Andrea Mantegna: Painting's Mediality

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The Image as a Window to Heaven: Preconditions in Medieval Christian Conceptions

The hermeneutics of the Christian Middle Ages assign to the religious image and its aesthetic function a characteristically ambivalent status. The ambivalence concerns the question of the identity of the image, what Hans Gadamer calls its 'mode of being', and it arises from diverging aspects inherent in the image: its independent actuality versus its existence as a reproduction, its concrete irreplaceability versus the self-suspension implied by its pictorial status.[1]

On the one hand, the particular efficacy of the image results from the relation of resemblance (*similitudo*) in which it is thought to stand for something outside itself. In this respect, the image is destined to make present or to re-present in visible, material form the experience of the invisible, immaterial reality of the heavenly beings. The result of this is the paradoxical experience of the real presence of the numinous, which may sometimes even lead to the identification of representation and archetype. The immeasurable gap that separates the earthly and the divine, the worldly and the transcendent, appears to close. The medium of the image thus lends a concrete shape to the desired experience of the proximity and presence of the divine.[2]

On the other hand, however, the image also points to the utter inaccessibility and insurmountable distance of the divine, insofar as the fundamental function of pictorial representation is to refer beyond itself to that which it is not. It is essentially characterized by the 'mediacy of all relations of resemblance'.[3] Thus the image literally serves as a 'means', a medium, which – according to an anagogical conception of knowledge of the divine – must be transcended toward a higher vision of that which is not representable in a visual shape.

It is well known that this conception of the image is largely based on a pictorial theory founded in Platonic metaphysics, subsequently adapted by medieval Platonism and interpreted in Christian terms. Common to this entire tradition is the ontological invalidation of the image: as a mere sensual manifestation of the true, eternal essence, the image does not possess any sort of ontological independence and therefore has only an inauthentic kind of existence. The underlying hypostatical conception of the world also gave rise to the metaphor of the painting as merely a 'shadow image' cast by an antecedently existing nature, which in turn is only the reflection of a metaphysical truth.[4] As a consequence, the artwork has at best an anamnetic capacity. On the basis of these premises, the

Detail from Andrea Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1490 (plate 16).

medieval exegetical tradition since Augustine reformulated pictorial meditation as a preliminary, lower stage of the contemplative ascent leading from the visible to the invisible, *per visibilia ad invisibilia*.[5]

Transparency and Opacity: The Picture as a Window and as a Surface

Such preconditions and highly paradoxical traditions are forceful reminders of the fact that the image's role as a medium, already asserted by theology, required a certain distanced attitude on the part of the viewer. Only this sort of detachment, the act of differentiating between the representation and the represented object, allowed the image to fulfil its specific purpose. As a consequence, this mediating role entails a certain demand on the image's aesthetic articulacy. This demand inevitably became more pressing as images increasingly gained what Louis Marin terms 'mimetic transparency', gradually losing their mark as media of presentation.[6] The more the image gained the status of an imitation of visible reality, of what Alberti described as a 'window', the less it opened up a view onto a meta-pictorial reality. Understandably, the tension resulting from these two different demands on the image called for new pictorial forms. They came to be supplied by an aesthetic practice that turned the problem of the representational and intentional status of the image into a productive moment of the pictorial creation itself.

A panel representing the Virgin Mary, probably painted around 1480 in Ferrara and now located in Edinburgh, may serve as an example (*plate 1*).[7] It depicts the Virgin enthroned, flanked by two angels in a landscape and framed by a counterfeit wooden window rendered in an impressive trompe-l'oeil manner. Even torn pieces of leftover parchment covering that are tacked to the frame are discernible. The striking trompe-l'oeil effect achieved by this representation is further strengthened by the traditional motif of the fly. The insect appears to settle, life-like, on the projecting piece of parchment on the lower left-hand side.[8] The painting imitates the form of another object, namely a window, through which one perceives the apparition of Mary as though it were part of a reality *behind* the representation. The parchment seems to have been torn away like a veil to afford an unobstructed view of the seemingly real presence of the Virgin. Even so, the awareness remains that the experience of this presence results only from a deception, and that what is seen is irrevocably a painted picture. The image itself aims to revoke the assertion of the real presence of what is being depicted. In this way the venerable premise of pictorial theology that 'the honour should be transferred back to the prototype' ('honor refertur ad prototypa'), and thus the referential aspect of the image, become aesthetically productive as a self-reflective structure.

The motif of the torn parchment in the painting seems, however, to have a further semantic aspect in store. It is hardly accidental that the torn parchment calls to mind the image of the torn curtain that, in the Old Testament, veiled off the view into the Temple's inner sanctum, and which was removed only for those converted to the true God: 'velum templi scissum est', as the Gospels promise.[9] The topoi associated with the *revelatio* in its biblical, typological sense are condensed in this image. The four Gospels as well as their respective exegetical commentaries continually refer to this scene in order to emphasize that what still remained concealed in the Old Covenant came to be revealed through Christ's redemption of mankind.[10] A phrase in the widely employed Marian sequence, *Ave praeclara maris stella* clarifies the point: 'what the figural type [of the Old Testament] has formed, first the veil must be pulled aside in order to see it' ('... quod typus figurabat, iam nunc abducto velo datur perspici').[11] In this sequence and in related exegetical literature, the mystery of the

Incarnation is the central object of *revelatio*. This points back to the Ferrara painting and its subject matter, the Mother of God, since the implicit theological meaning of that painting lies in the mystery of Christ's being the Son of God, incarnated through the Holy Virgin.[12] The unusual motif of the Christ Child depicted with closed eyelids as if asleep – an iconographic reference to his predestined sacrificial death – also points to these same ideas. The Christ Child is shown in the act of loosening the belt (*cingulum*) from Mary's dress, thus accentuating the traditional symbol of Mary's virginal chastity while simultaneously placing a blessing on her future marriage to the Lord. This is in keeping with Christ's admonition that the believers keep their 'belts fastened' (*praecincti*) like those 'who are waiting for their Lord to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks'.[13] Clearly the pictorial discourse contained in this painting, a discourse concerning the reality both of the image and of what it depicts, is motivated to a

considerable extent by theological considerations. The deeper meaning of the subject matter, the paradoxical incarnation of Christ as the Son of God, is 'revealed' to the viewer through her appreciation of the paradox of pictorial representation.

The Ferrarese painting thus exhibits a reflexive stance toward the mediatory quality of painting. The distinction between reality and pictorial representation is reflected in the image itself, by way of a perceptual discontinuity. This raises the question about the relationship between this representational strategy and the widely discussed conception of the image that was first put forth in the early quattrocento, in Alberti's treatise *De pictura* (1435), and which became central to any understanding of modern representational painting. Alberti's well-known definition of the image as a view through an open window (*finestra aperta*)[14] focuses on the fiction of the total transparency of the pictorial surface as though it were made of 'transparent glass' through which 'the visual pyramid could pass'.[15] This conception seeks to capture the experience of an unbroken continuity between the world of the image and that of the viewer who expects the objects in the painting to appear 'markedly in relief and similar to the objects presented'.[16] The spectator is promised a direct participation in the world of the image. This participation is then facilitated by figures displaying an array of emotional affects, so that, in accord with Aristotelian ideas, the spectator is addressed and involved at an emotional level.[17]

It has correctly been pointed out that Alberti's much-quoted definition of the image as a *finestra aperta* in no way precludes his simultaneous acknowledgement that it is a painted surface.[18] Alberti himself states: '... a painting will be the intersection of a visual pyramid at a given distance, with a fixed centre and certain position of lights, represented artistically with lines and colours on a given surface.'[19] However, it is just here that a critical point, or rather an unresolved problem in Alberti's conception of the image, becomes evident. It concerns the question of the proper quality and significance of the mediation between reality, as perceived in nature, and its two-dimensionally projected representation – the question, that is, of the status of the category of pictorial mediation itself. The plane is clearly acknowledged as a regulating system of coordinates, a mathematically controllable site for ordering the proportionality and the spatial relations between the objects in the painting. But the implicit idea of a total transparency of the veil draped between the viewing subject and the object of his vision clearly reveals the quest for art to attain a tautology between the reality as it appears and its image, the quest for the dissolution of the medium. What is neglected is the productive aspect of the procedure by which the perspectively perceived object is transposed into a different order of appearance, distinguished not only by its flatness but also by the novelty of its shapes and colours. The mediatory preconditions and the perceptual effects of this process of transformation are barely examined. As James Ackermann has pointed out, Alberti still thinks of colour as a property of the actual object itself, as an 'objective phenomenon', rather than as a property determined by the eye in the process of perception (a view already found in Leonardo). All the less Alberti was able to understand the figurative dimension of the picture as based on a genuine, systematic 'grammar' of representation that produces specific expressive effects.[20]

As James Elkins has shown by drawing on the ambiguous concept of a 'poetry' or 'poetics' of perspective, one consequence of this unsolved problem was to question the extent to which the pictorial arrangement of objects is conditioned by human vision and, therefore, at the same time depends on the medium of representation. This was answered in widely different ways during the quattrocento.[21] The specific profile and weight of these various answers were not so much determined by

antecedent theories but rather emerged from the concrete discourse of the paintings themselves and from the pragmatic process of their production.

Fenestra coeli: Mary as Mediatrix in the Medium of the Image

In the Ferrarese painting just discussed, the aesthetic option of emphasizing the image's materiality as a medium is manifest in a particularly striking way. It creates a productive tension between the subject matter and its depiction. The self-referentiality of the image is rooted in the painting's intended external reference: it draws the viewer into a novel kind of communicative context engaging both his vision and imagination. It is not accidental that this aesthetic development coincided with the emergence of a mimetic, rationalized conception of representation in the Renaissance. The more mastery over external reality painting gained through the powers of illusion, the more it could claim that its authentic poetic value lay in the difference between image and reality.[22]

This is most clearly to be seen in that the presentation of the image's medial character gradually migrates from the representation itself to the place where the fictional space of the image and the factual space of reality meet — that is, to the frame.

2 Lazzaro Bastiani, *The Virgin and Child*, c. 1460–70. Oil on panel, 54.5 × 42.5 cm. Berlin: Gemäldegalerie. Photo: © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

The frame testifies to the difference between actual and imaginary presence, the point of transition between the two. The frame separates the image from the world it imitates, while at the same time producing a mediation between them. The result is a certain ambivalence: the frame is both part of the picture and part of external reality, yet it does not fully belong to either.[23] It is characteristic of the painting of the trecento and still more of the quattrocento that the practice of pictorial design becomes increasingly aware of the aesthetic effect of this ambivalence of coexisting elements, seeking to utilize it in the service of an increasingly sophisticated attitude toward the problem of fictionality.[24]

A painting of the Virgin dated around 1460–70, which originated in the circle of Andrea Mantegna and which today is usually attributed to Lazzaro Bastiani (Berlin, Gemäldegalerie), supplies a telling example of the ambivalent nature of the frame (*plate 2*).[25] In the centre of the painting, the half-length figure of the Virgin holds the infant Jesus. An illusionistic marble parapet in the extreme foreground mediates between the spaces of the image and the viewer. Its trompe-l'oeil effect is enhanced by a painted but deceptively authentic cartellino. The infant, who is located on this threshold and who tries with great agility to wind free of his mother's caring embrace, gains a palpable presence for the viewer. His right foot seems to protrude from the painting into real space as though he were about to step into the latter. But this entire representation, which offers the viewer an intimate proximity to the heavenly personages in the image, assumes its proper role only in the context of a larger ensemble. Of central importance in this ensemble is the surrounding frame, which is decorated with a series of putti floating on clouds and carrying the instruments of the passion, the *arma Christi* (*plate 3*).

The manner in which the frame is represented generates a calculated rupture between various levels of reality. It does so by contrasting the striking evocation of presence in the centre of the image with the allegorical, super-natural reality of the angels carrying the *arma Christi* and of the cherubim heads depicted on the same scale. The central image is thus assigned a role not unlike that of a picture within a picture. The overall design of the painting is carefully planned: even though the putti are visibly reduced in scale and are depicted standing on clouds, and the cherubim appear as translucid, irreal phenomena, they are in fact both spatially and situationally united with the central group of the Virgin and Child. This is accomplished both through their postures and through the direction of their gazes and bodies. The effect of unity is heightened by the external illumination shared by all the figures in the picture. The aforementioned ambivalence inherent in the role of the frame becomes especially manifest here. Yet, it is clear that the aim is not just an aesthetic play with different levels of reality. Rather, as in the case of the Ferrara painting of the Madonna, the point is to find a solution to the fundamental problem of the pictorial communication and mediation of the truth of salvation. The *arma Christi* depicted on the frame symbolically anticipate Christ's predestined sacrificial death and, moreover, refer to the eschatological meaning of that sacrifice, which will be fulfilled in the Parousia of the Last Judgment.[26] The experience of the presence of the Madonna and Child made possible by the painting is thus expanded to include the reality of salvation, which necessarily evades direct pictorial visualization.

