

THE ARTICULATION OF ACTUAL AND ILLUSIONISTIC SPACE IN TUSCAN
FAMILY CHAPELS AND FRESCOES, IN THE TRE- AND QUATTROCENTO

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PART I : TEXT

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ABSTRACT

THE ARTICULATION OF ACTUAL AND ILLUSIONISTIC SPACE IN TUSCAN FAMILY CHAPELS AND FRESCOES, IN THE TRE- AND QUATTROCENTO

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The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the articulation of chapel space, wall surface and type of pictorial illusionism in five selected Tuscan chapels, and their frescoes, in the Tre- and Quattrocento. The aims of this research include an analysis of mural decoration in family chapels, as defining the wall surface, creating illusionism, establishing fictional views through perspective and emphasizing or concealing the solidity of the architectural surface. This study will also investigate the interrelationship of fresco iconography with chapel function so as to establish a communication between chapel space and pictorial surface.

The research methods and procedure employed are based on an appraisal of the literature of the period, historical background, patronage, architecture and formal, symbolic and narrative considerations within the frescoes. The role of the spectator, the importance of framework, false architecture and grisaille form part of the conclusions on each chapel totality. Field study was essential to this research. The dissertation consists of seven chapters.

The conclusions of the research are the total interaction of real, symbolic and illusionistic space in the frescoes and architecture of the family chapel in Tuscany.

For my mother
Edna Queenie Mabel Prendini
And my son
Marco Vincenzo William Macfarlane

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Length, width, height of chapel : 20,82 x 8,42
x 12,80m.

Height of scenes from floor : 3,02m

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Depth, width of chapel: 6,96 x 5,38m.
 Height of double tiers
 of scenes: 5,00m.
 Height of scenes from
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Height, width and depth of chapel : 15,00 x
7,70 x 7,50m.

Height of scenes from floor : 2,50m.

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Width and depth of chapel : 5,23 x 3,71 m.

Height of scenes from floor : 3,13 m.

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Height of chapel : about 12,25 m.

Depth and width of chapel : 5,64 x 6,14 m.

Height of scenes from floor : 1,74 m.

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SOURCES OF PLATES

Black and White Photographs :

Plates 90 and 91, 94 and 95, (Borsook, E. and Offerhaus, J., Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence. History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel, Doornspijk, Davaco Publishers, Holland, 1981.)

Plates : 108, 120, 121 and 122, 123a and b, 124, (Winternitz, E., Musical Instruments and their Symbolism in Western Art, London, Faber and Faber, 1967.)

Colour Photographs :

Plates 1-32, 34-45, 63-88, 92-93, 100, 103, 105, 108, 111, 115, 118-119 (Scala, Istituto Fotografico Editoriale, Antella, Firenze, 1986/7.)

Plates 33, 49, 50 and 51, 54, 57 (Baldini, U., Direttore dell'Istituto Centrale del Restauro nella Cappella Brancacci.) Courtesy Olivetti, Johannesburg.

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SOURCES FOR FIGURES

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FIGS 1 and 41 (Former drawn by P.A. RIEDL, and latter by URSULA SCHLEGEL in Borsook, E, The Mural Painters of Tuscany. From Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto, 2nd ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980)

FIGS 3 - 5 : (Photo-montage with drawing by the writer)

FIG 11 : (Watkins, L.B. The Brancacci chapel Frescoes. Meaning and Use, Parts I and II, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1976)

FIGS 22 - 25 : (Photo-montages by writer from Borsook, E and Offerhaus, J. Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinità, Florence. History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel, Doornspijk, Davaco Publishers, Holland, 1981)

FIG 28 : (From Sandström, S., Levels of Unreality, Studies in Structure and Construction in Italian Mural Painting during the Renaissance, Uppsala, 1963).

PREFACE

The reasons for undertaking this research are to offer an interpretation of five Tuscan burial chapels in order to determine the interaction of the form of the paintings with the wall surface. This investigation was motivated by the need to establish a spatial and mural language, within the restricted area of the research, which would link or separate the fresco programmes.

The background for this research is the history of the chapels and their architecture in relation to the families and painters concerned in the fresco programmes. A history of the frescoes and their relevant dates belong to this area. Formal issues of space-perception have been researched from available sources in the literature. This has been expanded by field study of the selected chapels.

The purpose of this dissertation is to show the types of spatial "visibility" which result from the interaction of space in relation to the frescoes as part of the wall surface. This symbiotic interrelationship involves the uncovering of symbolic meaning within the iconography. Levels of meaning exert an influence on illusionism.

The vast scope of this analysis is restricted, in this study, to five examples. Each programme has a different manner of "adjusting" chapel architecture. Within this central theme, the role of the spectator is developed as a necessary participant in the efficacy and credibility of illusionism.

Finally, this study represents a new approach to Tuscan mural painting. This analysis contributes to the totality of each chapel-fresco programme. Mural painting is no longer isolated from its architectural walls, and appears to change the dimensions of actual space in relation to the spiritual needs of the burial chapels.

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CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION

The purpose and intention of this dissertation is to analyse the systematic division of pictorial and architectural space, in relation to symbolic content, in Tuscan family burial chapels in the Tre- and Quattrocento.

This introductory chapter establishes the historical context which led to the great age of Tuscan mural painting within the precincts of the private burial chapel. The issues of patronage, themes, the technical language of frescoes and their relation to architecture will be briefly discussed. This background to the rise and decline of Tuscan frescoes is then followed by the form of the dissertation. The sub-division of the main body of the research is presented and the specific reasons and justification for the choice of the selected chapels is briefly analysed.

I THE RISE OF TUSCAN MURAL PAINTING

The arrival of the great Tuscan mural schemes was influenced by three factors: the widespread building activity sponsored by the Church and commune, the new humane approach to clerical teaching on the part of the Mendicant Orders and the rise of private patronage on the part of the laity.

The time-hallowed pretext for permitting pictorial narratives inside the church for the sake of instructing the illiterate was given new life by both the Franciscan and Dominican Orders. The immense popularity enjoyed by the Dominicans and the Franciscans was largely due to the dramatic way in which they tried to bring home moral truths of Christian history and dogma.² In this sense the walls of naves, chapels, cloisters and refectories served as "silent sermons"³ - dramatic, large and therefore impressive and easy to follow.

Painters of the fresco cycles which decorated the chapels in the Tre- and Quattrocento professed themselves to be "by the grace of God, the expositors of sacred writ to the ignorant who know not how to read".⁴

II THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TUSCAN FAMILY CHAPEL

Mural painting in Tuscan burial chapels is related to the needs of individual patronage. This desire for fame and splendour in perpetuity, on the part of the patrons, influenced the great Tuscan mural schemes of the Tre- and Quattrocento. The wealthy laity acquired burial sites and private family chapels inside the churches of the Mendicant Orders - a privilege hitherto reserved for monarchs and princes of the Church.⁵ These concessions were often the reward for financial support or religious patronage which the Church accepted as an act of piety.

The Decretum Gratiani of c. 1140 stated that burial inside the Church was to be limited to the high clergy. The inclusion, however, of the ambiguous phrase that this could be extended to digni presbiteri vel fideles laici allowed this policy to be relaxed so as to include prosperous lay patronage in the Tre- and
6
Quattrocento.

The extension of burial sites within the Church to laymen encouraged the development of private patronage. On various occasions, the obligations of maintaining and improving church decorations within the burial chapels of private families was enforced by communal decree.

This was the case at Santa Trinità in Florence and San Francesco at Arezzo. The communal decree of Consigli Maggiori Provvisioni 94 of the 5 June 1405 ordered that the entire Church of Santa Trinità be restored and beautified, appointing officers to ensure that those families who had promised to fulfill these ends met
7
their obligations.

(a) PATRONAGE

Private patronage was often linked to the Church or the political climate of the day. The patronage of the Scrovegni family, for example, was interwoven with their desire for the public penitential acknowledgement of the sin of usury, the despised

source of Scrovegni wealth. The need for expiation and pardon probably prompted the construction of the Arena Chapel in Padua and its dedication to Santa Maria della Carità (the Madonna of Mercy). Enrico Scrovegni's father Reginaldo died in 1289 and, according to contemporary chronicles, his son obtained a retroactive pardon for him in 1302.⁸ Through Enrico Scrovegni's amicizia with Pope Benedict XI, on the 1 March 1304, the pope⁹ granted indulgences to those visiting the family chapel. The chapel of the erstwhile infamous usurer was no longer limited to private use but was also open to visiting pilgrims.

The importance of amicizia, vicinanza or parentado was also an essential key to advancement in the Florentine society of the Quattrocento.

In September 1433, Cosimo de' Medici was sent into exile from Florence at the request of the newly formed Signoria.¹⁰ The government passed into the hands of the anti-Medicean group led by Rinaldo degli Albizzi.¹¹ Twelve months later the situation was completely reversed. In September 1434, a group of pro-Medicean Priors was drawn from the electoral purses and Cosimo and his friends were recalled to Florence.

Florentines responded to these political events not simply as individuals but as groups bound together by ties of kinship, marriage and neighbourhood, (parentado and vicinanza). After the Medici returned to Florence the Balia, which had ended their

exile, proceeded to banish large numbers of those citizens, including some of the patrons of chapels selected for this research, who had ruled Florence during the year of their

¹² exile. The leaders of the anti-Mediceans included five members of the Bardi family, famous for their chapel in Santa Croce, painted by Giotto (between c. 1315 to 1325) and the Peruzzi family with their adjacent chapel painted by the same artist (between c. 1310 to 1320).

Felice Brancacci, the acknowledged patron of the Brancacci Chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine, was also exiled in 1434. Felice's marriage to Maddalena di Palla Strozzi was politically disastrous to his chapel patronage as his ties of parentado linked him to the anti-Medicean cause. There was a web of consorteria, parentado¹³ and amicizia between the Strozzi and Brancacci families. In the first version of Felice Brancacci's will the family chapel was endowed to his son and all the members of his consorteria "tutti e ¹⁴ chonsorti di chasa Brancacci".

Felice Brancacci's ties with his family chapel were broken after his exile and the fresco cycle was interrupted. His tomb was ¹⁵ never placed within the chapel precincts.

The Sassetti family, patrons of the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità, owed their fortune to the Medici. Francesco Sassetti was never a political man and entered the Medici Bank as a young man ¹⁶ in the Avignon and Lyons branches. He was, however, linked to the political upheaval of 1434 through family connections.

Sassetti married Nera Corsi and through the parentado of his wife's family was, inadvertently, connected to those members who plotted against Cosimo de' Medici. Although Sassetti was never exiled the compromising of his political standing could have been one of the reasons for the pro-Medicean theme intertwined with the Franciscan narrative on the walls of his family chapel.

The patronage of the Strozzi Chapel was also affected by the political situation of the day. The exile of prominent members of the Strozzi family, as adversaries of the Medici in the 1430's, affected Palla di Nofri Strozzi, his son Nofri, Smeraldo di Smeraldo and Matteo di Simone Strozzi.¹⁷ Filippo Strozzi, the patron of the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, was the exiled son of Matteo di Simone.

The ostracization of the Strozzi family imbued Filippo Strozzi with the desire to reinstate his family in a prominent position in Florence. His palace, burial chapel and endowments in terms of religious patronage were all a means to this end.¹⁸

Filippo lived for many years in Naples where, unmolested by political enemies, he was able to make his fortune as a banker at the Neapolitan court. Eventually, in 1468, Lorenzo de' Medici welcomed him back to his native city.

Putting behind him family enmity for the Medici's part in the impoverishment of the Strozzi parentado, Filippo chose to

consolidate the prominence and perpetuity of his line in the
¹⁹
 endowment of his family chapel. Unlike Sassetti, whose wealth
 depended on the Medici, Filippo Strozzi was in a position to make
 financial loans to Lorenzo de' Medici. From 1487 to 1488 Filippo
 made a number of loans to Lorenzo at the latter's request that
²⁰
 they be for the "bisogno del comune".

In contrast to the patronage of the abovementioned Florentine
 chapels, the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo was uninvolved with either
 Church or politics in a major way. The unusual sequence of the
 chapel's iconographic programme of the Legend of the True Cross
 is, however, according to Creighton Gilbert, directly related to
²¹
 new ideas on Theology directly related to the Church. Like
 Michele Brancacci, the Aretine patron, Baccio di Masi Bacci, was
 never buried in his family chapel. The chapel was never painted
 with frescoes during his lifetime and was left to the supervision
²²
 of his heirs.

(b) NARRATIVE THEMES

The themes of the murals commissioned for private burial chapels
 satisfied diverse needs: to instruct, to admonish when a sin or
 sins had been committed by the patron, to exalt his image for
 posterity and, finally, to decorate the family chapel. In this
 way, the aesthetic and religious motives were often mixed with
 civic pride.

In 1317 Enrico Scrovegni declared that he built the Arena Chapel:
 "In honour and reverence ... of the Virgin mother of God ... and
 in honour of the good city-state and commune of Padua and for the
 salvation of his soul and those of his family past and
 present".²³

Pictorial narratives were only allowed in private chapels within
 the church precinct in order to instruct the observer, to render
 sacred mysteries visible so that they could better be committed to
 mind, and to excite devotion. Ecclesiastical art, even when
 related to individual patronage, was the "materialization of
 Theology".²⁴ In this way, although the themes in family chapels
 were related to the concerns of the patrons, the narrative still
 served as a silent sermon.

In the Arena Chapel the exemplary Lives of the Virgin and Christ
 are contrasted with the theme of usury which is pictorially, and
 hence "publicly", atoned on the walls of the chapel. In the
 Brancacci Chapel the Petrine programme is focussed on Peter's role
 as a redeemed sinner who, as Christ's vicar on earth and guardian
 of the gates of Paradise, shows the spectator the way to
 Salvation. Both chapels have themes eminently suited to their
 funerary needs.

Similarly, in the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo the theme of the Legend
of the True Cross, like the story of the Tree of Jesse and St.
 Bonaventura's Lignum Vitae, was a medieval attempt to find a

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concordance between the Old and the New Testaments. It was a favourite theme with Franciscans and became popular in Tuscany during the first decade of the Quattrocento. The Franciscans were custodians of the Holy sites in Jerusalem, many of which figure prominently in Piero della Francesca's version of the Legend of
 26
the True Cross.

In contrast to the aforementioned cycles, the theme of the Sassetti Chapel's sacred imagery is more closely linked to the secular as well as the spiritual needs of the patron. The Story of St. Francis is related to pro-Medicean and Antique intellectual themes. These are blended in an expression of Florentine pride. Portraits of Lorenzo de' Medici and the Sassetti family extend the iconography into a web of amicizia, parentado and vicinanza, which concretizes the patron's connection and desired favour with il Magnifico.

Patron saints were often part of the imagery of a private burial chapel. The right wall of Filippo Strozzi's Chapel, for example, portrays events from the life of his name saint, Philip, whereas the titular of the chapel, St. John the Evangelist, is retained on the left wall. The chapel's function as a burial site for the deceased donor assumes great importance in the Strozzi Chapel. Filippino Lippi's painted grisailled triumphal arch, framing the Strozzi tomb on the altar wall, celebrates the victory of Filippo Strozzi's faith and its reward in eternal Salvation. The idea of the "portal to eternity" has, according to Borsook, a possible

precedent in Masaccio's Trinity, located nearby in the same
²⁷
 church.

The concept of the altar wall as the most significant zone for sacred imagery forms a continuous link between the fresco schemes of the Tuscan burial chapel. In fact, in an act of the Synod of Trier declared as early as 1310, it was obligatory to install a
²⁸
 religious image on or behind every altar.

The narrative "sermons" in burial chapels all involved the response of the spectator and this aim was linked to illusionism. Illusionistic framework or pictorial space, together with the blending of the categories of "true" and "false", all extended the artists' techniques and could be used to tie religious imagery, in
²⁹
 the frescoes, to that of the actual world. Once this became a convention for eliciting spectator response, illusionism became integral to the language of mural painting. With the Quattrocento development of optical effects developed by perspective, it became possible for the artist to further involve the beholder in the imagery and meaning of the frescoes.

(c) TECHNIQUE

The compositions of frescoes, in much of the Trecento, were initially sketched upon one or more layers of rough plaster
³⁰
 usually called arriccio, or base plaster. Such drawings were known as sinopie and were gradually covered with a final layer of

31

wet plaster, the intonaco, or surface plaster. It was on this surface that most of the Tuscan murals were painted. This technique of true fresco was used when the frescoes were painted entirely in plaster while it was still fresh (fresco).

Much of Giotto's work at Padua in the Arena Chapel, and the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel, were done in true fresco. Only finishing touches and certain colours were added when the surface was dry. In true fresco only so much plaster as the artist knew he could paint in a single day was applied. These daily patches were known as giornate.³² Sometimes, however, wide bands of mortar, called pontate, were applied in a single session to³³ correspond to the level of the painter's scaffolding (ponte). Giotto used this method in the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce, which was painted when the plaster was dry (secco).

When true fresco was used, certain details were painted while the plaster was at its freshest, for example, faces, hands or the drawing of the entire figure. The frescoes in the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce, painted by Giotto and his shop, illustrate this technique.

In the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo, Piero della Francesca resorted to wads of cloth which he packed wet against the surface to keep it moist until he could paint it.³⁴ The imprint on the cloth can still be seen today. The Sassetti Chapel was also painted mostly in true fresco. Ghirlandaio's figures were built up from

elaborate underpainting, beginning with dark tones while the highlights were done in white before the final layer was applied.³⁵ Although no evidence of sinopie has been found in the Sassetti Chapel there is some of the use of cartoons. Pricked cartoons or spolveri are discernible in three faces of the vault sibyls. Cartoons, or full-sized drawings, were used for transferring a composition to the wall and consisted of pouncing (spolverare) coloured dust through holes pricked into the lines of the design prepared on paper.

It is possible that Ghirlandaio worked from full-scale drawings as did Filippino Lippi in the frescoes of the Strozzi Chapel.³⁶ Several of the Strozzi drawings still exist. Exactly how Filippino enlarged his compositions is not known and no sinopie have been found. The only marks on the arriccio are those used to establish the axis of the triangular field of each vault Patriarch.³⁷ Sure evidence for the use of cartoons can only be established for minor figures and ornamental details. The Strozzi programme is also painted in true fresco as promised in Filippino's contract with Filippo Strozzi: "E promette lo detto Filippo di Filippo al detto Strozzi di lavorarla in fresco." Different size giornate were used by Filippino in different sections of the Strozzi programme, details were added in secco.³⁸

True fresco, sinopie, and spolveri were all part of the painting technique in Tuscan burial chapels.

(d) THE FRESCOES IN RELATION TO THEIR ARCHITECTURAL SITES

A certain conflict developed between architects and fresco

painters in the Quattrocento. Where architects like Brunelleschi and Alberti were trying to emphasize the opaqueness and structural clarity of walls, painters were bent on dissolving them with illusionism. The painters of Tuscan burial chapels did not work with contemporary architecture but, for the most part, with Gothic structure. They changed this architectural ambience by incorporating many of the new Classical features used by contemporary architects.

Each of the chapels selected for this study either changed or modified its architectural site. Giotto's decorative framework in the Arena Chapel concentrated on the actual structure of the barrel-vaulted interior. In this way, he strengthened rather than modified the architecture while indicating the frescoes' objective surface. His Trecento mural language showed that an identification between pictorial architecture and actual architecture could occur. By placing the stress on actual structure, Giotto was able to lower the frescoes' pictorial level of reality in relation to their objective existence as part of the wall. The starting-point for Giotto's pictorial language is, therefore, the definite wall-surface.

In contrast, Masolino, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi were working, in the Brancacci Chapel, within Gothic architecture. The painted Brunelleschian pilasters which frame the four corners of the chapel walls have no relation to the Gothic site. This imposition of fictive Classical architecture changes the relation between

"real" and "false" structure and the frescoes as part of the overall illusionism. The painted architecture no longer defines the pictorial scenes, in the frescoes, categorically as painted wall.

Among the rare cases known of painters working in contemporary architecture is Piero della Francesca's donor mural in the Sacristy of the Tempio Malatestiano at Rimini.³⁹ Piero was particularly sensitive to the exigencies of any architectural site which he was commissioned to decorate with frescoes. He composed in an architectonic way and in the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo tried to reconcile perspective with the reality of the flat wall. He used perspective not only to create depth but to guide the beholder's eye "... to the heart of the subject which coincides with a plane⁴⁰ in the immediate foreground".

Painting almost like an intarsia worker, Piero gave to all his forms, in the Bacci Chapel, and the intervals between them, a geometric clarity which appeared to lock into an even pattern concentrating on the actual architecture. Piero, therefore, had no need to use fictive architecture to restructure his site. He accepts Gothic structure in the Bacci Chapel by defining the rib-vaults and lunettes in a decorative manner which accentuates their architectural support. Piero only modifies the structure of the chapel walls with the use of Classical mouldings in the separation of the narrative scenes.

Most of the painters of the second half of the Quattrocento, like Ghirlandaio or Filippino Lippi, never fully absorbed Piero della Francesca's confidence in proportion and geometry. Instead, rich ornament, descriptive details and elaborate narrative changed the apparent size and shape of their architectural sites. Perspective, grisaille and false architecture restructure their Gothic chapels which are simply "painted away".

III THE DECLINE OF TUSCAN MURAL PAINTING

From 1490 the great centre of mural painting began to shift from Florence to Rome. The Vatican commissioned huge fresco schemes and private patrons could no longer compete with the Church. For example, Filippo Strozzi could not prevent Filippino Lippi from interrupting his work on his burial chapel when the latter was called to paint murals for Cardinal Oliviero Carafa's burial chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome, in 1488.⁴¹ It was Lorenzo de' Medici who had recommended Filippino to the powerful cardinal, the protector of both the Dominican and Vallombrosan Orders. The Strozzi frescoes had yet to be begun and the delay can be blamed on political expediency. In fact, since autumn 1487, Lorenzo de' Medici had been urging Carafa's help to obtain a Cardinal's hat for his thirteen year-old son Giovanni.⁴² Six months after Filippino agreed to work for Carafa, the Cardinal⁴³ approved the cardinalcy for Giovanni de' Medici.

The great era of Tuscan mural painting gradually came to an end.

The large mural programmes commissioned by the Vatican attracted the talents of fresco painters and it was the grandeur and rhetoric of new, as well as Ancient Rome, which ushered in the mural painting of the Cinquecento.

IV FORM OF THE DISSERTATION

This study is divided into seven chapters. Individual chapters are assigned to the analysis of each chapel-fresco programme and a concluding chapter presents an overview of the material in relation to the concepts of continuity and change.

The main five chapters are divided internally into separate concerns beginning with a critical appraisal of the literature. This methodology establishes whether the subject has been extensively dealt with in the literature and in any new contributions made by the writer. Each chapel is then placed within its historical background related to patronage. An analysis of the actual structure of the architecture introduces the visual dialogue which emerges through the interaction of pictorial and architectural space. The arrangement of the frescoes is, in each chapter, accompanied by diagrams which explain their spatial construction and placement. Relevant dates pertaining to the artist and the programme are included in this section. This clear division of material establishes the basis for the main analysis of the chapel walls in terms of iconography and illusionism.

Each wall, in relation to the whole chapel, is explored in terms of pictorial space, changes in the wall surface due to illusionism, the spectator's response or position in relation to the frescoes, and symbolism within the iconography. The latter concern is not with narrative per se but with its effect upon illusionism. This introduces the theory of levels of reality or unreality, within the spiritual meaning or didactic purpose of the iconography.⁴⁴ This method assigns each pictorial element a different degree of "reality" which affects the articulation of actual and illusionistic space.

The objective degree of reality is always the real solidity of the wall itself. The pictorial degree of reality is of either a "high" or "low" level depending upon the efficacy of its illusionism. The image's degree of reality refers to its level of realism, illusionism or abstraction within certain parts of frescoes of each programme.⁴⁵

This section of each chapter analyses some reasons why illusionism is not only a means of making apparent intrusions into the chapel walls but why it has a didactic purpose as well. The type of meaning required by the iconography is considered, in this research, as having an effect on its level of reality. When this reality does not require a realistic representation, as in images of high religious symbolism, a more abstract or idealized representation may be used.⁴⁶

Finally, each individual chapter analyses the manner in which the frescoes interact with their painted framework. The decorative frame of each fresco or mural scheme is evaluated as affecting their apparent position on the wall surface. If the frame is surface-conscious, the fresco retains its objective quality as part of the wall. If, on the other hand, the frame is illusionistic, the position of the fresco in relation to the surface may be changed or become ambiguous.

Fictive architecture, grisaille and even pictorial architecture, within the frescoes, can interact in the same way by building up illusionism. In this way, the firm frontier between the sphere of reality and that of fiction is compromised. An overview of each chapel integrates all these factors in a brief conclusion to the separate programmes.

The final chapter, the conclusion, introduces suggestions for a mural language in the Tuscan burial chapel of the Tre- and Quattrocento, by contrasting certain elements within the preceding chapters in terms of themes related to continuity and change. The methodology will establish an ongoing mural language and will include a brief mention of similar related developments in other Tuscan frescoes of the same period.

V JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF CHAPELS

(a) VARIETY IN THE VISUAL FORMS OF THE CHAPELS: INDIVIDUALITY

The Arena Chapel, Padua, although not strictly within the Tuscan

area, was chosen for its complex pictorial programme and its unitary architectural space. Painted by the Tuscan artist, Giotto di Bondone, the chapel's barrel-vaulted interior is unarticulated by structural membering. A new relationship between pictorial space and the flat surface of the wall emerges. The architecture appears planned for painting. There are no cornices or raised mouldings and the rectangular space of the interior is only complicated by the addition of the "simplest of Gothic⁴⁷ choirs". Six plain, unrimmed, window openings are the only⁴⁸ interruption in one otherwise unbroken side-wall.

Within the chapel interior, independent of the larger space of a church structure, the frescoes and walls are articulated into a completely homogeneous ensemble. The non-illusionistic decorative bands reinforce architectonic structure, place the frescoes firmly on the wall as "painted surface" and expand the symbolism of the iconographic whole.

This awareness of the function of mural painting as part of the wall enables an identity between the frescoes and the architecture to occur. If this homogeneity was complete, the chapel would have offered little to the analysis of illusionism. Imitation marble panels in the dado, fictive architecture, complex framework with changing viewpoints and different solutions to pictorial space all expand the architectonic function of the chapel with illusionism. Levels of co-existing reality and unreality emerge from the tightly articulated totality.

The importance of the spectator to the union of illusionism, spiritual meaning and actual structure became the final motivation behind the choice of the chapel. The Arena Chapel has been explored extensively in the literature, but never as a completely articulated iconographic and illusionistic whole.

The Brancacci Chapel, in the Church of Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, presented the direct opposite from the integration of actual and symbolic space in the Arena Chapel. The three painters, Masolino, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi, changed the surface of the walls by means of individual systems of illusionism. The architecture was no longer related to the frescoes through the structural alteration and restoration of many of its original parts.

These changes in the architecture indicated a need to re-assess the programme in terms of the interrelationship between the wall and the fresco. Fictive architecture and simulated Classical mouldings introduced different levels of architectonic illusionism. The apparent position of the frescoes in relation to the wall and as part of the actual space in the chapel, was affected by framework. The destruction of the original vault and lunettes, painted by Masolino, changes the sequence of the programme's iconography which is now incomplete.

The purpose of this research could be directed to the analysis of the articulation of actual and illusionistic space in a

re-evaluation of the Brancacci Chapel as a spatial and symbolic interconnection.

Three distinct pictorial systems to perspective and iconography emerged in the frescoes of Masolino, Masaccio and Filippino Lippi working within a single space. A close inspection of the architectural site, in relation to the frescoes, resolves a number of spatial issues pertinent to this study and adds to the understanding of the chapel as a whole. These points are developed together with their relevance to the larger issues of iconography.

The incomplete integration of architectural, illusionistic and narrative concerns in the Brancacci Chapel, as a totality, served as a contrast of choice to the unitary wholeness of the Arena Chapel.

The Bacci Chapel in Arezzo, painted by Piero della Francesca, was chosen in order to analyse his solutions to pictorial space in relation to both depth and surface-consciousness. His architectonic awareness of the function of mural painting, as part of the wall, is interrelated with a complex iconographical programme. The dual concerns, a rational perspectival system of pictorial space and a symbolic didactic totality, are integrated and result in different types of pictorial space for distinct parts of the fresco programme. This study is not concerned with problems of chronology as an explanation for "types" of pictorial

space and, therefore, directs these findings to the consolidation of levels of reality.

The most significant expansion of the apparent limits of chapel space occurs in the illusionistic modifications of architecture in the Sassetti and Strozzi Chapels.

The Sassetti Chapel, in the Church of Santa Trinità, Florence, painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio, uses a system of fictive architecture similar to the Brancacci Chapel. The modification to the interior of the Brancacci Chapel is less illusionistic, whereas in the Sassetti Chapel fictive architecture appears to "open" the walls, allowing visual penetration to occur. This effect is pertinent to the choice of the chapel as Ghirlandaio changes the quality and solidity of its architectural walls. Through perspective, fictive architecture and trompe l'oeil framework, Ghirlandaio offers different solutions to pictorial space and, in consequence, to their analysis.

The final selection of the Strozzi Chapel, in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, painted by Filippino Lippi, was made in order to consolidate changes in pictorial illusionism in relation to the wall. The actual dimensions of the Strozzi Chapel are apparently changed by means of trompe l'oeil, grisaille and fictive architecture. Filippino's brush alters the space and shape of the chapel by means of illusionism without destroying the solidity of the wall. In this way he differs from Ghirlandaio's

dissolution of solid structure and the analysis could be directed to changes on the walls in relation to a "closed" rather than "open" system of illusionism.

(b) AVAILABILITY OF ICONOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

This research is not only concerned with the objective degree of reality of the frescoes, as part of the architectural wall, but also with their pictorial degree of reality in relation to their iconographic or conceptual totality. The availability of analyses on the narrative structure and symbolism within the iconography of the programmes was therefore important to the selection of the specific chapels.

The literature on each chapel, chosen for this study, is extensive and provided the background research necessary for the understanding of allegorical, narrative or didactic concerns within the fresco cycles. The interrelation between symbolic content and illusionism or modifications of chapel structure in relation to the spectator is excluded from the literature and is a new departure. Some individual contributions to iconographical aspects and other issues in the research, are acknowledged in each individual chapter.

The relation of iconography to symbolic spatial spheres could, through a thorough investigation of iconographic analyses available in the literature, be expanded to include levels of

reality. Each programme has specific iconographical features which also justify their choice and re-evaluation in terms of the spatial and symbolic analyses of this research.

The Arena programme abounds with symbolic parallels and correspondences which could be collated into a conceptual totality. The choice of the Brancacci Chapel relied on a need for re-interpretation of each scene in relation to the central role of Peter in the cycle. The Aretine programme's arrangement and its multi-layered symbolic significance could also be re-evaluated in terms of levels of reality.

The Sassetti narrative's influence of epigraphy, numismatics and historiography, combined with a complex spiritual message, justified further analysis in relation to the locations and meaning of specific images within the cycle. Finally, the Strozzi Chapel's allegorical and spiritual imagery could be related to existential levels of meaning in the donor's pictorial journey to Salvation.

(c) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER TRE- AND QUATTROCENTO PROGRAMMES OR
FRESCOES: TYPICALITY

It was in the Upper Church at San Francesco, Assisi that the first great scheme by a Tuscan painter was formulated. Many of the frescoes of the papal chapel which narrate the Story of the Virgin, St. Peter and St. Michael are attributed to Cimabue between c. 1274 and 1284.

Architecture and painting reinforce each other in Cimabue's frescoes by means of a complex system of framework. Framework is also an essential feature of Giotto's Paduan programme and is a means, in both the Cimabue's cycle and the Arena chapel, of blending the "real" and sacred worlds of the narrative.

There is a linking of the Duecento and the Trecento by means of an ongoing co-existence of levels of reality in which fictive architecture and illusionism play a significant role.

Giotto introduced fictive pilasters to the chancel arch of the Arena Chapel and Cimabue also puts two pictorial categories in contrast to the space of his papal chapel at Assisi.⁵⁰ In the transept there is both a real gallery of small columns with a row of painted angels and a series of fictive niches with angels and prophets.⁵¹ By means of the architectural framework into which these latter are inserted, they are viewed in connection with the real space of the chapel.

The contrast between the categories of "real" and "false" continues in the Trecento. It is, however, the sense of decorative unity in Cimabue's frescoes that anticipates the homogeneity of Giotto's Paduan scheme.

In contrast to the mural schemes which, while admitting illusionism, emphasized the integrity of the wall surface, a different kind of attitude developed in which the picture or

fresco was no longer specifically identified as "painted wall".

Masaccio's experimentation with mathematical perspective changed the apparent surface of architecture through illusionism. His fresco of the Trinity with Mary, John and two Donors, in the third bay of the west aisle of Santa Maria Novella, Florence, demonstrates an example of this change. Painted late 1425 to 1428, during part of the same period as his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel, this monumental altarpiece or cenotaph, with its life-size figures and perspective setting, changes the surface of

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the Church wall. Masaccio's use of Brunelleschian architecture in the Trinity also appears in the framing fictive architecture of the frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel. This type of framing architecture also re-appears in the central tier of Ghirlandaio's Sassetti Chapel.

An "invitation" into the world of the frescoes occurs in Filippino's contributions to the Brancacci Chapel and is extended in his paintings in the Strozzi Chapel. Filippino's frescoes in the former immediately preceded his work in the latter, establishing a continuous development towards greater pictorial illusionism. Contemporary frescoes by Signorelli in the San Bizio Chapel at Orvieto use similar ways of expanding the apparent width of the chapel by setting back painted ornamental piers, like

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In contrast to this illusionism, Piero della Francesca used a

cogent system of proportion and mathematical perspective without disturbing the planarity of the architecture in the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo. In fact, Piero lowers his horizon line so as to increase the monumentality of his figures without disturbing the wall surface.

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Piero della Francesca's cycle of the Legend of the True Cross was a typical programme in the later Trecento and early Quattrocento. A thirty years' delay occurred from 1417, when the chapel patron Baccio di Maso Bacci died, and 1447 when work commenced in the vault by Bicci di Lorenzo.

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The typicality of the theme may be exemplified by Agnolo Gaddi's Cross cycle, painted c. 1390, in the Franciscan Church of Santa Croce, Florence. This scheme was copied by Cenni di Francesco in the Franciscan Church of Volterra in c. 1410 and Masolino also painted a cycle of the Cross in the Augustinian Church of San Stefano at Empoli in 1434. A different version of the theme was also portrayed by Benedetto di Bindo on the Siena cathedral's reliquary. This makes four Tuscan cycles in forty years, with Piero's being the last known large cycle of the Cross ever painted.

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In the final analysis, it is not the typicality of any of the programmes that dictated their choice but their unique systems of articulating actual and illusionistic space in relation to the wall, the spectator and the iconography.

CHAPTER 2 : GIOTTO'S ILLUSIONISM IN THE ARENA CHAPEL

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine the articulation of actual and pictorial space in the Arena Chapel, Padua. The architecture of the Arena Chapel is a unitary space because it is not part of the larger enclosure of a Church structure. This architectural and spatial homogeneity affects the quality of pictorial illusionism in the chapel. The frescoes are fixed in a specific relationship with their spatial context and exert an effect on the architecture. An interaction of actual and pictorial space takes place in the Arena Chapel by means of illusionism.

The articulation of the Arena Chapel surface as either planar or penetrable influences the quality of illusionism in the way pictorial space in the frescoes is "read". This, in turn, affects the viewers understanding of the shape of the chapel enclosure.
¹
 "Space as such, empty space, is not visible but surfaces are".

According to this concept, the relationship between actual space, in the chapel, and fictive pictorial space, in the frescoes, creates the perceptual visibility of the chapel interior. This interior can be modified, extended or reduced, in fictional terms, by means of pictorial illusionism. The quality of illusionism influences the actual space of the chapel and involves the active participation of the spectator. Where pictorial forms appear to "enter" into spectator space, they infringe on his visual consciousness.