It is hardly an accident, therefore, that the believer's gaze, directed at the two figures in the centre of the painting, is not answered by any responding look. Instead, it is drawn into the imaginary space on which their own meditative gazes seem to dwell, both of which are directed into a distance but which are characterized psychologically in quite different ways. The Virgin, in quiet anticipation of future

3 Detail of Bastiani, *The Virgin and Child*, showing *putti* carrying the *arma Christi*.

suffering, seems to look straight at the cross presented by a putto. Christ's almost tangible proximity and the corporeality of his naked feet are represented in deliberate contrast to his remote and inaccessible gaze transfixed on high. This contrast refers to an interpretative tradition in which the mystery of the dual nature of *Christus mediator* is represented by the antithesis 'feet on the ground, head in heaven' (pedes in terra, caput in coelo). In the words of Augustine, 'He is high above all heavens, but with his feet he stands on the earth: the head is in heaven, the body is on earth.'[27]

Due to the illusion created by the central field, which appears as though in 'relief and similar to the objects presented', Bastiani's painting proves to be a window image in keeping with Alberti's definition.[28] It is only the rupture effected by the frame that makes the spectator aware of the fact that the prospect opening up before her is imaginary and ultimately points to another, invisible reality. Part of the subtle meaning of the painting is that it sets the stage for the familiar exegetical interpretation of the Virgin as the 'window to heaven' (*fenestra coeli*), through which the believer hopes to enter paradise.

This notion of the Virgin as a window, realized in such an evident manner in Bastiani's painting, refers to her dual role as a medium of the incarnation of the divine *logos* and as the *mediatrix* and intercessor for the believer.[29] Mary is the medium of divine grace and is therefore, in the words of Albertus Magnus, 'a window of illumination lighting up the entire house of the church with eternal light'.[30] In this way, the Virgin also comes to represent the prospect of an afterlife and of salvation at the end of time. 'Because she is a window, the window of devotion ought to be opened piously to her.'[31]

Bastiani's painting condenses this cluster of religious ideas into a clear and concrete visual form through the interaction between frame and image. Even though it indicates its fictional status primarily through the motif of the frame, it manages to demonstrate its overall medial character – that is, its specific 'mode of being' as a membrane between this life and the hereafter. In this respect, it is comparable to the Ferrarese panel and its self-thematization as a velum or veil (see *plate 1*).

Picture and Frame in Mantegna

The frequent and far from random appearance of the *fenestra coeli* motif in Early Modern religious images clearly documents the new demands that mimetic representation made on the complex relationship between medium and subject matter. The ambition and achievement of an image is not exhausted by the vivid representation of its subject. It aims, beyond this, to make visible the latter's transcendent and imaginary nature. The pictorial device of fictional parapets and frames intensifies the experience of an immediate encounter and communication, the impression of an actual epiphany of the heavenly persons. Yet it also effectively conveys to the viewer the unattainability of the reality that the painting presents to the eye. The device thus brings about an aesthetic reflexion, an interpretative act of

4 Master of Pratovecchio (Giovanni di Francesco?), *The Virgin and Child*, c. 1450. Tempera on panel, 78.74 × 65.09 cm. Cambridge, MA: Fogg Art Museum (Lehmann Collection). Photo: © Harvard Art Museums.

viewing, by demonstrating that the image itself is a means of interpreting reality and by keeping alive an awareness of the fictitiousness of representation. In doing so, the image ultimately functions as an 'aesthetic border' which marks the difference between reality and fiction.[32] The fundamental tension between medium and subject matter, which one might expect to diminish as a consequence of increased illusionistic accomplishment, acquires a new significance thanks to the project of inscribing the mediality of the image into the latter's aesthetic perception itself.

In a word: The motif of the *fenestra coeli* was treated as an 'Aufgabe' in Jacob Burckhardt's fundamental sense. It contributed to the gradual refinement of the forms of pictorial expression and provoked solutions of enormous formal diversity well into

5 Bernardo Zenale, *The Virgin and Child,* **c. 1500–05. Oil on panel, 37 × 37 cm. Milan: Pinacoteca di Brera. Photo: ©️ Pinacoteca di Brera.**

6 Vincenzo Foppa, *The Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist,* **1485. Fresco transferred to canvas, 192 × 173 cm. Milan: Pinacoteca di Brera. Photo: ©️ Scala, Florence.**

the quattrocento and beyond. At one end of the spectrum, motifs were reduced to simple formulas, which were merely quoted and schematically applied, for example in a Tuscan panel from *c.* 1450 (*plate* 4).[33] At the other end of the spectrum one finds far more sophisticated solutions that complicate the relationship between interior and exterior space. This can be seen in a panel by Bernardo Zenale in the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, painted *c.* 1500–05. Here again the image simulates a window frame and additionally features the motif of Mary's half-covered breast as a symbol of the promise of grace (*plate* 5).[34] The representation is semantically enriched by the soft light that falls through the bottle-glass window pane at the left and illuminates the infant Jesus. In the exegetical tradition, the light alludes to the Incarnation or, more precisely, to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception and to the identification of the Virgin with the undefiled tabernacle. On the far right wall of the enclosure a further opening provides a view of earthly nature. As God's creation, its existence is owing to God's will to which His own Incarnation in Christ on the main part of the painting provides tangible and vivid testimony.[35]

Zenale's panel shows that the conception of the image as a 'view' or as a 'window' was embedded in a complex discourse. This discourse combined both specific representational aims with symbolic intentions and theoretical assumptions with thematic demands. The mutual interaction resulted in a constant supersession, variation, and redefinition of pre-existing categories of the 'reality' of representation. This can be shown by reference to the wide variety of transitional forms, motivic variations, and recombinational transformations. For example, a painting by Vincenzo Foppa, created in 1485, modifies the window motif into a symbol of sovereignty by elevating it into an architecturally structured triumphal arch spanning a loggia (*plate* 6);[36] or consider the psychological and religious intensity in Jacopo Bellini's representations of the Virgin or those of his son Giovanni Bellini.[37]

This particular problem of pictorial representation and its thematic elucidation was addressed in exemplary fashion by Andrea Mantegna. Mantegna's early painting in the Städel in Frankfurt, created around 1450, presents the Evangelist Mark through the fictive stone frame of an arched window (*plate* 7).[38] The painting testifies to Mantegna's special preoccupation with the formal means of mediating between interior and exterior, between the world of the image and that of the viewer. He attempts to redefine the iconic portrait under the new mimetic conditions. The lively attitude of the saint and the force of his gaze evoke the impression of his actual presence. The aesthetic boundary delineated by the marble frame is emphatically transgressed by the

trompe-l'oeil of the book and the arm of the saint as he rests on his elbow. The composition, with its foreshortened window casement (depicted as though seen from just below) and windowsill (as though seen from just above) suggests an extreme proximity to the spectator. In spite of this suggestiveness and vividness, the saint does not acknowledge the viewer's presence. He remains unreachable: his concentrated and spellbound gaze is directed not at the viewer but focused on the far distance. The Evangelist is thus simultaneously present and absent, close and distant. His melancholy posture, *gestus melancolicus*, and the expression of his eyes combine retrospective contemplation with keen anticipation of the future, his testimony to Christ's Sacrifice with the unshaken faith in salvation. The distance on which his gaze dwells speaks of the visionary and inspired spirituality that is the characteristic feature of his sainthood. In this way, the experience of immediate presence generated by the image refers the viewer to another experience, that of salvation, which is only disclosed outside the image.

7 Andrea Mantegna, *St Mark the Evangelist*, c. 1450. Tempera on canvas, 81.2 × 63.6 cm. Frankfurt am Main: Städel Museum. Photo: © Artothek.

8 Andrea Mantegna,
Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, c. 1455. Tempera on canvas, 68.9 × 86.3 cm. Berlin: Gemäldegalerie. Photo: © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

It can hardly go unnoticed how high an ambition informs this early work by Mantegna. This ambition no doubt accounts for the sometimes immature and contrived use of aesthetic techniques in the painting, such as the dramatic foreshortenings and laboured perspectival design. Even so, here we already find a testimony to Mantegna's remarkable awareness of the problems inherent in the image's capacity reciprocally to mediate illusion and distance.[39] We see right from the beginning that the quest for a new mimetic plausibility anchored in a reflection on the content of what was to be represented. Given this reflection, mimetic plausibility is grasped as aesthetic effect. Granted that in Mantegna's *St Mark* the persuasive power of the painting evidently relies on the advances in realistic portrayal, its genuinely innovative and anticipatory dimension lies in the increased ability to imbue the painted figure with a soul. This animation of the traditional portrait icon ultimately serves a thematic purpose: to achieve a psychologically convincing portrayal of a particular religious and spiritual character. The 'visualization of the invisible' opens up an entirely new horizon, that of the inner life of the depicted person.

The full expressive possibilities opened up by Mantegna's conception of the image can be seen in his *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*, now in Berlin, painted only a few years later, c. 1455 (plate 8).[40] The great esteem that this painting came to enjoy even during the artist's lifetime is demonstrated by Giovanni Bellini's repeated recourse to it[41] and by the fact that already in the early sixteenth century it had found an established place in the private art collection of Pietro Bembo in Padua (plate 9).[42]

It is well known from Sixten Ringbom's impressive reconstruction of its history, that Mantegna's painting is a mile-stone in the development of the genre of half-length figure historical painting, or narrative close-up.[43] This genre combines elements of narrative history painting with the near view of the portrait icon. The work tells a story: the Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple according to the Gospel of Luke.[44] But this temporally unfolding event congeals into one static, never-ending moment. This

9 Giovanni Bellini,
Presentation in the Temple,
1465–70. Oil on canvas, 80 ×
105 cm. Venice: Fondazione
Querini Stampalia. Photo: ©
Scala, Florence.

effect is enhanced by the image's compositional structure, which is marked by a clear symmetry and a strict ordering according to a grid of horizontal and vertical lines in the picture plane. The figure of the high priest Simeon, whose arms form a right angle, is carefully aligned with the angles of the frame, and the contours of his forehead, profile and beard clearly follow a vertical line. Simeon's impressive snow-white beard stands in correspondence with the vertical figure of the Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. In the centre of the painting Joseph's face is displayed frontally, preventing visual access to the background and thereby denying the effect of spatial depth.[45]

Mantegna's painting creates an ambivalence between the impression of proximity and presence, on the one hand, and the impression of remoteness and timelessness, on the other. The pictorial device of the fictive marble frame surrounding the image crucially contributes to this ambivalent effect. The frame gives the deceptive suggestion of tangibility and proximity, especially in the trompe-l'oeil of Mary's arm and the cushion, which projects into the viewer's space and provides a base for Jesus to stand upon. At the same time, the frame outlines the aesthetic boundary that defines an unsurpassable difference between the reality of the event internal to the image and its contemplation from outside.[46] The fine nuancing of accents should be noted: only the group of the Virgin and Child achieve such a presence as to transcend the frame, departing from the otherwise strictly rectangular design of the image. In this way, they are defined, with effect, as the nucleus of the overall figural arrangement.

For good reason, the accentuated depiction of the frame in Mantegna's painting has been interpreted as a reference to Donatello's famous *Pazzi Madonna* of 1420 (*plate 10*). Already in the quattrocento, Donatello's work was frequently copied and imitated. Its reception accounts also for the remarkable motif of the Madonna shown in profile with the Christ Child clinging tenderly against her cheek.[47] The connection between the two works can hardly be doubted, all the more so since in Mantegna's painting the group of the Virgin and Child in half-length is presented in a compact and self-contained fashion, so that the overall composition can be read as a narrative expansion of a Marian icon.

But the deeper meaning of this pictorial design is by no means exhausted by Mantegna's reference to Donatello, nor by the obligatory invocation of the *paragone* between the latter's technique of shallow relief carving, *rilievo schiacciato*, and Mantegna's sculptural painting. It is likely that Mantegna also took into account the authority of another work housed in Padua, his home town and the site of his workshop: namely, the long-venerated votive image in Padua cathedral (*plate 11*). This painting was the protagonist of an annual liturgical play marking the occasion of Christ's birth. This Madonna, which survives today only in a faithful copy of the mid-seventeenth century (1647?) and is part of a Baroque altar located in the right transept, was venerated as a miraculous painting by St Luke as early as the thirteenth century.[48] For the staging of the mystery play, it was covered with a precious cloth

10 Donatello, *The Pazzi Madonna*, c. 1420. Marble, 74.5 × 69.5 cm. Berlin: Gemäldegalerie. Photo: © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

('nitido pallio cooperta').[49] The climax of the play, directly preceding the celebration of the proper mass, consisted of the revelation of the painting with the words, 'here is the Infant' ('Adest hic parvulus'), meaning Christ the Lord and Saviour incarnate.[50] The sources testify to a lively veneration of this Madonna as a miraculous image. They report that it received special donations of clothes and that it was taken along on petitionary processions in times of need, such as during droughts or floods. In short, it was invested with almost corporeal qualities.[51] This effect was significantly reinforced by an inscription that was located on the original image's lower edge. In it, Mary addresses the viewer in order to testify that the son she presents is in fact God incarnate: 'He is God and Man whom I offer as a parturient virgin' ('*DEUS EST ET HOMO QUEM VIRGO PUERPERA PROMO*').[52] Not only the unusual motif of the standing, swaddled Christ Child presented by the Virgin, but also the illusionistic framing niche strongly suggest that Mantegna looked back to this image.[53]

The reference to the venerated icon casts new light on Mantegna's pictorial intention in the *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*. The votive image in the Padua Cathedral owed its effectiveness in the evocation of real presence not least to its role as a protagonist in the liturgical drama celebrated annually during the vigils of Christmas, the *Nativitas Domini*. When the shepherds, on approaching the altar with the image, were asked, 'Whom are you seeking in the manger' ('Quem quaeritis in Presepe'), they replied, 'Christ, the Lord, our Savior' ('Salvatorem Christum Dominum'). Upon which the precious cloth covering the image would suddenly be drawn aside to reveal the image of the Virgin and Child with the words 'Here is present the little child' ('Adest hic parvulus'). The staged revelation of the image thus acquired the significance of an epiphany. This was reinforced by the inscription on the frame, which gives explicit testimony that the Son here presented is God incarnate.[54]

Mantegna's painting aims at a similar experience. However, the revelation that occurs on beholding the image is differently realized: by releasing the viewer's interior imagination. The viewer's perception focuses directly on the thematic content of the painting, on its iconographical subject matter, because the *Presentation in the Temple* is itself nothing less than the event of an epiphany. It is the moment when the priest of the Lord, Simeon, recognizes at the end of his long life the promised Saviour in the guise of the Christ Child presented to him by Mary. The Bible states explicitly that Simeon's act of recognition, his epiphanic moment, takes the form of a visual experience: '... he took him up in his arms and blessed the Lord and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation"' ('viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum').[55]

Taking its departure from the theme of epiphany, Mantegna's painting develops a particular viewing function. To realize the incomprehensible glory of God in the physically and tangibly close Christ Child becomes the task of imaginative vision or perception. The deeper meaning conveyed in the experience of

11 Unknown Artist, *The Virgin and Child* [copy after thirteenth-century votive image], c. 1650. Tempera on canvas on panel, 106 × 71 cm. Padua: Duomo. Photo: © Gabinetto Fotografico del Museo Civico di Padova.

the image subtly communicates that Christ is the 'light for revelation' (lumen ad revelationem),[56] as stated in the Gospel of Luke, the 'illumination' that 'indicates the giving of grace'.[57]

A description by Henry Suso provides an idea of the kind of imaginative experience that the painting would have stimulated in its beholders. It is the testimony of an inner vision which he received on Candlemas, that is, on the very holiday that commemorates Simeon's encounter with the Lord.[58] In expectation of the heavenly Child:

> … he approached with a heart full of yearning and knelt in front of the Madonna, before she came in and offered the Child to Simeon. He raised his eyes and hands up to her and implored her to show him the little child and to allow him to kiss it. And when she offered him the baby full of grace, he spread his arms wide in the endless width of the world, and then he took and embraced the beloved many times. He contemplated his beautiful eyes, he looked at his little hands, he greeted his tender lips …, then he lifted up his eyes, and his heart was full of wonder that the bearer of the world was so great and yet so small, so magnificent in the heavens and yet so child-like on earth; then he attended to him as he offered him a chance to sing and cry and then quickly returned him to his mother and went with her (into the Temple), until all was completed.[59]

Similar reports of experiences in which the faithful identify themselves with the role played by the prophet Simeon are found in some Italian texts.[60] Again on Candlemas, the blessed Angela da Foligno, who died in 1309, saw immediately upon entering the Temple how the Holy Virgin turned to her and placed the small Child in her arms.[61] The blessed Corrado D'Offida, who died in 1306, had a similar experience. In a vision, the Madonna offered him the Child so that he could partake of the same consoling experience once granted to Simeon, 'ut probaret quam consolationem habuit Simeon'.[62] Such accounts correspond unmistakeably with the vivid portrayals of the same event described in the roughly contemporaneous *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, whose description of the intensity of these experiences was designed to lead the believer to emotionally re-experience Simeon's encounter with the Lord.[63] In the end, these descriptions originated in the official liturgy, and more specifically, in the procedure for the procession and feast of *Mariae Purificatio*. As early as 1213, the *Ordo Officiorum* of Siena Cathedral stipulates that the scene of the encounter in the Temple was the very heart of the ceremony. In direct reference to the Gospel of Luke, it explicitly instructs the congregation 'to proclaim and to believe together with Simeon (*cum Simeone*)' that 'for all people a light is prepared to enlighten the heathens', a light (i.e. Christ) 'that we cannot carry with Simeon visibly (*cum Simeone*), whose visible sign and personal symbol, however, we hold in our hands'. This latter phrase refers to the light from the wax candles carried in the procession.[64] This celebration was performed still more elaborately in Padua Cathedral in the form of a liturgical drama, in which priests and clerics from the cathedral donned special costumes and assumed the roles of the Virgin and of Simeon as well as those of Joseph, Hannah, and the participating angels.[65]

The reports by Suso, Angela da Foligno, and Corrado D'Offida describe the event of Christ's becoming present in the most concrete way, through an imaginative vision (*visio imaginativa*). Nevertheless, this presence remains a projection of the interior imagination. It is the same kind of experience, then, that the image seeks to

evoke in the beholder. The paradoxical conception of reality inherent in this type of visual representation is constitutive of the viewer's specific mode of reception. On the one hand, the image aims to bring about an experience of what is represented as real, culminating in the trompe-l'oeil effect that suggests the real, tangible presence of the child in the space of the painting. But on the other hand, the painting suspends this semblance of reality by presenting the event in the unbridgeable distance of a fictitious space without place or time, a sphere of reality that remains incommensurable with that of the viewer.

Against this background, the extent to which the image is governed by a carefully calculated *mise-en-scène* is evident. The frontally depicted figure of Joseph provides the viewer with a counterpart, almost a mirror image, within the picture. Joseph directs his concentrated gaze gravely and unwaveringly at Simeon, and thus at the very person whose epiphany the external viewer, for this part, seeks to comprehend. The figures of Mantegna himself and his wife, Nicolosia, also merit closer consideration.[66] Rather than looking at the event and its protagonists, both gaze into an indeterminate, imaginary distance outside the frame, in a direction that corresponds to the direction of the light in the image. This idiosyncratic motif of the outward-directed gaze will not be explicated in more detail here,[67] since it has already been established that the constellation of the different directions of gaze as well as the motif of seeing and the visual acquisition of knowledge play an important role within the composition. The role of the viewer thus becomes itself a theme of the painting.

Overall, it is clear that Mantegna's painting aims to bring the heavenly figures to life and into proximity through the medium of fiction, whereas the Padua image had evoked their real presence by way of a literal unveiling. The 'revelation' becomes an act of illumination that takes place within the viewer himself. This experience of revelation acquires an even greater complexity and theological depth when one pays attention to the many references at the level of content that are provided by the subject matter and its iconography. The motif of the child entirely swaddled in white cloth refers to the white burial shroud in which Christ's corpse was wrapped, and thus to the eschatological doctrine in which the Incarnation, Christ's sacrificial death is already sealed.[68] The swaddling clothes can also be understood as referring to the *palla corporalis*, the consecrated cloth that covers the holy sacrament on the altar. As Aelred of Rievaulx wrote in the twelfth century, 'the swaddling clothes are the covering of the Sacraments', 'involutio pannorum est tegumentum sacramentorum'.[69] In this way, the motif of Christ's swaddling clothes is fundamentally connected with the problem of sacramental representation. Just as the body of Christ as a child remains hidden and invisible in the swaddling clothes, so too his flesh and blood remain hidden during mass behind the appearance of the sacramental bread and wine: 'Ibi ipse Christus esse creditur; sed involutis pannis, hoc est invisibiliter in ipsis sacramentis.'[70] A deeper, sacramentally determined meaning is contained in the motif of the Christ Child, which is here fittingly presented as standing directly on the threshold between pictorial and real space, placed on a dignified, liturgical cushion (*plumacium*). The fulfilment of the promise of divine grace is anticipated only in the prospective vision of Christ's sacrifice. This dimension of meaning was already revealed to the old man Simeon, who, according to Scripture, informs Mary, even as he glories in holding the Messiah, that 'a sword will pierce through your own soul …'.[71] The tenor of grave, silent seriousness that governs the facial expressions, and the composed and quiet grief of Mary, who already realizes the futility of her care, lend the painting an expressive intensity that continues to reverberate with the viewer.

12 Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, c. 1504–06. Tempera on canvas, 213 × 95 cm. Venice: Ca' d'Oro. Photo: © Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro.

The strategic linking of formal and semantic devices in single motifs underlines the significance of the overall scene. A final example of this is the white veil covering Mary's head. Portrayed with such delicately orchestrated folds, it inexorably attracts the viewer's attention, all the more so as it exemplifies its special significance as a model for the child's swaddling cloth, for the loincloth of the crucified Christ, and equally for the communion cloth on the altar.[72]
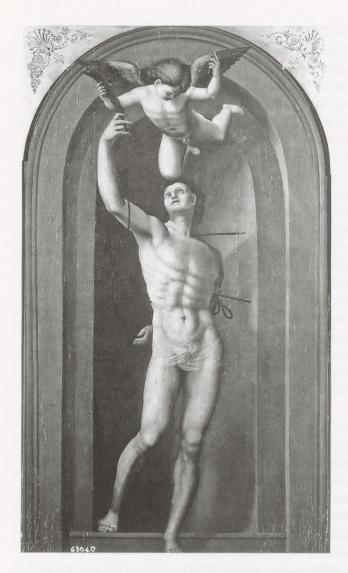
The Berlin *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* is just one telling example of how Mantegna grappled with the problem of the medial character of the image, a concern that pervades his entire work. In a series of original solutions, Mantegna reflected on the conditions and possibilities of pictorial representation, focusing again and again on the relationship between actual and pictorial space and on the function of the aesthetic boundary. Beyond the two early works in Frankfurt and Berlin, evidence of Mantegna's ongoing interest in these issues is well illustrated by paintings such as *St Euphemia* in Naples (1454)[73] and *St George* in Venice (c. 1467).[74] Moreover, Mantegna's preoccupation with re-defining the relationship between pictorial space and the form of the frame may also be studied in his large altarpieces.[75]

Another late work, *St Sebastian* in the Ca' d'Oro in Venice (c. 1504–06), displays the sophisticated conceptual character of Mantegna's images (*plate 12*). It was apparently commissioned by the Bishop of Mantua, Lodovico Gonzaga, a connoisseur of the arts and a patron and friend of Mantegna. At the time of the artist's death in 1506 the St Sebastian was still in his studio. Like the *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*, it ended up in the private art collection of Pietro Bembo shortly thereafter.[77] The figure of the saint is depicted with an emphasis on three-dimensionality so that it resembles a statue. In a noticeable departure from traditional iconography, the saint is shown, not bound to a tree or a column, but set against the darkened half-cylinder of a greyish-black niche with a frame of brown-stained marble.[78] Sebastian's appearance recalls that of a sculpture, and without question the finely chiselled muscles of his upper body are inspired by ancient models. The Apollo Belvedere is echoed in inverted fashion in the saint's feet, which are caught mid-step.[79]

In spite of its sculptural quality, the figure possesses considerable vivacity and captures the impression of a living, corporeal presence. The fluttering hair and loincloth contribute to the dynamic effect of the saint's stepping out of the niche. His posture is pervaded by a certain ambivalence: caught in a fragile tension between standing and walking, he seems at once arrested motionless in the central axis of the painting and moving away from that point. The painted marble frame, coinciding with the edge of the painting, contributes decisively to the impression that the saint is emerging from the niche to assume palpable reality in time and space. This effect is reinforced by the trompe-l'oeil details of the left foot, that seems to protrude from the painting at the viewer's eye-level, and the deceptively real candle around which a narrow ribbon bearing an inscription is wound. Seen from below, and given that the

13 Attributed to Perino del Vaga after Fra Bartolommeo, *St Sebastian*, c. 1520–30. Oil on panel, 145 × 86 cm. Fiesole: San Francesco. Photo: © Alinari Archives, Florence.

painting's total height is 210 cm, the saint appears as a humanly real yet gigantic figure. He is imbued with the quality of a true hero of the Christian faith whose martyr he is.[80] This impression is enhanced by the fact that the niche is, almost imperceptibly, too small and too narrow for the figure. As a result, the saint appears to be pushing and breaking out of his confines.

The reality of the representation can thus be understood only in terms of a specific paradox. The staging of the saint in front of the niche intensifies his appearance to the point of making him seem palpably present, while the niche also identifies this presence as a fiction.