The spectator must, at the same time, view the pictorial image on both a perceptual and a conceptual level. This conceptual structure is created by the interaction of symbolic content, within the iconography of the frescoes, with levels of illusionism. The spectator becomes the catalyst in uncovering the symbolic meaning within each programme and relating it to types of illusionism which place images on different "levels of reality"² in both a spatial and spiritual sense.

In this way, perceptual reality, the actual dimension of pictorial and architectural space, and conceptual meaning, can be integrated. Giotto was aware that the symbolic and allegorical structures of the Arena Chapel required specific levels of naturalism or illusionism to emphasize their meaning and function in relation to the spectator.

The way in which pictorial images are placed on different levels of symbolic reality, in relation to meaning, and how they articulate the wall surface, actual space and the participation of the observer, will be analysed in this chapter in relation to Giotto's pictorial illusionism.

I CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE LITERATURE

A critical appraisal of some contributions to this chapter, from the vast selection of literature on the Arena Chapel, includes Eve Borsook's comprehensive analysis of Tuscan chapels which formed the groundwork for an historical overview of the chapel and which has

been fundamental to a clear understanding of the iconography.³ Borsook does not, however analyse the effect of iconography on the illusionism of the Arena programme nor does she discuss pictorial space in relation to the spectator. The iconography of the Arena chapel is dealt with on both a factual and symbolic level, but there is little linking of actual and illusionistic space as dependent on the meaning within the frescoes.

The importance of symbolic content, in the iconography of the Arena Chapel, is extended by Stubblebine's collection of essays.⁴ Of particular importance to this area are Ursula Schlegel's essay on the connection between meaning and patronage in the frescoes, and Dorothy Shorr's essay on the spiritual importance of the role of the Virgin in the Arena cycle. The linking of space, across the surface of the narrative side-walls, is amplified by Alpatoff's⁵ essay on vertical and horizontal parallelism.

This research into the pictorial and architectural interdependence of mural painting in Tuscany owes much to the ideas of "spatial reality-degrees" discussed by Sven Sandström.⁶ He analysed the way in which pictorial images were related to the shape of the wall surface and how they affected actual space. His concept that the frescoes have an objective reality, separated into different parts, in relation to intention, and a concrete reality which forms part of actual space in which the observer stands, is pertinent to the present analysis. The "reality" of Sandström's terminology does not concern what is actually real, but, on the contrary, "... the total unreality of forms and objects that the picture seeks to render

credible."⁷ The aesthetic effects that are used to achieve this have both iconic and formal intentions. Sandström's manner of investigation remains, however, primarily formal. In contrast to his approach, it is the manner in which these formal solutions to pictorial space and illusionism are directly dependent on specific intentions related to meaning, that will be addressed in this chapter on the Arena Chapel.

The concept of the plane and penetration of the wall surface is also analysed by John White, particularly in relation to the narrative side-walls of the Arena Chapel.⁸ He links pictorial space with the flat surface of the wall, and his analysis of vertical and horizontal divisions, viewpoints and the programme in relation to pictorial bands which limit depth while subordinating the mural system to the total concept of the whole chapel, is pertinent to this chapter.

John White's discussion of Giotto's space-construction and Sandström's theory of 'levels of reality' form, therefore, the basis for the analysis of illusionism in the Arena Chapel. Contradictions and correlations between these two authorities will be elucidated in all sections of this chapter.

The fundamental analysis of White and Sandström is that mural painting in general and, the Arena frescoes in particular, must be seen as a specific art-form in active connection - and to some extent in conflict - with the space of architecture.⁹ Whereas Sandström examines the different reality-degrees in the frescoes and

their effect on the walls of the Arena Chapel, White concentrates on Giotto's formulation of a new relationship between pictorial space¹⁰ and the flat surface. Although White does not use the word 'reality' in the same sense as Sandstrom, he does use the word 'realism' as part of Giotto's development of pictorial space.

Giotto's change from the use of foreshortened frontal compositions to the oblique construction of pictorial architecture had, according to White, the specific purpose of placing a new emphasis on realism.¹¹ At the same time, White sees Giotto as fully aware of the conflict this oblique architecture created in relation to the flat surface of the wall. For this reason Giotto also developed the minimal oblique construction of pictorial architecture which retained the surface-stressing harmony of the frontal settings without sacrificing the realistic connotations of the oblique solutions.¹² The co-existence of these methods on the narrative side-walls of the Arena Chapel indicates that Giotto had a dual interest: surface pattern and realism.¹³ Through his analysis White indirectly corroborates Sandstrom's theory of co-existent 'levels of reality' because he acknowledges that different types of realism occur within the same programme.

There is, therefore, a correlation between White's analysis of Giotto's development of different types of 'realism' and Sandstrom's placement of pictorial forms in relation to their degree of 'reality'.¹⁴ Sandstrom does, however, develop this conception further and sees Giotto as clearly conscious of the possibilities inherent in a marked distinction between different parts of a fresco

programme in relation to changes in pictorial space.¹⁵ This complex interweaving of what appear to be sometimes disparate elements in the frescoes are seen by Sandström as having different effects so that a type of confrontation occurs between the frescoes, in their several parts, and the space in which the observer stands.¹⁶ The spectator becomes, according to Sandström, important to the interplay of 'levels of reality' in the frescoes and his understanding of their importance when 'read' in conjunction with meaning, placement and illusionism.

Neither White nor Sandström deal with the iconological questions inherent in the narrative symbolism of the Arena programme although Sandström does stress the intertwining of symbolic intention with purely formal elements as two aspects of the same phenomenon.¹⁷ Giotto had, Sandström suggests, to confront a set of iconological problems which were rooted in the pictorial conventions of the Middle Ages.¹⁸ The distinctions between parts of the frescoes and their changing 'realities' could have originated from Giotto's need to extend medieval pictorial language. Sandström cites Erwin Panofsky on this particular problem :

In the High Middle Ages representations, personages of the remote past or the distant future could share the stage of time - or rather timelessness - with characters of the present. Objects accepted and plainly recognised as symbols could mingle with real buildings, plants or implements on the same level of reality - or, rather, non-reality.¹⁹

Giotto's problem was to reconcile this medieval attitude with an overall fiction that is acceptable from the point of view of realism: to create, what Sandström calls, a "gradation of reality"

while preventing any of the parts of the frescoes from appearing incredible in the context of the whole.

Changes in illusionism, therefore, fulfilled a need to supply a clear variation between lifelike depiction and conceptual
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representation of religious ideas.

The fundamental contribution Sandström makes, to this study of the Arena Chapel, is that his concept of 'degrees/levels of reality', is set in relation to the function of the frescoes and their placement within the programme instead of being associated with the enduring
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properties or qualities of the paintings.

This view corresponds to a dynamic conception of the means available to the artist; the intention of the artist and the attitude of the observer determine the mode in which the forms function. 22

Both authorities agree that Giotto accentuates the objective nature of the picture surface in the Arena Chapel frescoes which can be viewed, not only as scenes in space, but experienced as
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material. Sandström emphasizes this dualism in the frescoes as both objects and representations and White corroborates him to the extent that he points out the duality of Giotto's preoccupation
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with surface pattern and realism. The terminology differs but the fundamental premise is the same. Sandström states:

The picture is itself an object; it represents objects with a measure of illusionism; it represents human situations, actions and movements. 25

As objects, the frescoes affect the opacity or penetration of the walls of the Arena Chapel. As representations, the frescoes introduce illusionism through the pictorial imitation of objects. This system is seldom either only surface mural decoration or illusionism but is, according to Sandström, both the former and the latter.²⁶

This double effect, noted in different ways by both White and Sandström, is difficult for the spectator to comprehend at the same time. It is Giotto's task, through changes in pictorial space, to guide the spectator's perception from one category to the other. This creates a communication between different spheres and it establishes changes on the wall surface which can be related to the narrative symbolism of the programme as a whole. The gradation of reality is made in accordance with the logic of each fresco's content within the totality.

It is the intention of this chapter to expand the analyses of White and Sandström to include an interpretation of both the iconological symbolism and construction of pictorial space in the Arena Chapel.

II HISTORY

The history of the Arena Chapel is indivisibly linked to its patron,

Enrico Scrovegni, in the final appearance of the fresco arrangement and the levels of meaning within its iconography. On the 6 February 1300 Enrico Scrovegni bought land from the Dalesmanini family.²⁷ The chapel stands in the ruins of an ancient Roman arena, hence the name. It was originally built next to the Scrovegni Palace, which no longer exists.

Before the 31 March 1302, Scrovegni obtained permission from the Bishop of Padua, Ottobono di Piacenza, to build a family chapel with a dual dedication to the Virgin of the Annunciation and of Charity. The original document has been lost, but reference is made to it on the 9 January 1305.²⁸ Borsook places the date of the chapel at 1303 as this date appeared in an inscription which commemorated the chapel on Lady Day, the 25 March.²⁹ According to Bellinati, the inscription was "... originally immured in the facade, then transferred to the apse and after 1570 disappeared."³⁰ On the 1 March 1304 Pope Benedict XI granted indulgences to those visiting the chapel and it acquired a public, as well as a private, function.

III PATRONAGE

Enrico Scrovegni was an infamous usurer and "... wished to wrest the soul of his father, Reginaldo, from the torments of purgatory and to atone for his own sins."³¹ Enrico owed his vast fortune to his father, Reginaldo, who had acquired his riches through usury, which in medieval times was considered by the Church as a mortal sin.³² Ursula Schlegel states that, after the Lateran Council of 1176, reaffirmed in 1274, usurers were not permitted to receive Holy Communion nor Christian burial if they died without atonement.³³

The building of the Arena Chapel may be seen as a concrete condition of absolution and an expiative offering to the Church. Absolution is based on confession, as a prerequisite for atonement, and the emphasis on the sins of usury, the role of the Virgin as intercessor, and the Redemptive theme of the iconographic programme of the Arena Chapel underscore the link between meaning and the needs of the patron.

The chapel can be seen as a physical manifestation of both confession of sin and Scrovegni pardon. The public nature of the Arena Chapel as open to pilgrimage, implies that this absolution was made known to all. The expiative nature of the burial chapel was confirmed by Enrico Scrovegni's joining of the lay disciplant Order of the Cavalieri di Santa Maria, or Guadenti, which was against usury in any form. "No-one is to be received in the Order who has gained good through usurious wickedness"³⁴ This Order was instituted at the beginning of the thirteenth century to defend the "dignity" of the Virgin against heretics. It has been suggested that the Arena Chapel may have been used in ceremonies for the Order.³⁵ Enrico Scrovegni was, however, driven into exile towards the close of his life and died in Venice in 1320.³⁶ But he was buried in the Arena Chapel and his tomb, and effigy, are placed behind the altar.

IV ARCHITECTURE

The unitary space of the Arena Chapel is contained within a simple barrel-vaulted interior (Pls. 1 and 2). There is no apparent

structural membering and White has described it as "... an³⁷
 exhibition gallery destined to show a suite of pictures"

The barrel-vault forms a deep arch or half-cylindrical roof over the oblong space of the Arena Chapel. The edges of this half-cylinder rest directly on the side-walls. This arched space is reinforced pictorially by decorative bands in the interior of the chapel. The quality of the barrel-vault gives to the space of the Arena Chapel a downward movement or thrust, which defines the interior space and emphasizes its unitary wholeness. The Arena Chapel has long, horizontal lines and is narrow in proportion to its length. The interior wall is pierced by six high windows on the south side, while the north wall is unbroken. The pictorial complexity of the fresco programme within belies this simple architectural shell. The architecture "... encloses a pictorial and apparently boundless interior and thus creates a space determinate and impenetrable from³⁸ without but indeterminate and penetrable from within." The Arena Chapel has been called "... the earliest articulated and completely homogenous fresco ensemble that has come down to³⁹ us." It is believed that Giotto might have been the architect⁴⁰ of the chapel. This would explain why he had no need to modify the chapel space by the introduction of false architecture as it was already designed with the frescoes in mind.

John White has stated that the total bareness of the architecture in the Arena Chapel has the effect of giving Giotto the maximum area of ideal painting surface while removing the element of architectural⁴¹ competition.

There is no need, and no temptation, to try to equate the painted architecture with the natural volume and solidity of structural stone and marble.⁴²

White states further that without the painter there is nothing but the inarticulate bare wall of the chapel architecture.⁴³ In this way, he holds an equivalent view to Sandström who suggests that mural painting influences the shape and size of the architectural walls of the chapel and may become, in this way, architecture,⁴⁴ without quotation marks.

Sandström considers that the fundamental raison d'être of mural painting is in its decorative function and that it is determined both practically and theoretically by its milieu-creating effect.⁴⁵ The frescoes of the Arena Chapel are bound, in their function as mural painting, to the surface of the chapel walls, which, as Sandström points out it is their purpose to embellish and throw into relief.⁴⁶ The frescoes are also bound to the chapel as a whole and must also influence its architectonic effect. Changes in the apparent shape of the walls of the Arena Chapel, and the views of the critics, will be dealt with in the individual sections of this chapter.

The Arena Chapel's walls, divided by framework, stress the construction of the architecture. This harmonious relation gives emphasis to the actual architecture while admitting different types of illusionism.

V ARRANGEMENT OF THE FRESCOES

The fresco programme of the Arena Chapel is by Angiolotto di Bondone, called Giotto, a Florentine, born in c.1267 in the Mugello. He died in 1337.⁴⁷ The theme of the frescoes (Fig. 1) represents The Lives of the Virgin and of Christ. No documents of any kind exist for Giotto's murals and the dating depends on the evidence that they were mentioned in Francesco da Barberino's Documenti d'Amore, and in Riccobaldo Ferrarese's Compilatio Chronologica,⁴⁸ both written by 1313.

The fresco scheme constitutes a sermon on the theme of Redemption and the sins of usury. Between the Last Judgement (Pl. 3) on the entrance wall and the Annunciation (Pls. 9 and 10) on the chancel arch at the opposite end, the Lives of the Virgin and of Christ are unfolded on both side-walls.

The sequence always starts and finishes on or beside the chancel arch, moving along in a continuous narrative defining the planarity of the architecture with a horizontal stress on the limits of the side-walls (Figs. 2-5). The Story of Joachim and Anna occupies the top row of scenes on the right of the south wall, and then continues on the opposite side with the Life of the Virgin, commencing with her birth. This leads up to the chancel arch itself. Immediately below the Annunciation on the chancel is the Visitation (Pl. 12), from which one turns to the right wall again. Here, the narrative proceeds with the Christological cycle beginning with the Nativity (Pl. 18) and ending with the Massacre of the Innocents (Pl. 16) at

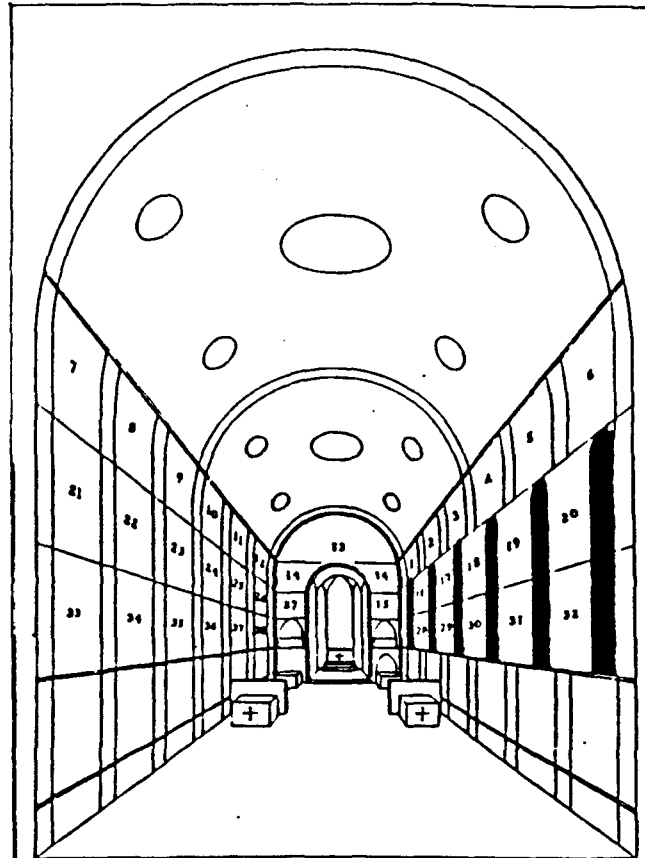


Diagram of the Scrovegni Chapel, drawn by P. A. Riedl.

1. Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple. 2. Joachim among the Shepherds. 3. Annunciation to St. Anne. 4. Joachim's Sacrifice. 5. Dream of Joachim. 6. Meeting at the Golden Gate. 7. Birth of the Virgin. 8. Presentation of the Virgin. 9. The Virgin's Suitors Presenting their Rods. 10. The Suitors' Prayer before the Rods. 11. Marriage of the Virgin. 12. The Virgin's Bridal Procession. 13. God the Father sends out Gabriel. 14. Annunciation. 15. Visitation. 16. The Nativity. 17. Adoration of the Magi. 18. Presentation in the Temple. 19. Flight into Egypt. 20. Massacre of the Innocents. 21. Christ among the Doctors. 22. Baptism of Christ. 23. Wedding at Cana. 24. Raising of Lazarus. 25. Entry into Jerusalem. 26. Expulsion of the Money-Changers from the Temple. 27. Judas Receiving the Bribe. 28. The Last Supper. 29. Washing of the Feet. 30. Christ taken Prisoner. 31. Christ before Caiaphas. 32. Flagellation. 33. Way to Golgotha. 34. The Crucifixion. 35. Lamentation over Christ. 36. Noli me tangere. 37. The Ascension. 38. Pentecost.

Figure 1: Arrangement of frescoes in the Arena Chapel, Padua. (Drawing P.A. Riedl.)

the other end. The spectator must then turn to view the opposite wall where, at the same level, the narrative begins with Christ among the Doctors (Pl. 15) and ends with the Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple (Pl. 17). The Betrayal of Christ (Pl. 19a) is placed next to this scene.

The third row of frescoes narrates the Passion of Christ, beginning with the Last Supper (Pl. 18) and ending with the Pentecost (Pl. 17). The lower level of the chapel is occupied by the dado, which is separated from the narrative by grisaille panels interposed with fictive sculptures of Virtues and Vices (Pls. 26-29c).

VI THE END WALLS: ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

In order to uncover the conceptual structure of the Arena Chapel and the way in which architectural and pictorial space are articulated, it is necessary to analyse the symbolism within the iconography. Two areas in the Arena Chapel which can be isolated as having a high spiritual reality in terms of meaning within the chapel programme (Fig. 6) are the end walls. An attempt will be made to analyse the meaning and illusionism in these two areas.

The way in which iconography affects actual space in the Arena Chapel will be related, according to the subsequent analysis, to the spectator's awareness of the dimensions of the chapel interior. His central position is initially attested by his need to turn physically in order to follow the narrative sequence. This viewing spiral forces him to view the entire shape of the limits of the actual space in which he stands. Each time the spectator turns he views both the Last Judgement (Pls. 3-7) and the chancel arch. The

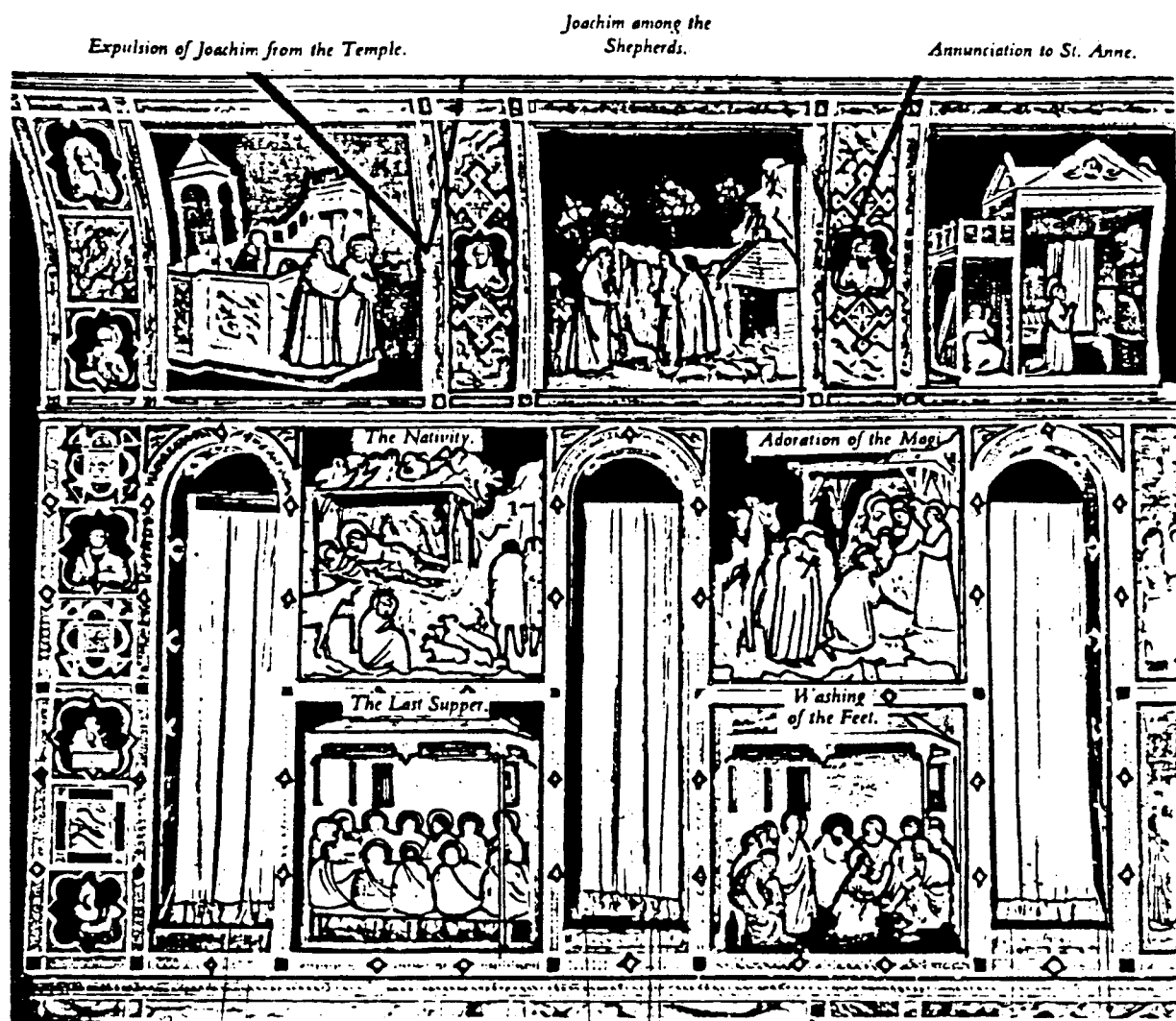


Figure 2 : South wall of the Arena Chapel.

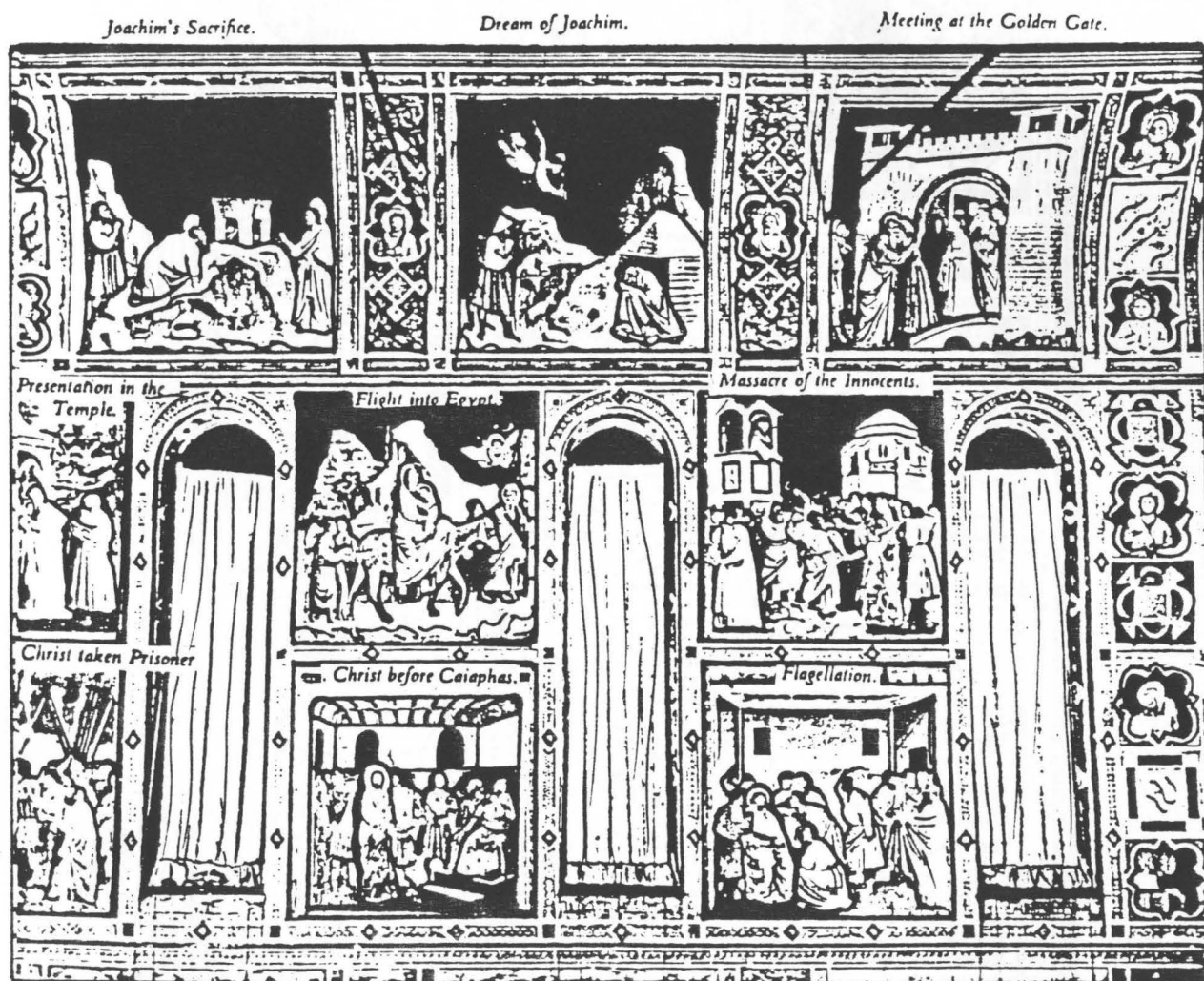


Figure 3 : South wall of the Arena Chapel (towards the west wall).

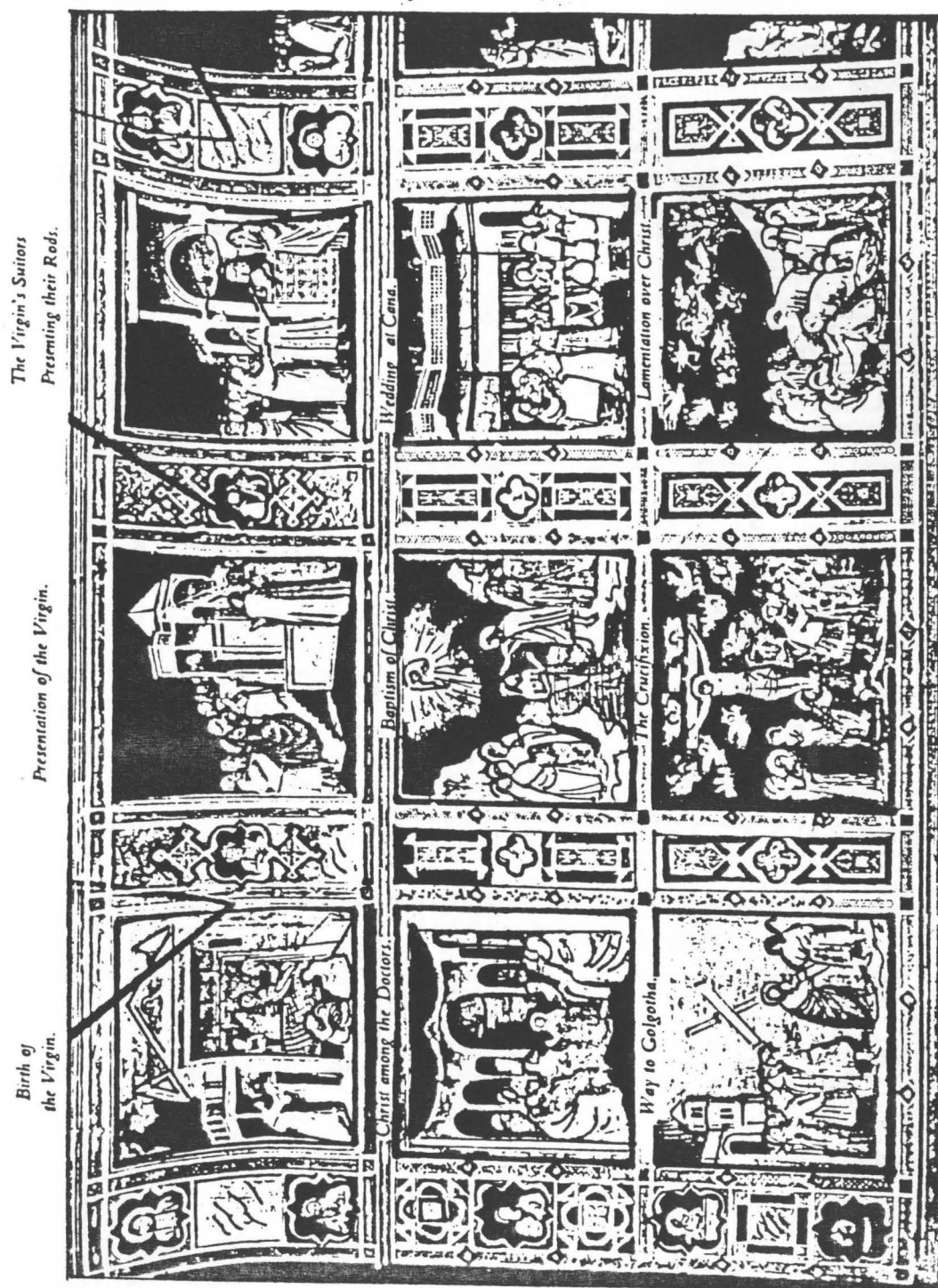


Figure 4 : North wall of the Arena Chapel (starting next to the west wall).



Figure 5 : North wall of the Arena Chapel.

structure of the representations on these two walls will be seen to be fundamentally different, iconographically and illusionistically, from the narrative side-walls.

Both John White and Sandström agree that the two end walls of the Arena Chapel are distinct from the narrative side-walls in their structure and, hence, illusionism. While Sandström concentrates on these two areas in the Arena programme White's analysis is more condensed but is nevertheless pertinent to the discussion of the end walls.

The two end walls of the Arena Chapel are, according to White,⁴⁹ treated consistently. The Last Judgement fills the one wall with a single composition, and the top half of the other is similarly unified by the Annunciation. Both walls are framed by tall pilasters which recede towards the middle and stress the centre⁵⁰ of the chapel as a whole. Despite the "jealously guarded rights of the individual scene", White sees Giotto as ordering the decoration round the spectator standing in the centre of the⁵¹ chapel. White therefore, suggest that the end walls stress the importance of the spectator to the artist but he does not take this any further in terms of narrative symbolism.

Sandström also sees a connection between the two end walls remarking on the decorative border which surrounds the vault field of both⁵² walls. He corroborates White's view that the spectator is increasingly important. The spectator has, according to Sandström,

a stronger impression of direct pictorial contact with the Last Judgement than with the narrative side-walls. Sandström also suggests that one of the principal reasons that the Last Judgement cannot be viewed in the objective manner of the side-walls is that it cannot be seen in direct relation to the decorative system of the whole programme. That is, the fresco is no longer seen as an object on the wall, nor through a wall, hence it must be seen on a more conceptual plane and Sandström equates the pictorial properties of the Last Judgement to that of a vision⁵⁴ Sandström does not however explore the iconological reasons for the vision-like effect of the Last Judgement. A thoroughgoing analysis of iconological symbolism is, therefore, lacking in the critical appraisal of both White and Sandström.

In the following analysis an attempt will be made to assess to what extent the differences between the end walls and the narrative walls can be explained in relation to a more symbolic or spiritual reality acknowledging the groundwork of White and Sandström.

It can be suggested that the Last Judgement, on the entrance wall, and the frescoes of the chancel arch, have a high degree of spiritual reality in terms of Christian didacticism which distinguishes them from the narrative side-walls. The Debate in Heaven (Pl. 8) with the Annunciation (Pls. 9-12) below it, on the chancel arch, are highly representative of the implications of spiritual structure in the chapel, in accordance with Christian doctrine. This is exemplified in the Debate in Heaven, where God the Father sends the archangel Gabriel to the Annunciate Virgin with the message that will precipitate man's Redemption. This is represented in the two scenes of the Annunciation below.

In contrast, the Last Judgement could be seen to present the consequences of man's choice, for Redemption or Damnation, in the acceptance or rejection of the Incarnation as an instrument of Salvation. In this way the end-walls define the limits of both the spiritual and physical structure of the Arena Chapel. Both scenes, the Annunciation and the Last Judgement, reiterate the verticality of the end-walls by virtue of their being the largest scenes in the chapel, although the Annunciation must be seen in conjunction with the whole area of the chancel arch. They are positioned opposite each other across the long interior space of the chapel which is defined by the horizontal directional framework of the side-walls. Space is orientated in a west-east direction and an east-west direction, depending on whether the spectator is entering or leaving the chapel.

The Last Judgement also dominates the west wall by its lack of internal framework definition which affects illusionism. This compositional structure changes the relation between the picture and the spectator by leading his perception from the reality of the flat chapel wall to a more symbolic reading of the fresco's conceptual structure. There are no flat decorative bands to isolate the spectator's perception of the scene, which is unified in its pictorial action through a sweeping upward and downward rhythm.

The fresco is divided compositionally and symbolically into Paradise and Hell by the Cross held by the archangels Michael and Raphael.⁵⁵ Christ dominates the fresco by his scale and central position above the Cross (Pl. 4). He is isolated in a mandorla

surrounded by a shimmering rainbow border. By means of the significant gesture of his hand he elevates the procession of the Saved (Pl. 6) from the minute chaotic figures of the Damned (Pl. 7). Caught in a vortex of rivers of fire, or symbolic blood, the Damned stream towards the space occupied by the large grotesque figure of Satan. "For it is the day of the vengeance of the Lord." (Isaiah 34:8).

On either side of Christ sit the Apostles on a curved platform which appears to bend towards the frontal plane of the fresco. The Last Judgement is the only scene in the cycle of the Arena Chapel in which figures undergo changes of scale in relation to their symbolic level of reality. In this manner Christ is very large and monumental while the Damned are very small.