As in the case of the Berlin painting, Mantegna also included a paragone with sculpture, especially with classical sculpture, in his *St Sebastian*. Here again, however, the pictorial intention is not adequately characterized merely by reference to the paragone motif. It is true that Mantegna demonstrates in this work how painting can achieve what is denied to sculpture: to convey a vivid sense of animation, to imbue art with the impression of life. But there is a deeper reason for this demonstration, and as before it has to do with the content of the subject matter. The staged ambivalence of the saint in the moment of his animation, as he is caught in the transition between liberation and statuesque duration, concretizes the painting's proper subject matter: namely, the saint's ecstatic rapture, his translocation to the realm and to the eternal contemplation of God (*visio beata*) at the moment of greatest physical pain. The candle at the lower right expresses this very effectively. A waft of smoke trails from the wick, indicating that the flame has only just been extinguished. The inscription on the winding ribbon explains its symbolic meaning: '*NIL NISI DIVINUM STABILE / EST CAETERA FVMVS*', 'Nothing but the Divine is constant, everything else is smoke'. The candle thus symbolizes the transitory nature of the body, which will turn to ashes unless it is permeated by the grace of God and transfigured in its integrity.[81] This expresses the traditional idea that precisely the tortured bodies of the martyrs will, by virtue of their vision of God, receive the gift of intactness (*corpus illaesum*) in the form of a fresh creation.[82]

The saint is represented accordingly. He is caught in the transitory moment of ecstasy, the moment of his elevation and encounter with God, when the frail confines of his human body are broken. Here one can speak of an *excessus*, a 'departure', in the true sense of the word. The saint gazes yearningly while raising his eyes to heaven, with red lips parted, glowing red cheeks, and wavy hair, details that characterize the *astrazione* or the emotional state of abstraction of his soul. They also indicate the direction of the movement implied in the motif of stepping forward and expressive of the movement of the soul, *motus animi*.[83] The view from below intensifies this effect into an upward movement. The saint's martyrdom, his 'passion', is transformed into passionate ecstasy and self-abandoned *compassio*. His martyrdom is thus interpreted

in accordance with the topical understanding of the *gloria passionis* and 'suave vulnus charitatis', the sweet wounds of love for God.[84]
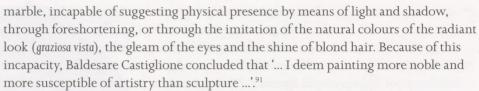
The meaning of this image further comes alive when Mantegna's depiction of St Sebastian is compared with the one produced by Fra Bartolommeo for San Marco in Florence. Painted some ten years later in 1514–15, it has survived only as a copy (*plate 13*).[85] In a fashion remarkably similar to Mantegna's saint, the protagonist is staged as though stepping out of the niche that encompasses him. At the moment of transfiguration he gazes upward at an angel who hands him the palm branch, symbol of the victory constituted by his martyrdom, while the angel gestures at the heavenly destination of his elevated soul. The analogy between the two paintings' pictorial conceptions is striking, even though there are also some noticeable differences. For example, Fra Bartolommeo chooses a different relation between the scale of the figure and that of the niche. The body seems hardly disfigured by the arrows with which he has been tortured. Indeed, the modelling of the body brings about a relaxed elegance in the curves of the contrapposto.

The comparison with Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* helps us to understand Mantegna's painting; in the former, the introduction of the descending angel makes explicit an aspect that is only implicit in Mantegna's painting but is fundamental to its meaning: the moment of the saint's ecstatic elevation to God, when he overcomes his physical frailty and his body's susceptibility to the tortures of martyrdom through the transformative power of religious conviction and abandonment to God. The fact that the multitude of arrows piercing his body cannot do any damage to his heroic appearance elevates Sebastian in the eyes of the viewer into an earthly manifestation of transcendence. As the inscription states, 'nothing besides God is secure' ('nihil nisi divinum stabile est'). What is illustrated here is the idea of fulfilment in God, which according to hagiographical typology coincides with the *imitatio Christi*, the re-enactment of Christ's Passion, thus also the overcoming of death.[86] Moreover, the legend of St Sebastian's martyrdom contains a particular analogy to Christ's death on the cross and his resurrection since the saint was not killed by the arrows but survived miraculously. In the night following his martyrdom, Irene, who had come to bury him, found him alive and nursed him back to health.[87]

In Mantegna's painting, the *gloria passionis* is manifested in the effective contrast between the dark background and the saint's illumination by the brilliant light that presents him as though surrounded by divine radiance and grace.[88] The angle of incidence of the light clearly corresponds with the direction of the gust of wind that ruffles the saint's hair and causes the ends of his loin cloth to flutter. The same gust of wind, however, also extinguishes the flame of the candle, dispersing its smoke into thin air. This parallelism invokes the image of the 'breath of God', that both breathes life into creation and takes that life away again, and which now permeates the saint in his ecstasy and creates him anew by granting immortality to his soul and transfiguring his body.[89]

It is only against this background that the extraordinary conceptual density of Mantegna's painting can be fully appreciated. The design effectively unites the theme of the saint's divine animation with that of animated sculpture, reflecting the analogy between God the Creator and the artist as creator. In the context of the debate over the hierarchy of the arts, the *paragone*, the claim of painting that unlike sculpture it was predestined to instill life into the represented subject was of central importance. In Jacopo Pontormo's formulation, painting claimed to 'infuse a spirit into a figure and to make it seem alive'.[90] In contrast to the painter, the sculptor was incapable of evoking the impression of actual flesh and blood as opposed to lifeless

marble, incapable of suggesting physical presence by means of light and shadow, through foreshortening, or through the imitation of the natural colours of the radiant look (*graziosa vista*), the gleam of the eyes and the shine of blond hair. Because of this incapacity, Baldesare Castiglione concluded that '... I deem painting more noble and more susceptible of artistry than sculpture ...'.[91]

Castiglione's and Pontormo's claims concerning painting's ability to create a figure through colour and to imbue it with soul, spirit, and emotion were intended to privilege their *artificium* as analogous to the divine act of creation. Alberti had argued similarly when he located the reflection of 'life' in painting in the convincing depiction of movement and sentiment (*movimento e sentimento*), adding that 'those movements are especially lively and pleasing that are directed upwards into the air.'[92] As David Summers has shown, what is at work here is the concept of '*aria*', central to Renaissance art theory. This concept characterizes painting's paradoxical obligation to make visible and comprehensible what is internal and hence invisible in man. *Aria* is the animation that permeates the depicted figure and lends it an integral unity of body and soul, enlivening it as it were with divine breath. For Alberti, *aria* was manifested in an exemplary way by motifs such as hair caught in a breeze and made to 'wave upward in the air like flames', or garments depicted in motion so that 'the clothing blown about by the wind will wave appropriately up in the air' and produce a 'pleasing result'. Alberti reminded the reader, however, that the artist should seek to represent movement in a moderate and graceful form (*moderati e dolci*) in order to make artistic form pleasurable rather than merely arouse the viewer's astonishment regarding the effort expended on the work. Only in this way could the painted figure become a visual manifestation of grace or *gratia* in the eyes of the viewer.[93]

14 Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, c. 1460. Tempera on panel, 68 × 30 cm. Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum. Photo: © De Agostini Picture Library.

If we consider Mantegna's *St Sebastian* in the light of such aesthetic conceptions, it becomes evident how far the infusion of life into the depicted figure, its animation with soul and intellect, constituted the actual artistic intention. Mantegna aimed to portray this animation as the impact of a higher divine blessing and at the same time as a manifestation of the artist's skill at lending *gratia* to the painted figure. An account by Vasari illuminates the fundamental difficulties in finding the ideal balance and establishing the right correspondence between grace and motion, between inner disposition (*movimenti d'animo*) and physical presentation (*movimento del corpo*). Remarkably, Vasari's account refers primarily to Fra Bartolommeo's *St Sebastian* from San Marco (see *plate 13*). As Vasari reports, the life-like tones of St Sebastian's skin, his gentle grace, and the perfect beauty befitting his character

were praised enthusiastically by all of the painter's colleagues. To the chagrin of the monks of San Marco, however, the figure of the saint also awakened a strong erotic desire among women and the painting was therefore immediately removed from the church.[94] This account illustrates how difficult it was to assess the risk inherent in the painting's ability to achieve sublimation and its capacity to create *gratia*, once the latter was considered only as a quality of the represented figure itself rather than as a signature of its aesthetic production.

It is well known that Mantegna explored these specific challenges and problems already in his early work, not least with respect to the representation of St Sebastian. In the early Vienna painting, the saint's unbroken physical integrity is contrasted with a surrounding landscape of ruins (*plate 14*).[95] Fragments of antique sculptures reflect the contrast between pagan decline and Christian triumph. Notwithstanding the questions that still surround the work's interpretation, the artist's inscription ('*TO ERGON TOU ANDREOU E[...]*'), which appears directly next to the saint, thematizes the competition between the genres of sculpture, consigned to decay, and painting, which is able to endure.[96] The implicit reference to the *paragone* is also central to the painting in Paris. Here, the fragment of a foot from an antique statue is pointedly depicted next to the foreshortened feet of the saint in the immediate foreground of the painting, at the viewer's eye level.[97] This illustrates both Mantegna's claim to perfect measure and painting's capacity to represent ideal proportions and classically articulated forms.[98]

Mantegna's *St Sebastian* from the Ca' d'Oro condenses these aspects and thus achieves a new quality of reflection upon the medium itself (see *plate 12*). Basing the work on the central image of the animated sculpture, he takes up the theme of the competition between sculpture and painting. The latter manifests its ability to animate the representation and bestow it with an enduring existence precisely because it does not create a material object in the medium of dead matter, but rather produces an experiential quality in the viewer's imagination.

Here, then, the image strikingly testifies to its inherent capacity 'to represent objects taken from experience in a form transcending all natural experience'.[99] Activating and utilizing this capacity does not amount to artistic self-positing or to an 'emancipation' from the object, in the sense of art becoming autonomous. Rather, it serves to compress the subject matter itself into a specific aesthetic experience. One can thus recognize what really motivates Mantegna's concern with the specificity of different media, his engagement with sculpture and his continual quest for the *paragone*, be it with Donatello or with Antiquity. His project is to establish artistic practice itself as the source both of the genuine efficacy of pictorial representation and of the significance of the image as image.

The Countenance of Christ in the Image: Mantegna's Directing Vision

Works like Mantegna's *Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* (see plate 8) or the *The Virgin and Child with Angels* from Ferrara (see *plate 1*) conceive of the painting as a membrane that conceals an imaginary and incommensurable reality while at the same time uncovering or revealing it. The painting is understood not as a transparent plane onto which a representation is projected but literally as a medium of presentation. As a consequence, there is a continuous awareness that the iconic equivalence of the represented object is also a function of representation itself.

We have explored the scope of Mantegna's conceptual engagement with this set of issues in his continuous exploration of the relationship between frame and pictorial space, and in his various efforts to represent the 'animation' of the painted

15 Andrea Mantegna,
Christ the Redeemer, 1493.
Tempera on canvas, 55 × 43
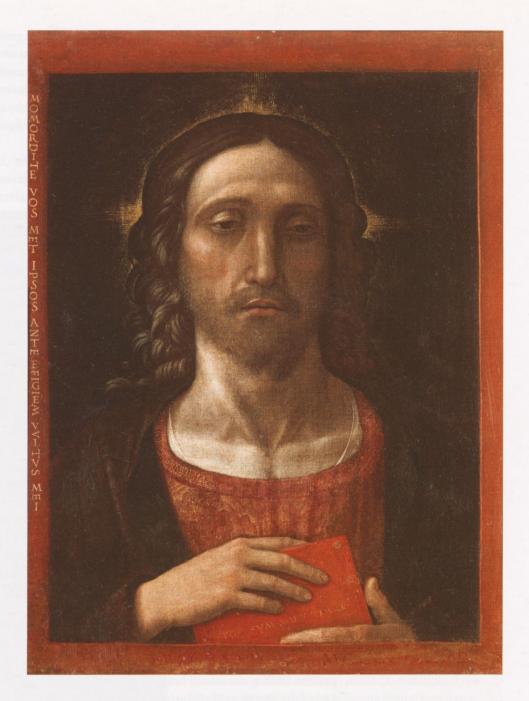cm. Corregio: Museo Civico.
Photo: © Museo il Correggio.

figure as a plausible category of the 'invisible'. The same context also calls for a discussion of the artist's repeated engagement with the representational challenge that is most fundamentally linked to the paradox of pictorial representation as such: the image of Christ. This link, which deserves more detailed study, will here be considered only briefly by means of two examples.