The importance of the role of the Virgin is attested by her position to the right of Christ, and second to him in size, in her own mandorla. Dorothy Shorr has suggested that this isolation of the Virgin from Christ indicates her unique position within the iconography of the chapel. "This position of the Virgin among the Elect, halfway between Heaven and earth(places) the emphasis not on the customary act of intercession but on the relationship of the Virgin and those who look to her for Salvation."⁵⁶ In her role as both mortal and Divine, the Virgin could reflect Enrico Scrovegni's hope for her beneficent aid on the day of Judgement. Shorr sees her as the Virgin of Charity, and the second image of the Virgin who accepts the model of the Arena Chapel from the donor kneeling above the entrance door, as the Virgin of the Annunciation.⁵⁷

If this theory is correct, then the dual role of the Virgin as the

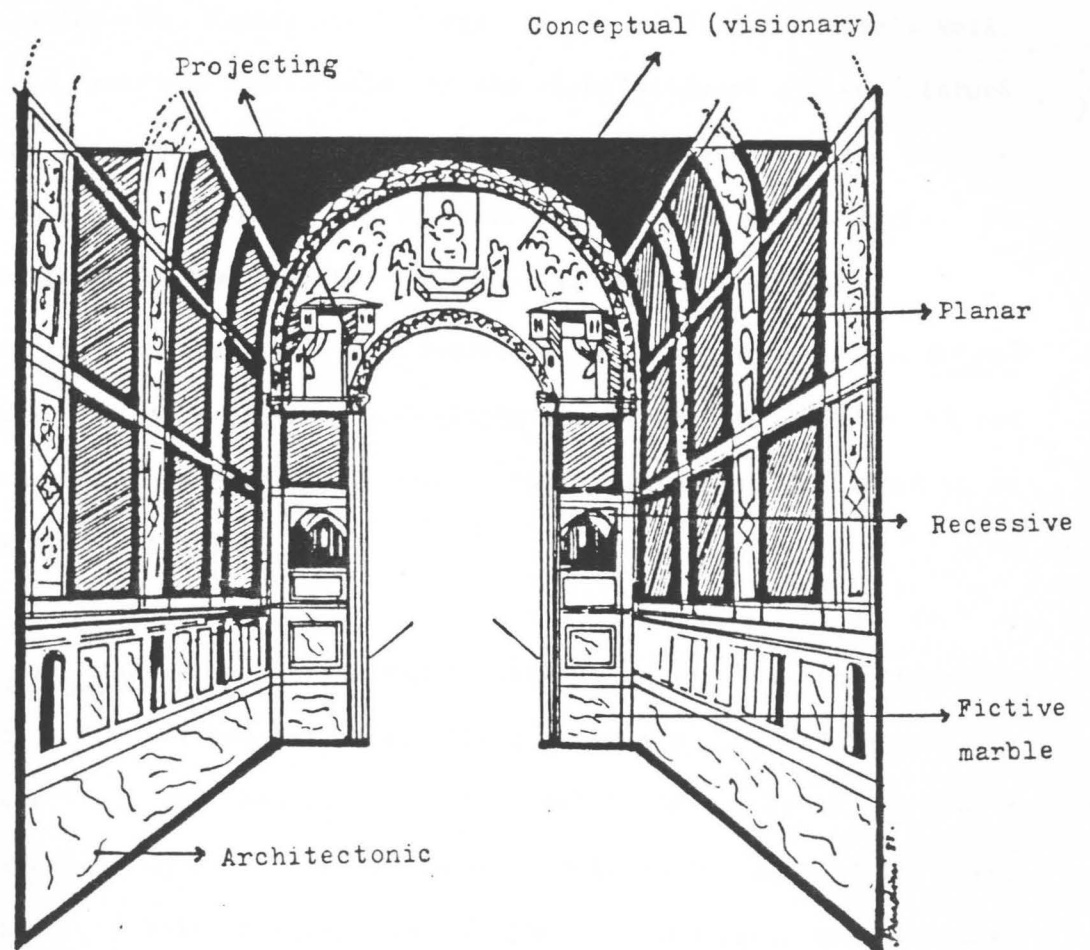


Figure 6 : Definition of the wall surface in the Arena Chapel.

Logos and as a means to Salvation, through the forgiveness of sin is portrayed in the Last Judgement. This would also link the Last Judgement symbolically with the Annunciation on the chancel arch along the central nave of the chapel uniting the two end walls of the chapel.

Through her acceptance of Scrovegni's expiative offering of the chapel in the Last Judgement the Virgin confirms her absolution. The portrait of Enrico Scrovegni is, however, ambiguously situated in relation to Judas, who hangs in the middle of Giotto's Hell. Judas is related vertically to the right pilaster and entablature framing the chapel door, and horizontally, with both the head of Scrovegni, to the left, and the entrance to Hell, on the right. He is identified by the inscription GIUDA and the garment he is

wearing is related to that described by da Voragine in the Golden
⁵⁸
Legend. In medieval iconography the figure of Judas is related to usury and avarice and could again refer to Scrovegni in an
⁵⁹
 iconographic parallel.

The Last Judgement is pierced by three windows above the figure of Christ. On either side of these openings painted angels are "rolling" up the heavens. Each angel is in armour in front of a gold-studded door. One is about to roll up the sun and the other the moon. This folding up of the heavens peels away the last vestige of the physical world, in conceptual terms, as it makes way
⁶⁰
 for the spiritual and by implication Eternity is begun. It is written in the Apocalypse that on the day of Judgement:

There was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair, the whole moon became as blood; and the stars fell upon the earth, as a fig-tree casteth its green figs when shaken by a great wind. And the heavens departed as a book folded up.
(Apocalypse 12:17)

The Last Judgement fills the whole of the west wall. Its symbolic didacticism affects the illusionism of the fresco, its confrontation with the spectator and its level of reality. In terms of a conceptual reading Christ, with the hierarchies of the Elect and the Damned are related more to an underscoring of spiritual content than naturalistic laws of space construction. The fresco represents the final confrontation of the spectator as he leaves the actual space of the chapel. Giotto's concern is less with realistic space-construction than with alerting the spectator to the high degree of symbolism in the fresco and its different 'level of reality' in relation to the main narrative. Sandström, as has been previously noted, has seen the conceptual space of the fresco as close to that of a vision.

For when a picture is to be understood as being visible neither through nor on the wall, the only possible reference left is by way of the characteristic properties of the vision. 61

The illusionism of the fresco is affected by the reversal of traditional scale in the figures, the floating processions of the Elect, the lack of three-dimensional recession, the illusionism on the lower edge of the fresco and the abolition of internal borders. These are all motivated by a desire to guide the spectator's response to the high level of spiritual meaning within the unreality of its elements. There is a need for a visual change in the perception of one space against the other and the spectator

is brought into direct contact with the fresco by the lack of the perceptual barrier created by framework which surrounds only the vault field. This "invitation" into the space of the fresco is limited in its accessibility by the unreality of its pictorial space which cannot be seen as part of the wall or as the illusion of a scene in space. Although the spiritual "reality" of the fresco is high due to its symbolic meaning, its objective degree of reality is low because it does not appear to belong to either the space of the chapel or the wall. In terms of illusionism the Last Judgement's 'level of reality' must be conceived in abstract terms as conceptual.

If the Last Judgement abolishes the borderline and transitional barrier between pictorial and actual space, so details of greater illusionism re-establish contact with the space of the observer. The gown of the priest, who with Scrovegni, proffers the model of the Arena Chapel to the Virgin, above the entrance door, "spills" over the framework of the door, creating an illusionistic penetration into the actual space of the chapel (Pl. 5). In this way the planarity of the wall is subjected to surface alteration and the dimensions of the chapel are changed. The priest is no longer attached or bound to the fresco but enters into the observer's own spatial reality.

This illusionism is further stressed by the fictive roll moulding on the upper edge of the dado, beneath the Last Judgement. This appears to be in front of the fresco and indicates that the apparent projection into the space of the chapel is, after all, only an illusion. The tiny figures of the Damned, emerging from rocky graves above this limiting lower moulding, are also ambiguously

close to the spectator's own reality and in this way enhance and establish contact with their didactic message. The space of the Last Judgement cannot be seen as either planar or recessional in the sense of traditional values.

The Last Judgement, through the lack of interior framework, does not stress the objective nature of the picture surface as planar. Although the spectator does not experience the painted surface as material, the conceptual structure of the iconography enables him to read the fresco's content undisturbed by naturalistic criteria. If the objects are recognised as symbols, having a spiritual rather than a realistic meaning, then they can function on the wall in terms of their level of reality or rather unreality. This indicates that there is a specific purpose in relation to function and Giotto's intention determines the attitude of the spectator in his perception of the Last Judgement's integration of form with meaning.

It is impossible to accept this type of contemplation on a purely cerebral or formalistic level because the interplay of structural hierarchies is interdependent on the function they assume when "read" in conjunction with meaning.

Both White and Sandström agree that there is an increased illusionism in the treatment of the chancel arch in the Arena Chapel and that this differs from the pictorial space on the narrative side-walls.⁶² The main thrust of their respective arguments will be briefly presented.

White comments on Giotto's unusual perspective in the pavilions of the Annunciation.⁶³ Giotto's empirical perspective is outward

projecting. John White points out that both pavilions are painted with their forward surfaces parallel to the wall and instead of the orthogonals running towards the centre of each arch, they diverge⁶⁴ towards the outer walls. This particular treatment of the walls surface is, according to White, a deliberate choice on Giotto's part and he contrasts this form of perspective with that in the two small Gothic 'chapels', or tombs, painted lower down on the same chancel⁶⁵ wall. These, White describes as "... perfect in every detail of their vaulting".⁶⁶ These, he states further, are seen from the centre of the arch, in contrast to the pavilions of the Annunciation⁶⁷ above.

There is no story to be told, no figures to dominate and influence the architectural construction of these illusionistic 'chapels' and what Giotto desired, according to White, was the illusion of two⁶⁸ chapels flanking the existing choir. The fact that they are, in addition, seen from the centre of their arches, indicates that everything is ordered for the benefit of an observer standing in the⁶⁹ centre of the church. White clearly states that this increased realism is significant to the weighing of the artist's intentions in relation to specific kinds of pictorial construction. In this manner, White corroborates Sandström's theory that illusionism is at⁷⁰ the service of different types of reality.

White does not, like Sandström isolate five degrees of reality within the changing pictorial solutions to the chancel wall, but he does concede that there is an indication of purpose in relation to⁷¹ pictorial space. The architectural divergence of the

Annunciation chambers is seen, by White, as encouraging⁷² communication of the figures across central space. Their glances and the gaze of the spectator can slip easily across the sloping inner walls of the outward-projecting architecture, instead of being "...hemmed in by jutting balconies."⁷³

Sandström takes this analysis further in relation to symbolic content. He also relates the purpose of the perspective in the Annunciation figures to a desire to create contact between Mary and the angel so that they are turned towards each other, but unlike White, extends this to include a change in the spiritual 'level of reality'.⁷⁴ The reality of the Annunciation is of a high order, dependent on content, for the moment of Christ's assuming human form is stressed as distinct from the main narrative by Giotto's unusual⁷⁵ treatment of the perspective. This alerts the spectator to a change in the level of reading the frescoes. Even though the pavilions are in semi-darkness and open to incorporate chapel space, the vault arch partially cuts across them, indicating to the spectator that their accessibility is only an illusion. At the same time, this arch-framework emphasizes the connection of the Annunciation with the main scene above it, the Debate in Heaven. God the Father sits on his throne in a sort of alcove - with the⁷⁶ same degree of brightness as the two pavilions below. Tradition also decreed, according to Sandström, that God should not be presented directly as one figure among others in a picture. He is generally isolated from other parts of the picture, often by means of a medallion indicating that He contemplates the scene from⁷⁷ the vantage-point of another reality. By his alcove in the

Debate in Heaven He is united to the figures in the Annunciation scene, who are equally separated in space, the whole forming a triangular composition expressing a link between them. This alcove could also be understood as a penetration of the solid wall - or a suspension of the wall by means of a vision. These vision-like qualities relate the scene to Sandström's implicit suggestions for reading the space in the Last Judgement.

Sandström discusses specific types of pictorial categories or 'realities' on the chancel arch of the Arena Chapel and some of these will be analysed below.

The definition of the chancel arch, consists of changing solutions to the flat surface of the wall which affect illusionism. The different treatments of pictorial space indicate specific levels of reality. Sandström has suggested that the wall of the chancel arch can be divided into apparent closed and open sections.⁷⁸ This creates illusionistic penetration, planarity and projection into the actual space of the chapel, which may be related to iconographic meaning. Sandström isolated five degrees of reality which affected the surface of the chapel in this area.⁷⁹ The dado appears to protrude into actual space, the illusionistic tomb paintings to contain space, the wall to show a continuous flow of space contiguous with the surface, the chambers of the Annunciation (Pls. 9, 10) to have the see-saw effect of being both protruding and flat, and finally, the Debate in Heaven to approximate the vision-like properties of the Last Judgement. There is a logical iconographic intention for each of these spatial solutions.

The contrast of these pictorial categories begins in the dado, which has a remarkable plastic effect owing to its illusionistic simulation of actual marble. At the same time, this section runs right around the chapel and also has an architectonic function. The panel section appears to protrude into chapel space to a limited degree, which it would do if it were actually of marble. The gaze of the spectator must glide from the objective aspect of the dado as pushing into his space, to the pictorial aspect which acknowledges the fiction as a painted wall.

The tomb niches, above the dado, "incorporate" space as if they were actual chambers (Fig. 7). Space invades the illusionistic modelling of the wall as if "real" niches had been built behind the wall itself. These areas are painted with an effective illusion of perspective, which works from the central nave of the chapel, relating to the position of the spectator. These tombs are also meant to be seen crosswise from the two side-altars which originally stood against the wall of the chancel.

The definition of the concrete wall is re-established in the scenes of the Betrayal of Judas and the Visitation. They are completely enclosed within a system of double isolating borders and the frescoes are depicted non-illusionistically, stressing the dominance of the wall. This connects them to the progression of the narrative on the side-walls.

On either side of the chancel arch the pavilions of the Annunciation are open and in semi-darkness, "...just as real, unlighted niches in

the wall of the chapel would have been." ⁸⁰ It is in this way, as Sandström suggests, that they acquire something of the reality of the chapel's interior and contact is created with the spectator, by infringing on his space. ⁸¹ At the same time Gabriel and the Virgin are connected, as has already been noted, by the linear direction of their chambers, across the gap of space which separates them on the chancel arch (Fig. 8). This illusion is increased by the white curtains, symbols of the Virgin's purity, which flutter outwards from the balconies of the Annunciation pavilions into the space of the chapel. ⁸²

Sandström suggests that the Annunciation frescoes oscillate between two spatial aspects: projecting and planar. ⁸³

The illusionism of the upper part of the chancel arch filled with the scene of God the Father dispatching the angel Gabriel on his mission to announce to Mary that she is about to become the mother of Christ also affects the planarity of the chancel arch. ⁸⁴ The pictorial space of the Debate in Heaven has no interior sub-division. The implicit downward direction of the narrative action, as God the Father instructs Gabriel to descend to "earth" with his fateful message, encompasses the whole archway in one sweeping spatial emphasis. This unifies the celestial and terrestrial zones of the iconography in relation to their different 'levels of reality'. The Annunciation has the highest level of spiritual reality, in relation to man's Redemption, as the Incarnation. The compositional linking of the Annunciation with the Debate in Heaven emphasizes Mary's physical and Divine status as

mother of Christ underscoring the interrelationship and meaning between the frescoes. Mary, it was maintained in Catholic doctrine, was conceived sine macula, without sin, as was Christ. She had a unique devotional purpose which emphasized her role as an intercessor for man's sins as mater misericordiae.

This position of the Annunciate Virgin, as an intercessor in relation to sin, may, explain the inclusion and different treatment of the pictorial space in the Betrayal of Judas (Pl. 11) and Visitation (Pl. 12) scenes. Both these frescoes have a low degree of reality in relation to illusionism and have the same type of pictorial space construction as the frescoes on the narrative side-walls.

The lack of illusionism in the Betrayal and Visitation scenes is important in guiding the spectator's response to them as placed on a lower level of reality than the scenes above them. This indicates that their didactic purpose is narrative rather than symbolic. Judas' inclusion on the Holy realm of the chancel arch can also be found to have its explanation within the iconography of the programme. Without sin there would have been no need for Gabriel's mission or for man's ultimate hope for Redemption. This relates to what Godby calls the "circularity" of the Annunciation theme, which heralds not only the birth of Christ but his death.⁸⁵ The depiction of Judas on the chancel arch may then be linked to the confession of sin. As Schlegel points out, the basis for atonement

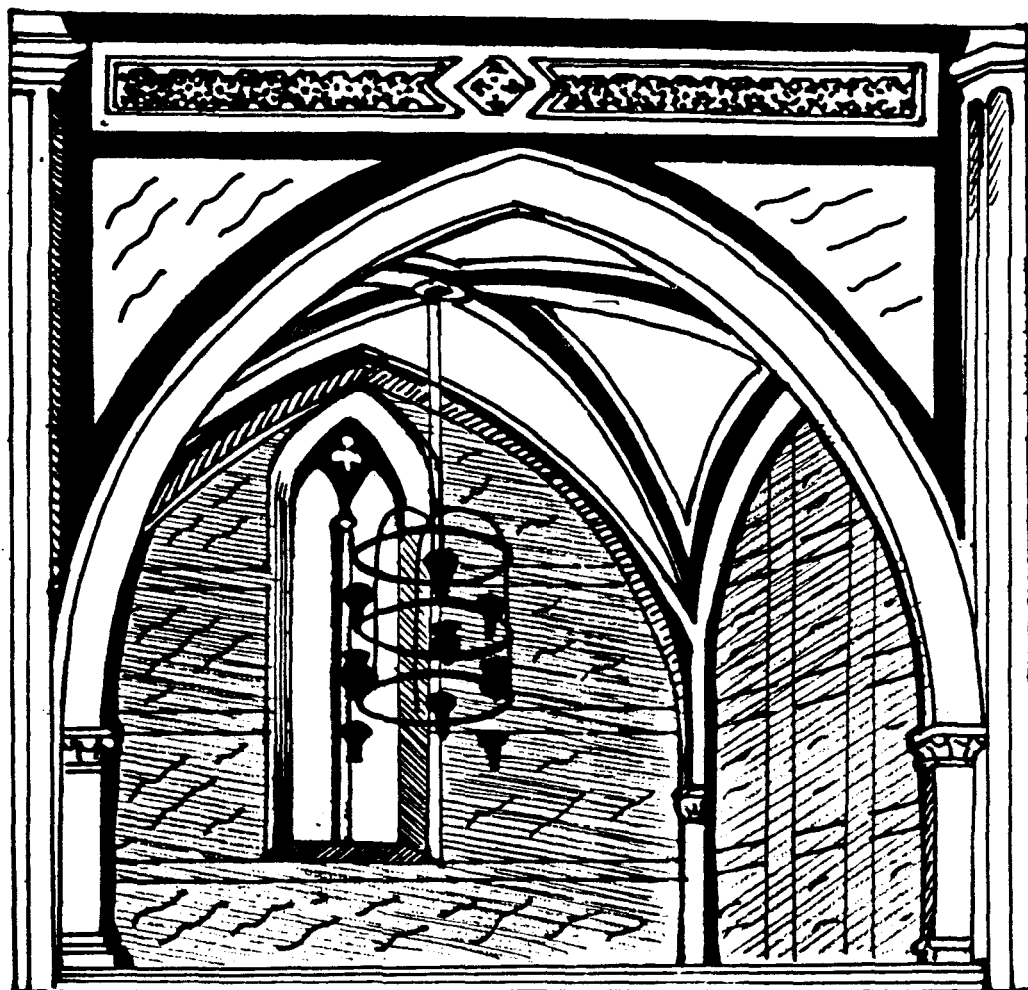


Figure 7 : Illusionistic painted chapel on the chancel arch of the Arena Chapel.



Figure 8 : Inverted perspective in Annunciation chambers on the chancel arch of the Arena Chapel.

is the confession of sin, for every sin is a "betrayal of Christ".⁸⁶ Judas represents the greatest betrayal of all and may mirror Scrovegni's consciousness of the need for a concrete pictorial "confession" of his sins of usury under the merciful auspices of the Virgin of the Annunciation. This concretising of his absolution would be logically exemplified in the illusionistic tomb chambers as "cenotaphs" awaiting his Christian burial. The Betrayal and Visitation are also linked to the illusionistic tombs by the flanking of their lateral borders with fictive painted pilasters and projecting capitals of actual stucco. Both frescoes have the same type of space as the narrative side-walls and connect them laterally across the surface of the chancel arch, linking it to the continuous processional movement without interrupting the iconographic sequence.

VII THE NARRATIVE SIDE WALLS.

ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

The illusionism of side-walls and their changing spatial solutions to the treatment of wall surface, within a decorative framework, emphasize images as placed on different levels of "material" or "spiritual" reality. The side-walls also connect the two major scenes of the Debate in Heaven on the chancel arch and the Last Judgement on the entrance wall, by their enactment of the decision made in Heaven and, by following a predetermined narrative progression, contain elements for the ultimate spiritual conclusion of man on the day of Judgement.

The common framework imposed on the side-walls simultaneously connects and separates the scenes as distinct steps within the body of the narrative frescoes. The scenes become a "passage" through which the spectator must pass in order to reach the altar or the entrance and, thereby, act as a continuous progressional reminder of God's decision to provide mankind with the means for his Salvation and the finality of his ultimate choice. In this way, a physical identification between the spectator and the sequence of the narrative occurs and is important to the iconology and illusionism of the programme.

An empathy between the represented human life of Christ and the spectator's own spiritual journey may take place as the narrative unfolds. The recognition of man's role in Redemption is emphasized in the narrative side-walls as the spectator must pass from the visionary experiences of the chancel arch and the Last Judgement to a set of didactic frescoes generated from that beginning.

In the Christological cycle, there is an iconography of theological parallelisms which clarify, for the spectator, the meaning of each episode and its place within the narrative. Pictorial organization heightens meaning, for example, in the Raising of Lazarus (Pl. 23a) above the Resurrection (Pl. 25) and the Noli me Tangere (Pl. 23b) on the north wall. The former represents Christ in his generic role as the conqueror of death and the latter as the conqueror of his own death.

John White has made a significant contribution to the understanding of pictorial space and viewpoints in the narrative side-walls of the Arena Chapel and sees the scenes from the Christological cycle as emphasizing the centre of their respective walls.⁸⁷ The Noli me Tangere and the Pentecost are notable exceptions leading the spectator's eye towards the chancel arch.

This could link them, in terms of symbolism, to the Annunciation and to the lower illusionistic tombs on the chancel arch, hence counterposing Christ's birth and death. It could also be suggested that a different type of spectator involvement is needed in these frescoes and a change in treatment indicates a change in their 'level of reality'. Christ has changed his physical reality from Son of Man to the Risen Son of God and, therefore, his accessibility to mortal man (the observer) must also of necessity change.

Iconology and illusionism become interdependent 'realities' on the side-walls of the Arena Chapel. The relationship of the narrative scenes to the wall surface blends the real and pictorial worlds, (illusionism and imitation) so that the function of different images, related to the central theme of Redemption, are treated through more realistic or conceptual modes of representation. This analysis will examine some effects of different types of pictorial space-construction, symbolic parallelism and 'levels of reality' in relation to the planarity or penetration of the wall.

The spatial solutions in the side-walls of the Arena Chapel indicate varying ways of articulating space in relation to the architectural

surface. The clarity of their framework indicates that Giotto was making a clear distinction between the istoria and the frame. At the same time, the frames create a visual barrier re-establishing pictorial space as clearly related to the mural plane. Within this narrative structure, as in literature, the narrator "... tells a 'tale with a tale'" so that the frescoes and the frame must be⁸⁸ seen on different levels of narration and, hence, reality.

The narrative scenes are ordered into two sets, of three parallel tiers, one of each wall, which both define the horizontal direction of the nave and are connected to the two major scenes of the vertical end-walls, making up the rectangular structure of the chapel and the length of the nave space. The uppermost tiers on both walls are divided into six scenes each while the lower tier of the south wall is divided into five, separated by the six windows.

John White offers several suggestions for the analysis of Giotto's⁸⁹ articulation of pictorial space with the architecture. The first method involves the way in which related spatial settings, with architecture set at an oblique angle, establish unity of place, which link certain frescoes across the nave, or laterally across the surface of the wall. This method connects meaning, establishing planarity and punctuating the narrative rhythm within the programme.

The second method of unifying related frescoes within the narrative involves the use of directional parallels, which create a grid of imaginary lines on the surface of the wall. In this way, the frescoes are "held" onto the surface of the wall, and any illusionism is counteracted. At the same time, the spectator is involved in following these directional surface patterns and paralleling related meaning within the iconography. On the level of iconography, another way of establishing contact with the spectator is the use of pictorial space and figural compositions which are closely related and which inter-connect formally and symbolically.

Illusionism is most apparent in the lower tiers of the Christological cycle in the use of foreshortened frontal settings in the pictorial architecture. This extension of architecture in the frescoes to the limits of the defining framework "opens" the frontal plane to a limited degree, allowing chapel space to "reside", in fictional terms, within the surface of the wall.

Before selecting a few examples from each of these methods to illustrate this suggested mode of analysis a consideration of the standpoints of White and Sandström, in relation to "realism" and "levels of reality", is pertinent.

In the upper frescoes of the Virgin Cycle White's analysis concentrates on the "reality of the architecture" as opposed to the pictorial space around it. In the lower Christological tiers his emphasis changes to a discussion of the "reality of space" rather

than that of the architecture in the frescoes. White does not, specifically, identify this change of emphasis but it emerges from his manner of isolating certain types of space-construction. This implicit admittance of a change in the "reality" of the upper and lower tiers of the Arena Chapel links White's analysis to that of Sandström. Sandström has stated that a classification of the elements making up the total artistic effect of any wall in a fresco scheme can, and should be assigned different degrees of reality as objects.⁹⁰ The frescoes may have an objective degree of reality, closely related to the wall itself, a pictorial degree of reality, with credible pictorial space in which the painted figures can move,⁹¹ or as part of the former or the latter another aspect emerges.⁹² This aspect Sandström calls the "motif's" degree of reality. This "motif" can refer to the depiction of everyday objects, accepted by the observer as "real" or can refer to the depiction of the supernatural.⁹³ It is, however, in the nature of aesthetic fiction that the observer must adopt a liberal attitude as the frescoes make visible not only what is in the real world but also things that he cannot give form to.

White's separation of the "reality of architecture" from the "reality of space" in the upper and lower tiers of the narrative side-walls of the Arena Chapel is, therefore, analogous to Sandström's premise that their level of reality is different. Some suggestions can be put forward to extend their individual analyses and indicate Giotto's iconological purpose.

Changes in pictorial architecture may have a symbolic purpose.

White notes, for example, that the only scenes in the Arena Chapel, apart from the Annunciation on the chancel arch that have a foreshortened setting of the architecture are the Annunciation to Anne and the Birth of the Virgin on the upper tier of the south and north walls.

He does not, however, attempt to link this related architectural reality to an iconological purpose. Each scene has to do with a miraculous birth. Mary is already impregnated with Christ as the "Word is made flesh" in the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel. Likewise her mother Anne receives her Annunciation from an angel, through miraculous conception. Finally, the Virgin, mother of Christ, is born. It appears logical that Giotto was using related systems of architectural construction in order to create an analogy between similar types of content. In this way he indicates, to the spectator, the high degree of spiritual "reality" between the scenes. White is corroborating, in a more implicit manner, Sandström's premise that the "level of reality" in related frescoes can be seen as affecting their meaning and treatment. Giotto is making this meaning perfectly clear to the spectator and this

skillful juxtaposition of several degrees of reality, interdependent one upon the other is the consequence of a definite plan and purpose, and corresponds to precise views about the relation between a given type of picture and a given content. 94

White's analysis of the "reality of the architecture" in the Virgin cycle is divided into four main groups consisting of variations in the position of the architecture in relation to the wall surface.

These groups consist of foreshortened frontal compositions, extreme oblique constructions, surface-stressing harmony together with the oblique architecture and, finally, the moderate oblique construction.⁹⁵ White also suggests that the choice of pictorial architecture may have a "symbolic structure".⁹⁶

White sees the interior of the architecture in the Expulsion of Joachim, for example, as similar to the choir enclose of S. Clemente in Rome.⁹⁷ Several other buildings, portrayed in Giotto's narrative side-walls, are also related to actual structures. In every case the identification is incomplete and Giotto has created a new pictorial structure from an amalgam of past experiences of the real world. The altar and the pulpit in the Expulsion of Joachim could also, according to White, be seen as symbolizing the two main functions of the Church on earth, the sacramental and the Divine.⁹⁸ The importance White attaches to architecture emphasizes his recognition of the distinction of the Virgin cycle from the lower Christological scenes. This analysis will be extended, in the sections on framework, to include a distinction of the two suites by means of their pictorial frames. It could be suggested, at this point, that the whole of the Virgin cycle is removed in time from the Christ cycle. This separation of the episodes as removed from each other in time could also have been an important reason why Giotto distinguished the Story of Mary from that of Christ. He clearly indicates, through his treatment of pictorial architecture as one of the ways of underscoring this separation, that the former narrative is a prologue to Christ's life and Passion.

In addition to this time-related theory Eve Borsook has pointed out that Giotto's Virgin cycle is based on the Apocryphal Gospel of James the Less (which was a major source for the Golden Legend)⁹⁹ together with the gospel of pseudo-Matthew. In contrast, the scriptural accounts for the Christological scenes reflect Giotto's preference for the gospel of St. John - especially for the Passion sequence.¹⁰⁰ This changing of the iconological source material could also have affected the symbolism and changes in pictorial space-construction in relation to the ebb and flow of the narrative. In one instance, the Crucifixion,¹⁰¹ Giotto used details from the Legend of the Holy Grail.

If pictorial architecture dominates the upper scenes of the Virgin cycle then the quality of the pictorial space is also affected. In both the Expulsion of Joachim and the Presentation of the Virgin the architecture is set forty-five degrees to the plan so emphasizing a certain conflict with the wall while creating a minimal pictorial space in which the protagonists function.¹⁰² In Giotto's fresco of the Meeting at the Golden Gate the architectural composition is,¹⁰³ according to White, of the first importance. The fresco lacks the complexity of jutting shapes of the previously mentioned frescoes and has a correspondingly calmer spatial quality.¹⁰⁴ Nuances in the type of space in the individual frescoes can also be related to meaning within the narrative progression. Finally, it could be suggested that the type of space-construction in the upper frescoes is less illusionistic than in the lower tiers because Giotto is contrasting the uppermost row of frescoes as objects and symbols from the lower tiers.

It will emerge in the analysis of the Christological cycle that the level of reality of the Passion scenes, where architecture is extended to the limits of the outer framework, in several frescoes, changes to include the spectator as an active participant. Giotto's adaptation of viewpoints in these scenes to that of the spectator in the centre of the chapel is continually stressed.¹⁰⁵ In the Last Supper, for example, White discusses how Giotto brings the architecture into the closest possible association with the surface¹⁰⁶ of the wall - and, hence, the spectator's own reality.

White also analyzes the internal spaciousness in the fresco of Christ Teaching in the Temple, in which Christ is emphasized by the firm arc of seated priests and elders curving back into space, carving out the "reality" of the enclosure it defines in a single spatial movement.¹⁰⁷ The sharpness and clarity of the spatial definition in the Passion scenes indicates Giotto's intention to include, through increased illusionism, the participation of the spectator in the life and birth of their Saviour, Jesus Christ. This inherent symbolism could be the iconological purpose behind Giotto's progressive conquest of pictorial space in the lower tiers of the Arena Chapel. Some individual frescoes will now be analysed.

The use of oblique architecture already discussed, creates unity of place in the Expulsion of Joachim (Pl. 13a) which commences the upper tier of the south wall, and links it to the Presentation of the Virgin (Pl. 13b) on the north wall.

This creates a certain conflict, according to White, which Giotto subdues by overlapping the lower edge of the pictorial framework in the Expulsion of Joachim, a device that re-affirms the surface of the wall.¹⁰⁸ If the admittance of the "material", physical realism, is considered in the Arena programme at the service of spiritual ends, then the use of jutting angles of an oblique pictorial architectural setting in the Expulsion of Joachim may be seen as emphasizing the physical and spiritual void into which Joachim must step after his rejection from the temple. In this way, Giotto calls attention to Joachim, who is emotionally intense and expressively isolated through his treatment of pictorial space.

Anne's sterility was due according to scripture to her virginity and to Joachim living in a state of marital chastity, castum coniugium, which makes the rejection of him by the priest due to his childless state filled with potent suffering.¹⁰⁹ Joachim and Anne were rewarded with the conception of the Virgin and the link is emphasized by the connection of the Expulsion of Joachim to a rotated version of the same temple architecture in the Presentation of the Virgin. In the latter fresco two onlookers, facing inwards, counteract any jutting angles in the oblique architecture while illusionism is limited by figures climbing the steps of the building. This lateral emphasis enables the integrity of the wall to remain intact.

Didacticism is emphasized by the positioning and identification of the scenes from the Virgin Cycle with the physical structure of

the chapel. Placed on the actual curve of the barrel vault, these frescoes infringe on the most celestial zone of the chapel. This is reinforced by their lack of internal bands of inner olive-green and outer red-brown liners which surround the lower Christological scenes. The centralizing tendency of the Expulsion of Joachim relates to the spectator's position in the middle of the nave, and connects with the Meeting at the Golden Gate (Pl. 14b), which is angled towards it opening and closing the first register of the narrative.

In a similar way the Birth of the Virgin, on the north wall, establishes unity of place with the Annunciation to Anne (Pl. 14a) on the south wall while emphasizing symbolic content as already suggested in terms of their architecture. Both are situated on the upper tier of the narrative walls and link across the nave. The passing of the bread on the porch, in the Birth of the Virgin, could relate to the spinning woman on the same porch in the Annunciation to Anne in a semantic parallelism of meaning in panis (bread) with panis involutum (wrapped in swaddling clothes) in a reference to Christ as the Living Bread.¹¹⁰

Another iconographic link between the two frescoes is the use of Pagan Victories in the gables of both houses flanking a bust-portrait shell.

...the bust-in-shell flanked by confronting genii in the gable of the house of St. Anne in the two scenes in the Arena Chapel of the Annunciation to St. Anne and the Birth of the Virgin. The bust figure here seems to represent Christ sanctioning his own mortal ancestry and the shell most likely signifies that he is visiting from the Other World. Christ's blessing on a time distinct from his own mortal existence is conveyed.¹¹¹

The essentially funerary significance of the shell motif could be extended to refer to the theme of Resurrection and to the role both Anne and the Virgin had to play in the Incarnation. Unity of place also establishes lateral linking, which emphasizes the opacity of the side-walls and their objective reality. Examples of this are the Presentation of the Rods, the Flowering of the Rods, and the Betrothal of the Virgin. This is also exemplified in the Entry into Jerusalem on the second tier of the north wall with the Carrying of the Cross (Pl. 15) on the third tier of the same wall and part of the Christological cycle.

The use of the same architecture and the diagonal link underlines, according to White, symbolically, "...the joyous entry and the harrowing departure."¹¹² Directional linear patterns establish the surface of the walls as flat, compositional parallels establish complex links within the scenes themselves. The walls of the Arena Chapel are unified as cohesive units with a richly differentiated pictorial structure which indicates to the spectator that the frescoes are interrelated, apart from sequential progression, by the real and symbolic linking of pictorial space so as to "situate them on different planes of reality."¹¹³

Some directional parallels occur through the positioning of the Cross in the Carrying of the Cross, which points to the Baptism of Christ (Pl. 20a) in a symbolic parallel of rebirth on the north wall. The central isolation of Christ, in the Baptism, creates a vertical link with the Crucifixion (Pl. 20b) below it. The three frescoes create a directional, compositional and symbolic trilogy of

rebirth and Resurrection. Compositionally, Christ is the centre of both the Baptism and the Crucifixion; it has been suggested that the placement of the garments, on opposite sides in each fresco, introduces criss-cross relationships as well.¹¹⁴ At the same time, the frescoes are massed more solidly below in the interrelation of parts, which are built up like a facade.¹¹⁵ In a similar way the diagonal of the Cross in the Carrying of the Cross is echoed in the diagonal rock formation in the Lamentation (Pl. 21) on the same north wall.

Iconography and illusionism co-exist in the narrative side-walls and shape the quality of the pictorial space where the scenes of the Passion of Christ are brought into intense contact with the space of the spectator. The frescoes are brought closer to the surface of the wall through the eradication of a definitive frontal plane. The supremacy of the objective nature of the wall system gives way to the need to place these lower scenes of the narrative on a different level of perception. This results in an "...internal gradation of the elements of the paintings - a gradation which enables different elements to be grouped together under a dominant form..."¹¹⁶

Contact with the space of the spectator requires an increase in the level of illusionism. In this way actual space and pictorial space merge in a symbiotic interconnection through a blurring of the physical barrier of the wall surface. Sandström has analysed this linking of different types of space, real and fictive as the "passage between the picture and real space."¹¹⁷ The

"transition", or obstacle in the boundary between spatial spheres, created by a limited penetration of pictorial space that declares itself as fictive, is eradicated in favour of greater illusionism. The lower frescoes of the Christological cycle, especially those on the south wall, are brought up as near as possible to the real space of the observer, so that a certain permeation of pictorial and actual space occurs.