One of these is a little studied painting from the year 1493, currently located in the Museo Civico in Correggio. It depicts Christ the Redeemer in a cropped close-up portrait (*plate 15*).[100] As above, the aesthetic means employed to dramatize the representation is shown in the way the painted figure is set in a shallow space behind a window opening illuminated from the left-hand side. The composition suggests that the figure is located close to the viewer, yet his stern and withdrawn expression does not acknowledge the viewer's presence and creates an unbridgeable
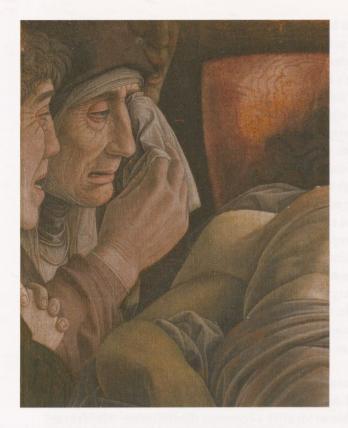
distance. Here, Christ figures neither as the Man of Sorrows of the Passion nor in the iconographic role of the *Salvator Mundi* but rather as the one who once appeared to his disciples in order to reveal his divine nature.[101] This interpretation is supported by the inscription adorning his book: '*EGO SVM: NOLITE TIMERE*' – 'It is I, fear me not'. These are the words that the resurrected Christ called out to his disciples in order to assuage their fear upon seeing him and to strengthen their faith.[102] He addressed his disciples with the same words when he showed himself to them miraculously walking on the water, and through this evidence of his divinity sought to dispel their remaining doubts and lack of faith.[103] This thematic context explains the specifically ambivalent relation between illusion and distance in the painting. In analogy to the Gospels' interpretation of the Lord's words, the contemplation of the painting leads the beholder to realize that despite the Lord's remoteness and divine unapproachability, He is nevertheless present and will be with the believer as long as his faith remains firm and unshaken. This is just what is conveyed by the vertical inscription on the left-hand side of the frame, enjoining the reader to fear God and to mortify his flesh for the sake of faith: '*MOMORDITE VOS [se]MET IPSOS ANTE EF[F]IGIEM VVLTUS MEI*', 'torment thyself before the image of my face'.[104]

16 Andrea Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, c. 1490. Tempera on canvas, 68 × 81 cm. Milan: Pinacoteca di Brera. Photo: © Scala, Florence.

The inscription on the frame takes up the diction of the inscriptions that have often accompanied representations of Christ since the Middle Ages and that were meant both to inspire awe in the face of the image and to make it clear that Christ himself was not actually present in it: 'Effigiem Christi, qui transis, semper honora; non tamen effigiem, sed quem designat, adora.'[105] Inscriptions of this kind function as external instructions for viewing the image, reminding the viewer of the difference between the pictorial subject and the picture in its own materiality. In Mantegna's painting, however, the inscription has been inserted into the representation itself, as an internal sign of its own fictionality. It thus functions as a self-referential comment on the image's own specific reality. One could say that the paradox with which human cognition is confronted in the epiphany (*apparitio Domini*), the revelation of God's glory in the earthly body of Christ, is rendered immanent in the paradox of the image and its representational reality. The image proclaims that God comes to be close and present to the viewer not through the material, concrete substance of the painting, but through its release of processes of imagination, supported by a steadfast faith.

A third, fragmentary inscription on the lower part of the frame indicates that the painting originally served as a personal gift dedicated to an unnamed recipient. It is uncertain whether the recipient was an individual, a prayer community, or a religious institution. But it is significant that the day on which the gift exchanged hands is exactly specified: 5 January 1493, the eve of the holiday of the Epiphany.[106]

While in this case Mantegna relied on an established tradition of illusionistic framing, his famous painting of the *Dead Christ* in the Brera in Milan breaks new ground (*plate 16*). This painting, to which scholars have assigned widely differing dates, from the late 1450s to around 1500, is laconically described by contemporary sources as 'Christ foreshortened', 'Christo in scurto'.[107] The figure of the dead Christ, who is laid out on the sepulchral stone for his anointment, is represented as though through the eyes of the beholder, radically subjected to his perspectival *ratio*. This leaves such a drastic impression that the work has often been regarded as a profanation of its sacred subject. Hans Jantzen speaks of a 'de-sacralization of the figure of the Savior' for the sake of the bold artistic aim of rendering a subjective view purged of all distance.[108] This verdict, however, does not do justice to the significance of the pictorial structure. It would be more adequate to say that it is the beholder himself who is literally subjected to this extreme perspective and who is abruptly drawn into the depths of the painting by it, in a way that is irritating or even disturbing.[109] In his penetrating analysis of the painting, Hubert Schrade has rightly pointed out 'the agitating dimension of the work, which allows immediate proximity but denies any intimacy'. Schrade also points to the effectively designed 'instability of the pictorial boundary', which makes it impossible for the viewer to locate an unequivocally fixed viewpoint in front of the image.[110] With compelling suggestiveness, Christ's feet extend beyond the sepulchral stone whose front edge, parallel to the frame, defines the aesthetic boundary. The prostrate body is brought oppressively close to the eyes of the beholder. At the same time, given his point of view, the observer is denied the opportunity to gauge the real dimensions of Christ's body. Several elements contribute to this effect: first, the extreme reduction or even exclusion of the surrounding space, so that a further grasp of the spatial logic of the situation beyond the prostrate corpse is not possible; second, the calculated discontinuity of the constructed perspective that makes the striking

17 Detail of Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, showing the faces of onlookers.

foreshortening of the body possible, so that the heavy torso and especially the head are depicted in 'incorrect proportion', i.e. too large in comparison with the hands and feet and, moreover, at a different angle.[111]

The depiction of the dead Saviour is permeated, then, by a constitutive ambiguity. The fact, that Christ's body appears close yet remote, palpable and yet incomprehensible, is the consequence of a presentation that is decisively adapted to pictorial requirements. It is only in its visually determined pictorial reality that Christ's appearance can become a concrete reality for the eyes of the beholder. His body is presented in a way that is closely adapted to the conditions of pictorial seeing. Various aspects of a theologically based semantics certainly play a role here. Mary, John, and a third onlooker, probably Mary Magdalene, approach the body from the left, coming almost intrusively close, to look especially at the wound on his side. Their grieving gazes serve as examples and instruction for the external beholder's own suffering, his *compassion* (plate 17). The wounds, which the painting so prominently exposes to the viewer's gaze (*ostentatio vulnerum*), are thought to testify to the authenticity of the Lord's body. They serve as a focus for the viewer's religious empathy, following the widespread devotional practice of the Five Sacred Wounds. The low eye-level of the viewer and his assigned place at the feet of the Lord makes his inner participation in Christ's suffering (*imitatio pietatis*) at once an act of Christian humility (*humilitas*). In all these respects, the image lends visual form to the topical appeal addressed to the faithful since the Middle Ages in inscriptions on images of the crucified or tortured Christ: 'Aspice qui transis, quia tu mihi causa doloris', 'look here, you who are passing by, for you are the cause of my pain'. Such inscriptions, which draw on the biblical *lamentationes* of Jeremiah and which recur in the extra-liturgical Lamentations of the Virgin (*laudes*), beseech the beholder in ever new variations to feel compassion, making him the addressee of the Lord's lament as well as of his reproach.[112]

No less relevant for the painting's ambivalent evocation of proximity and distance, tangibility and remoteness, especially as manifested in the divergent and perspectively discrepant presentation of Christ's feet and face, is the topos of *pedes in terra — caput in coelo*, rooted in heterodox theological tradition. Bernard of Clairvaux explains this topos of the paradoxical double nature of Christ in a passage of his sermons on the Song of Songs: 'If it seemed right to Saint Paul to describe Christ's head under the aspect of his divinity, it should not seem unreasonable to us to ascribe his feet to his humanity.' Bernard is referring to Paul's famous dictum concerning the futility of the human desire to see the Lord face to face (*facie in faciem*) in this life.[113] Mantegna's painting, indeed, denies the beholder the Lord's reciprocal look. Christ rests in front of him as a corpse, with his eyes closed. Nevertheless, the slight tilt with which the holy face turns away from the mourning figures on the left and toward the light entering from the side already contains the prospective promise of the vision of God at the end of time.

Painted frames, which Mantegna employs in various ways, and perspectival manipulation of the kind seen in *Cristo in scurto*, are forms of the image's 'self-definition', to use Holländer's term. They contribute to the aesthetic effect by contributing to the image's articulacy.[114] But the 'auto-reflexive dimension' of the picture is achieved not only through devices that address its external function or the material, objective character of its ostensibly transparent surface.[115] Already in Mantegna's works the represented figures themselves also function as crucial vehicles of aesthetic effect. They do so by 'playing to the gallery', through the self-conscious presentation of their actions, expressions, and gestures, even through the emphatic display of motionlessness. They do so, furthermore, through the *mise-en-scène* of their interacting gazes, which in turn serve to orient, direct, and attract the external viewer's gaze, sometimes to reject or ignore it. This is not simply to point out that the paintings employ rhetorical means of expression, as Alberti claimed, to achieve the viewer's emotional attunement (*movimento d'animo*) to the depicted events.[116] As the *Christo in scurto* has shown, Mantegna's primary concern is not so much that the beholder identifies himself with the figures in the painting, through a rhetorically effected transmission of passions and emotions. Rather, his aim is to charge viewers with the task of becoming aware of themselves as perceiving subjects in the very act of seeing.

Looking back at the paradigmatic works examined here, and despite the varying degrees of formal development and stylistic as well as iconographic differentiation, it is possible to identify a common denominator. All of these paintings are distinctly and reflexively marked as media of representation, of pictorial presentation. In each case, the particular staging of the interrelation between gaze and counter-gaze, pointing and being pointed at, light and darkness, proximity and distance, etc., reveals a dramaturgical schema in which the mediated nature of the representation becomes the subject of a proper discourse. This discourse is a self-referential one since it is conducted in the medium of representation itself. Moreover, it is inscribed into the fictional structure of the image. The aim of creating an illusion (*evidentia*), rooted in the tradition of rhetorical theory, is consistently made to subserve another intended effect which relies on the countervailing aim of breaking the illusion. This pictorial strategy does not simply aim at creating a psychologically suggestive illusion or at enabling the viewer's sympathetic identification with the subject matter. Rather, it strives to reveal the 'as if' structure of what seems to be plainly apparent, and to bring about an awareness of the difference between vision and knowledge. Its effect is based not on the straightforward idea of 'placing before the eyes', 'ponere davanti agli occhi', but rather on the intensity with which it produces the visible evidence of what is not evident to the eye.[117]

Notes

This article is adapted from my book *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien*, Munich, 2001. For the translation I am much indebted to Gieslinde and Jeffrey F. Hamburger, and especially to Felix Koch, who worked out the final version at hand. A comprehensive and critical synopsis of the book, including a discussion of the notion of the term 'mediality', which is unusual in English, but central in the book, is to be found in the review by Reindert L. Falkenburg, *The Art Bulletin*, 89, 2007, 593–7.

1   The following studies on the history of the term remain of fundamental importance: Walter Dürig, *Imago: Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie und Theologie der römischen Liturgie*, Münchner Theologische Studien, 2, 5, Munich, 1952, esp. 21ff., 48ff.; Kurt Bauch, 'Imago', in Kurt Bauch, *Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin, 1967, 1–20; Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Der Bildbegriff bei den griechischen Vätern und der byzantinische Bilderstreit', in Leo Scheffczyk, ed., *Der Mensch als Bild Gottes*, Darmstadt, 1969, 144–92. Furthermore, divided into theoretical and pragmatic discourses, see Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Eikon', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 4, Stuttgart, 1959, cols 776–782; Gerhart B. Ladner, 'Bild', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 2, Stuttgart, 1954, cols

287–341; Dietrich Schlüter and Wolfram Hogrebe, 'Bild', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Joachim Ritter, ed., vol. 1, Basle, 1971, cols 913–919; Massimo Cacciari, 'Die Ikone', in Volker Bohn, ed., *Bildlichkeit: Internationale Beiträge zur Poetik*, Frankfurt a.M., 1990, 385–429; Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea*, New York, 1992, 93ff., 183ff. Regarding the theoretical basis from the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans., revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd revised edition, New York, 2003, 135ff.

2 A closely related paradigm for this notion of the image can be found in the concept of Eucharistic representation, which links the distinction between the sacramental and the historical body (*species* and *veritas*) with their ideological mediation through *similitudo*. Regarding related problems concerning the visuality of sacramental representation since the Carolingian era and their terminological clarification by Thomas Aquinas, see Hasso Hofmann, *Repräsentation: Studien zur Wort- und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis ins 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin, 1990, esp. 65ff. (first edition 1974); for recent publications see Thomas Lentes, 'Auf der Suche nach dem Ort des Gedächtnisses: Thesen zur Auswertung der symbolischen Formen in Abendmahlslehre, Bildtheorie und Bildandacht des 14.–16. Jahrhunderts', in Klaus Krüger and Alessandro Nova, eds, *Imagination und Wirklichkeit: Zum Verhältnis von mentalen und realen Bildern in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, Mainz, 2000, 21–46.