Although the outer framework still exists and can function as an outer transitional barrier determining the frescoes nearness or distance, the frontal plane is opened up giving the spectator "a way
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into the picture." This neutralises the objective quality of the wall through apparent illusionism. The way this spatial articulation works can be seen in the following examples.

The four scenes, two on either side of the Betrayal of Christ (Pl. 19a), on the south wall, show Giotto's use of the foreshortened frontal setting in which the architecture has been extended to the limits of each fresco adjacent to its framework. The frontal plane of the chapel appears, in fictive terms, to become illusionistically penetrable by being opened up to the viewer. The scenes of the Last Supper (Pl. 18), the Washing of the Feet, and the Mocking of Christ (Pl. 16) extend the apparent dimensions of the chapel by a limited visual containment of space. Christ before Caiaphas (Pl. 19b), for example, uses a fore-shortened ceiling which directs the observer's eye directly into the composition, while the rounded arches on the rear wall of the fresco perforate the limiting boundary of the back wall by implying a further recession of space.

It could be suggested that the Eucharistic connotations of the Last Supper (Pl. 18), the subsequent betrayal, injustice and humiliation of Christ, reflect an iconographic reminder to the spectator of the price paid by the Saviour for man's Redemption. It would, according to this theory, be logical that the barrier between actual and pictorial space be neutralised to allow the spectator to "enter" the frescoes of the Passion of Christ, and participate in their spiritual reality. Conversely, on the lowest tier of the north wall, the culmination of these tragic events, in the Crucifixion, attains another level of symbolic reality. In the frescoes of the Crucifixion, (Pl. 20b), the Lamentation (Pls. 21 and 22) Noli me Tangere and the Resurrection, Christ changes his position in relation to the real world, his level of spiritual reality. Like the Last Judgement on the west wall, and the Debate in Heaven, on the upper part of the chancel arch, the high spiritual and symbolic reality of the events belie naturalistic representation and become closer to the qualities of a vision. Their accessibility to the spectator, is, in consequence, limited by their pictorial unreality. Neither naturalistic nor illusionistic, they can only be understood in conceptual terms in relation to actual space.

VIII THE DADO :

GRISAILLE, ICONOGRAPHY AND ILLUSIONISM

Giotto treated the three pictorial tiers of the narrative side-walls as a unit contrasted with the simulated marble illusionism of the dado area which defines the interior limits of the chapel with

architectonic effect. The use of grisaille indicates that the dado and the pictorial walls are placed on different 'levels of reality'. Illusionism is heightened by contrast with the frescoes. "The paintings are of paint, and so the stone panels are of stone too", is the insistent fiction of the frescoes in contrast to the
 119
 dado.

In analysing this illusionism Sandström sees the grisaille statues of the Virtues and Vices (Pls. 26-29c) as not having a high degree of reality as objects due to their positions which are not
 120
 technically possible in stone sculpture. In this manner Giotto links the figures to the simulated marble panels of the dado while re-establishing their reality as paintings rather than sculptures. Sandström suggests that by endowing the Virtues and Vices with greater mobility than actual sculptures and, in part, a spatial milieu of their own - the observer is easily brought to glide from their objective aspect to their pictorial aspect and back
 121
 again.

On another level this distance between pictorial types can be found to have a significant relation to the quality of iconography in terms of allegory. The allegorical meaning of the dado and its apparent projection into spectator space may have a specific function. Giotto arranged the Virtues and Vices in pairs so that opposites balance each other and contrast meaning. As the spectator enters the chapel the Virtues are on his right and have their faces turned to the heavenly side of the Last Judgement, while the Vices are on his left and look in a like manner to the part of the fresco

representing Hell. The high degree of illusionism in the dado increases the spectator's visual proximity to the allegorical messages of the fictive statues.

Some examples will serve to illustrate the relationship between iconography and illusionism within the allegorical structure of the dado. The role of usury is alluded to in the fictive sculpture of Charity (Pl. 26c) who tramples moneybags underfoot and her opposite Envy (Pl. 26d) who holds a well-stuffed moneybag. The allegorical figures of the Vices are often represented with a lack of stability which creates an ambiguous surface attachment to the chapel wall. In this way the figures of Infidelity (Pl. 27b), as a fat, overfed woman who totters towards the fires of Hell, and Wrath (Pl. 28b), who convulsively tears apart her garment, have a freedom of pose and a lack of gravity that indicate their fictive sculptural nature. The most unstable figure is that of Inconstancy (Pl. 28d), who is highly illusionistic in relation to the actual space of the observer as she "...tries in vain to stand upright upon the rolling wheel of Fortune" ¹²² and appears to "fall" into chapel space.

Justice and Injustice occupy the centre of each wall. Illusionistically they are emphasized by means of the fictive ⁹⁹ consoled frieze which splays out directly above them. Borsook maintains that their position coincides, architecturally, with the original division of the chapel into private and public ¹²³ sectors. The figures of Justice (Pl. 27c) and Injustice (Pl. 27d) form the base, visually, for the vertical axes of the south and north walls. On the north wall the broad central border

panel rises above the fictive sculpture of Injustice and runs clear across the ceiling, coming to rest between the central pair of scenes on the upper register of the south wall.¹²⁴ The figure of Justice is also linked with the border panel that crosses the vault. In this way both paired scenes are integrated as part of the pictorial structure of the chapel totality.

The base of the throne of Justice introduces several levels of illusionism. The fictive bas-relief frieze asserts the frontal plane of the chapel wall while the convincing space in which the throne of Justice is placed creates a limited perforation of the surface. This throne has delicate tracery surrounding its cusped pointed arches which reinforces its architectural reality. The dimensions of the chapel are extended in this area. The high degree of illusionism in the Justice panel could indicate Giotto's desire to stress the potency of his didactic message by making contact with the spectator a visual reality. Physical involvement of the spectator could equate moral involvement.

Likewise, the figure of Injustice is also placed in an architectural setting and a fictive frieze establishes the visual proximity of the scene to the chapel surface. The figure of Injustice is screened partially by "trees" which appear to grow upon a rocky landscape in the lower part of the panel. Their function could be to introduce an intermediate neutral barrier, on the surface of the wall, which consolidates the fictive nature of the illusionism. A certain perforation of the wall still occurs, however, in the recessional quality of the dark rounded archway behind the figure of Injustice.

Within the Virtues and Vices two pairs play capital roles in the structuring of the cycle of images as a whole and their relation to the architecture. The figures of Hope (Pl. 26a) and Despair (Pl. 26b) are placed at the west end of the south and north walls respectively. They form a visual and iconographic link with the adjoining fresco of the Last Judgement, on the west wall. The figure of Hope soars along a diagonal and her line of movement points towards the figures of the Saved souls in the adjoining corner of the Last Judgement.¹²⁵ These figures continue the diagonal axis, started in the dado, and point to the central figure of Christ in Judgement. This specific positioning of Hope could have an iconographic function and reflects the aspirations of Scrovegni himself in his personal hope for Redemption.

On a more abstract level the spectator can also identify with the figure of Hope in his confrontation with the visionary reality of the fresco of the Last Judgement. The spatial placement, the lack of gravity and the directional pattern, in the fictive sculpture of Hope, combine in a didactic logic which links levels of meaning within the iconography of the Arena programme.

Despair is also linked to the fresco of the Last Judgement, and points towards the zone of Hell. Davis has put forward the suggestion that the outstretched arms of the figure of Despair echo those of the huge figure of Satan. Despair is represented as an old, hanged woman but despite her neck being broken (by her own purse strings) her arms are outstretched stiffly.¹²⁶ This could

be symbolic of her directional link to both the small devil who comes to collect her soul and who moves diagonally down towards the right of the panel as though he just left the Last Judgement, and to Satan himself. Martindale has interpreted the figure of Despair as a "... symbol of religious condemnation of the person guilty of despair who becomes a prey of Satan for offending against hope seen as a theological virtue...."¹²⁷ There is an obvious effect on the spectator in terms of didactic content. Whereas the Vices are off-balance, indicating spiritual and physical loss of control, the Virtues display symbolic balance. Their formal relationship to the spectator serves to contrast man's attitude to the spiritual foundation and physical limits of the chapel, his stability or non-stability, his sense of choice, faith or lack of faith.

This iconological aspect is not dealt with fully by Sandström's analysis of the Virtues and Vices. He fails to establish that only the Vices are off-balance, whereas the Virtues are balanced in order to underline their didactic message and clearly explain meaning to the observer.

The Virtues are on the side of the Blessed, while the Vices are on the side of the Damned.¹²⁸ The greater pictorial realism, as opposed to sculptural illusion, is purposefully placed at the beholder's level. In this way, the 'level of unreality' of the Virtues and Vices, as religious allegories, is clearly stated as they are neither sculptures nor 'real'. It, therefore, becomes necessary for the observer to change his level of 'reading' the grisailles in terms of their relationship to the spiritual symbolism

of the Arena programme as a whole. Their allegorical 'reality' is clearly stated as distinct from both the main narrative and the more-vision-like areas on the end walls of the chapel. Placed at the beholder's level the Virtues and Vices show the observer, in the most direct way, the consequences of good and evil - the paths to
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 Heaven and Hell.

Sandstrom does relate the treatment of the grisailles to Giotto's desire to create contact between pictorial aspects as he states:

Not only the contrast between two degrees of reality, but also the oscillation between them is utilisable artistically. 130

Sandstrom omits to explain how this is also utilisable symbolically. He suggests that two of the Virtues have a measure of instability because Fides holds a fluttering parchment roll and Spes
 131
 hovers in mid-air. Contrary to Sandstrom's suggestion, however, Fides stands towering like a strong 'statue' against the dark background of the niche. In her left hand she holds her credo which projects, illusionistically, into the spectator's space. It could be suggested that here Giotto creates a deliberate contact between the observer and his Faith. Whereas the credo or document of Christian faith projects outwards towards the spectator, heretical writings are crushed under her feet. On Fides scroll is written : Credo in Deum/Patrem omnipoten/tem creatorem/celi et terre et in/Ihesum Christum Filium/Dei unigenitum. Osvald Siren has analysed the 'sculpture' of Fides in these words :

Faith is hieratic and imposing, and perhaps represents the Church itself, even more than a theological virtue.¹³²

Fides does not, therefore, represent instability and even the "fluttering parchment" has the specific didactic purpose of establishing a communication between the allegory of Faith and the observer's own spiritual commitment to Christianity.

A symbolic reason can also be found for Spes "hovering" in mid-air. Explained in iconological terms Spes does not display Sandstrom's suggested lack of stability. The figure of Spes raises her hands to receive the "crown of life" held by a small angel in the upper corner of the panel. She has small wings attached to her shoulders and rises a short distance from the ground floating upward"... as
¹³³
 though borne of a great longing". The lack of material weight in the figure of Spes could be Giotto's way of emphasizing her spiritual level of 'unreality' as her soaring frees her from all material bonds. It could, also be suggested that Giotto is clarifying the elevating force of divine hope for the spectator. It has been previously noted that Spes line of movement points to the Saved in the Last Judgement and this reinforces the didactic importance of the grisaille. In this way, Sandstrom's "contact between aspects" may be taken further to include levels of meaning in the allegorical figures of the Virtues and Vices which establish contact with the narrative, the end walls and the spectator.

It could be suggested that for these reasons the Virtues and Vices are placed closest to the spectator, separated from the sacred

narrative and depicted with a high degree of plasticity and illusionism which identifies them with the physical base of the chapel itself. The iconographic and illusionistic functions of the Virtues and Vices appear to acknowledge an extended meaning of spiritual choice within the Arena Chapel and the use of grisaille emphasizes this purpose within the programme as a whole. The use of grisaille, in the dado, reinforces, through symbolic allegory, the didactic messages of the narrative cycle while indicating a different level of reality from the narrative and more vision-like areas of the chapel.

The dado is also functional in its articulation of the chancel arch in relation to the high degree of illusionism in the fictive tombs. Their physical reality is reinforced by the realism of the simulated marble in the dado and an interaction with the space of the observer occurs. The fiction is increased by the apparent extension of chapel space into the painted tombs, which appear "filled" with space and increase the visual dimensions of the architecture.

Iconographically, visually and actually these areas function as "real" tombs, carving out the surface of the wall and awaiting the burial of the donors. Situated at the level of the observer and of the priests who read Mass at the side altars beneath the chancel arch, they are angled inwards, reversing the outward projection of
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 the chambers of the Annunciation.

IX FRAMEWORK

The interior structure of the Arena Chapel is reinforced by the use of pictorial bands. At either end and in the middle of the chapel three of these bands rise up arching across the vault (Pls. 30 and 31). The starred blue ceiling is divided into two parts by these bands, which function as painted architecture. The use of framework affects the illusionism of the Arena programme by linking the frescoes with their architectural support and indicating to the spectator that they are decorative units upon an existing surface. Framework reinstates the function of the wall. The three tiers of the narrative side-walls are divided by framework which affects, according to Sandström, the quality of illusionism.

One can conceive of each side-wall as being a unified whole which can be lifted down to reveal a wall with a similar architectonic effect these borders (express) a clear awareness of the real character of the picture: the borders indicate that it is to be accepted as a painted surface.... conceived of as an object and not an imagined opening in a wall. 135

A subtle manipulation of viewpoints occurs in the framework of the Arena Chapel. According to White the articulating bands across the vault are all seen frontally and parallel to the floor, while the rest of the framework has mouldings foreshortened from below. The framing of the allegorical figures, in the dado, is seen from a low central viewpoint corresponding to normal head height. The framework which surrounds the narrative scenes unites them to the architectural reality of the chapel wall in several ways.

Illusionism is subordinated to the needs of the mural system by a red band that separates the dado from the narrative by stressing the surface. The floreate border (Fig. 9) of the upper tier of the Virgin cycle is placed on the initial curve of the vault integrating pictorial bands with architectural reality.

Fictive mosaic in the form of Cosmati work frames the scenes of the lower tiers of the Christological narrative (Fig. 10). The framework of the Arena Chapel creates a pictorial grid which isolates the individual frescoes while linking them to the architecture. Each fresco is assigned its own potential living space within its border. Assembled on the wall within a common framework, the frescoes also share a related spatial setting. This cogent definition could be related to Thomas Aquinas' concept of manifestatio:

Sacred doctrine makes use of human reason, not to prove faith but to make clear (manifestatio) whatever else is set forth in this doctrine. 137

This interrelation of parts, with different functions and degrees of meaning which affect their actual and symbolic "reality", has the pictorial definition of a Gothic Summa. The three requirements for the Summa as a totality (sufficient enumeration), arrangement according to a system of parts, and parts of parts (sufficient articulation) and distinctiveness and deductive cogency (sufficient interrelation), are closely related to Giotto's structural system of framework in the Arena Chapel.

John White's concentration on Giotto's formulation of pictorial space in relation to the wall is particularly related to his use of framework which surrounds the narrative scenes on the side-walls and so unites them to the architecture.¹³⁸

Sandström also stresses that the broad ornamental borders emphasize the construction of the architecture of the Arena Chapel links them up to the rib-work on the exterior.¹³⁹

Both authorities agree that the framework in the Arena Chapel binds the three pictorial tiers of the side-walls into a unit. Both concede that the red-brown border which separates the walls from each other and from the lower fictive panelling of the dado limits illusionism.

Sandström and White stress the objective surface of the Arena Chapel which is articulated by Giotto's framework. White maintains that this painted framework is "... a floating, decorative unit upon an existing surface, and not a counterfeit wall in itself".¹⁴⁰

Sandström also suggests that one can conceive of each side-wall as being a unified whole which can be lifted down to reveal a wall with a similar architectonic effect.

Although White does not suggest an interpretation of framework as "levels of reality" he indirectly admits that the illusionism inherent in changing viewpoints indicates changing levels of perception which involve the spectator and hence the "realities" co-existent on the chapel walls. The uppermost register, for

example, is framed by borders which are seen frontally whereas the lower registers have a framework which reveals a tendency to recede towards the centre of each wall as a whole. Even the dado's complex mouldings indicate, by means of small perspective pointers, that the spectator's place is at the centre of the chapel.¹⁴¹

These adjustments to surface illusionism are interpreted by Sandström as modifying the framework's function and as reinforcing the homogeneity of each wall being seen as a series of pictures on its surface, because the sensation of identity between the picture and the wall surface is incomplete.¹⁴²

This is due to, firstly the false frames of the uppermost tier of the side-walls which create a minimal impression of depth between the wall surface and the picture surface within the arrangement of the whole and, secondly to the wall as a unit. In this latter case the spatial system of the side-walls is placed in relation to the dado which is not contained within the same isolating borders as the upper registers but is highly illusionistic in its role as simulated marble.¹⁴³

Sandström sees changes in viewpoints and illusionism in the framework of the side-walls of the Arena Chapel as directly related to the juxtaposition of different reality-degrees which co-exist on the wall. By means of the imitation of material the rectangles of the dado attain, according to Sandström, a strong illusionistic effect.¹⁴⁴ The dado appears to protrude into the real space of the chapel. This effect is heightened by contrast with the frescoes

above, and illusionism is heightened by the contrast between two levels of reality: the frescoes and the dado.

Whereas Sandström sees the framework of the side-walls as affecting their degree of 'reality' within the illusionism of the fresco scheme, White concentrates on viewpoints as underscoring their function as frames, incorporating spectator response, and forming the horizontal and vertical divisions of each side-wall. When White analyses the framework of the scenes from the Life of the Virgin he contrasts their arbitrary viewpoints, not angled towards the spectator, with those of the Lower Christological narrative.¹⁴⁵

He does not, however, seek a purpose in this change in spectator involvement, nor in the use of floreate framework and lower foreshortened roll-mouldings. He accounts for this and the lack of centralizing viewpoints as an earlier stage of Giotto's spatial development in relation to the lower scenes from the Life of Christ.¹⁴⁶ Sandström, in contrast, suggests that the difference in framework apparent in the uppermost register is so specific that it is deliberate and must have a purpose.¹⁴⁷

A different type of framework must have an effect on the frescoes "level of reality" and Sandström stresses that those in the Virgin cycle differ, as objects, from those in the Christological scenes. As the story of Mary in the upper tiers ends on the chancel arch, and thus does not recur on the lower side-walls, this distinction, expressed clearly by both framework and viewpoints, must have a

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significance for the frescoes content. Although Sandström does not, specifically, indicate what this purpose is, in terms of conceptual symbolism it becomes clear to the spectator that the Virgin cycle with Mary as a mother of Christ has, and needs, a different level of reality to the lower registers of the Arena Chapel. The spectator is purposely not invited, to the same extent, to participate in those scenes closest to the vault (the zone of Heaven) as he is in the lower frescoes.

The reason for this could be firstly, that the Virgin cycle is a separate story and, secondly, that Giotto was drawing on not only Biblical sources but on others such as the Golden Legend. This has been discussed previously in the analysis of the narrative side-walls.

When John White maintains that the spectator is not taken into as much consideration in the framework of the frescoes of the Life of the Virgin he is, in fact, corroborating Sandström's theory that they differ from the lower framework but without taking into consideration that this is in order to stress a gradation of meaning which is, through a change in the framework's level of reality, clearly explained to the spectator.

Framework in the Arena Chapel also has an iconographic and illusionistic function. The iconographic bands that separate the narrative scenes contain references to their adjacent narrative frescoes. Alpatoff recognized the potential parallelism between the
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 ten "medallions", or as Brown calls them quatrefoil

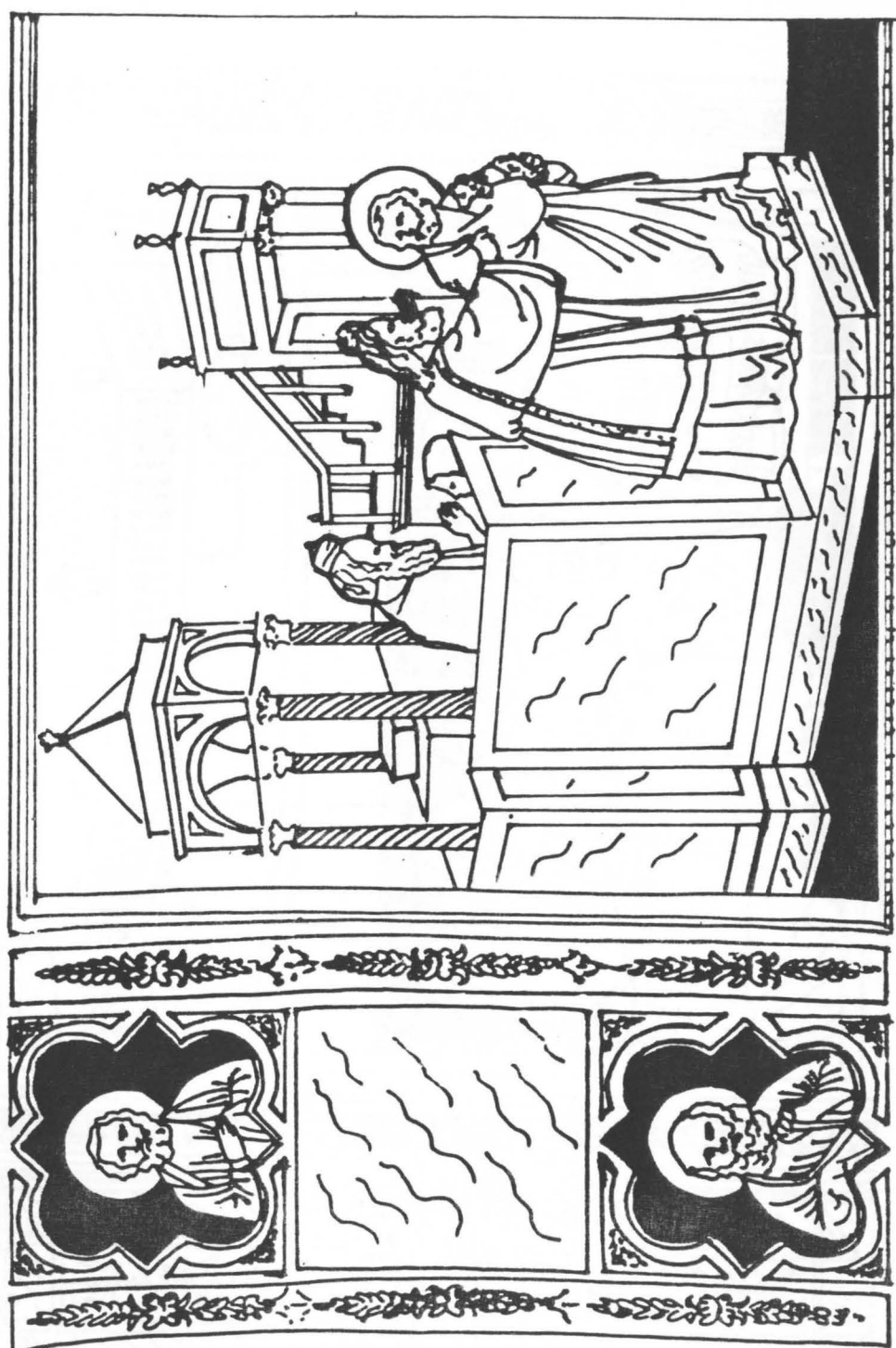


Figure 9: Framework on upper tier of the south wall of the Arena Chapel next to the Expulsion of Joachim.

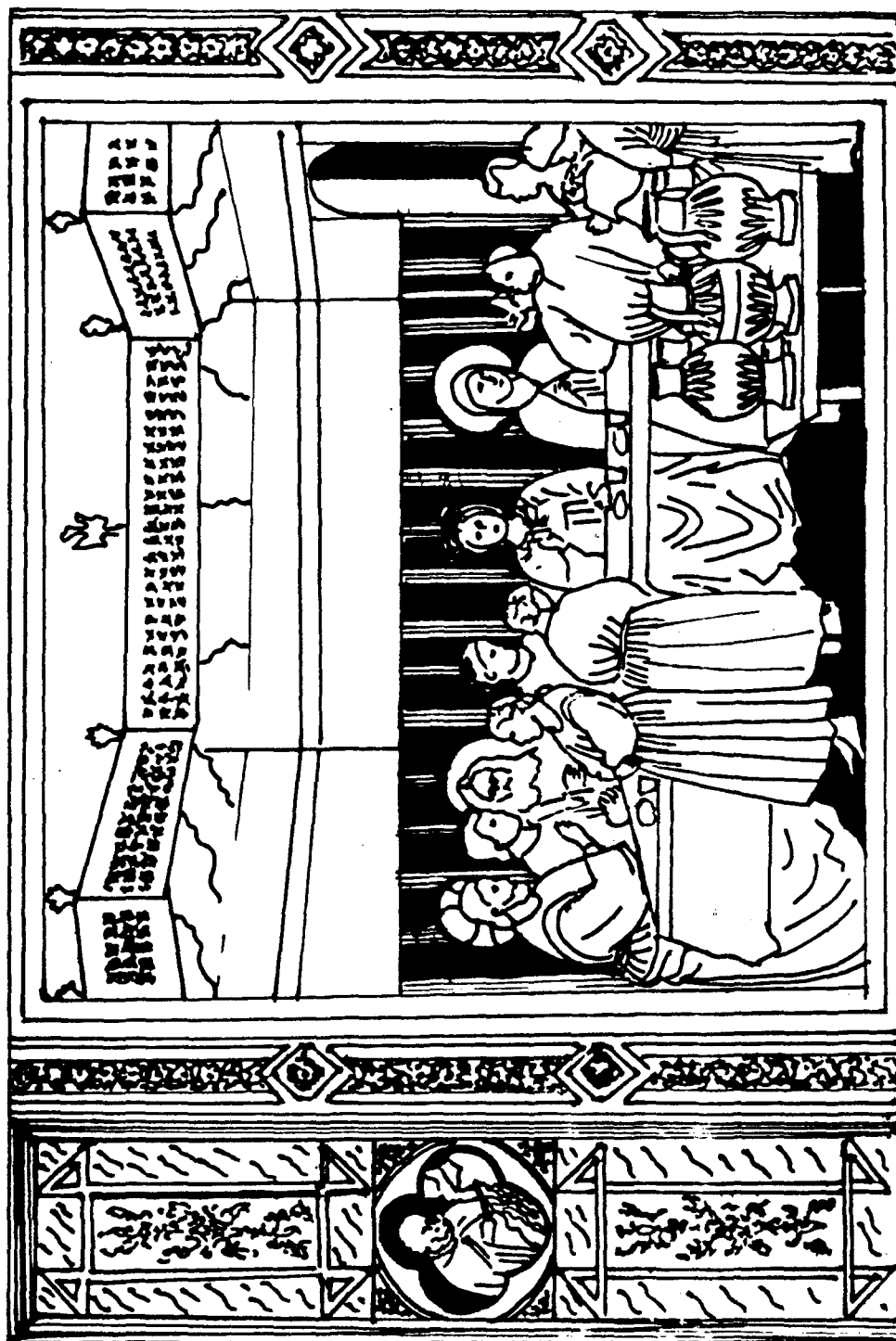


Figure 10: Framework of quatrefoil iconographic stop showing Moses striking water from the Rock, The central tier of the north wall of the Arena Chapel next to the Wedding of Cana.

iconographic "stops", as amplifying the programme with levels of
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 allegory.

For example, the Lion that breathes life into her cubs that were born dead, relates symbolically to its adjacent fresco of the Noli Me Tangere in a parallel of the Resurrection (Pl. 24). Likewise, Jonah swallowed by the whale next to the Lamentation is symbolic of rebirth (Pl. 22). The medallion next to the Expulsion of the Moneylenders from the Temple shows the archangel Michael striking the Demon and symbolizes the negation of the sins of usury in the programme. The iconographic function of the framework extends, in this way, the possibilities of meaning within the narrative, links the frame and the scene and indicates that both are to be read on different levels of narration. The illusionistic function of the frame is functional to the frescoes' reality as part of the architecture and determines the frescoes' basic effect of nearness to the surface. Sandström states:

If the framework and the pictorial space are on the same level of reality, then neither a transition in the ordinary sense of the word nor an invitation is necessary; for in such a case, communication takes place unimpeded, and the illusion comes to depend on how credibly the false architecture acts against other elements in the room. 151

That the Christological cycle is differentiated by its framework from the upper level of the Virgin, in terms of illusionism, is amplified by John White who interprets the marble frame moulding of the upper registers as foreshortened from below, while the lower registers have decorative bands interposed between the edge of the
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 imitation marbling and the scene itself. Instead of roll

mouldings White emphasizes the use of a flat marble rim in which there is no foreshortening as the framework is viewed frontally.¹⁵³ Framework not only defines the shape and structure of the vault but the tightly-packed Old Testament figure busts amplify the iconography by a symbolic reference to a pre-ordained will of God in the theme of Redemption in the New Testament.

It can be concluded from the analyses of both White and Sandström that the Arena Chapel is articulated by its framework so that the frescoes are fixed in a specific relationship with their spatial context. This involves the participation of the observer in uncovering the interrelation of the symbolic totality. Sandström this concern to a definite iconological purpose which can be extended to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between meaning and illusionism. In Sandström's words:

The skilful juxtaposition of several degrees of reality, interdependent one upon the other, is the consequence of a definite plan and purpose, and corresponds to precise views about the relation between a given type of picture and a given content ...¹⁵⁴

X CONCLUSIONS : THE TOTALITY

The fundamental premise of this study, based on critical evaluations in the literature and on field study is that iconography and pictorial space are indissible from each other as fresco from wall. Taking Sandström's premise that there are three distinct degrees of reality within the mural system as the objective, pictorial and motif's degree of reality, it becomes clear that the total fiction of these realities, in terms of illusionism, changes the structure

of the programme. The quality of the perceptual whole is altered by meaning, which shapes the spectator's perception of surface in relation to the conceptual content. John White's concentration on Giotto's different types of space-construction is not incompatible, within the development of realism, with placing the frescoes on different reality levels.

The total interaction of space in the Arena Chapel can, therefore be related to the following issues. The unitary space and the close interrelationship of the shape of the chapel and its pictorial articulation indicates that there was no need for Giotto to change the architecture to conform to his artistic purpose. Illusionism, where it occurs, functions in relation to iconography or stresses architectonic structure as it does in the fictive pilasters with actual stuccoed capitals, which frame the frescoes on the chancel arch. The interaction of chapel structure with its pictorial decoration is reinforced by framework which functions on both the levels of a barrier, limiting space, and as an iconographic extension of the narrative. In this way framework establishes planarity, articulates actual and pictorial structure and emphasizes that the conceptual whole is held together by its iconographic system.

The changing viewpoints within the framework establish contact with
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the spectator. The arrangement of the frescoes is functional in making up a homogeneous totality. Firstly, the narrative on the side-walls is closely connected to its framework demarcation: isolated in limited spatial boundaries, the frescoes reinforce the nave walls while admitting various solutions to pictorial space. Secondly, the viewing spiral guides the spectator's actual and visual locomotion so that he becomes aware of actual space, its

shape and apparent dimensions, as well as pictorial surface, its relation to plane and framework, and the developing story within the frescoes. This primary function of the spectator in bringing together all the elements that build up the total conception, is extended by the quality of the surfaces in relation to iconography and illusionism.

The side-walls establish a lateral direction but the end walls emerge as distinctly different in their spatial structure. They are non-planar, undefined by framework and indicate a different level of symbolic "reality" which affects their relation to the wall. In the Last Judgement and the Debate in Heaven, the lack of identity between the pictorial elements in the frescoes in relation to actual surface (the actual wall) alerts the spectator to a change in his level of perception which must be related to symbolic content within the frescoes. In a similar way the chancel arch re-affirms Giotto's intention for a change in meaning through the "illusionism" of the painted tombs, which include a portion of space belonging to the spectator and reaffirm the burial function of the chapel. It is also reaffirmed by the chambers of the Annunciation which establish contact with each other, across the chancel arch, and with the space of the spectator by projecting into his space in the chapel.

This iconological and illusionist purpose is also clearly demonstrated in the grisaille dado, which creates an architectonic and allegorical structure for the fresco programme. Through illusionism the dado, as closest to the spectator's physical height,

also defines the spiritual structure of the chapel. The continuation of marble into the framework of the narrative scenes unifies the side-walls by uniting them to the perceptual system of the symbolic whole.

In conclusion it can be suggested that the unitary space of the Arena Chapel is cogently structured in all its parts to create an indivisible unity within the totality. A totality which cannot only be related to pictorial space but must include an awareness of a subtle manipulations of illusionism to underscore the iconological message of the programme in relation to the spectator.

CHAPTER 3 : THE ORGANIZATION OF SPACE IN THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

The organization of pictorial space in the Brancacci Chapel is divided between Masaccio, Masolino and, later Filippino Lippi. Each artist interprets the iconography on a different level of meaning, which is reflected in the quality of each fresco's pictorial space in relation to the surface of the wall. In this way, the spectator must take into visual consideration that the programme, as a totality, is stylistically distinct in its relative parts. The perceptual separation of the cycle's distribution between the three artists gives the frescoes individual spatial solutions which affect the level and clarity of their symbolic interpretation.

The use of mathematical perspective, in the Brancacci Chapel, allows the fiction of illusionistic penetration of the opaque surfaces of its chapel walls to occur. The eye of the observer may, initially, appear "... to shoot unhindered into imaginary space", but a total dissolution of the wall, in terms of¹ completely credible illusionism, is never allowed to occur.

The organization of pictorial space in the Brancacci Chapel, by means of illusion-creating methods like perspective does, however, influence the architectonic effect of the wall surface. The decorative function of the frescoes as "painted wall" is not

stressed and the actual dimensions of the chapel are apparently changed by recessions or projections that occur on the mural plane. Sandström has observed that, not infrequently, mural painting is really architecture without quotation marks.² The use of false architecture in the form of fictive Corinthian pilasters which frame the four corners of the Brancacci Chapel affect the apparent spatial position of the frescoes, in relation to the spectator, to the same extent as if they were "real".

The high degree of symbolism in the Petrine cycle as a spiritual journey is integral to the type of illusionism used by each artist in the Brancacci programme. The use of mathematical perspective is combined with a need to express inner meaning within the narrative content so that images are placed on different symbolic levels related to pictorial space. The interaction of illusionism, realistic space-construction and iconography, determine the conceptual reading of the chapel as a whole.

This chapter sets out to analyse each artist's contribution to the symbolic progression of the Petrine cycle in relation to pictorial space.

I CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE LITERATURE

The literature of the Brancacci Chapel is extensive. Background information for the historical section of this chapter relies on

James Beck's compilation of important documents relating to
 Masaccio.³ This is extended by Watkins thesis on the chapel in
 which he deals with documents and sources.⁴ Watkins also
 analyses architectural changes which the chapel has undergone and
 the current restoration programme in the chapel has verified many
 of his findings. The concept of "symbolic form" in Masaccio's
 frescoes is related, by Watkins, to the way in which iconography
 is transformed in its formal realization.⁵ Meaning affects
 pictorial space and this chapter will extend Watkins' theories to
 include illusionism and the architectural reality of the wall
 surface in relation to the spectator.

Eve Borsook's general outline of the programme relates to some
 areas of the iconography and placement of the frescoes.⁶
 Patronage and political allegory are expounded at length by
 Anthony Molho in his article on the Brancacci chapel which has
 clarified the controversy surrounding the chapel's final
 patronage.⁷ Many articles and monographs too numerous to
 mention have provided background material but none deal
 specifically with spatial organization.⁸ Sandström and John
 White remain essential reading in the clarification of spatial
 concepts, some of which are pertinent to this chapter.⁹

II HISTORY

The original Gothic Church of Santa Maria del Carmine (Pl. 34),
 of which the Brancacci Chapel is one of the few remaining

sections, was built for the Carmelites between 1268 and 1422.¹⁰ An account book of the Carmine gives notice for May 28, 1386, of a small payment to workers executing the masonry of the crypt beneath the "chapella de branchaccj."¹¹ The chapel had been under Brancacci patronage since its construction in the third and last building campaign of the Church of the Carmine.¹² The dedication of the chapel includes both St. Peter Apostle and the Madonna del Popolo.¹³

Borsook maintains that the Byzantine Madonna, which forms the chapel's altarpiece, may have been installed at the time when the new Church was consecrated and that it is to her, as the Madonna del Popolo,¹⁴ that the chapel is dedicated. New evidence, however, discovered when restoring and removing areas of the chapel frescoes, suggests that it was only between 1435 to 1458, that the cult of the Madonna del Popolo was introduced into the chapel.¹⁵

During this time the chapel was taken over by a lay Order of Women who brought with them the "duecentesca immagine" of the icon of the Madonna and Child.¹⁶ Pieces of fresco, uncovered beneath the icon, which has now been removed from the altar, may indicate that it was not part of the original programme and was later installed, for political reasons, to disassociate the chapel from the Brancacci and the prominence of the Petrine programme by establishing the cult of the Madonna. In this way "... i frati vollero così eliminare ogni tangibile e eventuale

sospetto di connivenze o legame nostalgico con i Brancacci."¹⁷

One fact is certain and that is that La Compagnia di Santa Maria¹⁸
del Popolo was founded in the Carmine in 1460.

III PATRONAGE

During the years 1422-1434 the legal ownership of the chapel was held by Felice Brancacci, who is generally considered the patron of the Brancacci Chapel, although his patronage of the fresco¹⁹ programme will be seen to be inconclusive.

Felice Brancacci was a nephew of Pietro di Piuvichese Brancacci²⁰ who founded the Brancacci Chapel. The Petrine cycle's dedication to St. Peter could be a reference to Pietro as his name saint. By 1390 Pietro had no direct male heir and the ownership of the chapel passed into the hands of his brothers' families. The only brother with an heir was Michele Brancacci who, however, died four years later, leaving the chapel patronage²¹ to his twelve year-old son Felice as early as 1394. This became legal in 1422, the year in which Felice drew up his will, but the will makes no mention of the mural decorations of the²² chapel.

Felice's tax declarations to catasto officials in 1427, 1430 and 1433 also show a total absence of any reference to the family²³ chapel. Indeed, had Felice signed a contract with either Masolino or Masaccio, the unpaid balance, if any, could have been

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legally tax deductible. Molho has suggested that the cause of this could be that from February 1424 to September 1425, Felice, a prominent silk merchant, also served as a cashier for the communal fiscal chamber. In an audit undertaken in late 1431 it was discovered that he had misappropriated more than 2 900 florins from the communal coffers for his private use. This may have included unrecorded payments for the decoration of the chapel.²⁵

During the 1420's, until being widowed in 1429 and his marriage to Palla di Nofri Strozzi's daughter, Lena, in May 1431, Felice Brancacci was close to Cosimo de' Medici. His marriage proved to be a disastrous political decision which affected the fresco programme of the family chapel. Palla was considered one of the principal anti-Mediceans of the 1420's and after Cosimo's return from exile in October 1434, Felice's own political standing was compromised.²⁶ He fled to Siena barely escaping imprisonment.

Despite many letters of overture to his former friend Cosimo, Felice's banishment remained permanent. The result was that the Brancacci chapel, together with all Felice's property, was confiscated by the ufficiale dei ribelli during 1435.²⁷ Ties between Felice Brancacci and his chapel were severed irrevocably. When Felice was no longer able to provide the financial support necessary for the maintenance of the chapel, and for the celebrating of Mass and other religious rites within its precincts, the ownership lapsed by default. The

commissioning of the unfinished frescoes and the choice of Filippino Lippi was probably made by the lay Order of Santa Maria del Popolo.

IV ARCHITECTURE

The Brancacci chapel has undergone extensive architectural alterations (Fig. 22 and Pl. 34). The first significant change occurred in the chapel vault (Pl. 35). The original Gothic quadripartite rib-vault was destroyed between 1746 and 1748²⁸ during renovations to the chapel interior. It was replaced with a semi-circular vault painted in a Baroque style by Vincenzo²⁹ Meucci.

The alterations in the vault changed the shape of the chapel interior. The original structure divided the interior space into interdependent sub-wholes based on the linear diagonality implied in the directional emphasis of the rib-vaults. The reconstructed vault is downward-pressing architecturally but pictorially illusionistic. Secondly, the lunettes were destroyed and replaced, on the side-walls, with shallow rounded lunettes painted illusionistically by Carlo Sacconi to simulate grisaille architecture.

Between 1670 and 1674 a marble pavement and dado were added to the chapel.³⁰ The dado defines the actual dimensions of the interior space, which appears to undergo certain changes in the

illusionism and the pictorial space in the frescoes. In 1734 the frescoes were cleaned and in 1744 the Gothic mullioned window was altered. In this third structural change the window was shortened and rounded, changing the appearance of the altar wall. The original window was extended one and a half metres below the present one (Fig. 13).³¹ According to recent evidence, parts of a fresco below the window may have been destroyed.

In this same year a fourth alteration occurred. The altar was enlarged and a marble frame was provided later in 1782.³²

In 1771 a great fire raged in the Carmine but the frescoes, although blackened, remained intact. The damage was repaired in 1780 on the advice of Raffaello Mengs.³³

The alterations to the chapel affect the spectator's relationship to the shape and dimensions of interior space. The vault, without its diagonal ribs and pointed structure, has lost its upward thrust, which is now reversed by the rounded forms of the present architecture. The lateral walls, without the pointed lunettes, appear truncated and have a dominant horizontality. This is increased on the altar wall by the shortened window and the heavy frame which relates this area to the marble of the dado.

Within this altered shape the pictorial walls have an independent illusionistic role within the restructured totality. At the same time, although the frescoes must be viewed within the existent

structure, their destroyed lunettes were part of the iconographic sequence and meaning of the whole. The changes which will occur during the present restoration will introduce further architectural changes. In the light of this complexity the frescoes will be analysed in relation to pictorial space, meaning and the spectator, without further appraisal of the architecture other than the quality of the wall itself.

V ARRANGEMENT OF THE FRESCOES (PLS. 58, 59, 60 AND 62a, b
restoration of the Brancacci Chapel)

The cycle of frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel portrays the Events from the Life of St. Peter, accompanied by the Fall and Expulsion of Adam and Eve.³⁴ The programme was painted by Masaccio (c.1402-1428/9) between 1423 and c.1428 in collaboration with Masolino da Panicale (c.1383-1440/7). It was completed by Filippino Lippi (c.1457-1507) between c.1481 and 1485³⁵ (Fig. 12).

The exact participation of the three artists is unclear, and although this debate is beyond the scope of the present chapter, the configuration of the giornate (the patches of plaster laid on fresh for each session of work), has indicated that three possible periods of activity occurred (Fig. 11).

First, Masolino began alone in the vaults and lunettes,³⁶ then

Masolino and Masaccio collaborated on the second tier, and finally Masaccio worked alone on the bottom tier until his death and the cessation of this stage of the programme.³⁷ Filippino's completion from 1481 onwards, brings the cycle to a close.

The narrative order of the existing frescoes consists of two tiers. From left to right, moving across, it commences with the Expulsion of Adam and Eve (Pl. 37), attributed to Masaccio on the entrance pier, followed by his Tribute Money (Pl. 38). To the left and right of the altarpiece are Masolino's Peter Preaching (Pl. 42) and Masaccio's Baptism of the Neophytes (Pl. 44). On the right wall is Masolino's Peter Curing the Cripple and the Raising of Tabitha (Pl. 47). The upper tier is closed by Masolino's Temptation of Adam and Eve (Pl. 36). The bottom tier commences with Filippino Lippi's Peter in Prison visited by St. Paul (Pl. 55) on the entrance pier, followed by the Raising of the Son of Theophilus and The Chairing of Peter (Pl. 49), begun by Masaccio and finished by Filippino.

On either side of the altar are Masaccio's Peter Healing with his Shadow (Pl. 50) on the left, and the Distribution of the Goods of the Church and the Death of Ananias (Pl. 52), to the right. The right wall belongs to Filippino Lippi's Peter and Paul before Nero and Crucifixion of Peter (Pl. 54) and ends with Peter's Liberation from Prison (Pl. 56) on the entrance pier.³⁸

The narrative order of the destroyed lunettes was the Calling of

Peter and Andrew on the left wall, Peter Weeping and the Denial of Christ on the altar wall, and the Naufragio, or, Christ Walking on the Water, on the right wall. All these frescoes were attributed to Masolino, as was the vault containing four Evangelists. A few centimetre-square fragments of arriccio containing indications of Masolino's sinopie have been found underneath the reconstructed frescoes.³⁹ The detachment of the vault frescoes has positively revealed two sinopie as Masolino's original Peter Weeping and Denial of Christ,⁴⁰ The removal of the marble altar-frame has revealed a decorative framework of vine-leaves with bust-like portrait medallions.⁴¹

Although the restoration team believes that the fragments of fresco found beneath the icon of the Madonna could be a possible Crucifixion of Peter by Masaccio, this is not conclusive and it is possible that this fresco could be either the absent Feed my Sheep or Christ Consigning the Keys of Heaven to St. Peter, which would complete the iconographic programme.⁴² Pope-Hennessy maintained that this subject originally formed part of the frame of the altar-piece and consisted of a marble relief now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁴³

VI THE LEFT WALL : ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

The Temptation of Adam and Eve and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve, (Pls. 36 and 37) as Old Testament scenes serve as introductions to the Brancacci programme.⁴⁴

Iconographically, the concept of original sin as the cause of man's loss of Paradise and his need for Redemption would introduce the spectator to the spiritual reality of meaning within the reading of the Petrine cycle.⁴⁵ The spectator, like Peter, is linked symbolically to Adam and Eve as the first sinners. The space within the Expulsion fresco has a cogent three-dimensionality within the narrow vertical confines of the scene. The shadow in the opening of the archway, with its emanating golden rays, extends the symbolic significance of the scene, indicating Adam and Eve's separation from the zone of Paradise.⁴⁶ This merging of symbolism with space is exemplified by the angel who does not intervene materially, but, foreshortened, sketches out a circle which embraces the two figures below in an "...invisible niche of which the gesture itself constitutes the upper cornice."⁴⁷

Likewise, the use of red, a possible reference to Christ's future Passion, in the angel's gown and wings, introduces a single note of brilliant colour in the restricted chromatism of the scene. The non-specific background has a universal significance of time and place. In conceptual terms it is abstracted from reality, indicating to the spectator that it is symbolic of everyman's "expulsion" from the gates of Heaven. Masaccio has also reduced background detail in order to concentrate the action on the figures, whose deep sense of suffering is portrayed in Adam's gesture of shielding his face and Eve's anguished expression.

Baxandall has suggested that the spectator is encouraged to identify with two emotions ... as it is Adam (*lumina tegens digitis*) who expresses shame, Eve (*palma premens pectus*) only⁴⁸ grief."

The use of gesture and facial expression are evocative and invite spectator response.

Where medieval art uses a "pictograph" to symbolize an object or an event, Renaissance art uses dramatic evocation, trying to involve the spectator in an empathetic response. 49

A visual dialogue between the subject and the viewer is initiated. At the same time the non-specific space of the event maintains the sacred quality of the action and establishes reverential distance. The use of chiaroscuro and shadowed contour defines the figures' corporeal weight in three-dimensional terms. This affects the barrier between fresco, architectural wall and the observer in several ways.

Firstly, the monumental form of the figures and their minimum framework definition create a certain degree of illusionism because there is no distinct emphasis on the planarity of the wall. Secondly, the barrier between actual space, in which the observer stands, and the picture, is dissolved and an interpenetration of the two spheres occurs in fictive terms. This

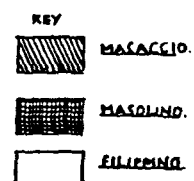
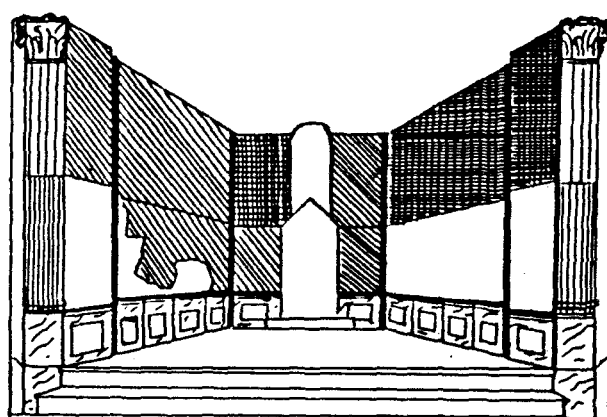
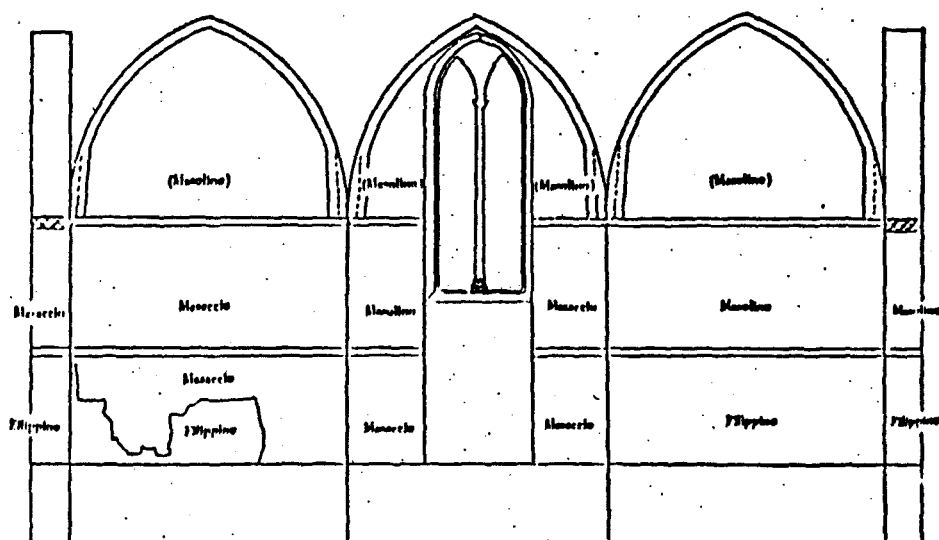
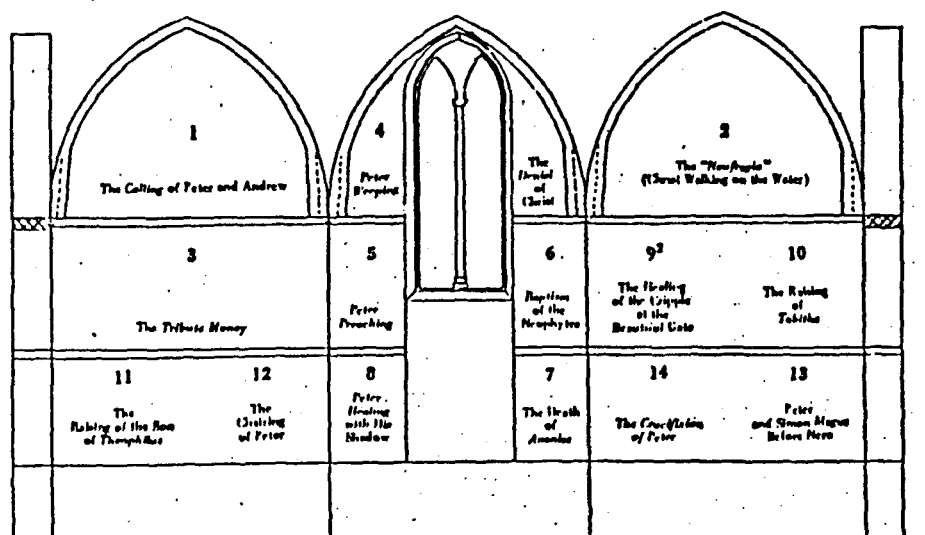
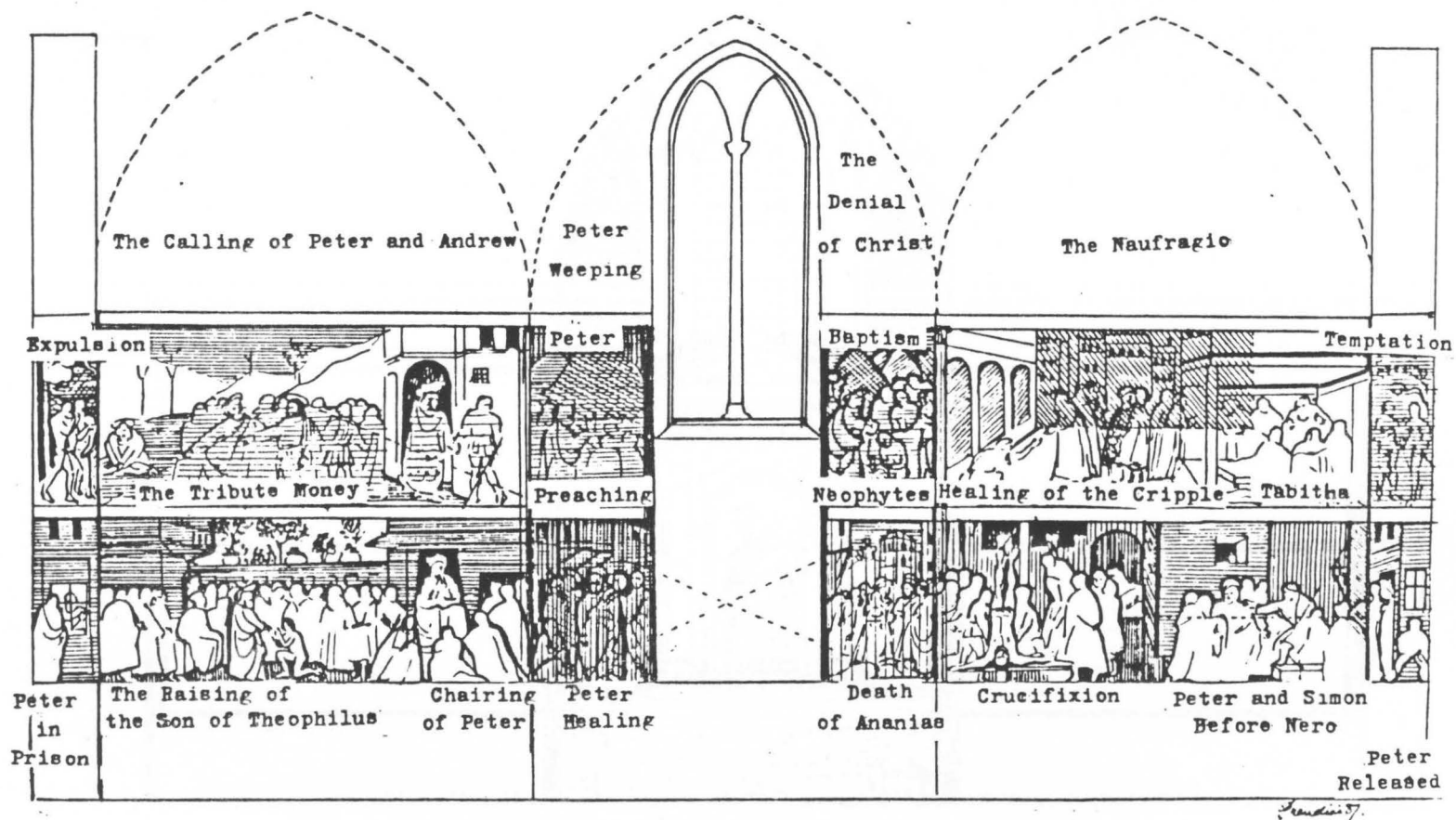


Figure 11 : The Brancacci Chapel showing original lunettes and window and distribution of the scenes

Figure 12 : The identification of scenes in the Brancacci Chapel



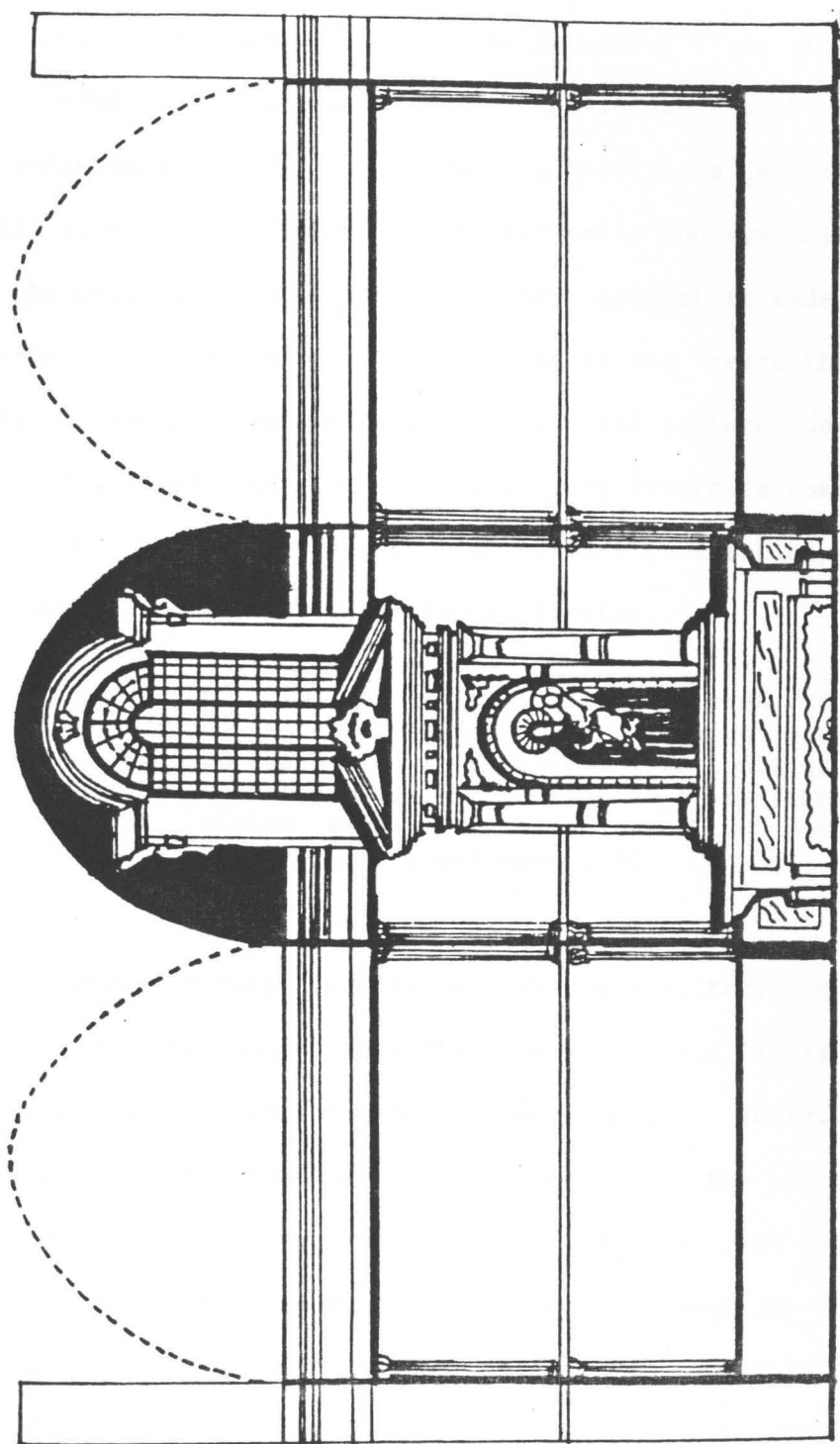


Figure 13 : Altar wall of the Brancacci Chapel with reconstructed window and altarpiece

results in the figures of Adam and Eve appearing to make a "step out into space" and partaking of the spectator's own physical reality.⁵⁰

Thirdly, the entrance pier, related across the walls to its counterpart on the right wall in Masolino's Temptation, creates an allegorical "frame" which physically and symbolically encloses the main narrative. In this context contact is made with the spectator by transcending the boundaries of the fresco through opening up a channel of communication between the picture and real space.⁵¹

The illusionism of the Expulsion fresco is however, limited by the low degree of pictorial reality in the background which establishes the spatial recession as limited.

An essentially aesthetic tension is produced when the consciousness of a work of art as an object - as a painted wall, too - is brought into conflict with the fiction of a space formation that is altered by paint, united with a representation that does not belong to contemporary existence. 52

Masaccio's figures convey meaning through their pictorial degree of reality and this "human" aspect is the key to the illusionism in his subsequent frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. In this way the objective aspect, the painted surface, and the pictorial aspect, three-dimensional solids defined by light and shadow, combine with the symbolism in the iconography. These two levels integrate to affect illusionism, not to trick the spectator into believing what is false to be "real", but to transform the narrative to elicit the full potential of its meaning. The projections and penetrations that occur on the wall surface must be seen as rational explorations integral to the iconographic totality.

The Tribute Money (Pls. 38, 39a, b, and 40, 41) is related to the Expulsion as a link in the chain leading to Redemption and the paying of earthly debts.⁵³ Both frescoes use a similar archway, a metaphorical link to Heaven, which establishes a certain unity of place. The fresco is not the beginning of the Petrine cycle which began in the destroyed lunettes, but has a "transitional" place in relation to the narrative sequence which Watkins has interpreted as related to its pictorial form.⁵⁴ The term "transitional", as the development of stages within Peter's position in relation to Christ, is indicated in formal solutions to pictorial space. Each stage on Peter's symbolic journey, from sinner to Pope and eventual martyrdom, is related to an accumulative degree of reality designed to underscore his gradual spiritual evolution. In another way this transition, in spatial rather than iconographic terms, creates the barrier, or lack thereof, between Peter's spatial position, in the frescoes, and the picture plane in relation to actual space.

The Tribute Money is divided into three zones of space. There are different kinds of space for specific actions. The scene of Christ commanding Peter to go to the water and extract payment from the mouth of the fish, so as to pay the tax collector, is placed at the centre of the composition. In the middle distance, to the left, Peter is seen taking the coin from the fish's mouth and in the immediate foreground, to the right, he pays the stater⁵⁵ to the tax collector for Christ and himself.

Christ is at the centre in both spatial and symbolic terms. He is also enclosed in space by the apostles surrounding him. The monumental density of this compact area of space is contrasted with the small, isolated figure of Peter collecting the Tribute money. Thrust off to the left of the fresco, Peter's position is pivotal to his relation to Christ. He has, in spiritual terms, yet to "earn" his place in the centre of the composition. Peter, isolated from Christ's enclosing spatial circle, appears "small
56
and indistinct."

Watkins interprets this as a process of transformation which occurs in the treatment of space and pictorial form relating to
57
Peter's inner growth. Peter is spatially and formally pushed aside, indicating the separate quality of this episode of the miraculous fish from the main centre of action, but he also appears shrunken and indistinct. The allegorical symbolism of Peter being the means to pay not only the Biblical debt but man's spiritual debt of sin which is linked to Adam, is reflected in the figure of Peter "... crouched foetus-like at the side of the sea,
58
and from these waters he is born to spiritual life." The blurring of contours and the atmospheric density of moisture-laden space in this area of the fresco allow a limited permeation of actual space, in fictive terms, to invade the picture surface which appears filled with air.

To the right of the fresco Peter affects space in an entirely different way. He is more monumental and is depicted close to

the wall surface. Alone with the tax collector he pays the allegorical debt; he is close to the spectator's own space and, at the same time, the perspectival lines of the architecture create a recession in which the archway frames Peter's head, emphasizing the symbolic link to the arch in the Expulsion.

The space of the Tribute Money is contained within a single network of perspective, of which the head of Christ acts as the centre of radiation and as an axis of equilibrium within the fresco. The division of the scene into three zones affects the surface of the wall. It is recessive to the left, planar in the horizontal linking of the figures around Christ, in which the internal semi-circle is counteracted by the back of the foreground figure who establishes the pictorial limits of the scene, and projecting, to a limited degree, in the smaller frontal semi-circle created by Peter and the tax-collector.

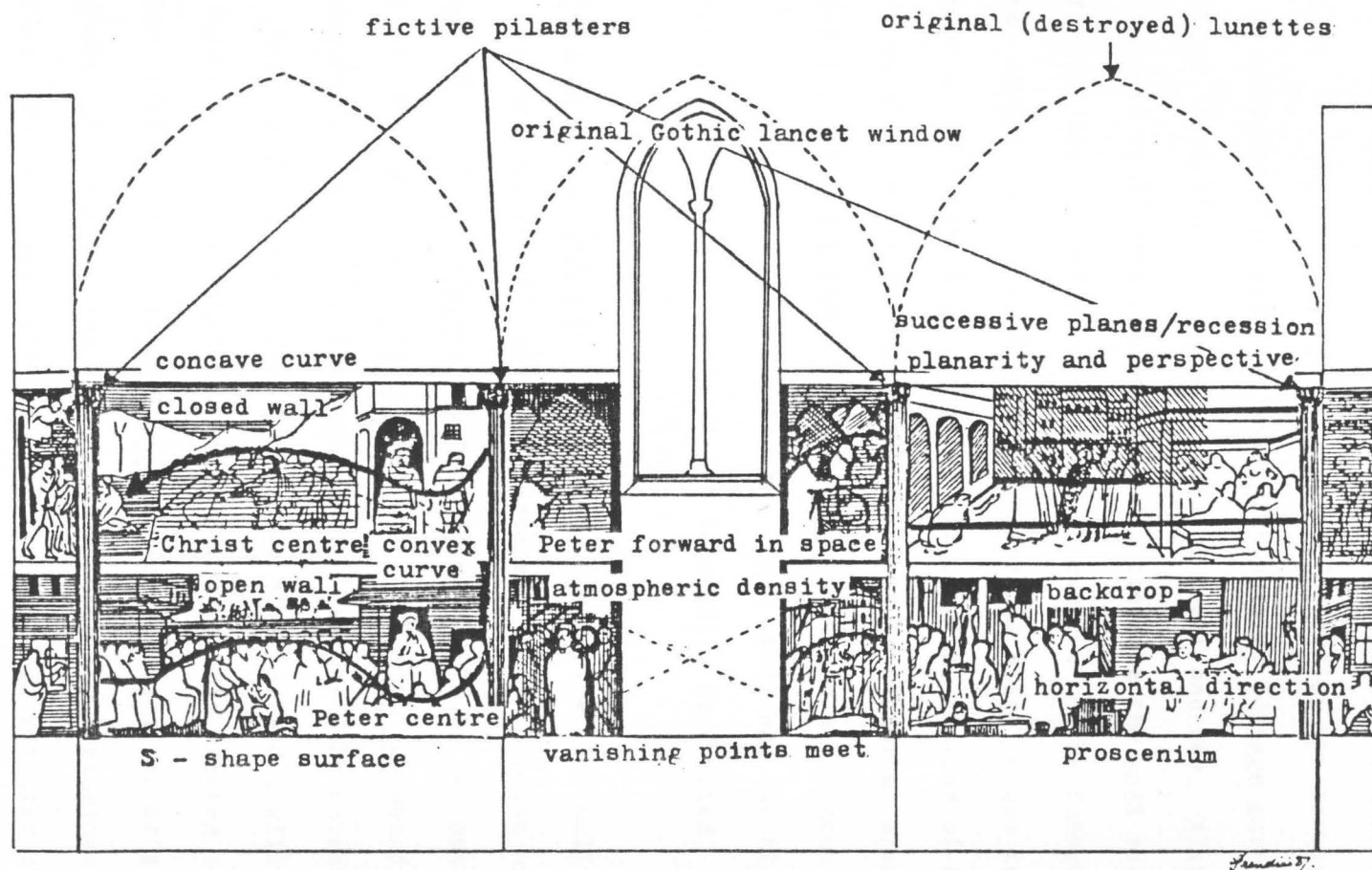
Three levels of perception are required which are linked to meaning. The objective reality of the fresco as a painted surface is attested by the limiting background detail which brings the action back to the foreground figures. The pictorial degree of reality is created through the rational perspectival space. Each pictorial element's degree of reality is related to the individual figure's meaning within the narrative structure and how this affects its formal realisation. In this way Christ, as the source of the action, becomes the focus of the composition's spatial unity, the symbolic "centre" and the spiritual link to

Peter's own position within it.

The Raising of the Son of Theophilus and The Chairing of Peter (Pls. 49 a, b) was commenced by Masaccio and completed, at a later stage, by Filippino. The contribution of each artist affects the pictorial space and illusionism of the fresco. The architecture of the fresco divides it into three spaces. The Raising scene, attributed to Masaccio, consists of overlapping figures within a rectangular plan of space in which they are grouped in an arc-formation. Illusionistically, space recedes in depth behind the frontal figures of Peter and Theophilus' son. They are the only figures who establish the frontal limit of the fresco. To the right Peter is Chaired and the spatial concavity of the central compositional arc is reversed.

The semi-circle of figures surrounding Peter "bulges" convexly into spectator space. This illusion is reinforced by the backs of the three figures who enclose the Chaired figure of Peter and whose drapery "spills" over the edge of the fresco. This suggests that Masaccio intended a slow and powerful S-shape moving across the surface of the fresco in plan (Fig. 14).⁶⁰ This S is formed by the two contrasting semi-circles around Peter raising the son of Theophilus and Peter Chaired. In the Chairing of Peter the saint is "centred" in front of the kneeling figures. Iconographically, this coming to a compositional centre is integral to Peter's assimilation to Christ as he attains a position relative to that occupied by Christ in the Tribute Money. In contrast to Masaccio's carving out of the planar surface of the

Figure 14 : The organization of space in the Brancacci Chapel



fresco, Filippino's figures flatten the composition with processional repetition. This does not, however, re-introduce planarity to the fresco as Filippino "opens" up the background with an illusionistic panelled wall with pots of foliage screening a further dimension of space containing trees and sky. Although this "opened wall" does not entirely disintegrate the wall surface⁶¹ it affects the illusionism of the fresco. The foreground figures appear to be standing on a theatrical stage, close to the spectator's own reality, and the illusionism, instead of being graded within the figures and their relation to pictorial space as in Masaccio, is separated into a proscenium and a backdrop. At the same time, a link between the back wall and the fictive pilasters, which frame the ends of the left wall, is created.

The original left lunette; The iconography of the left wall as a whole is influenced by the lost scenes of the lunette of the Calling of Peter and Andrew. Without Peter's calling the position of Peter in both the Tribute Money and the Theophilus would lose its sequential and symbolic progression within the narrative. Jesus said to Peter and Andrew : "Come ye after me and I will make ye fishers of men." (Matthew V: 18;20) This relates to the symbolic fish in the Tribute Money and is crucial to Peter's role throughout the cycle from humble and doubting beginnings. It clarifies the sequence for the spectator and indicates that a symbolic journey is taking place. The spectator can identify with Peter's beginnings and recreate a personal road to Redemption in relation to him.

VII THE ALTAR WALL

ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

A consideration of the statement: "The wall has melted, and reality and picture are one world to the imaginative eye", is relevant to the illusionism on the altar wall of the Brancacci Chapel.⁶² Like the left wall, the altar wall is divided with classical economy by the painted architectural framing of the scenes. A single narrow fictive architrave runs in an unbroken line from wall to wall, dividing the walls into two equal parts.⁶³ The fictive Corinthian pilasters turn the corners of the main walls onto the lateral limits of the altar wall. The non-decorative nature of this framework eradicates any barrier between the architectural frame and the pictorial world it encloses.

White maintains that a certain dissolution of the opacity of the wall surface occurs. The architectural illusionism of the fictive pilasters, mathematical perspective and the content in different spheres of the narrative affect the reality-degrees of picture,⁶⁴ architecture and observer respectively.

The space in the Peter Preaching (Pl. 42) by Masolino is organised by figures which may reflect the influence of Masaccio. Peter's dominant role is stressed by his scale and proximity to the frontal level of the picture plane. Masolino's treatment of the narrative is encapsulated symbolically by reducing number of

figures in the fresco, which becomes representative of all the converts in the story of the Conversion of the Three Thousand. Peter's symbolic and actual prominence is reinforced by Masaccio in the Baptism of the Neophytes (Pls. 44, 45, 46) Peter is isolated, like in the Preaching, to the left of the fresco. A significant void is created between his outstretched arm with the Baptismal bowl and the kneeling figure of the neophyte. Symbolically the baptizing role of Peter is linked to, and is the direct result of, the sermon in the Preaching. This establishes an iconographic link and a compositional parallel across the surface of the wall.