3 Bauch, *Imago*, 5.

4 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, London and Cambridge, MA, 1963, vol. 7, 514a–518a (Parable of the Cave), vol. 10, 595c–599b (Images as *phantasmata*). Hans Willms, *Eikoon: Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Platonismus*, Münster, 1935; regarding the reception during the Middle Ages see Paul Aubin, 'L'Image dans l'oeuvre de Plotin', *Recherches de Science religieuse*, 41, 1953, 348–79. Regarding the history of the theory of shadow, see Victor Ieronim Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, London, 1997, 20ff.

5 Ernst Benz, *Ecclesia spiritualis: Kirchenidee und Geschichtstheologie der franziskanischen Reformation*, Stuttgart, 1934, esp. 24ff.; Ernst Benz, *Die Vision: Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt*, Stuttgart, 1969, 313ff.; Sixten Ringbom, 'Devotional images and imaginative devotions: Notes on the place of art in late medieval private piety', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 73, 1969, 159–70, 162ff.; David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, IL, 1989, 161ff.

6 Louis Marin, 'Die klassische Darstellung', in Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig, ed., *Was heißt 'Darstellen'?*, Frankfurt a.M., 1994, 375–97, here 388.

7 58.4 × 44.1 cm. See Roberto Longhi, *Officina Ferrarese*, Florence, 1956, 65; Hugh Brigstocke, *Italian and Spanish Paintings in the National Gallery of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1978, 44f.; Pierre Georgel and Anne-Marie Lecoq, *La peinture dans la peinture*, Paris, 1987, 245; Miriam Milman, *Le Trompe-l'oeil: les illusions de la réalité*, Geneva, 1992, 58.

8 See André Chastel, *Musca depicta*, Milan, 1984; Daniel Arasse, *Le Détail: Pour une histoire rapprochée de la peinture*, Paris, 1992, 79ff.

9 Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45; with reference to Exodus 26:31ff., Exodus 36:35f. See II Corinthians 3:15f. ('auferetur velamen'), with reference to Exodus 34:33 (Moses covers his face). On this topic see Hilde Zaloscer, 'Versuch einer Phänomenologie des Rahmens', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 19, 1974, 189–224, here 204f.

10 See Johann Konrad Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis: Studien zur Darstellung des Vorhangs in der bildenden Kunst von der Spätantike bis zum Ende des Mittelalters*, Wiesbaden, 1982, 83ff. and esp. 87ff., with exhaustive enumeration of examples.

11 *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, vol. 50, Guido Maria Dreves, ed., Leipzig, 1907, vol. 50, 313, no. 241, see 314 (5b); see also Hennig Brinkmann, 'Voraussetzungen und Struktur religiöser Lyrik im Mittelalter', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, 3, 1966, 37–54, see 46ff.; and Robert B. C. Huygens, 'Deux commentaires sur la séquence Ave praeclara maris stella', *Cîteaux: Commentarii Cistercienses*, 2–3, 1969, 108–69.

12 '... cum vero Christum credit incarnatum, passum, et a mortuis suscitatum, sedemtemque a dextris Dei, velum ei scindetur, aperienturque, quae ante velata erant, divinae dispensationis secreta mysteria': Candidus v. Fulda (died 845), *Opusculum de passione Domini*, in *Patrologia Latina* 106, col. 98 Bf (cap. XIX); see Eberlein, *Apparitio regis – revelatio veritatis*, 87. For the *Ave praeclara* sequence see the commentary

of Caesarius of Heisterbach (before 1219): 'Precipua dominice incarnacionis sacramenta continentur in hac sequencia ...'; see Huygens, 'Ave praeclara maris stella' on this topic.

13 Luke 12:36–37. See Wolfgang Speyer, 'Gürtel', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 12, Stuttgart, 1983, cols 1232–1266; Viktor H. Elbern, 'Gürtel', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 4, Munich, Zurich, 1989, cols 1796–1797.

14 '... I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen ...'. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture. The Latin Text of De Pictura and De Statua*, trans. Cecil Grayson, ed., London, 1972, 55.

15 'They [painters] should understand that, when they draw lines around a surface, and fill the parts they have drawn with colours, their sole object is the representation on this one surface of many different forms of surfaces, just as though this surface which they colour were so transparent and like glass, that the visual pyramid passed right through it from a certain distance ...'. Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 49. The same concept is in Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks*, arranged, English trans. and intro. Edward MacCurdy, London, 1938, vol. 2, 369, A I v: 'Perspective is nothing else than the seeing of an object behind a sheet of glass, smooth and quite transparent, on the surface of which all the things may be marked that are behind this glass; these things approach the point of the eye in pyramids, and these pyramids are cut by the said glass.'

16 Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 69.

17 'A "historia" will move spectators when the men painted in the picture outwardly demonstrate their own feelings as clearly as possible. Nature provides ... that we mourn with the mourners, laugh with those who laugh, and grieve with the grief-stricken.' Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 81; also in this context cf. Moshe Barasch, 'Der Ausdruck in der italienischen Kunsttheorie der Renaissance', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 12, 1967, 33–69; Heiner Mühlmann, *Ästhetische Theorie der Renaissance: Leon Battista Alberti*, Bonn, 1981, 149ff., 161ff.; Hans Belting, *Giovanni Bellini: Pietà. Ikone und Bilderzählung in der venezianischen Malerei*, Frankfurt a.M., 1985, 7f.

18 Joseph Masheck, 'Alberti's "window": Art-historiographic notes on an antimodernist misprison', *Art Journal*, 50: 1, 1991, 35–41; James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*, Ithaca, NY and London, 1994, see esp. 12ff., 46ff.; Jack M. Greenstein, 'On Alberti's "sign": Vision and composition in quattrocento painting', *The Art Bulletin*, 79, 1997, 669–98, 689ff.

19 Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 49.

20 James Sloss Ackerman, 'On Early Renaissance color theory and practice', *Studies in Art History*, American Academy in Rome, 1, 1980, 11–38, again with a postscript in James Sloss Ackerman, *Distance Points: Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture*, Cambridge, MA, 1991, 151–84; on this topic see Barasch, 'Der Ausdruck in der italienischen Kunsttheorie', 43.

21 Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective*.

22 See Clark Hulse, *The Rule of Art: Literature and Painting in the Renaissance*, Chicago, IL, 1990; Christopher Braider, *Refiguring the Real: Picture and Modernity in Word and Image, 1400–1700*, Princeton, NJ, 1993; Marin in Hart Nibbrig, 'Die klassische Darstellung'; Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne*, Cambridge, 1997.

23 In the meantime the relevant literature is extensive. See for example Georg Simmel, 'Der Bildrahmen: Ein ästhetischer Versuch (1902)', in Georg Simmel, ed., *Zur Philosophie der Kunst: Philosophische und kunstphilosophische Aufsätze*, Potsdam, 1922, 46–54; Ernst Michalski, *Die Bedeutung der ästhetischen Grenze für die Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Berlin, 1932; Meyer Schapiro, 'On some problems in the semiotics of visual art: Field and vehicle in image-signs', in Meyer Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society*, La Haye, 1969, 223–42; Michael Polanyi, 'Was ist ein Bild?', in Gottfried Boehm, ed., *'Was ist ein Bild?'*, Munich, 1994, 148–62, esp. 156ff., (first edition 1970); Zaloscer, 'Phänomenologie des Rahmens'; Anne-Marie Lecoq, 'Cadres et rebord', *Revue de l'Art*, 26, 1974, 15–20; Hans Holländer, 'Bild, Vision und Rahmen', in Joerg O. Fichte, Karl Heinz Göller and Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, eds, *Zusammenhänge, Einflüsse, Wirkungen: Kongreßakten zum ersten Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes in Tübingen, 1984*, Berlin and New York, 1986, 71–94; Louis Marin, 'Le cadre de la représentation

et quelques-unes de ses figures', *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, 24, 1988, 63–81; Stoichita, *History of the Shadow*, 53ff. (first edition 1993), with further literature; Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, 'Starting out from the frame (vignettes)', in Peter Brunette and David Wills, eds, *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*, Cambridge, 1994, 118–40.

24 For the context concerning all pictorial genres (altar, devotional, history painting) and all media (fresco, panel painting) see the fundamental study, Sven Sandström, *Levels of Unreality: Studies in Structure and Construction in Italian Mural Painting during the Renaissance*, Uppsala, 1963; Wolfgang Kemp, 'Masaccios "Trinität" im Kontext', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 21, 1986, 45–72; Elma Sanders, 'Osservazioni sulla cornice nella pittura e nella letteratura del Trecento e del Quattrocento', in Antonio Franceschetti, ed., *Letteratura italiana e arti figurative*, Atti del XII Convegno dell'associazione internazionale per gli studi di lingua e letteratura italiana, Florence, 1988, vol. 1, 375–81; Klaus Krüger, 'Mimesis als Bildlichkeit des Scheins: Zur Fiktionalität religiöser Bildkunst im Trecento', in Thomas W. Gaehtgens, ed., *Künstlerischer Austausch – Artistic Exchange*, Akten des XXVIII. internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte in Berlin 1992, Berlin, 1993, vol. 2, 423–36; Jannetta Rebold Benton, 'Antique survival and revival in the Middle Ages: Architectural framing in late duecento murals', *Arte Medievale*, 8: 1, 1993, 129–45; Hubert Locher, 'Das gerahmte Altarbild im Umkreis Brunelleschis: Zum Realitätscharakter des Renaissance-Retabels', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 56, 1993, 487–507; Michaela Krieger, 'Zum Problem des Illusionismus im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert – ein Deutungsversuch', *Pantheon*, 54, 1996, 4–18.

25 79 × 67 cm, the moulding of the frame has been restored. See *Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie Berlin: Katalog der ausgestellten Werke des 13. – 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1975, 44; Rona Goffen, 'Icon and vision: Giovanni Bellini's half-length Madonnas', *The Art Bulletin*, 57, 1975, 487–518, here 501; Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna: With a Complete Catalogue of the Paintings, Drawings and Prints*, Oxford, 1986, 476, no. 161; Stefano G. Casu, 'Lazzaro Bastiani: La produzione giovanile e della prima maturità', *Paragone*, 47: 557–61, 1996, 60–89, here 68f.

26 See Rudolf Berliner, 'Arma Christi', *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 3:6, 1955, 35–152; Robert Suckale, 'Arma Christi. Überlegungen zur Zeichenhaftigkeit mittelalterlicher Andachtsbilder', *Städel Jahrbuch*, 6, 1977, 177–208.

27 '*Longe est super omnes coelos, sed pedes habet in terra: caput in coelo est, corpus in terra*'; Augustinus, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, Patrologia Latina 37, col. 1163. Regarding this and the interpretation of Christ's feet as a symbol of the incarnation in general together with numerous examples see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Die zwei Körper des Königs: Eine Studie zur politischen Theologie des Mittelalters*, Munich, 1990, 81ff., esp. 90–3; Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, New York, 1983, 143f.

28 Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 69.

29 Vgl. Yrjö Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine: A Study of Poetry and Art of the Catholic Church*, London, 1912, 343ff.; Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in 15th Century Devotional Painting*, Åbo, 1965, 42ff.; Goffen, 'Icon and vision', 505; Carla Gottlieb, *The Window in Art: From the Window of God to the Vanity of Man*, New York, 1981, 69ff.; Hana Hlaváčková and Hana Seifertová, 'Mostecká Madona – imitatio a symbol' (The Madonna of Most – Imitatio and Symbol), *Umení*, 33, 1985, 44–57 (with an English summary).

30 '... *fenestra illuminationis totam domum ecclesiae luce divinitatis illustrans.*' Cited from Anselm Salzer, *Sinnbilder und Beiworte Mariens in der deutschen Literatur und lateinischen Hymnenpoesie des Mittelalters*, Linz, 1893, 526.

31 '*Quia ipsa est fenestraria debet suis devotis fenestram aperire.*' James of Voragine, *Mariale sive sermones de laudibus deiparae Virginis ...*, Antwerp, 1712, 284; quoted after Hlaváčková, Seifertová, 'Mostecká Madona', 47.

32 Michalski, *Die Bedeutung der ästhetischen Grenze.*

33 Edgar Peters Bowron, *European Paintings before 1900 in the Fogg Art Museum: A Summary Catalogue*, Cambridge, MA, 1990, 304, no. 568.

34 See Pietro C. Marani, *Leonardo e i leonardeschi a Brera*, Florence, 1987, 112ff., no. 13 in Pietro C. Mariani, *Brera nascosta: Arte lombarda dal XIV al XVII secolo*, Milan, 1991, 59, no. 20.

35 Concerning the symbolic motif and its exegesis: Salzer, *Sinnbilder und Beiworte Mariens*, 71ff.; Millard Meiss, 'Light as form and symbol in some fifteenth-century paintings', *The Art Bulletin*, 27, 1945, 43–68 (reprinted in Millard Meiss, *The Painter's Choice: Problems in the Interpretation of Renaissance Art*, New York, 1976, 3–18).

36 Maria Grazia Balzarini, *Vincenzo Foppa*, Milan, 1997, 169, Kat. 35.

37 See Goffen, 'Icon and vision'. For a more extensive discussion of the notion and the aesthetic concept of the *fenestra coeli* motif in Italian painting from the duecento into the sixteenth century see my book *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren: Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien*, Munich, 2001.