Masaccio, in contrast to Masolino, "carves" out the surface of the fresco by the semi-circular grouping of the neophytes to the right of the scene. The movement of the composition can be read along the heads of the standing figures, along Peter's arm, completing a rhythmic circle which brings the emphasis back to Peter himself. The figure behind the kneeling youth, who appears to be extricating himself from a white garment, has been interpreted as a symbolic parallel to Christ in his winding cloth and may be a
65
subtle reference to the Resurrection.

The high spiritual meaning of the scenes on the altar wall is acknowledged in the Baptism fresco as a "...ritual immersion in
66
the waters of a second birth." This links the frescoes to the reality of the Mass, as only the baptized may receive the Eucharist necessary for the remission of sins. The circle in the Baptism of the Neophytes is a means of including the spectator in

the inner movement of pictorial space as a symbolic circle of "growth". Peter has earned a prominent place and around him the neophytes are pictorially developed in varying stages of symbolic and actual "transformation".⁶⁷

Watkins has suggested that the grouped figures could be seen, symbolically, as stages in the spiritual development of the same person.⁶⁸ If one accepts his theory, then changes in pictorial plenitude, plasticity and clarity of outline are logical solutions to the level of reality each figure attains in relation to Peter as Christ's vicar on earth.

The Peter Preaching and the Baptism of the Neophytes are related to their fictive framing pilasters in different ways. In the former, Peter is placed further back in space and the pilaster creates a transitional layer of space in front of him. In the latter, Peter appears to be on the same level and can, in fictive terms, be seen to be no longer bound to the surface of the wall. His modelling with chiaroscuro and monumental drapery emphasize his limited intrusion into the space of the chapel.

In this way, Masolino's Peter Preaching creates a concavity on the wall surface because the space in front of Peter is empty, while Masaccio's Baptism of the Neophytes has a convex movement in the circularity of the composition in relation to Peter. Both frescoes limit background recession by hills behind the figures so that illusionism is articulated by the figural groups and their relation to the apparently "dissolved" frontal plane of the wall.

Peter Healing (Pls. 50, 51) and the Death of Ananias (Pl. 52, 53) form the lower tier of the altar wall and are both attributed to Masaccio. The diagonal recession of the pictorial architecture in the Peter Healing contributes, illusionistically, to the real space of the chapel, which appears to be continued into the pictorial field of the fresco.

A series of architectural planes and overlapping figures create a rational space construction in the scene. Peter is again thrust forward and dominates the pictorial space. The composition consists of two apostles, Peter and John, two followers, probably newly healed, and three cripples in varying stages of cure. Two spatial systems, architectural and figural, are combined in the fresco. The sequence of planes reads not only as diminishing perspectival depth-degrees but "...equally strongly as a⁶⁹ geometrically increasing system of areas proceeding forward." In this way the movement of the apostles forward, their spatial movement is supported by the architectural system which leads the spectator's eye into space and back again.

This visual movement allows the onlooker to further establish the kind of spatial relationship between the figures which is developing in the "healing" and the effect of its transformation on the group of cripples. The crouched cripple to the left is, according to Watkins, "... only half-made, a crude fragment⁷⁰ roughly brushed in." His companion is more fully modelled and the cripple closest to Peter is completely "whole". The

degree of realization of each figure's dimensionality is related to Peter's position and the spiritual miracle that is being enacted. As Peter was shrunken and indistinct in the Tribute Money when cast off from Christ, so now Peter's material and spiritual ascendancy is indicated to the spectator by making the cripples furthest from his miraculous shadow the most unformed.

In addition, the lack of three-dimensionality and flatness of the foreground cripple limits the illusionistic penetration of the scene by establishing the fresco as a painted surface. The content within this conceptual reading of the scene indicates that the full realization of form is developed on an abstract and symbolic level and links the figures in the Peter Healing, like those in the Baptism of the Neophytes, to everyman's transformation through Christ, which emphasizes the Redemptive theme of the burial chapel.

The Death of Ananias is related to the Peter Healing by means of their vanishing points which connect behind the altar. "These two external vanishing points, without actually coinciding, give sufficient emphasis to the spectator's central placing as he stands, enclosed by the framework of the architecture, and looks
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into the depths beyond." The pictorial space is flanked by architecture on both sides, which creates the linear directional recession for the figure groups. The illusionism of this surface penetration is counteracted by the horizontal emphasis of Ananias' inert body, which lies parallel to the frontal plane of the wall.

The centre of the scene is occupied by Peter and a woman and child surrounded by a semi-circle of figures. This enclosure underlines Peter's centrality and power in relation to the dead Ananias.

Space works in several ways in the fresco. The buildings establish a frame on either side of the composition. This frame lies behind the fictive pilaster which, illusionistically, must be read as the most frontal area of the fresco. While the buildings at the side operate basically to frame the painting, the towerlike structure at the centre tends to open up the space by its two-point perspective.⁷² In terms of illusionism this building affects the solidity of the back wall but formally it supports Peter's compositional verticality.

The placement of the frescoes on the altar wall reflects the liturgy of the Mass. The "positive" scenes are placed to the left of the altar, which reflects the liturgical right, facing out from the altar. In the same way the "negative" scenes are placed to the right of the altar, the liturgical left.⁷³

In each fresco on the altar wall Peter dominates the pictorial organization of space and the iconography stresses his spiritual power. In each scene the number of figures has been reduced to concentrate on Peter as the focal point of action. White has observed that in all scenes containing architecture the horizon line is at the same height as the general level of the heads of the participants.⁷⁴ In this way the onlooker is placed on the same level as the pictorial figures.

The original altar lunettes : The Peter Weeping and The Denial of Christ would have emphasized Peter's symbolic transition from

weakness to strength in his role of "healing" and "re-awakening"

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on the altar wall. Peter is typologically associated with

Christ more strongly than other saints. He receives from Christ

the charge of his role, being ordered to feed the sheep of Christ

and he is given the Keys of Heaven. "He is the fisher, Christ the

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fish." As a sequel to the Peter who wavered and denied

Christ, the Peter on the altar wall speaks of both Resurrection

and Baptism as he immerses his followers in the waters of Eternal

Life.

VIII THE RIGHT WALL :

ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

The Healing of the Cripple at the Beautiful Gate and the Raising of Tabitha (Pls. 47 and 48) is attributed solely to Masolino. The

fresco consists of three scenes and its central vanishing point has little iconographic significance. Perspective in the fresco

"... expresses nothing but the unity of space in which the

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separate incidents take place." Pictorial space is

independent from narrative meaning and only the "mechanical

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qualities of the spatial unity are recognised." Perspective

is used in a non-dramatic way and is linked to the exploration of

its depth-creating possibilities more than as a means of evoking

symbolic nuances within the narrative structure.

In terms of illusionism, however, the spectator's eye is drawn straight into the pictorial space. This visual journey is emphasized by abrupt changes of architectural and figure scale. Unlike the slow drama of Masaccio's figural groups in various stages of dimensionality linked to their ascending level of reality within the iconographic progression, Masolino's fresco has a quicker movement based on change of scale. There is little transitional linking between the background and the foreground space, and even the pair of youths who walk obliquely from the background past one episode in the direction of another do not connect the spatial zones.

As in Tribute Money, there are three definite distinct spatial zones. This division of the surface provides definite and related scenes for the healing of the cripple, the messenger and the ⁷⁹Raising of Tabitha. This narrative division of space isolates the different stages of the story. Space, in this way, is divided functionally to facilitate the reading of the narrative content. The decorative figures and the use of costume detail establish a frontal planarity lacking in Masaccio's more sculptural and monumental figures. The scenes of the cripple and Tabitha are set into equivalent areas, both forward and in picture space, both at the sides, and both with movements parallel to the picture plane.

Masolino's simple perspective system creates shapes that form a surface pattern just as successfully as they drive back into

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depth. His retention of a decorative linearism, reminiscent of the International Gothic Style, gives the fresco a greater frontality and elegance than the rest of the Brancacci programme. Masolino follows the sequence of the iconography in the placement of the scenes. In other words, the iconography undergoes rather little transformation at Masolino's hands, and is instead painted out in a pictorial fashion relying heavily for its meaning upon
81
the narrative sources.

In this way, illusionism is related to narrative concerns and is integrated with meaning in a separate, rather than an integral, manner like Masaccio. This different approach to illusionism becomes evident in the lack of chiaroscuro in favour of a deep, clarified pictorial space filled with light in Masolino's fresco. At the same time, the figures all have the same degree of dimensionality and undergo little transformation in relation to their degree of importance within the narrative. The illusionism comes to rely on a cogent recession of space, not a gradual attainment of pictorial plenitude. Illusionism, hence, is not graded but direct, not transitional but episodic, and this affects the spectator's response to the apparent and actual surface of the chapel wall.

The circularity of Masaccio's compositions with their articulated architecture and figure groups, the bright recessional planes of Masolino's space-construction and decorative figures, are changed and flattened by the late Quattrocento hand of Filippino Lippi in

the Crucifixion of Peter and Peter and Simon Magus Before Nero, (Pl. 54) on the lower right wall. The Petrine cycle culminates in Peter's martyrdom as a glorious end to his spiritual journey.

The fresco is divided into two episodes, separated by a central archway which "opens" up the back wall of the fresco. Space could be seen to perforate this area but the painted architecture is parallel to the picture plane and re-establishes a "wall" behind the figures. This wall creates two levels of space. Firstly, the frontal plane appears totally dissolved and the figures, both theatrical in gesture and in their apparent placement on a type of proscenium, partake of the same space in which the observer stands.

Secondly, the only wall that still appears solid is the pictorial one created by the painted architecture. This gives the illusion of an increase in the actual dimensions of the chapel, because, if the frontal plane is transparent, it can, according to visual logic, be seen to be reconstructed behind the figures. In other words, Filippino "pushes" the wall surface further back into space.⁸² The figures are composed parallel to the architecture in the fresco and gesture in the direction of the Crucifixion. The high spiritual reality of the theme of the Crucifixion is counter-acted, to an extent, by the lack of a frontal barrier. The very accessibility of the scene, in which the spectator can visually step up onto the frontal stage, limits his symbolic distance. Symbolic hierarchies are no longer indicated. The

parity of the insistent illusionism of the picture surface places Peter on the same pictorial level as the other protagonists in the fresco. His attainment, through martyrdom, or "glorious death" of final assimilation to Christ, is not emphasized.

The original right wall lunette and the extant entrance piers :
the discovery of the sinopie of Peter Weeping and his Denial on the altar wall lunettes gives credence to Vasari's supposed placement of the Naufragio above the frescoes of the right wall. As Vasari permits us to reconstruct it, the cycle of the acts of St. Peter is completely of the conventional type. He, like Watkins, places the Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew above the Tribute Money; the Peter Weeping was in the small field beside the window; the Naufragio, or Christ Walking on the Water, filled the other lunette. Peter, in this lunette, may be imagined as a man full of doubt and cowardice, in contrast to his increased status in his role as healer in the Tabitha, and his glorious death in the Crucifixion. From a man of fear he becomes a man with no fear through Redemption. He no longer has a need to cry out, as when Christ bid him to come to him upon the water, "Lord
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save me", for he is Saved. The lunette is important to the symbolic reading of the right wall of the Brancacci chapel.

Filippino's Prison scenes, on the lower tiers of the right and left wall, frame the related bottom sections of the programme. Peter at the court of Theophilus is framed by the Peter in Prison (Pl. 55) scene and the Crucifixion is bounded by his Liberation by the Angel. (Pl. 56) The interrelation between the two scenes, on the lower entrance piers, differs from the integral symbolic connection of the upper scenes of Masaccio's Expulsion, on the

left wall, and Masolino's Temptation, on the right. Both concretise the cause and effect of original sin and link the entire cycle to Peter in relation to Adam in terms of the Redemptive theme of the chapel. The entrance piers and the lost lunettes are important to the iconographic totality of the Brancacci cycle in relation to Peter.

IX POLITICAL ALLEGORY

The investigation of the iconographic programme of the Brancacci chapel is incomplete without a mention of some possible influences of political allegory on the selected scenes.

Peter in the lunette of the Calling of Peter and Andrew, could be seen as a prefiguration of the Church, the Naufragio as a testing of Peter's faith and that of the Church, embodied in his persona. The four representations in the scenes of Peter "healing" and "re-awakening" have an implicit reference to the Resurrection but are seen by Molho as allegories which "... underline Peter's primacy in the Church."⁸⁴ According to his theory the scenes in the upper register on the altar wall depict Peter alone, to indicate the basic missionary work of the Church, the potestates predicandi et baptizandi.⁸⁵ Likewise, the Ananias scene is seen as significant to the papacy's claims that it had ultimate jurisdiction over all ecclesiastical property.⁸⁶ The Tribute Money could then refer, not only to Peter's allegorical debt for mankind, but also to the Church's position on the taxation of the clergy. The Raising of the Son of Theophilus and the Chairing of Peter could also relate to Church matters as Theophilus kneels in

front of the enthroned Peter, stressing, according to Molho, the
⁸⁷
 submission of secular to papal authority.

Finally, Peter has a special relationship to the Church in its institutional role. He was exalted in three Churches, the Church Militant, the Church of Converted Pagans and the Church
⁸⁸
 Triumphant. Likewise, three feasts of Peter are celebrated every year. The feast of the Chairing of Peter was also celebrated as the day of the dead "... in which the living invoke the presence of the dead so that they too may be ensured of
⁸⁹
 Salvation and Eternal Life."

X FRAMEWORK (GRISAILLE AND ILLUSIONISM)

The non-decorative framework of the Brancacci chapel does not stress the objective nature of the picture surface. The fictive Corinthian pilasters that frame the corners of the chapel have an architectonic function which extends the real architecture of the chapel in terms of illusionism. This occurs because the framework is executed in grisaille and relates more to the architectural reality of the chapel than to the pictorial reality of the frescoes. In this way the frontal plane of the frescoes appears transparent and the space in the frescoes appears to have the same level of reality as the actual space of the chapel. In contrast, the grisaille pilasters and horizontal framing that simulate a fictive architrave belong on a different level of perception from the frescoes.

During the current restoration of the chapel, floreate framework has been discovered under the marble altarpiece (Pls. 59, 60, 61). It combines curvilinear vine-leaves with bunches of grapes. Both borders, the left side attributed to Masolino and the right to Masaccio, are outlined by several neutral liners, a central red-brown liner being the widest. Parts of the borders are interrupted by circular iconographic stops. These contain bust portraits, (Pl. 58) possibly of the Brancacci family.⁹⁰ Iconographically, the vine could refer to Christ's Passion and relate, in terms of placement, to the Eucharistic rites of the Mass on the altar wall. Illusionistically, these new, previously unknown border frames stress the planarity of the wall surface being decorative and outlined with non-spatial liners.

XI CONCLUSION : THE TOTALITY

The organization of space in the Brancacci Chapel is affected by the loss of the original vault, lunettes and reconstruction of the altar wall. The political disgrace of the Brancacci family interrupted the programme and delayed its completion. The architectural framework holds the disparate spatial systems together in a logical whole. The spatial language of each artist affects the perceptual shape of the wall surface in the chapel. Masolino's sense of pattern prevents the spectator from "looking through" the plane of the image as if it were transparent or non-existent, while his cogent perspectival space-construction is

rationalised with the reality of the flat surface.

Masolino uses a series of horizontal layers in his pictorial recession, determined by the placement and dramatic scale reduction of his figures. At the same time, their three-dimensionality is counteracted by decorative details so that the inter-relationship of forms on the surface is stressed. In this way, Masolino's figures occupy space but do not "displace" it with their corporeal weight because of their decorative relationship to the frontal plane of the wall.

In contrast, Masaccio's figural density, contour and chiaroscuro emphasize the three-dimensionality of his figures in relation to the flat planarity of the wall. This mass and space displacement affects their surface illusionism. Objects of mass and volume possess a major characteristic which tends to protrude on space-perception, for example, the movement and shape of their surface areas.⁹¹ Masaccio's pictorial space incorporates mathematical perspective with mass volume (monumental figures and architecture), space volume (a limited realistic space in the frescoes), and surface volume (the apparent dissolution of the frontal plane). In this way, "... the visual sense is so closely attuned to the tactile that it is possible to 'feel' the surface⁹² merely by intensive looking".

Masaccio's compositions are centralized to incorporate a direct relationship with the viewer and use circular movements within the

frescoes to link symbolic elements within the meaning of the scenes. Actual architecture is related to pictorial architecture. In this way, the frescoes appear to include actual space, while the use of fictive pilasters creates a transparent frontal plane on all the walls of the Brancacci Chapel.

Filippino Lippi's use of a frontal stage interacts with the transparent frontal barrier, created by the use of false architecture, emphasizing the impression that the frescoes are penetrable to a limited degree. His "opening" of sections of the background to include vistas of space or landscape makes his frescoes the most credible in terms of illusionism.

Masaccio's attention to the symbolic meaning in the iconography of the Petrine cycle influences the linking of the programme as a conceptual totality. The spectator becomes aware of a progressional spiritual journey culminating in Peter's martyrdom. In this way, although there are different spatial systems in the distribution of the scenes between Masaccio, Masolino and Filippino Lippi, the essential importance of the role of Peter is implicit in the programme.

The three spatial systems in the Brancacci chapel involve the spectator in adjusting his perception of the frescoes, placing them on different levels of symbolic reality in relation to changes within the pictorial progression of the narrative. The spatial and compositional system of each artist changes the

quality of the wall surface in a different way. At the same time, the actual space in the chapel appears to be extended or reduced in relation to the different pictorial solutions which either incorporate space or project into the chapel. Only Masolino's attention to the wall as wall establishes that all the fluctuations on the surface of the chapel interior are only illusions.

The loss of parts of the Brancacci programme, the current restoration, the trompe l'oeil Baroque vault and the fictive architecture all affect the pictorial and architectural whole.⁹³ Within this structure of change, the central theme of Peter as a saint typologically associated with Christ emerges. Peter, in a way unlike that of other saints, becomes, symbolically, Christ and exemplifies the possibility of Redemption to the spectator as everyman.

Although the programme lacks the scenes in which Peter receives from Christ the charge of his role, having been ordered to feed the sheep of Christ and given the Keys to bind and loose, the spectator follows the narrative to Peter's martyrdom as part of his inner association with Christ. It is only through this inner role of Peter that the cycle of frescoes in the Brancacci chapel can be fully integrated. In Peter's symbolic attainment of self, the spectator can relate the conceptual structure of the narrative to the multiple pictorial and spatial solutions on the chapel walls constituting its perceptual totality.

CHAPTER 4 SURFACE AND DEPTH IN THE BACCI CHAPEL FRESCOES

This analysis of surface and depth in the Bacci Chapel will address the quality of pictorial space, in the fresco programme, in relation to the chapel wall.

Pictorial illusionism in the Bacci frescoes is related to its exploration of mathematical perspective harmonised with the needs of mural structure as part of the wall surface. Perspective, geometry, line and colour build up the perceptual language of the cycle. At the same time, a conceptual structure emerges, within the iconographical symbolism, which affects the quality of surface and depth by changing spatial solutions to indicate levels of spiritual meaning within the totality.

This linking of the frescoes, as consisting of different symbolic parts, and the concrete reality of the space in which the observer stands, will be analysed in this chapter. Meaning and formal elements will, according to this theory, become aspects of the same phenomenon and the emphasis on the surface in the Bacci chapel will also establish "... the objective nature of the painting as a thing instead of being thought of (only) as a scene¹ in space."

I CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on the Bacci Chapel is extensive. Laurie

Schneider's analysis of iconographical correspondences and view of the cycle as a philosophical whole have been essential reading for this chapter.² Historical background and theories on the interconnection of chronology and style are addressed by Creighton Gilbert.³ He amplifies elements of meaning, within the iconography, but does not take into consideration the effect of symbolic meaning as influencing the different types of pictorial space in the frescoes.

The concept of spiritual meaning and iconographic symbolism is analysed by Michael Godby in relation to the fresco of the Annunciation in the Arezzo programme.⁴ His methodology is extended, in this chapter, to include all the frescoes in the Bacci chapel.

The role of the spectator receives little emphasis in the literature but Baxandall stresses the importance of gesture in the frescoes, which could be interpreted as visual "keys" inviting spectator participation.⁵

Although this analysis does not deal with mathematics or geometry, certain problems relating to Piero della Francesca's interest in perspective were clarified by Mario Salmi and Margaret Daly Davis.⁶ Contributions to iconography were made by many authorities but were unrelated to pictorial space.⁷ This is dealt with, to a certain extent, by Sandström's analysis of levels of "reality" and "unreality", which links meaning to different

8

types of images.

Despite the wealth of literature, the concepts of surface and depth have not been integrated with pictorial space, illusionism and symbolism within the iconography.

II HISTORY

The construction of the choir chapel in the Church of San Francesco at Arezzo was begun in 1336 by Frate Angelo di Meglio and was completed in 1374 with funds provided by Bartolomeo da Pietramala and Pagno di Maffeo.⁹ It was known as the cappella maggiore.

The Bacci Chapel forms the east end of the wooden-roofed Basilican Church of San Francesco, (Pl. 63) dominating the long central nave and flanked, on either side, by a smaller chapel. More than thirty years passed before any documentation of the chapel's decoration was recorded.

On the 27 June 1408, Baccio di Masi Bacci's last will and testament was drawn up. It refers to the chapel and establishes the patronage of the Bacci family and their intentions to decorate it.¹⁰ Before 1417, the year Baccio died, the enormous Gothic lancet window, which dominates the altar wall of the chapel, was installed.¹¹ The window was made by Niccolò di Piero Tedesco.

III PATRONAGE

As established above, the patron of the Bacci Chapel was Baccio di Masi Bacci.¹² Before 1417 he made several codicils to his will concerning the decoration of the family chapel. In one of these¹³ he stipulated a burial site at the foot of the high altar. Although the Bacci arms are mounted on either side of the chapel entrance, the family burial site is not within the chapel's precinct because the Bacci were buried on an axis with the chapel in the middle of the nave entrance to the monk's choir.¹⁴ This is confirmed in the description of Baccio's funeral and the placement of his tomb in the Bacci family's Libro dei ricordi:¹⁵ "...al nostro monimento a l'entrare del'ussio del choro." Baccio provided 500 florins to "...faccia dipinghere e fighurare tutta la cappella grande", but actual work on the frescoes was not¹⁶ begun until the mid 1440's.

Baccio's heirs were slow in fulfilling their obligations. Of his three sons, it was only Francesco and several grandchildren who, by selling a vineyard, were able to pay their respective one-third¹⁷ shares towards the chapel decoration. This amount was the first instalment used to commission Bicci di Lorenzo to decorate the chapel in the vault.

The reluctance of the Bacci heirs to pay their share of the chapel's expenses is documented as early as 1430 and 1436, when

the communal authorities of the City Fathers of Arezzo were seeking the credits of one of Baccio's sons, Tommaso, for his¹⁸ share of the choir's decoration.

Tommaso died, however, in 1447, and Francesco Bacci became the main patron of the chapel. His brother, Giovanni, may also have exerted an influence on the final iconographic programme. Giovanni's theological expertise on Church matters may have been important to the high degree of symbolism in the version of the Legend of the True Cross painted in the Bacci Chapel. Giovanni, who had entered the priesthood, obtained a degree of Doctor of Theology in 1439 at the University of Siena and, although he lived in Rome, kept up ties with the family chapel and Aretine members¹⁹ of his parentado.

IV ARCHITECTURE

The Bacci Chapel is Gothic in structure, with a quadri-partite rib-vault and pointed lunettes. (Pl. 64) The altar wall is bisected by the large Gothic lancet window deeply recessed into the wall.

The lower portion of the chapel is reinforced architectonically by fictive marble panels which form the dado. This illusionistic simulation of architectural structure runs around the three walls of the chapel concentrating visual "weight" in this area. The fictive dado also emphasizes the shape and dimensions of the

actual architecture. This contrasts with the upward thrust of the vertical Gothic architectural system.

The Bacci Chapel is entered through a pointed archway articulated, pictorially, by decorative framework. The upper edges of the entrance are framed by fictive Corinthian columns which form borders for the exterior fresco of the Last Judgement above the arch.

The use of fictive architectural Classical definition is continued into the chapel interior. The narrative frescoes are horizontally divided by painted grisaille Florentine mouldings.

The architecture of the Bacci Chapel reconciles Gothic structure with Renaissance Classicism by means of its pictorial language. The integration is facilitated by the decorative framework of the rib-vaults and lunettes, which stress their attachment to the surface while emphasizing Gothic diagonality.

In a different way, the false architectural Classical mouldings which separate the scenes introduce a horizontal balance to the chapel walls. In this way, Gothic architecture (actual structure) is modified by its pictorial definition (painted structure) and the two inherently opposing architectural systems of Gothic verticality and diagonality and Classical horizontality are reconciled. Pictorial definition is, therefore, responsible for a modifying effect upon the chapel as stress is laid on the real architecture.

V ARRANGEMENT OF THE FRESCOES

The cycle of frescoes in the Bacci Chapel represents the Legend of the True Cross. Painted between c. 1452 and c. 1466, it was initiated by Bicci di Lorenzo (1373 - 1452) with Four Evangelists in the vault and was completed by Piero della Francesca (1420 - ²¹1492).

The iconographic sequence begins and ends in the lunettes. (Fig. 15). On the right lunette the Death of Adam (Pl. 65) faces the Emperor Heraclius' triumphant return of the Cross to Jerusalem in the Exaltation of the Cross (Pl. 66). The pair of scenes below represents royal women in the discovering of the Sacred Wood. On the right wall, the Adoration of the Holy Wood (Pl. 68) and the Meeting of Sheba and Solomon (Pl. 68) are combined in one scene. Directly opposite, on the left wall, Constantine's mother, St. Helena, supervises the Discovery and Proof of the True Cross (Pl. 70). The lowest scenes are both battles. On the right, is the Victory of Constantine, (Pl. 71) and on the left, the Defeat of Chosroes (Pl. 72).

The altar wall, divided by the window, provides the narrow upright spaces for the "preambles and sequels to the main events".²²

Adjacent to the lunettes, and on the same level, are two Prophets, identified as possibly Jeremiah on the left and Isaiah (Pl. 67) on the right.²³ Below the Prophets are placed the Burial of the Wood, (Pl. 73) to the right, and the Torture of the Jew (Judas)

(Pl. 74) to the left. Beneath these scenes, the Dream of Constantine (Pl. 78) is on the lowest tier of the altar wall to the right, and the Annunciation (Pls. 75-77) to the left.

The arrangement of the frescoes does not follow a chronological order and different spatial solutions exert an effect on surface and depth.

VI THE SIDE-WALLS : ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

Piero della Francesca's ideas on space, proportion and mathematical perspective form the basis for an evaluation of the concepts of surface and depth in the Bacci Chapel. ²⁴ Geometry is a central element in Piero's application of perspectival theories. ²⁵ Piero was both a mathematician and a painter and was dominated by the laws of logic which never negated the quality of the pictorial wall as solid structure. Pictorial illusionism, within the frescoes, is re-evaluated in terms of the actual limits of the architecture.

In his De Prospectiva Pingendi, Piero defines painting volumes as existing in a measurable "place" (luogho) within pictorial space. ²⁶ Piero's quantitative placement of the pictorial image could also be related to another element in his Aretine painting; different types or levels of symbolism within the iconology of the programme. Changes in the placement or rendition of the pictorial images, point out to the spectator their different ²⁷ "levels of reality" within the narrative.

Piero della Francesca divided his walls into three large zones corresponding, approximately, in their interrelationship to the Euclidean Golden Section.²⁸ This establishes three painting surfaces one above the other. The scenes on the side-walls are also aligned so as to correspond to the vertical axis of each arched field of the Gothic architecture, integrating pictorial and actual structure.

The two lunettes were executed between c. 1451 and c. 1458.²⁹ The Death of Adam (Pl. 65) lunette, on the right wall, is spatially organized by figures. No architectural forms or apparent perspectival depth occur in the fresco. Figures are strung out along the frontal plane which excludes a spatial construction of depth, concentrating the action on the surface of the wall. This emphasis on the frontal plane stresses the quality of the wall surface and is non-illusionistic.

The vast Tree of Life which fills the entire lunette with its intricate branches re-inforces the sense of surface pattern "...³⁰ with a flat web of branches like a flower-like tapestry". The lack of illusionistic penetration of the fresco's surface is also emphasized by the horizontality of the action in which the figures³¹ appear in close proximity to the actual plane of the wall.

The grouping of the figures, in the Death of Adam lunette, and their interaction, introduce a certain displacement of space in relation to the surface of wall. Shallow areas of pictorial space

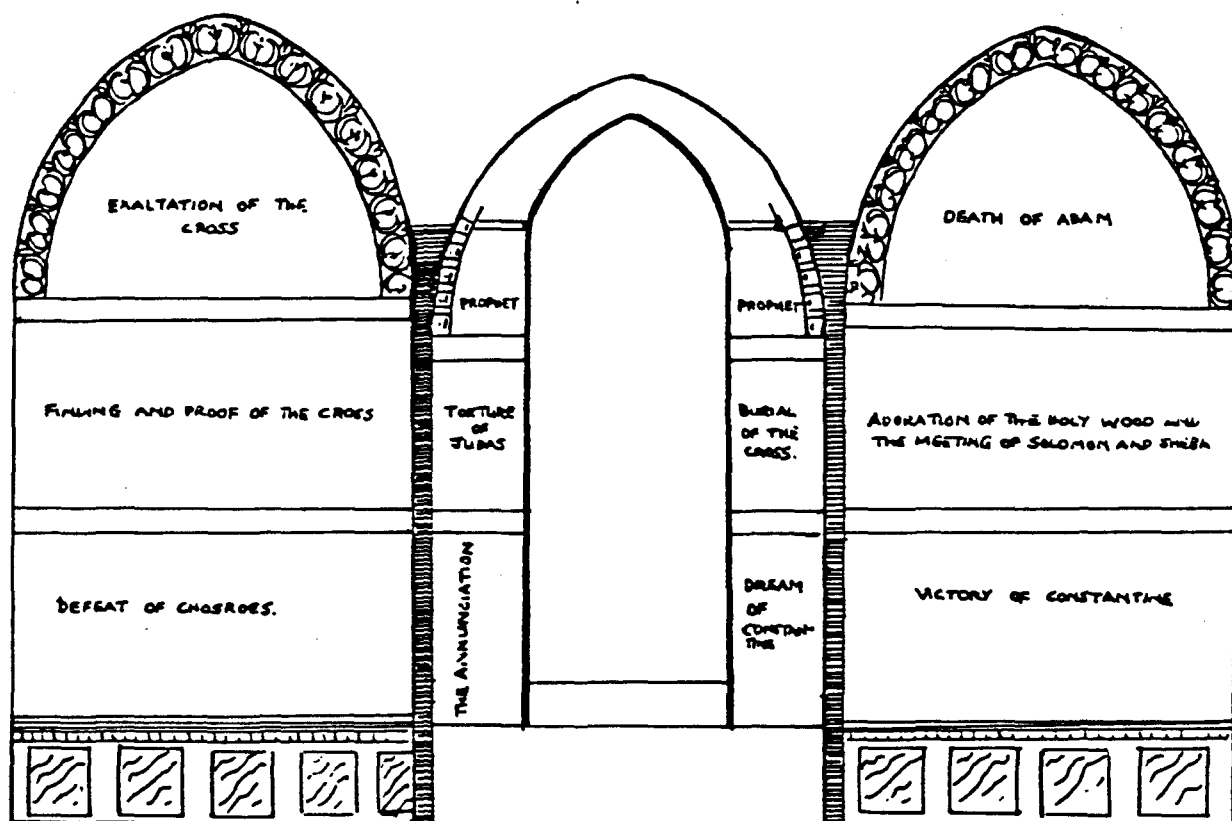


Figure 15 : Arrangement of the frescoes in the Bacci Chapel

appear to be "caught" between the figures and, in consequence, contained between the forms and the surface. In this way, although the lunette is surface-conscious, there is also a limited permeation of actual space into the frontal plane of the fresco. The lack of cast shadows and the high light value of the fresco are all, however, counter-illusionistic and balance any illusionism by re-establishing the wall as wall. Surface has been defined as :

The spread of a substance in space - and the manner of spreading suggests the nature of the forces operating on the material and responsible for its present form. 32

The way in which Piero "spreads" his figures across the surface in the Death of Adam lunette indicates his conscious desire to bring forms close to the wall and the spectator's own reality in the chapel. The fresco can, hence, be viewed as both an object in its own right, as part of the wall, and as a pictorial representation, part of a limited illusionism.³³ The fresco's content can be perceived, by the spectator, undisturbed by dominant illusionism while, at the same time, the painted surface of the wall can be experienced as actual material. In this way, both the didactic message, within the iconography, and the reality of the architectural support are harmoniously interrelated.

This surface quality also emphasizes the architectural relationship of the lunettes to the low level of illusionism in the decorative articulation of the chapel's Gothic vault. The upper space of the Bacci chapel is pictorially "adjusted" in order to harmonise in an active connection with the reality of its architectural walls. This heightening of the spectator's awareness of the shape and dimensionality of the upper chapel architecture is reinforced pictorially by Piero's concentration on the surface "reality" of the lunettes, because "...space as such,³⁴ empty space is not visible, but surfaces are."

The lateral action of the figures in the Death of Adam lunette is also underlined by the widespread arms of a grieving woman in the centre of the fresco. She links the groups of figures in each corner and again re-establishes surface, rather than depth. The action is concentrated on Adam and the inward-facing corner figures lead the eye of the observer to the death-content of the scene.

The burial function of the chapel is also symbolized in the configuration of the body of the grief-stricken woman, which could be related to that of the shape of the Cross. This introduces the spectator to an inner Crucifixion theme within the main narrative of the Legend of the True Cross. This spiritual level of meaning suggests that the Death of Adam may be seen as a lamentation, similar to that over the dead Christ and implying a typological correspondence with the death of Adam.

Illusionism and symbolism are interrelated in the fresco. A funnel of depth appears to "pierce" the centre of the scene, in the dramatic scale reduction of the figures of Seth and the Angel (Fig. 16). Firstly, the spectator is made aware of the colloquy of Seth and the Angel as a separate incident in the narrative and, secondly, a spiritual level of meaning can be emphasized. This more symbolic reading of the incident underlines the content of the colloquy, which is significant for every man as Seth asks the angel for the life of the dying Adam. Adam, the first transgressor, does not receive mortal life, and henceforth all men are punished by death. Only the seeds from the Tree of Life, which are planted in Adam's mouth by Seth, offer consolation. The Legend of the True Cross is the narration of how these seeds grow into the wood of Calvary, enabling Adam-everyman to receive Redemption; in this way, both Adam and Seth become prefigurations for Christ.³⁵ The lunette establishes contact with the spectator on a symbolic level and makes him aware of his own mortality.

Seth and the Angel are purposely separated from the interwoven frontal figures, symbolically close to the Paradise that Adam and all men have lost. The vast frontal tree of "good and evil" dominates the symbolism of the scene.³⁶ Surface and depth are counterpoised, in the Death of Adam lunette in order to underline certain visual messages, the reality of the wall and the symbolic unreality of the fresco's conceptual structure.³⁷

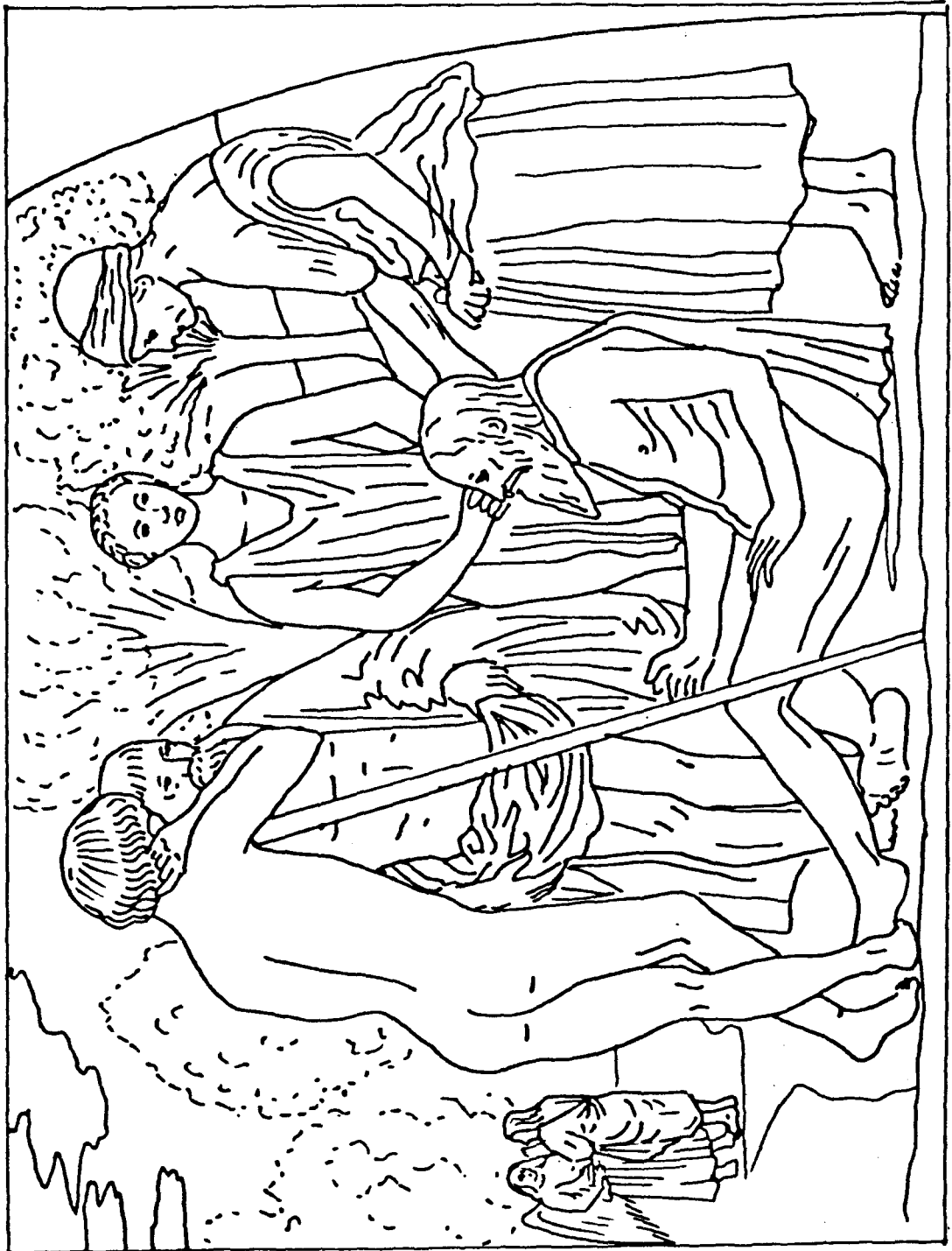


Figure 16 : Detail of Death of Adam showing scale reduction of Seth and the Angel

The Death of Adam lunette initiates, therefore, the fresco cycle and the progressional journey of the Cross. At the same time, the spectator becomes pivotal to the non-chronological progression of the programme in linking the narrative episodes to the consequences of Adam's sin.³⁸ Adam may be considered a direct prototype for Christ as his grave, according to Medieval tradition, became the site for Christ's Crucifixion and the Redeemer's own blood baptized the first man's skull.³⁹

The predominantly surface quality of the Death of Adam lunette is reinforced by its decorative, non-illusionistic framework which surrounds the pointed Gothic field of the fresco. In contrast, the lower framework of the lunette is defined by simulated architectural mouldings which cast fictive shadows onto the surface of the lower walls. This lower, more illusionistic, framework introduces fictive projections into actual space, creating a shallow layer of apparent space and preparing the spectator for the greater visual penetration, and illusionism, of the central side-walls. In this way, Piero della Francesca guides the spectator's response to different types of surface and introduces different levels of illusionism (i.e. unreality) to the surface.

The upper surface of the lunettes is also linked both formally and typologically across the chapel. The Death of Adam is related, across the actual space of the chapel, to the opposite lunette, on the left wall, of the Exaltation of the Cross.

This juxtaposition of the Exaltation of the Cross (Pl. 66) also allows the spectator to connect the two upper scenes, Adam old and dying and the final glorious restitution of the Cross to Jerusalem.

For as by man came death, by man has also come the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(1 Corinthians 15: 21-22)

In the Exaltation of the Cross the implicit Resurrection theme of the chapel is concretized. The two lunettes represent a beginning and an end to the cycle across chapel space. This symbolic linking also suggests a linear transparent connection between the two upper scenes and encourages the physical participation of the spectator as he turns from wall to wall.

In the Exaltation of the Cross the Emperor Heraclius restores the Cross to Jerusalem. The focal point of the fresco is created by an open space which separates the Cross, held by Heraclius, from the figures kneeling in adoration. (Fig. 17) The "opening" of pictorial space, behind the Cross, enables contact with the spectator to be underlined. The viewer is invited to "penetrate" space in this area and this reinforces his symbolic reading of the significance of the Cross.

In contrast to this use of illusionistic penetration to underscore symbolic meaning in relation to an implicit Resurrection theme,

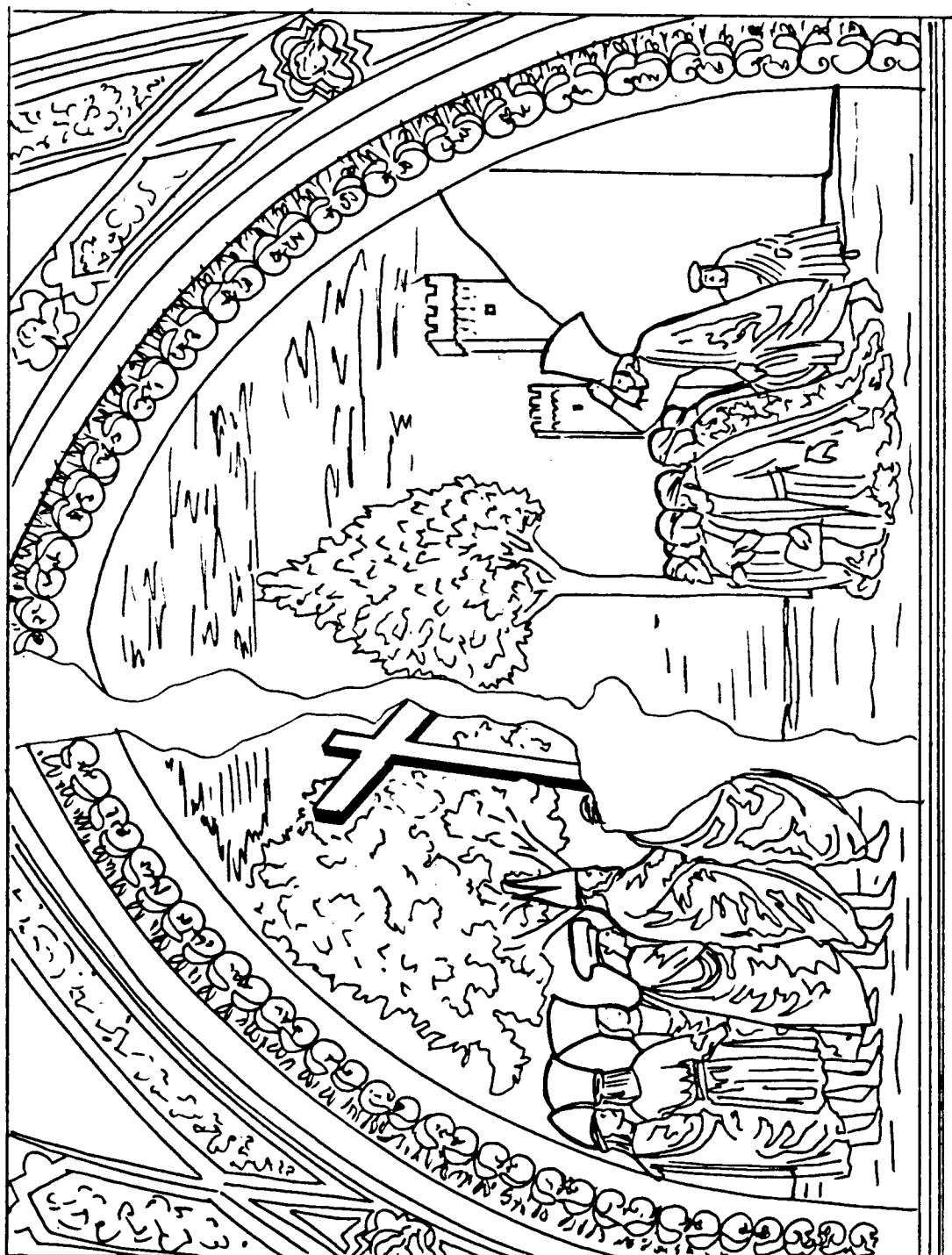


Figure 17 : Exaltation of the Cross showing central separation by
the Cross, planarity and floreate lunette framework

the lunette is also surface-conscious. The equal distribution of solids and voids across the fresco reinforces its planarity. A small figure, reduced in scale in a similar way to those of Seth and the Angel, in the Death of Adam lunette, again allows limited penetration into the fresco's pictorial space. Placed close to the framing right-hand wall of Jerusalem in the fresco, this figure could again be a means of underlining a symbolic emphasis by means of illusionism.

A typological relationship to Eden unites both lunettes. The Death of Adam takes place outside Paradise, the "heavenly city", while the Exaltation of the Cross takes place outside Jerusalem,⁴² the "earthly city".

Death and Resurrection are counterpoised themes across the chapel's upper scenes. The two green trees in the Exaltation of the Cross could refer, in their fecundity, to rebirth and so underscore the implicit Resurrection theme within the iconography, in contrast to the leafless tree in the Death of Adam lunette. The Legend of the True Cross describes the "...making of the True Cross out of the wood of Paradise."⁴³

Death came from a tree,
Life was to spring from a tree,
He who conquered on the wood,
Was also conquered on the wood. 44

Although both lunettes are light in coloration, the Exaltation of the Cross is slightly darker, and this "bleaching" of tones increases their lack of depth and their integration of paint with surface.⁴⁵

Below the Death of Adam, on the right wall, is the Adoration of the Holy Wood, and the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba. The fresco is divided into two narratives by means of a Corinthian column. To the left, the Queen of Sheba adores the Holy Wood over the river Kidron, also known as Siloan, near Jerusalem, and to the right she meets King Solomon⁴⁶ (Pl. 69). The action of the narrative is divided into exterior and interior space (Fig. 18). A deep perspectival space is laid out behind the figures. This illusionism initially appears to extend the dimensions of the chapel into the fresco altering the limits of the architecture. This initial impression is, however, counteracted by Piero's emphasis on the surface of the wall. The vertical beat of columns and figures across the fresco concentrates the action on the frontal plane of the scene. In this way, surface and depth are counterpoised.

The undulating horizontality of the background hills, in the Adoration of the Holy Wood, also limits any visual penetration of the wall surface. Silhouetted forms are combined with a repetition of colour and shape to establish, for the observer, the fresco's planarity in relation to its perspectival depth.

Colour is used, by Piero della Francesca, with a consciousness of each figure's position relative to the next, creating a "quantitative" distance between the forms. This also allows the spectator to redefine the interwoven pattern between the figures, placing them at specific, calculable distances from each other

and, at the same time, relating them to each other as an interlocking surface. This adjustment of colour and form with perspective is called by Longhi "perspective synthesis".⁴⁷ Each colour is thus precisely graded as extensions of either plane or depth in relation to each figure.⁴⁸ This adjustment of colour values, related to each other, and to their position within the pictorial space of the fresco, is graded so that each local tone retains its projecting or recessional properties.

Piero della Francesca's figures, in the Adoration of the Holy Wood and the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba, are clearly situated by means of tone, colour and value. In this way, they appear to have a calculable position, in terms of illusionism, within the picture-space hierarchy of the fresco. This synthesis of colour with form gives each figure its place within the illusionistic perspectival construction of the scene without either "bulging" into the space of the chapel, or being "pulled back" into pictorial space. The lack of chiaroscuro, the linearism and clarity of colour detail, all reinstate Piero's wall as solid, closed structure, i.e. as conscious of the objective reality of the surface.

The low eye-level of the scene incorporates the response of the spectator as he looks up into the fresco of the Adoration of the Holy Wood and the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba. The elongated figures attain a monumental stature in front of the pictorial architecture. In this way, the pictorial space is read

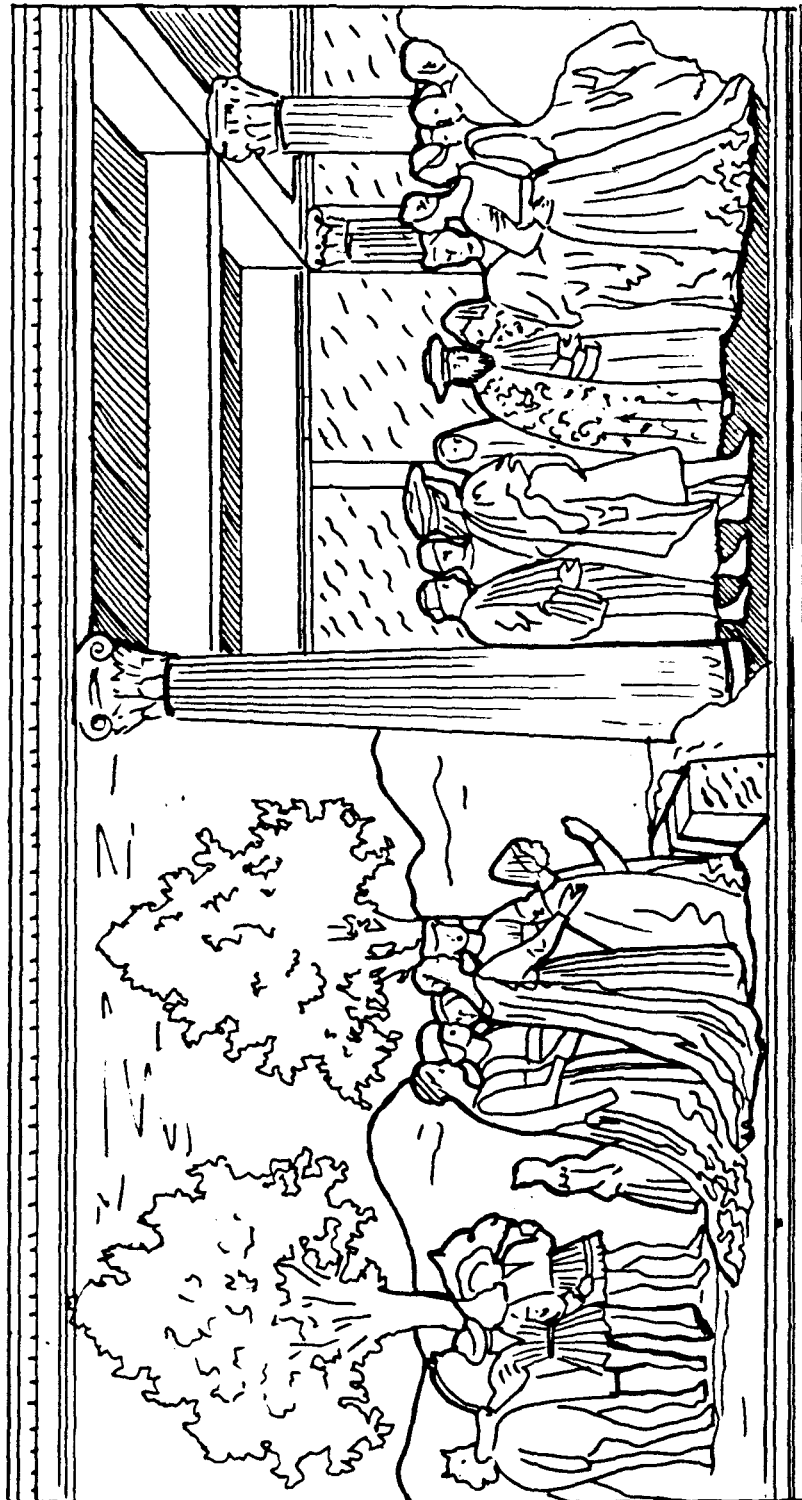


Figure 18 : The Adoration of the Holy Wood and the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba showing division into exterior and interior space

"backwards" from the overlapping forms of the colour-planes, to the mass and space-volume of the Albertian building, to the right of the fresco.

Piero fills the spaces between his figures with colour, not shadow, and this also harmonizes any spatial recession, within the essentially illusionistic system of depth, with the surface. The historical significance of the narrative, on the central tier of the right wall of the Bacci chapel, is given a universal significance by Piero's objective and "abstract" figures. Their apparent immobility, symmetry and lack of emotional gesture enable the spectator to identify with them as "equivalents" of reality.

The spectator reads the figures, in the Adoration of the Holy Wood and the Meeting of Solomon and Sheba, in a generic way as "objects" related to each other and to the fresco but as part of the wall which delimits his own reality in the chapel. Their apparent stasis suspends the figures "... in a unified time-space perspective."⁴⁹

The fresco may also have a symbolic function. The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon could suggest a parallel to that of the Magi at Christ's birth.⁵⁰ In the Middle Ages the adoration of the Wood and that of Christ by the Magi were also well-known⁵¹ symbols of the Pagan world accepting Christianity. An implicit link to Christ's birth and to the Redemptive theme, within the Legend of the True Cross can hence be overlaid upon the fresco's historical significance within the narrative.

The fresco relates horizontally across the chapel space to the scene of the Discovery and Proof of the True Cross, on the left wall (Pl. 70). Both frescoes have a similar spatial construction with a central axis which is angled to the spectator's position in the chapel. The figures, in the bilateral symmetry of both frescoes, are laid in front of both landscape and pictorial architecture to stress their surface attachment to the wall. Illusionistic space, and the whole perspective system of depth, is, therefore, constructed behind the figures.

The processional equilibrium of the figures, along the receding orthogonals, locates them at precise distances from each other and from the boundaries of the scene. The intervals between these figures is efficacious for creating a rhythmic movement which again emphasizes the surface.

On the right of the Discovery and Proof of the Cross an illusionistic feature appears to perforate the frontal plane of the fresco. The miraculous True Cross which resuscitates a dead youth and thus is proved the Cross of Christ, is placed on a penetrating diagonal. The Cross "pierces" the surface and points into the pictorial space and outward into the space of the observer.

This deliberately heightened illusionism is motivated by Piero's desire to include an empathetic response from the spectator by infringing on his real space in the chapel. The illusionism is,

therefore, important for conceptual meaning and emphasizes didactic content. The spectator is alerted to the spiritual meaning of the miracle as on a different level of "reality". Yet Piero does not destroy his surface but balances the penetration of the Cross by limiting its depth recession by means of a large planar temple behind it.

Typological correspondences influence the similarity of the two central side-wall frescoes, apart from Piero's architectonic stress on the structural symmetry between each wall. Both scenes are historical and each queen discovers and adores the Holy Wood in its pre- and post-Christian forms. Both Sheba and Helena also have a prophesizing role within the programme that relates to Jerusalem. According to Chydenius, the City of God is paralleled with Jerusalem and the construction of Solomon's temple with the building of it.⁵² Sheba also prophesized the miraculous nature of the Holy Wood :

For this sacred wood all the earth will tremble, sun
and moon will grow dark... 53

The youth, resuscitated from the dead by the True Cross in the Proof of the Cross, could also be parallel with the risen Christ⁵⁴ and underline the Redemptive theme of the narrative.

Stabilized between the greater planarity of the lunettes and the surface density of the lower tiers of the chapel programme, the central frescoes allow the spectator greater visual entry. The duality of surface balanced against cogent depth, the frescoes as both objects and illusions, invite the spectator to respond to the "world of the image" through association with the scenes in relation to actual space.⁵⁵ At the same time, the spectator connects both frescoes, not only in terms of similarities of pictorial space and position on their independent chapel walls, but in terms of symbolic meaning. Although historical, both frescoes, within the larger theme of Redemption, have a higher conceptual "level of reality".⁵⁶

The fresco of the Victory of Constantine over Maxentius (Pl. 71) completes the right wall of the chapel. The lances and banners in the battle scene create an intricate surface-pattern which is echoed in the confusion of the horses' legs.

Constantine heads a parade-like cavalry bearing a small white cross which originally must have been painted gold.⁵⁷ The parallel composition stresses the frontal plane of the wall and has a frieze-like quality. This massed interconnection of colours and interwoven shapes, read as abstract pattern, is placed close to the spectator standing in the chapel. At the same time, the intricacy of the surface limits his visual entry and is non-illusionistic.

The unhurried, arrested movement of the battle scene's protagonists also limits their realism and the spectator is free to shape his perception on the more abstract level of form and colour. The spectator can thus read the content of the battle scene and experience the painted surface as material at the same time. Sandstrom has observed this interaction as underlining the intention of the artist which determines the attitude of the observer and the mode in which the pictorial forms function.⁵⁸

A central axis occurs on the whole right wall of the chapel. From the great tree in the lunette, down through the bridge of the Holy Wood, to the tiny symbol of the Cross held by the victorious Constantine.⁵⁹ This calm, axial arrangement harmonizes the different types of the pictorial space-construction with the proportion of the entire wall.

The Defeat of Chrosroes (Pl. 72) on the lowest tier of the left wall of the Bacci Chapel, is even more tightly packed than the Constantine battle scene. There is little visual entry to its intricate density and even the barrel-vaulted ciborium, to the right of the fresco, appears decorative rather than depth-conscious. The crowded immobility of the scene could reflect either Roman sarcophagi or cassone battle scenes.⁶⁰

The greater visual entry of the Victory of Constantine is created by a "gap" in the distribution of the fresco's figures and horses, by means of landscape, to the right of the scene. This introduces

a pause in the fresco's action and again concentrates the eye of the spectator on the tiny cross held by Constantine which becomes the focus of the scene's symbolism. It was through the power of the Cross that Constantine stopped the battle without force.⁶¹

In contrast, the Defeat of Chosroes is filled with dense fighting figures. In front of the battle Chosroes is beheaded by the Emperor Heraclius. The action of the fresco concentrates on the punishment of Chosroes who profaned the Holy Cross by carrying it off as an ornament for his throne room.⁶² The outcome of this sacrilege is clearly indicated, to the spectator, by the placement of Chosroes close to the surface of the wall and the reality of the actual space in which the viewer stands. This increases the spectator's identification with the price of sacrilege and the beheading takes place on a narrow stage, behind the fictive lower architectural framework which appears to project into the chapel.

There is a rational articulation of the side-walls of the Bacci Chapel. Constantine's miraculous cross is profaned and rescued in the scene facing it. Similarly, above, the wood recognized by Sheba and buried by Solomon as a consequence is, in the opposite scene, excavated by Helena and submitted to a test of authenticity.⁶³ Finally, the tree which grows from Adam's mouth becomes, on the opposite wall, the Cross of Christ carried back in triumph to Jerusalem.

Underlying the symmetry of both walls is the symbolic theme of

Christ's Crucifixion, the implicit reason for the cycle. The lunettes have a planarity which concentrates on their high spiritual reality and relates them to the celestial zone of Bicci di Lorenzo's vault Evangelists. The central side-walls integrate perspective by counterposing depth and surface separating the historical narrative from the upper registers, while the battle scenes tighten the action of the programme and reinforce the actual limits of the chapel architecture.

Piero della Francesca was conscious of the fact that pictorial space, in narrative terms, presents contradictions relevant to different types of meaning. His "supreme certainty of mathematics", in which space was seen as strictly measurable and proportional and where action obeys the laws of probability, unity and decorum, is allied to his awareness of spiritual symbolism⁶⁴ which went beyond the confines of artificial perspective.

VII THE ALTAR WALL : ICONOGRAPHY, PICTORIAL SPACE AND ILLUSIONISM

The altar wall lunette, on either side of the Gothic window, portrays two Prophets,⁶⁵ possibly Jeremiah to the left and Isaiah (Fig. 19) to the right.

Isaiah, according to Salmi, represents the prophet who predicts the early life of Christ, from his birth to his Crucifixion and ultimate Resurrection. Jeremiah, in contrast, is interpreted as the suffering "Christ" of the Old Testament who, by his martyrdom,

pointed the way for Christ's Crucifixion.⁶⁶ The two prophets could be seen as a means of linking the Old and the New Testament as both imply a reference to Christ's earthly life.⁶⁷

The altar wall lunette is differentiated from those on the side-walls by its illusionistic framework which simulates architectural corbels. Seen from below, di sotto in sù, the framework also casts painted shadows onto the surface of the walls. In this way, the fictive corbels appear to project into spectator space, in contrast to the decorative planarity of the framework of the side lunettes.

The illusionism of the framework which surrounds the two Prophets is emphasized by the highly credible fictive space that they appear to occupy on the altar wall lunette. Larger and more monumental than any other figures in the Aretine programme, the Prophets stand on an illusionistic narrow platform, recessed behind the wall. Instead of stressing surface in their area, Piero della Francesca allows the upper zone of the altar wall to become spatially penetrable.

The Prophets are portrayed, through illusionism, as more "real" than any other figures in the programme. Their high level of illusionism and distinctive framework separates them from the main narrative. They become "observers" rather than participants of the narrative action and could be interpreted as allegorical figures.

On the right of the altar wall, the fresco of the Burial of the Wood (Pl. 73) shows the Holy Wood being buried "in the profoundest depths of the earth".⁶⁸ The spectator is thus introduced, according to Godby, to the strange meaning in the painting, by the "... inclusion of the jaws of hell which may be a literal illustration of 'profoundest depths'...."⁶⁹

The spectator's awareness of inner meaning is drawn to recognize that both the general configuration of the grain of the wood and its shape are "... reminiscent of a halo around the principal workman's head".⁷⁰ This creates a symbolic parallel with the carrying of the same wood on Christ's road to Calvary, re-inforced by the composition of the fresco which portrays three workers strung out on the frontal plane, lifting the Holy Wood into the same parallel space. The intersecting diagonals, created by the angle of the wood, are counterbalanced by the diagonal hill in the background.

The angle of the Holy Wood also points to the Annunciation (Pls. 75-77) on the lower left side of the altar wall. In this way, the Crucifixion, although absent from the narrative programme, is implicit in the Incarnation, with its tragic consequences in the price paid by Christ for man's Redemption. Some authorities relate the three figures, in the Burial of the Wood, to the Trinity, reinforcing the spectator's conceptual reading of the scene, for the Trinity was "...connected with the redemption of fallen humanity, for whose sake Christ became man."⁷¹



Figure 19 : Prophet showing illusionistic corbel framework and apparent "perforation" of the altar wall lunette

On the opposite side of the window on the altar wall, the fresco of the Torture of the Jew (Judas) (Pl. 74) is contained within a pyramidal cage of beams. The complementary pairing of the scene with the Burial of the Wood is emphasized by the diagonal use of the wooden beams in both frescoes and, also, by their symbolic interrelationship. If the figure of the Jew Judas, who refused to reveal to Helena the location of the True Cross of Calvary, until tortured, is typologically associated with the Judas who betrayed Christ, then the implications of Betrayal and Death are
72
counterpoised across the altar wall.

The theme of a figure being drawn from a well, into which he had been put as a form of torture, like the Judas in the Aretine programme, appears in the Biblia Pauperum in relation to Christ's
73
Resurrection. Da Voragine compares the tortured Judas in the
74
Legend of the True Cross with the Judas who betrayed Christ.

The knowledgeable spectator would be aware of these subtle symbolic nuances and see an implicit reference to Christ's Crucifixion in both the Torture of the Jew and the Burial of the Wood.

The lack of any deep illusionistic recession in either fresco enables the spectator to read the diagonal lines, in both the scenes of the Torture of the Jew and the Burial of the Wood, as a

surface grid. This stresses the surface planarity of the scenes, "holds" them firmly onto the actual wall and, directionally, the diagonal lines also connect them to the side-walls in a thematic totality. Piero underlines their sequential linking with the Sheba and Helena frescoes. The Burial of the Wood is a sequence to its discovery by the Queen of Sheba on her visit to King Solomon, and the Torture of the Jew is a preamble to St. Helena's discovery of the True Cross.

Piero della Francesca guides the response of the spectator, within a non-chronological narrative progression, by inviting him to connect typological correspondences. This interrelationship of narrative reciprocity is, at the same time, emphasized by an imaginary grid of directional lines which indicate visual paths across the chapel walls. This transparent linear movement also stresses the surface of the frescoes and prevents illusionism or perspective from creating visual "holes" in the chapel architecture.

The interaction of symbolism, illusionism and placement is most apparent in the inclusion of a fresco of the Annunciation, on the lower left of the altar wall. This scene was long considered as an "interloper" in the Legend of the True Cross. Several factors, however, indicate that the Annunciation has a pivotal role in the meaning of the Aretine cycle and is purposely placed in close proximity to the altar and the Eucharistic rites of the Mass.

The feast of the Annunciation falls on March 25 and is believed to coincide with Adam's birth as well as the Crucifixion.⁷⁶

Kahsnitz extends the significance of this symbolic link by suggesting that it is also the date on which Cain killed Abel, the first martyr.⁷⁷ According to Kahsnitz' theory, Eve, as his mother, is thus related to Mary as the mother of Christ as both sons died on the same calendar day.

The spiritual meaning of martyrdom is emphasized, in the fresco of the Annunciation, by the angel Gabriel who holds in his hand a palm, instead of the traditional lily (Pl. 76). This palm is symbolic of a reference, according to Godby, to martyrdom in the more specific sense of Christ's own Crucifixion.⁷⁸ The Annunciation becomes, in this context, essential to a full interpretation of Christian doctrine as it implies the totality of Christ's life and his subsequent death. This raises the quality of the narrative of the Legend of the True Cross to a higher spiritual level.

The symbol of the palm in the Annunciation underscores the fresco's meaning for the spectator, for "... even when the coming of Christ is initially heralded, his leaving is already indicated."⁷⁹ In this way, although the tragic culmination of Christ's life in the Crucifixion is nowhere explicitly narrated in the frescoes it occurred on the Cross, which is the subject of Piero's cycle. The Annunciation is, therefore, the only scene in the Aretine programme which parallels the journey of the Cross

with Christ's physical life by "... implying the complete cycle of
 80
 Christ's existence on earth."

The pathos of Piero's presentation of the Annunciation serves to involve the spectator in the tragic "circularity" of Christ's life and pre-ordained death as part of the programme's theme of Redemption. Longhi was also aware of this "elliptical allusion" to Christ's earthly life, but unlike Godby, did not recognise the
 81
 token of Gabriel as a palm. It is the palm of martyrdom which refers to Christ's death and which explains the need for the inclusion of the Annunciation in the story of the Legend of the True Cross.

Frederick Hartt also saw a reference to the Crucifixion in the Annunciation fresco but only in relation to the cruciform design of the composition, whereas Godby suggests a more explicit reference in the repeated motif of a stylized cross in the
 82
 decoration of the door behind the Virgin.

The slight twist of protest, in the Annunciate Virgin (Pl. 77) may also be a means of indicating, to the spectator, that she is fully aware of the implications of her destiny.

The idiosyncratic restraint of Piero's characterization of the protesting Annunciate at Arezzo should not conceal the prophetic foreknowledge of Christ's destiny and so the fresco's relationship to the Aretine tradition.⁸³

The pictorial organization of space in the Annunciation is constructed by means of mathematical perspective orientated towards the spectator at the centre of the chapel. The fresco is divided by a Corinthian column which separates Gabriel from the Virgin (Fig. 20). The scene is placed close to the spectator, approximating his eye-level and is spatially "penetrable" due to its centrality and credible recession. This illusionism is limited, however, by the spectator's assumption that the loggia, in which the Virgin stands, projects from the back wall, which prevents any perforation of the fresco becoming a complete reality.⁸⁴ In this way, Piero constructs in depth but still retains the objective surface of the wall.

The spectator's visual entry into the Annunciation's pictorial space is motivated by Piero's desire to create an emotive link between the observer and the pictorially observed by placing them in the same apparent space. Illusionism and placement, in close proximity to the altar and the enactment of the Mass, become subtle means of establishing a connection between two levels of reality. On the one hand, the religious and timeless sphere occupied by the angel Gabriel and the Virgin, with God the Father above them in the celestial zone of Heaven, and, on the other, the space of the chapel occupied by mortal onlookers.

God the Father observes Gabriel and the Annunciate Virgin from a "vision-like" area of the fresco while gesturing with open hands towards them. The symbolic separation of God the Father and the

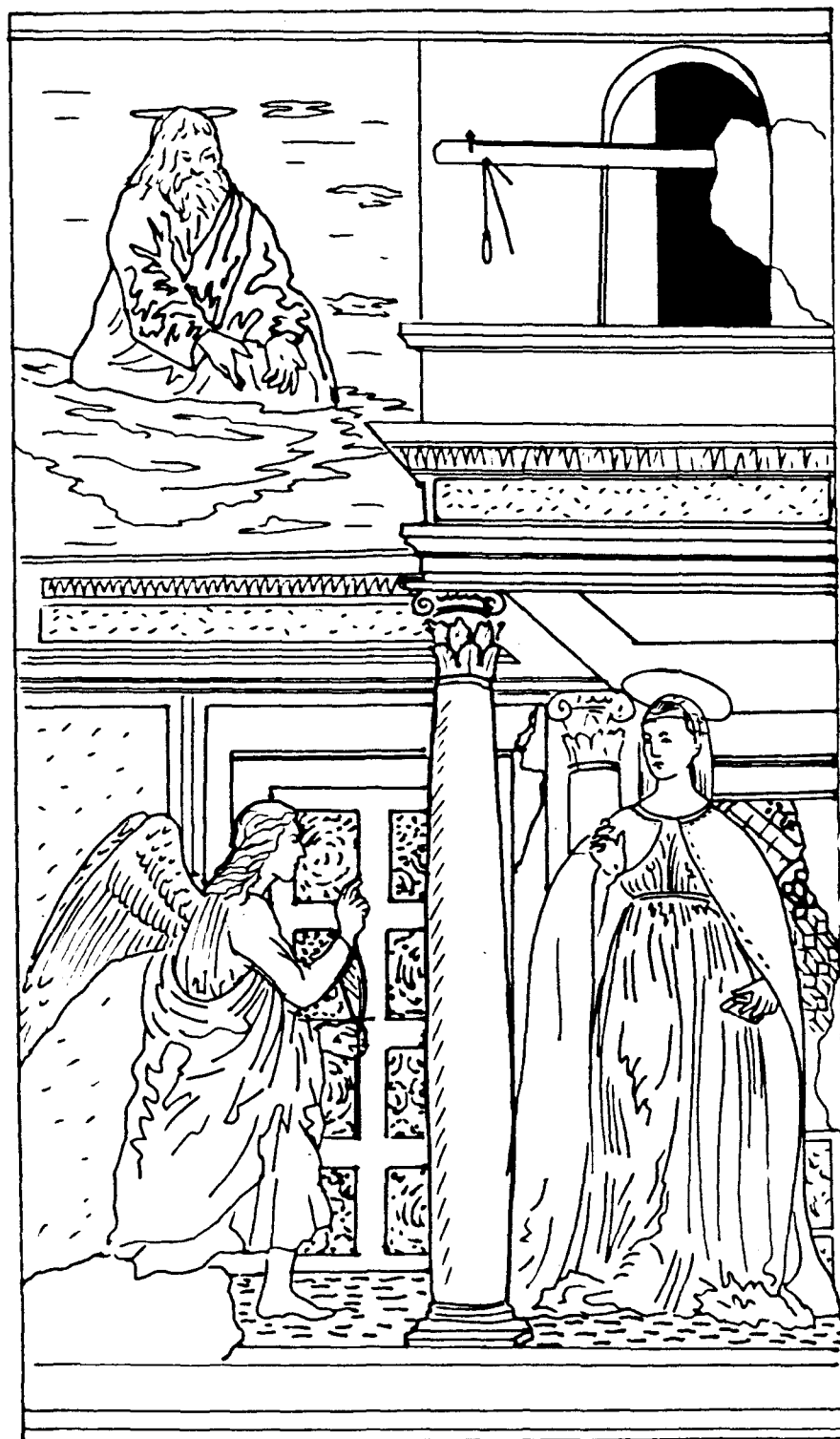


Figure 20 : The Annunciation showing limited opening of surface celestial zone for God the Father and illusionistic beam and rope

direction of the rays emanating from his hands concretizes the miracle being enacted in the Incarnation and presents it to the viewer in easily comprehended terms.⁸⁵ The placement of the Annunciation on the altar wall underlines the meaning of the Mass and also, in consequence, the Legend of the True Cross.