38 82 × 63.7 cm. Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 475f., no. 159; Keith Christiansen, in Jane Martineau, ed., *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., London and New York, 1992, 119ff., no. 5, on the attribution to Mantegna: Jochen Sander and Bodo Brinkmann, *Gemälde der romanischen Schulen vor 1800 im Städel*, Frankfurt a.M., 1997, 35, with additional literature.

39 The only partially preserved inscription of the fictive *cartellino* on the parapet, which so far has not been interpreted, may be seen in this context: 'INCLITA. MAGNANIMI VE[...] EVANGELISTA PAX TIBI M[ARCE...] E [...] ANDREAE MANTEGNAE […] O […] LABOR', see Sander, Brinkmann, *Gemälde im Städel*, 35.

40 69 × 86.3 cm. Robert Oertel and Hans-Joachim Eberhardt, in cat. mus. Berlin, 250; Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 62ff., 404f., no. 7; see the most recent literature on the subject: Jack Matthew Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative*, Chicago, IL, 1992, 138ff.

41 Compare the versions of the same subject in Venice, Pinacoteca Querini Stampalia, c. 1465–70 and in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, c. 1490: Anchise Tempestini, *Giovanni Bellini: Catalogo completo dei dipinti*, Florence, 1992, 70f., no. 19 and 200f., no. 69; Martin, in Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown, eds, *Il Rinascimento a Venezia e la pittura del Nord ai tempi di Bellini, Dürer, Tiziano*, Milan, 1999, 290, cat. 50. For this context see Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 77ff.; Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 404f.; Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, New Haven and London, 1989, 281ff.

42 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 405.

43 Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 72ff.

44 Luke 2:25ff.

45 The background, which is kept vague and spatially indeterminate, has darkened and was possibly painted over; the haloes in their present form are a more recent addition. See Rothe, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 82.

46 In the original state this effect was enhanced by a narrow, slightly elevated border, which was applied to the frame and which obviously was painted to match the fictive frame itself. See Andrea Rothe, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., Jane Martineau, ed., London, Milan, 1992, 82f.

47 Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 74ff. For Donatello's Pazzi-Madonna: Horst W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, Princeton, NJ, 1963, 44f.; Artur Rosenauer, *Donatello*, Milan, 1993, 89ff., 105, no. 21, with literature. Regarding its widespread reception see the study by Ronald G. Kecks, *Madonna und Kind: Das häusliche Andachtsbild im Florenz des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1988, 37ff., 89f.

48 117 × 82 cm. Irene Hueck, 'Ein Madonnenbild im Dom von Padua – Rom und Byzanz', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz*, 13, 1967–68, 1–30; for the technical reports see Lucio Grossato, in *Da Giotto al Mantegna*, exh. cat., Lucio Grossato, ed., Milan, 1974, no. 2, with further literature. See most recently Andrea Nante, 'La Madonna di Giusto de' Menabuoi per la cattedrale di Padova', *Arte lombarda*, 2008, 35–40.

49 For a more detailed study see Henk W. van Os, 'The Madonna and the Mystery Play', *Simiolus*, 5, 1971, 5–19, quotation 8, note 12.

50 van Os, 'Madonna and Mystery Play', quotation 8, note 12.

51 Hueck, *Ein Madonnenbild*, 6f.

52 *Da Giotto a Mantegna*, exh. cat. (1974), no. 2. The inscription in its current form originates from the mid-fourteenth century; it is, however, based on the lost original.

53 The unusual motif of Mary's precious brocade cloak, which so far has not been subject to closer examination, can perhaps also be explained in this context, given that already at this time the image of the Virgin was fitted out with an expensive set of garments. Cf., for example, the donation of similar garments in the will of Antonia Zabarella in 1441: Andrea Moschetti, 'La Madonna trecentesca del Duomo di Padova...', *Padova in onore di Fr. Petrarca MCMIII*, Padua, 1909, vol. 2, 141–56, see 155; Hueck, *Ein Madonnenbild*, 6. Testimony for Mantegna's early interest

in the panel of the Madonna and the form of the niche can be seen already in the Frankfurt half-length image of St Mark.

54 Cf. van Os, 'Madonna and Mystery Play', 5–19.

55 Luke 2:28–30.

56 Luke 2:32.

57 James of Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. William Granger Ryan, Princeton, NJ, 1993, vol. 1, 147 (The Presentation of Christ in the Temple).

58 For the tradition and meaning of the feast day see Hans-Joachim Schulz, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner, eds, vol. 7, 1962, 66.

59 Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche mystische Schriften*, Georg Hofmann, ed., Düsseldorf, 1986, ch. 10, 40.

60 See Miklós Boskovits, 'Immagine e preghiera nel tardo Medioevo: osservazioni preliminari', in Miklós Boskovits, *Immagini da meditare: Ricerche su dipinti di tema religioso nei secoli XII–XV*, Milan, 1994, 73–106, see 100ff.

61 Ludger Thier and Abele Cafuletti, eds, *Il libro della Beata Angela da Foligno, edizione critica*, Grottaferrata, 1985, 587.

62 '... beatam Virginem ferentem filium in brachiis videre meruit, que filium suum tradidit dicto fratri Conrado ut probaret quam consolationem habuit Simeon.' Ferdinand Delorme, ed., 'Catalogus friburgensis Sanctorum fratrum minorum', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 4, 1911, 544–58, see 549.

63 Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, eds, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, trans. Isa Ragusa, Princeton, NJ, 1961, 56f, (cap. XI).

64 '... Quod igitur in hac die cum cereis vel candelis accensis facere consuevimus solemnem Prozessionem, significat quod quasi cum [H]Anna et Simeone Domino jubiliter occuramus. ... et in manibus lumina portare, est cum Simeone confiteri et credere Christum esse paratumque faciem omnium populorum lumen ad revelationem gentium: quod illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum et qui visibiliter cum Simeone portare non possumus, eius visibile signum et ei conveniens gestamus in manibus; per ceram etenim Christi humanitatem accipimus ...' Giovanni C. Trombelli, ed., *Ordo officiorum ecclesiae senensis, ab Oderico eiusdem ecclesiae canonico anno MCXII compositus*, Bologna, 1766, 299f. Regarding the tradition and dissemination of this festive ceremony see Karl Young, 'Dramatic ceremonies of the Feast of the Purification', *Speculum*, 5, 1930, 97–102. Concerning the special relevance of the feast day in Siena see Henk van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces 1215–1460: Form, Content, Function*, vol. 2: 1344–1460, Groningen, 1990, 122ff.

65 Young, 'Dramatic ceremonies', 100ff.

66 For the identification see Wolfgang Prinz, 'Die Darstellung Christi im Tempel und die Bildnisse des Andrea Mantegna', *Berliner Museen: Berichte aus den Preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 12, 1962, 50–4; Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal, 'Ein Porträt Andrea Mantegnas als "alter Orpheus" im Kontext seiner Selbstdarstellungen', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 31, 1996, 149–86, here 165ff.

67 See Prinz, *Christi im Tempel*, 50–4; Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 405; and, most recently, Ingeborg Walter, 'Andrea Mantegnas "Darbringung Jesu im Tempel": Ein Bild der Befreiung und des Aufbruchs', *Städel-Jahrbuch*, 12, 1989, 59–70.

68 See Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 74.

69 Aelred of Rievaulx, Sermo II, in *Patrologia Latina* 195, 227; see also Leah Sinanoglou, 'The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval tradition and the Corpus Christi plays', *Speculum*, 48, 1973, 491–509, here 495f.

70 Aelred of Rievaulx, see note 69; cf. Sinanoglu, *Christ Child as Sacrifice*, 491–509. On the relevance of this element in the iconographic development of the subject see Dorothy C. Shorr, 'The iconographic development of the Presentation in the Temple', *Art Bulletin*, 28, 1946, 17ff., as well as Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral*, Baltimore, MD, 1959, 12ff, esp. 14f. For issues related to representation of the Eucharist, see note 2.

71 'tuam ipsius animam gladius pertransibit ...'. Luke 2:35.

72 For the iconographic semantics see Gizella Firestone, 'The sleeping Christ-Child in Italian Renaissance representations of the Madonna', *Marsyas*, 2, 1942, 43–62.

73 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 402f., no. 4; Christiansen, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 141ff., no. 13 (with bibliography).

74 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 405f., no. 8; Christiansen, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh.

cat., 207f., no. 42.

75 For the altar of St Luke from S. Giustina in Padua (1454), see Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 43ff., 401ff., no. 3; Sandrina Bandera Bistoletti, ed., *Il polittico di San Luca di Andrea Mantegna (1453–54), in occasione del suo restauro*, Florence, 1989; Mauro Lucco, in *Musei e Gallerie di Milano: Pinacoteca di Brera: Scuola veneta*, Milan, 1990, 282ff., no. 165. For the high altar of S. Zeno in Verona (1459); see now Felix Thürlemann, 'Andrea Mantegna: Der San-Zeno-Altar: Selbstreflexion der Mimesis', in Felix Thürlemann, *Vom Bild zum Raum: Beiträge zu einer semiotischen Kunstwissenschaft*, Cologne, 1991, 91–109; and most recently Stephen Campbell, 'Lo spazio di contemplazione: Mantegna e Gregorio Correr', *Andrea Mantegna: Impronta del Genio* (Acts of the 2006 conference), Mantua, 2010. For the Madonna della Vittoria (1496) see Jan Lauts, *Andrea Mantegna: Die Madonna della Vittoria*, Stuttgart, 1960; Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 177ff., 438f., no. 36. For the general context see Belting, *Giovanni Bellini*, 23ff.; Catarina Schmidt, 'La "sacra conversazione" nella pittura veneta', in Mauro Lucco, ed., *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Quattrocento*, Milan, 1990, vol. 2, 703–26, esp. 705f.

76 210 × 91 cm. Herbert v. Einem, 'Mantegnas "Sebastian" in der Cà d'Oro', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 20, 1983, 75–82; Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 222f. and 444f., no. 42.

77 The fact that bishop-elect Lodovico Gonzaga was meant to be the original recipient can be inferred from a related reference in a letter that Mantegna's son Lodovico directed to Francesco Gonzaga, the brother of the Bishop, as late as October 1506: 'Deinde gliè un San Sebastiano il quale nostro padre voleva fosse di monsignor vescovo di Mantua ...'. See Paul Kristeller, *Andrea Mantegna*, Berlin, 1902, 583f., document 190. The work's function remains unknown.

78 See the overview in Detlev v. Hadeln, *Die wichtigsten Darstellungsformen des Hl. Sebastian in der italienischen Malerei bis zum Ausgang des Quattrocento*, Strasbourg, 1906; also Victor Kraehling, *Saint Sébastien dans l'art*, Paris, 1938.

79 For an early testimony for the reception of the Belvedere Apollo in Padua from as early as the late fifteenth century see Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, New Haven and London, 1982, 148ff., no. 8; Phyllis P. Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, London, 1986, 71f. Antico and his followers executed small bronze copies. Significantly the first of these statuettes were commissioned by the Bishop of Mantua, Lodovico Gonzaga, who had also commissioned Mantegna's 'Sebastian' (cf. Lodovico's correspondence between 1498 and 1500); Hermann J. Hermann, 'Pier Jacopo Alari-Bonacolsi, genannt Antico', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, 28, 1910, 201–88, here 211f. (regarding the correspondence); Ann H. Allison, 'The bronzes of Pier Alari-Bonacolsi, called Antico', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 89/90, 53–4, 1993–94, 35–310.

80 Fundamentally for the iconography of St Sebastian: Irving L. Zupnick, 'Saint Sebastian: The vicissitudes of the hero as martyr', in Norman T. Burns and Christopher Reagan, eds, *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, London, 1975, 239–67; also v. Hadeln, *Darstellungsformen des Hl. Sebastian*, 1906; Kraehling, *Saint Sébastian*, 1938.

81 Regarding the symbolism of candles see v. Einem, *Mantegnas 'Sebastian'*, 79f.; William S. Heckscher, 'The Annunciation of the Mérode Altarpiece: An iconographic study', in *Miscellanea Jozef Duverger, Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis der Nederlanden*, Ghent, 1968, vol. 1, 37–65, here 62f. (with note 39 on Mantegna). Generally see: Katrin Seidel, *Die Kerze: Motivgeschichte und Ikonologie*, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York, 1996, 108ff. (symbolism of the light of life).

82 For the history and the theological basis of this notion see Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Material continuity, personal survival and the resurrection of the body: A scholastic discussion and its medieval and modern context', in Caroline Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, New York, 1991, 239–97; Arnold Angenendt, 'Der Kult der Reliquien', in *Reliquien: Verehrung und Verklärung*, exh. cat., Cologne, 1989, 9–24, here 12ff. and 16ff.; Arnold Angenendt, '"Corpus incorruptum": Eine Leitidee der mittelalterlichen Reliquienverehrung', *Saeculum*, 42, 1991, 320–48; Arnold Angenendt, 'Der "ganze" und "unverweste" Leib – eine Leitidee der Reliquienverehrung bei Gregor von Tours und Beda Venerabilis', in Hubert Mordek, ed., *Aus Archiven und Bibliotheken: Festschrift für Raymund Kottje zum 65. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt a.M., 1992, 33–50; Arnold

Angenendt, '"In meinem Fleisch werde ich Gott sehen": Bernward und die Reliquien', in *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen*, exh. cat., Hildesheim and Mainz, 1993, vol. 1, 361–8.

83 See Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters*, trans. Mrs Jonathan Foster, 5 vols, London, 1889–1914, vol. 3, 33, regarding the pertinent motif in Raphael's altar painting of 'St Caecilia' (1514): '... wholly given up to the celestial harmony, the countenance of the saint affords full evidence of her abstraction from the things of this earth, and wears that rapt expression which is wont to be seen on the faces of those who are in ecstasy ...' For the semantics and the widespread dissemination of the motif see Victor I. Stochita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art*, London, 1995, 165ff.; Andreas Henning and Gregor J. M. Weber, '*Der himmelnde Blick*': Zur Geschichte eines Bildmotivs von Raffael bis Rotari, exh. cat., Emsdetten and Dresden, 1998.

84 For this subject matter Erich Auerbach, 'Passio als Leidenschaft', *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 56, 1941, 1179–96; Erich Auerbach, *Literatursprache und Publikum in der lateinischen Spätantike und im Mittelalter*, Bern, 1958, 54ff.; Friedrich Ohly, *Süße Nägel der Passion: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Semantik*, Baden-Baden, 1989, esp. 423ff. ('Der süße Tod der Heiligen'). Regarding the related aspect of the candle as a symbol for self-sacrifice see, for example, Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, eds, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, 1967, col. 1363.

85 147 × 86 cm. Janet Cox-Rearick, 'Fra Bartolomeo's St Mark Evangelist and St Sebastian with an Angel', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 18, 1974, 329–54; Maurizio Tazartes, in *L'officina della maniera*, Florence, 1996, 162, no. 45. The extant copy originated in the 1520s; scholarship has attributed this copy to Perino del Vaga or Ezechia da Vezzano; it is a faithful rendition of the original in a reduced copy, see Cox-Rearick, 'St Mark Evangelist and St Sebastian', 332ff. and 338f.

86 For the paradigmatic understanding of the immortality of Christ's body and the dialectical relationship between his earthly Passion and his eternal impassibility see Artur M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik*, vol. 2, 1, Regensburg, 1953, 199ff. (Die Sterblichkeit Christi).

87 Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Ryan, vol. 1, 101; see *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. 11, Rome, 1968, 776ff.

88 Regarding the subject of the luminous transformation of saints see Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich, 1994, 115ff. (with numerous examples).

89 Concerning the theological associations of these ideas see Franz Mussner, 'Pneuma', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Josef Höfer and Karl Rahner, eds, vol. 8, 1963, cols. 568–576.

90 Jacopo Pontormo, *Letter to Benedetto Varchi* (1548), in Eric Cochrane and Julius Kirshner, eds, *The Renaissance*, University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, Chicago and London, 1986, vol. 5, 270–3, here 273; in regard to context see Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Benedetto Varchi's 'Due Lezzioni' and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1982, vol. 1, 181ff.

91 Baldesare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton, Edgar Mayhew, ed., New York and London, 2002, Lib. I, cap. LII, 59. Regarding the *Paragone* see the latest overview by S. La Barbera, *Il Paragone delle arti nella teoria artistica del Cinquecento*, Bagheria, 1997, 44f. on Castiglione, 56f. on Pontormo.

92 'So the painter who wishes his representations of bodies to appear alive, should see to it that all their members perform their appropriate movements. But in every movement beauty and grace should be sought after. Those movements are especially lively and pleasing that are directed upwards into the air.' Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 77. Concerning the early modern semantics of the comparison between the painter and God as the painting's creator see most recently Rudolf Preimesberger, 'Der Jahwist: Die erste Effigies (9. oder 8. Jhdt. v. Chr.)', in Rudolf Preimesberger, Hannah Baader and Nicola Suthor, eds, *Porträt*, Geschichte der klassischen Bildgattungen in Quellentexten und Kommentaren, 2, Berlin, 1999, 65–9.

93 Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. Grayson, 87. For the entire context see David Summers, 'ARIA II: The union of image and artist as an aesthetic ideal in Renaissance art', *Artibus et historiae*, 20, 1989, 15–31.

94 '... he [Fra Bartolommeo] painted a San Sebastian, wholly undraped, by way of specimen; the colouring of this figure is like that of the living flesh, the countenance most beautiful, and in perfect harmony with the beauty of the form; the whole work, in short, is finished with exquisite delicacy, insomuch that it obtained him infinite praise from the artists. It is said that when this painting was put up in the church, the monks discovered, from what they heard in the confessionals, that the grace and beauty of the vivid imitation of life, imparted to his work by the talents of Fra Bartolommeo, had given occasion to the sin of light and evil thoughts; they consequently removed it from the church and placed it in the Chapter House, but it did not remain there long ...' Vasari, trans. Foster, *Lives*, vol. 2, 455. See also Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 346ff.

95 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 78ff. and 408, no. 10. The dating varies from the late 1450s until the 1470s.

96 For a summary of the context see Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 78ff.; also Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting*, 71ff.; and Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Künstlerische potestas audendi und licentia im Quattrocento: Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea Mantegna, Bertoldo di Giovanni', *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, 31, 1996, 107–48, see here 130ff.

97 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 134ff. and 420f., no. 22. Scholarship varies in dating the image between the early 1470s and the early 1480s.

98 Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 134ff. Concerning further related aspects of both works in Vienna and Paris see Joan G. Caldwell, 'Mantegna's St Sebastians: Stabilitas in a pagan world', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36, 1973, 373–7.

99 Polanyi, in Boehm, *Was ist ein Bild*, 160.

100 55 × 43 cm. Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 437, Nr. 33; Christiansen, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 231, no. 54; Anna Stanzani, in *Mistero e immagine: L'Eucaristia nell'arte dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, exh. cat., Bologna, Salvatore Baviera and Jadranka Bentini, eds, Milan, 1997, 88, no. 7.

101 Christiansen, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 231.

102 Luke 24:36.

103 Matthew 14:27.

104 The unusual positioning of letters occurs frequently in Mantegna's work, cf. *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 313f., no. 93; 439, fig. 109.

105 See Ragne Bugge, 'Effigiem Christi, qui transis, semper honora: Verses Condemning the Cult of Sacred Images in Art and Literature', *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, 6, 1975, 127–39, with examples from the eleventh to the eighteenth century.

106 The legible fragment of the inscription reads: '...IA.P.C.S.D.D. MCCCCLXXXX[III] D/V JA', which may be interpreted as follows: '[Andrea Mantin]ia p[inxit (oder p[ictor]) c[haritate] s[ua] d[ono] d[edit] MCCCCLXXXXIII d[ie] V Ja[nuari]'. See Christiansen, in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., 231.

107 Called *Cristo in scurto* in a letter listing the paintings that remained in Mantegna's studio after his death, which was drawn up by the artist's son, Ludovico Mantegna (2 October 1506); Mentioned as a painting, 'che fece il Mantegna de quello Cristo ch'è in scurto' in a letter in the hand of the secretary of the image's new owner, Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga (28 October 1531). Notwithstanding these early sources, nothing is known about the original patron or the painting's original function. See the overview of scholarship in Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 421ff., no. 23; Mauro Lucco, in *Musei e Gallerie di Milano*, 291ff., no. 166; Francesco Frangi, *Cristo morto di Andrea Mantegna*, Florence, 1996, 9ff., 27ff.

108 Hans Jantzen, 'Mantegnas Cristo in scurto', in Hans Jantzen, *Über den gotischen Kirchenraum und andere Aufsätze*, Berlin, 1951, 49–51, quotation 49. For the foreshortening as it relates to the technical mastery of drawing see Robert Smith, 'Natural versus scientific vision: The foreshortened figure in the Renaissance', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1974, 239–48; Frangi, *Christo morto*, 39ff.

109 See especially Hubert Schrade, 'Über Mantegnas Christo in scurto und verwandte Darstellungen: Ein Beitrag zur Symbolik der Perspektive', *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, 1930, 75–111; Andreas Prater, 'Mantegnas Cristo in Scurto', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 48, 1985, 279–99; Felix Thürlemann, *Mantegnas Mailänder Beweinung: Die Konstitution des Betrachters durch das Bild*, Constance, 1989.

110 Schrade, 'Symbolik der Perspektive', 77.

111 The discontinuity is also true for the diverging distances from which the dead body and the stone slab are seen. For an overview see Smith, 'Natural versus scientific vision', 239–48; Prater, *Christo in Scurto*, 281ff.; Corrado Maltese, 'Il Pianto sul Cristo del Mantegna tra geometria e oratoria', *Arte lombarda*, 64, 1983, 60–4; Frangi, *Christo morto*, 39ff., with

a further bibliography.

112 See Thürlemann, *Mantegnas Mailänder Beweinung*, 18f.; for the content of the inscriptions see Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, Princeton, NJ, 1951, 121ff.; Hans Belting, *The Image and its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer, New Rochelle, 1990, 197ff.

113 *On the Song of Songs I*, trans. Kilian Walsh, introd. M. Corneille Halflants, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Works*, Louis Bouyer, ed., amongst others, Spencer, MA, 1971, vol. 2, 35f., quote 29 (sermon 6, relating to 1 Corinthians 11:3: '... the head of every man is Christ ...', '... caput vero Christi, Deus [est]', and 1 Corinthians 13:12: 'For now we will see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face', 'Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate; tunc autem facie ad faciem'). Concerning the optics of this concept see note 35 above, also Thürlemann, *Mantegnas Mailänder Beweinung*, 19.

114 Holländer, in Fichte et al., *Zusammenhänge*, 81.

115 Wolfgang Kemp, *Der Anteil des Betrachters: Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zur Malerei des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich, 1983, 38.

116 See note 17.

117 For relevant aspects of poetic theory, see: Gerhart Schröder, *Logos und List: zur Entwicklung der Ästhetik in der frühen Neuzeit*, Königstein, 1985, 39ff. (ch. 2.: 'Mimesis und Intensität'), here esp. 63ff.; Gerhard Regn, 'Mimesis und autoreferenzieller Diskurs: Zur Interferenz von Poetik und Rhetorik in der Lyriktheorie der italienischen Spätrenaissance', in Wolf-Dieter Stempel and Karlheinz Stierle, eds, *Die Pluralität der Welten: Aspekte der Renaissance in der Romania*, Munich, 1987, 387–414, esp. 397ff. For a general overview of theoretical developents see Werner Wolf, *Ästhetische Illusion und Illusionsdurchbrechung in der Erzählkunst: Theorie und Geschichte mit Schwerpunkt auf englischem illusionsstörenden Erzählen*, Tübingen, 1993, esp. 475ff. For the concept of *evidentia* see Andreas Solbach, *Evidentia und Erzähltheorie: Die Rhetorik anschaulichen Erzählens in der Frühmoderne und ihre antiken Quellen*, Munich, 1994; Ansgar Kemmann, 'Evidentia, Evidenz', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, Gert Ueding, ed., vol.3, 1996, cols 33–47. For the context of various conceptions of truth and reality in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, consult the study in the history of scholarship provided by Klaus W. Hempfer, 'Probleme traditioneller Bestimmungen des Renaissancebegriffs und die epistemologische "Wende"', in Klaus W. Hempfer, ed., *Renaissance: Diskursstrukturen und epistemologische Voraussetzungen: Literatur, Philosophie, bildende Kunst*, Text und Kontext, 10, Stuttgart, 1993, 9–45, who summarizes the results of his analysis of poetry and rhetoric in the following trenchant fashion: 'Truth is no longer a relation between proposition and content, but from now on a function of the persuasio-strategy of discourse, that is, it is purely a phenomenon of general agreement' (Hempfer, 'Probleme traditioneller Bestimmungen des Renaissancebegriffs', in Hempfer, 30). Gerhard Regn, 'Mimesis und Episteme der Ähnlichkeit in der Poetik der Spätrenaissance', in Klaus W. Hempfer, ed., *Renaissance: Diskursstrukturen und epistemologische Voraussetzungen: Literatur, Philosophie, bildende Kunst*, Text und Kontext, 10, Stuttgart, 1993, 133–45, comes to a similar conclusion: 'the extent to which the discursive universe of this epoch appears through the pluralized and heterogeneous experience of that which can be said or thought' (Regn, 'Mimesis und Episteme der Ähnlichkeit' in Hempfer, 138); see also Gerhart Schröder, 'Anamorphosen der Rhetorik: Die Wahrheitsspiele der Renaissance', in Gerhart Schröder and Barbara Cassin, eds, *Anamorphosen der Rhetorik: Die Wahrheitsspiele der Renaissance*, Munich, 1997, 11–32.