The Mass is a condensation in symbolic form of the life and sufferings of Christ. The Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension are referred to explicitly in both the Suscipe sancta Trinitas and the Unde et memores.⁸⁶ This reinforces the Redemptive theme in the cycle of the Cross and in the reference to Christ's destiny in the Annunciation. Death and the Resurrection are ritually enacted daily in the Mass itself. The open hands of God the Father signify, according to Baxandall, demonstration, and the significance of God's Benediction is indicated to the spectator.⁸⁷

To the upper right of the fresco the pictorial architecture is punctuated by a small, dark arched window with a projecting beam and rope (Fig. 20). This beam appears to project forward into actual space and casts a fictive shadow which heightens its illusionism. It is contrasted by the visual "hole" created by the dark window. Some authorities have suggested that the window is similar to a fictive "tomb" and that the beam and rope refer to the death of Judas and his role of betrayal in the

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Crucifixion. The beam points to God the Father linking him to the Annunciation and, through illusionistic projection establishes contact with the spectator by penetrating into his own space in the chapel.

The inclusion of the Annunciation, in terms of symbolism and illusionism, involves the participation of the spectator in the underlying theme of the Crucifixion and raises the programme from the level of simple narrative to a "... vision of the fulfilment of Christian destiny."

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The Annunciate Virgin relates to both the Old and the New Testament in foretelling the terrestrial life of Christ to which the Cross, in the Legend, refers. The chronology of the narrative is conscious of the intrusion of "divine rather than natural principles of time" in which the wood destined to become the Cross of Calvary is part of a larger theme of Redemption.

The Dream of Constantine (Pl. 78) on the lower right of the altar, is a nocturne. Compositionally it is divided by means of a tent pole behind which the sleeping Constantine is dreaming. The still, volumetric figures of the guards enclose the fresco on both sides. The foreshortened symbolic angel, abstracted from reality, enters the fresco from the extreme upper left. This illusionistic penetration indicates that Constantine's forthcoming victory will be achieved through the power of the Cross : in signo hoc confide

90

et vinctes. The angel becomes a symbol and universal sign of Divine intervention. The abstract, barely recognisable angel

swoops into the fresco on a penetrating diagonal and before it the dark tones of the night are symbolically illuminated.

VIII RELATION OF THE ARETINE PROGRAMME TO THE VAULT

The vault (Pl. 64) was painted by Bicci di Lorenzo. It was begun in the mid-1440's and Bicci was forced to abandon the decoration⁹¹ before 1450, due to illness and old age. The frescoes are his last known paintings.

Bicci's vault Evangelists have a hieratic and floating quality but occupy their spatial zones, between the ribs of the vault, with clearly stated volumes "... while at the same time their draperies are replete with strong linear motifs that create surface⁹² rhythm." This linear attention to surface allows Bicci's figures to be incorporated, without visual disturbance, into Piero's fresco cycle on the chapel walls. Both the Evangelists in the vault, and the planarity of Piero's lunettes, relate to the shape of the Gothic architecture of the Bacci Chapel and, hence, form a single emphasis in the upper regions of the programme.

The style of the Bacci vault is distinct from the frescoes on the chapel walls but is not intrusive. Iconographically, less realistic elements, like Bicci's Evangelists, have a positive function within the programme by emphasizing the "spiritual⁹³ eternal" in contrast to the "physical present". The vault is associated with a more celestial zone and attains a conceptual

level of "unreality" which is acceptable within Piero's programme as a symbolic totality.

IX FRAMEWORK

The horizontal framework of the narrative scenes of the Bacci chapel, with simulated Classical roll mouldings and dentils, indicates that the framework and the frescoes must be considered to belong on different "levels of reality" in terms of illusionism.⁹⁴ The objective quality of the frescoes as surface, is contrasted with the framework, which appears to be part of the actual architecture. This creates a contact between the two aspects which reinforces the planarity of the wall in relation to a two-fold system of illusionism : fictive pictorial space and fictive architectural structure.

The lunettes have a combination of decorative and architectonic framework. Both side-wall lunettes are defined by stylized leaf and flower patterns while the altar wall lunette has, in contrast, an illusionistic bracket and corbel moulding. In this way the central lunette-surround projects fictively into chapel space and modifies the upper architecture of the altar wall. The side lunettes' framework is counter-illusionistic and emphasizes the objective surface of the architecture while uniting it to the decorative framework of the vault.

The vault framework is highly coloured and decorative,

articulating and emphasizing the directional structure of the diagonal Gothic ribs. Outlined by white, green and red-brown liners the mirror-acanthus design is separated, at intervals, by lattice-quartrefoil iconographic stops, or "medallions". The planar and linear emphasis of the vault framework has little illusionism but is important to the pictorial definition of the chapel vault. The vault framework lays stress on actual architecture, links the lunettes to the upper zone of the chapel and defines the limits of actual space.

The entrance arch to the Bacci chapel is also reinforced pictorially but with simulated Gothic tabernacles on its underside. Standing saints are painted in these fictive architectural niches. This establishes a certain degree of illusionism by creating shallow pockets of fictive space. The definition of actual architecture with fictive architecture introduces the spectator to two levels of perception: "false" and "true" interrelate but the architectonic function of the framework predominates as a definition of the actual arch.

From the lower framework of the lunettes to the upper definition of the simulated marble dado, Classical framework gives the Bacci walls a predominant horizontality in contrast to the Gothic verticality and diagonality of the vault. The awareness of surface, and different qualities of that surface in relation to location within the chapel architecture, affect the framework system of the Bacci Chapel and unite the walls and the vault with

the shape of the architectural enclosure.

X CONCLUSION

Surface and depth in the Bacci chapel at Arezzo are constant concerns in a programme which is intensely aware of its objective reality as mural painting, part of the chapel architecture, defining and defined by its physical actuality.

This careful "counterpoise of depth and surface" facilitates narrative clarity by establishing different types of distance or contact with the spectator in relation to symbolic correspondences.⁹⁶

Less realistic elements within the construction of pictorial space, as in the relative lack of recession in the lunettes, are not negative aspects nor, necessarily chronologically earlier in execution, but have a positive iconographic and architectonic function. This changing spatial cadence is underlined by Piero's treatment of the sequential progression of the narrative. Instead of following the strict chronology of da Voragine's text in the Golden Legend, the source of the programme, Piero "... omits, amplifies and postpones according to his own imagination or pictorial needs."⁹⁷

Piero della Francesca is architectonically "shape-conscious" and this is integrated with his awareness of his frescoes as part of

the chapel surface. There is, therefore, no assault on the
 identity between the wall surface and decoration. ⁹⁸

Illusionistic methods, like mathematical perspective, are used to situate objects in their relative space to each other and to their apparent relation to the spectator's own position in the chapel. The retention of the integrity of the wall surface, combined with rational depth perception, enables Piero to "close" his wall and prevent it from pictorial or illusionistic dissolution. ⁹⁹ In this way, through Piero's accentuation of the surface reality of the chapel architecture, his system of laying out a cogent perspectival recession appears to move backwards from the frontal plane without destroying its planarity.

This harmonious balance of surface versus depth relies on Piero's innate sense of proportion, ratio and quantitative attention to the relative position of his pictorial images to each other and the limits of their framework boundaries. Proportion has been defined as "... the principle of unity amongst a variety of ratios ¹⁰⁰ which makes them all analogous". This principle underlines Piero's different types of framework, pictorial space and complex sequential linking of narrative symbolism which are unified into a rational totality.

The interwoven surface of Piero's mural language is clarified, for the spectator, by the use of carefully graded colours fused with light to indicate their projection or recession and the clear delineation of images which appear integrated with the wall. The

spectator becomes, in this way, aware of the frescoes as part of the plaster - the physical limits of his own space.

The mural language of the Bacci Chapel is integrated with its symbolic didacticism. The narrative of the Legend of the True Cross is part of the larger theme of the Resurrection of Christ, his "consecration" of the Cross for the Redemption of mankind. This symbolic core is evident in the inclusion of the fresco of the Annunciation in which both the Virgin and, by implication, Christ, accept their destinies and offer everyman the hope of Salvation.

In conclusion, the fresco scenes in the Aretine cycle are associated in a unified interrelated drama, in which pictorial, architectural and symbolic criteria are fused in relation to each other, the wall and the spectator.

CHAPTER 5 : THE "OPENED WALL" - CHRISTIAN AND ANTIQUE ALLEGORY
IN THE SASSETTI CHAPEL FRESCOES

Illusionism in the Sassetti Chapel is not "graded within the picture", but within distinct areas of the programme.¹ Certain areas of the chapel appear to be illusionistically "opened" to the viewer's visual entry, through a lack of attention to the surface solidity of the wall. Different types of surface, related to either allegorical or narrative portions of the fresco cycle, change the apparent dimensionality of the real space in the chapel. Actual space may, in this way, appear "smaller in quantity than the pictorial space added to it".²

This chapter will address the essential requirements for this effect and analyse how pictorial space operates in conjunction with fictive architecture and framework, where they occur in the programme. At the same time, a consideration of the allegorical or didactic meaning of some of the pictorial images will be undertaken.

Although the homogeneity of the perspective system in the Sassetti Chapel establishes the "consistent impression of unbroken continuity" between chapel and fresco space, certain counter-illusionistic elements re-establish that the "open" wall is fictional.³ In this way, although the surface of the

Sassetti Chapel is often penetrable, illusionism must be considered in relation to those parts of the programme which re-establish the wall as solid structure. This twofold effect invites the spectator to "read" the pictorial space on different levels of reality.

I CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on the Sassetti Chapel is limited to historical and iconographic interpretations. Sections of the programme have been analysed by Borsook and Offerhaus in their monograph on the chapel.⁴ A similar methodology of separating the chapel and the frescoes into distinct parts, has been adopted in this chapter.

Sandstrom has been essential to the analysis of space in the Sassetti programme but he only deals with the altar wall in terms of illusionism.⁵ He acknowledges that the frontal plane is "opened" and the writer's use of this term reflects his terminology.

Iconography is dealt with in several articles on Ghirlandaio's Antique sources but none related meaning to illusionism.⁶ Even Borsook's research into the general aspects of Tuscan mural painting remains a fundamental historical source for the Sassetti Chapel.⁷

Field study has been the most important aspect in the assessment of the role of the spectator in the programme and its effect on the dimensions of actual space.

II HISTORY

The Sassetti Chapel also known as the Chapel of St. Francis is the second chapel on the right arm of the transept in the Church of Santa Trinità, Florence and is adjacent to the sacristy entrance. The Church of Santa Trinità was built in the second half of the XI century by the Vallombrosan, a Franciscan order, who have remained its faithful custodians through the centuries⁸ (Pl. 79). The church was originally located outside the city walls of Florence, as documented by a deed dated July 19,⁹ 1077. This is the first definite date relative to the existence of the Church of Santa Trinità.

Between 1172 and 1173 a second circle of walls was built around¹⁰ Florence and the Church was included in the city. The XI century priorate was transformed into an abbey and Pope Lucius III granted it apostolic protection on May 30¹¹ 1183. The boundaries of the new parish were defined on¹² February 4, 1184. The original facade of the Romanesque Church of Santa Trinità can still be seen today on the internal structure of its west end. The church was then enlarged and transformed into its present T-shaped Gothic form in the second¹³ half of the XIV century. The design for the new structure¹⁴ has been attributed to Neri di Fioravanti in March 1360.

The Gothic Church of Santa Trinità was completed between 1396 and 1397 and the Sassetti Chapel was built between c. 1371 and 1405.¹⁵

III PATRONAGE

Francesco Sassetti obtained rights of patronage to the chapel between 1478 and 1480.¹⁶ The Sassetti Chapel is one of the best preserved examples of the early Renaissance with altar piece, wall and vault paintings intact. The Church of Santa Trinità is near the once splendid Sassetti palace, which no longer exists, and a small street still bears the Sassetti name. The chapel is still under the patronage of Francesco Sassetti's¹⁷ descendents and was last restored in 1896.

From 1469 until his death Francesco Sassetti was general¹⁸ "manager" of the Medici Bank. He began in the Geneva branch in 1438 and was custodian of the Medici's financial affairs for close on two decades. The patronage and programme of the Sassetti Chapel reflect these worldly concerns together with the spiritual issues within the iconography.

Another factor affected the chapel decoration. In 1459 Sassetti married Nera Corsi and the ancient Roman and Etruscan lineage of her family is reflected in the antiquarian imagery of the chapel¹⁹ programme. Francesco Sassetti was an enthusiastic collector of Roman coins and texts. He also promoted humanistic studies

and was governing officer of both the Florentine and Pisa studios²⁰
 (a Quattrocento equivalent of a modern University).

Throughout his life Sassetti's friendship with Bartolomeo Fonzio²¹
 expanded these humanistic pursuits. The Sassetti library was²²
 famous in Quattrocento Florence.

The patronage of the Sassetti Chapel is affected by three aspects. Firstly, Sassetti owed his financial position entirely to the Medici and secondly, through his own interests and the ancestral links of his wife's family, he was consciously involved with the Antique. Both the secular (worldly) and Antique interests are exemplified in the programme's iconography. Thirdly, his name-saint, St. Francis, was a personal motivation behind the choice of the religious narrative, and reflected the needs of the Franciscan Order of the Church of Santa Trinità.

Francesco Sassetti originally hoped to acquire the rights of patronage to the main chapel in the Church of Santa Maria Novella as the Sassetti family had many burial sites there. None,²³ however, were chapels inside the church proper. A family plot was located in the crypt, beneath the main chapel, and Francesco hoped for similar rights of burial in the main chapel itself. The exact nature of Francesco's quarrel with the Dominicans of the Church of Santa Maria Novella is unknown but it may have been connected with his desire for a Franciscan theme for the chapel's wall decoration. It was, possibly, for this reason that he changed his patronage to the smaller chapel in the Church of Santa Trinità.

Sassetti's patronage of his chosen chapel was also fraught with difficulties. In the year 1478, when final negotiations were taking place, the Pazzi conspiracy broke out on the 26 April.²⁴ This affected Sassetti personally as some of his wife's parentado were involved in a plot to overthrow the Medici. The importance of the Medici family and the inclusion of many of their portraits, in the programme of the frescoes, was an attempt to consolidate Sassetti's political position and a way of publicly declaring his loyalty to the Medici cause. Another reason was the unfortunate waning of Sassetti's financial status, which coincided with the chapel's decoration between the years 1479 and 1485, when several²⁵ branches of the Medici Bank, under Sassetti's control, failed.

The iconographic programme of the Sassetti Chapel combines its devotional purpose with its worldly intentions.

IV ARCHITECTURE

The Sassetti Chapel is Gothic in structure, with pointed lunettes and entrance arch (Pl. 80). The vault is articulated by ribs and is quadri-partite. The rib-vault is pictorially defined by framework which emphasizes illusionistic rather than architectonic form. The illusionism in the vault framework is repeated, in a modified manner, in the lunettes.

The architecture of the Sassetti Chapel is altered through pictorial framework and the inclusion of false architectural

divisions. Fictive, highly credible, grisaille pilasters turn the corners of the second tier of the narrative frescoes, and appear to function as "real" architecture. The rib-vaults appear to spring from these fictive pilasters which function in a similar way as actual supports, in visual terms. In this way, the fictitious architecture gives credibility to the apparent recession and dissolution of the frontal plane of the chapel walls by establishing a transparent layer of space in front of the frescoes. False architecture results in pictorial and architectural changes and the frescoes are "... comprehended in a spatial context which is not that of the picture".²⁶

V ARRANGEMENT OF THE FRESCOES

The cycle of frescoes in the Sassetti Chapel portrays Scenes from the Life of St. Francis and Prophecies of Christ's Advent. They were painted by Domenico Ghirlandaio, who was born in Florence in 1449 and who died there in 1494.²⁷ The frescoes were executed between c. 1482 and 1486, but no contract or any details of payments are known. Borsook suggests that it is unlikely that Ghirlandaio could have made much progress before the second half of 1482 because of other commissions in Rome and elsewhere in Florence.²⁸ The David and the Augustus' Vision above the entrance arch were, however, possibly painted as early as 1478.²⁹ The texts on the scrolls of the vault sibyls are taken from Filippo Barbieri's third edition of an illustrated treatise on Antique sibyls which was not published before 1482 and this

appears to establish the approximate commencement of the frescoes
 30
 inside the chapel.

The Franciscan cycle proceeds from left to right and from the top downwards (Fig. 21). Beginning with the lunette on the left wall, St. Francis Renounces his Worldly Patrimony (Pl. 81), the narrative continues onto the altar wall lunette with the Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule by Pope Honorius III (Pl. 82). The lunette on the right wall portrays the Trial by Fire (Pl. 83). On the second tier, arranged again from left to right, is the fresco of St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata (Pl. 84), and, on the altar wall, the Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son (Pls. 85, 86). The concluding scene on the right wall represents the Death of St. Francis (Pl. 87). This brings the narrative sequence to a close.

The lowest tier of the chapel wall contains, to the left, the tomb of Nera Sassetti, to the centre the altarpiece painting of the Nativity (Pls. 88, 89), and, to the right, the tomb of Francesco Sassetti.

The vault is decorated by four sibyls, identified by their scrolls as the Cimmerian (Pl. 100), Agrippan (Pl. 101), Eritrean (Pl. 102) and Cumean (Pl. 103) sibyls.
 31

Outside the chapel, above the entrance, is the Vision of Augustus on the Capitoline Hill, in a fictive lunette flanked, on the

right, by a simulated statue of David. The Nativity, the sibyls and the paintings on the entrance arch are distinct from the Franciscan narrative as prophecies related to Christ's Advent and are integral to the programme's meaning as a whole. The tombs have personalised Antique imagery related to Nera and Francesco Sassetti.

VI THE TOMBS : ANTIQUE ALLEGORY, GRISAILLE AND ILLUSIONISM

The tomb niches (Fig. 21) on either side of the chapel, were, according to Borsook and Offerhaus, almost certainly prepared before much progress had been made by Ghirlandaio because the distribution of the scenes, as well as the grisailles, could only have been calculated after the arcosolia had been hollowed out.³²

There is no consensus of opinion as to the identity of the carver of either the sarcophagi or the bands of relief, framing each arcosolium, but they have been attributed to Giuliano da Sangallo.³³ This appears feasible as Giuliano da Sangallo was interested in the Antique, and his sketchbooks are amongst the earliest in the Renaissance depicting Classical buildings on the basis of first-hand observation.³⁴ This would have harmonised with Ghirlandaio's own interest in the Antique.

Ghirlandaio also made a book of drawings between 1481 and 1482 when he was in Rome and visited, among other places, the

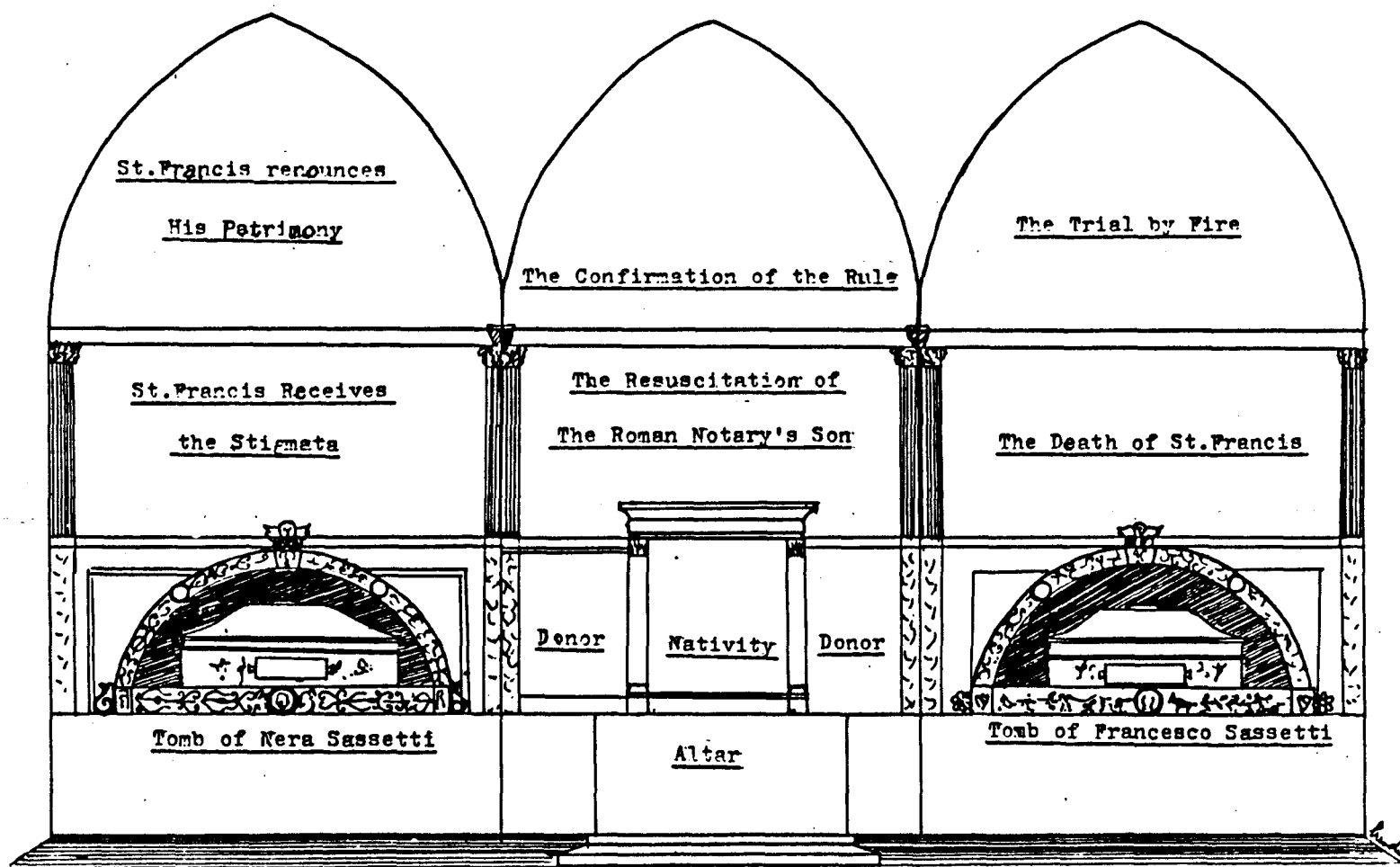
underground rooms known as grotte, of the Domus Aurea. ³⁵ This was immediately prior to his commencement of the fresco programme in the Sassetti Chapel. Ghirlandaio may have used some of his drawings of the grotesques, or paintings, in the Domus Aurea, in his Antique source material for the chapel frescoes. ³⁶ He also had access to Sassetti's own and the Medici collection of Antiquities.

The use of Antique allegory reflects the ideas of two antiquarian advisors who assisted both Ghirlandaio and Sassetti in the formulation of the chapel programme. Bartolomeo Fonzio and Agnolo Poliziano both contributed to the chapel's iconography, although their exact collaboration is unknown. The historical vein and the allusions to ancient history could, according to Saxl, have reflected Fonzio's speeches rather than Poliziano's ³⁷ writings. Poliziano's portrait, however, appears twice in the narrative programme, which indicates his importance to Francesco Sassetti.

Both tomb areas contain allegory. Nereids, riding sea-monsters are portrayed in the relief roundels on the framework above Nera Sassetti's tomb (Pl. 99). This may be a pun on her name, Nera, or a reference in marine form to Francesco's emblem of the ³⁸ centaur. Nereids have a further significance of representing ³⁹ happiness after life's burdens have been cast aside.

Between the roundels decorative details with urns, scrolls and

Figure 21 : The arrangement of the frescoes in the Sassetti Chapel at Santa Trinità, Florence



curvilinear forms complete the relief framework, with its centred portrait medallion. This medallion is flanked by Roman eagles. The spandrels of Nera's tomb are painted in grisaille : to the left, the Triumph of Germanicus, with the inscription GERMANICVS CAESAR/SIGNIS RECEPTIS (Pl. 99 and Fig. 22), and to the right, two horsemen with the inscription DECVSIO SENATVS C(ONSVLTO)
⁴⁰
 (Fig. 23).

The visual illusionism created between the projecting framework and the grisaille tomb spandrels deceives the observer's eye into initially believing that there is a continuity of technique and function. The grisaille figures are not, however, copies of relief sculpture but of Vespasian coins, and in their re-evocation as fictive relief lose their original quality through change in
⁴¹
 scale. The grisaille figures appear to stand on simulated architectural ledges and push them back "behind" the actual relief framework. This has the effect of counteracting the illusionism of the "real" and false relief, despite the related monochromatism of the grisaille, by emphasizing the actual discontinuity of the two areas.

The spectator is alerted to the illusionism and re-evaluates the spandrels as monochrome paintings. Painted shadows play an important role in the apparent three-dimensionality of the fictive relief of the tomb spandrels. Each pictorial image casts a painted shadow which gives the illusion of the forms projecting from the surface. This apparent projection is balanced by the

figures less than life-size scale, indicating that they are painted "reality".

The combination of real and fictive relief in the tomb area of Nera Sassetti transforms the lower wall of the chapel with limited illusionism. Although the grisailles have no actual depth their status as painted areas is still not categorically defined. The objective quality of the chapel surface is, hence, ambiguous. The grisailles, the framework relief, picked out in gold leaf, and the whole tomb area all serve to concretize the realm of death in the chapel.

The reliefs surrounding Francesco Sassetti's tomb arcosolium (Pl. 90), on the lower right wall, portray centaurs. Centaurs were the family emblem of the Sassetti and are placed in the roundels of the tomb framework in violent action. The funerary significance of centaurs is mentioned by Virgil who places them⁴² "at the entrance to the underworld." They illustrate Sassetti's family motto, sors placida mihi, as personal allegories⁴³ of power, victory and physical force. Centaurs, being "bestial" creatures, could also represent the side of man's nature characterized by mortality, in contrast to man's "divine" aspect⁴⁴ of the soul, immortality and reason.

The lower framework of Francesco Sassetti's tomb arcosolium is full of mourning figures and at the centre an emaciated, partly shrouded figure is stretched out on a catafalque near Sassetti

Grisaille

Illusionistic texture

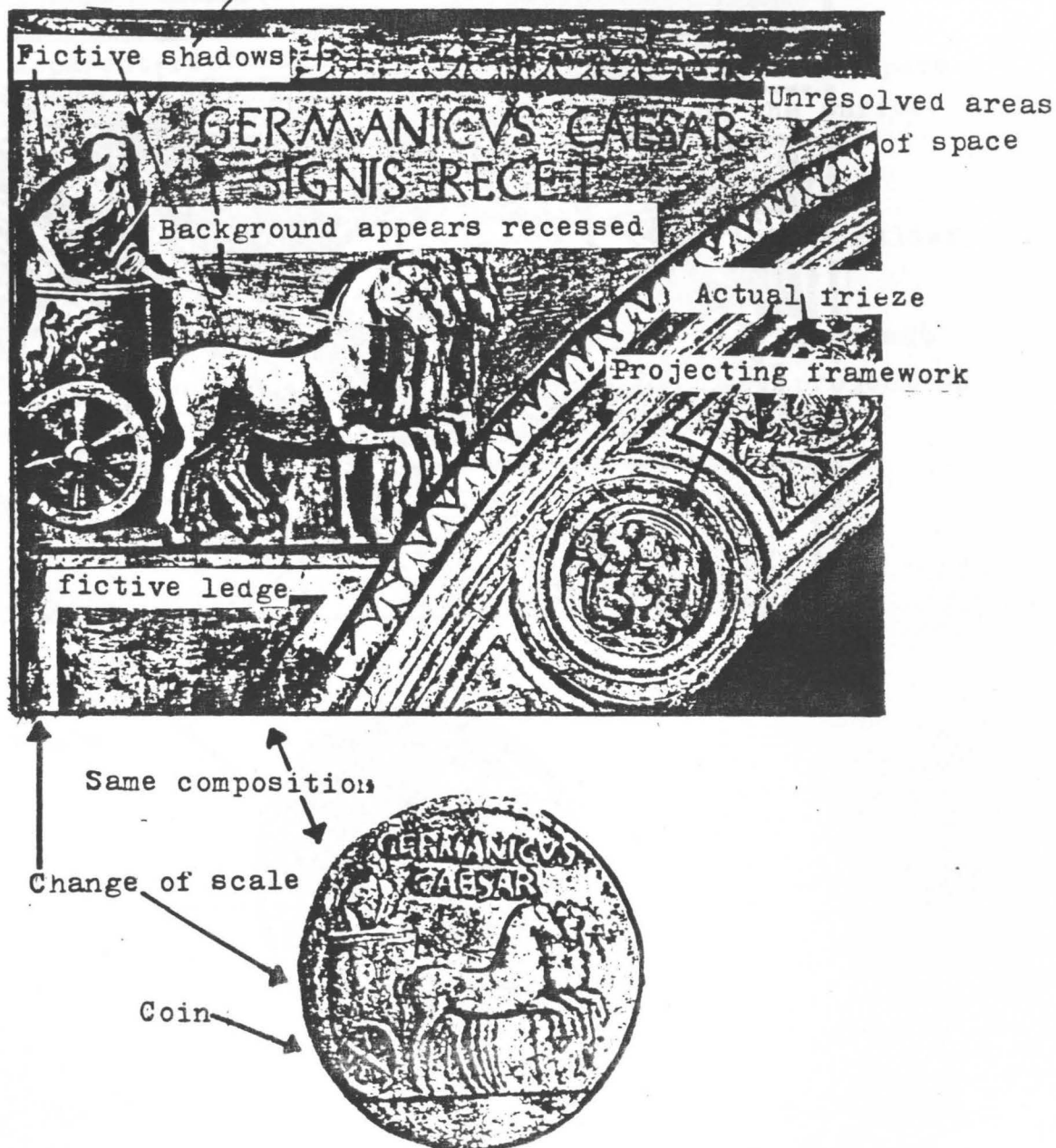


Figure 22 : Grisaille spandrel on the left side of Nera Sassetti's tomb showing the Triumph of Germanicus. Copied from a Caligulan coin in the British Museum, London

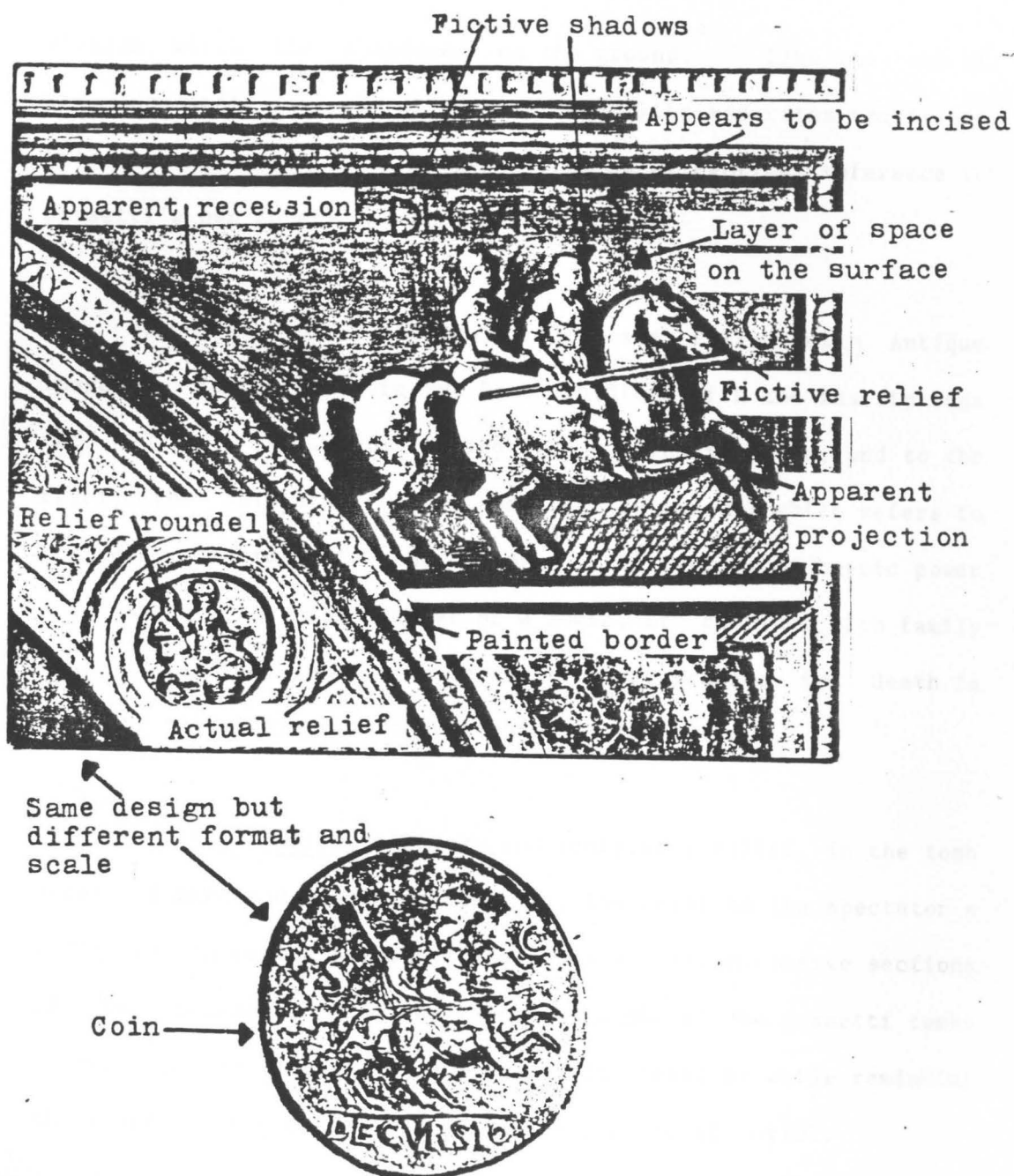


Figure 23 : Grisaille spandrel on the right side of Nera Sassetti's tomb showing two horsemen with the inscription, Decursio Senatus Consulto. Copied from a Vespasian coin in the British Museum, London

45

shields which lie abandoned on the ground. Like the tomb of Nera Sassetti, a central portrait medallion separates the frieze into two parts. The imagery forms an allegorical reference to Sassetti's own funeral, conceived all'antica.

The spandrels of Francesco's tomb are filled with Antique imagery. To the left are two Roman soldiers with the inscriptions CAES.AVG.S.C., (Pl. 96) copied from a Vespasian coin, and to the right, the Adlocutio (Pl. 97 and Figs. 24 and 25) which refers to the Roman address to the troops.⁴⁶ Allegories of heroic power and control, in the manner of a Roman, are combined with family emblems and references. Sassetti's preparation for death is couched, pictorially, in the language of the Antique.⁴⁷

The use of grisaille, allegory and sculptural relief, in the tomb areas of Nera and Francesco Sassetti, indicates to the spectator a different intention between these zones and the narrative sections of the programme. At the base of the chapel the Sassetti tombs concretize the actual dimensions of the interior while reminding the viewer of the chapel's function as a place of burial.

There is a regulated system of "levels of reality" in the Sassetti programme. The grisailles are illusionistic to a limited degree and have a fictive "reality" as relief rather than painting by establishing a surface modulation of the wall. The tombs are related to the dado and enrich the textural awareness of the spectator while underlining their allegorical function within the programme.

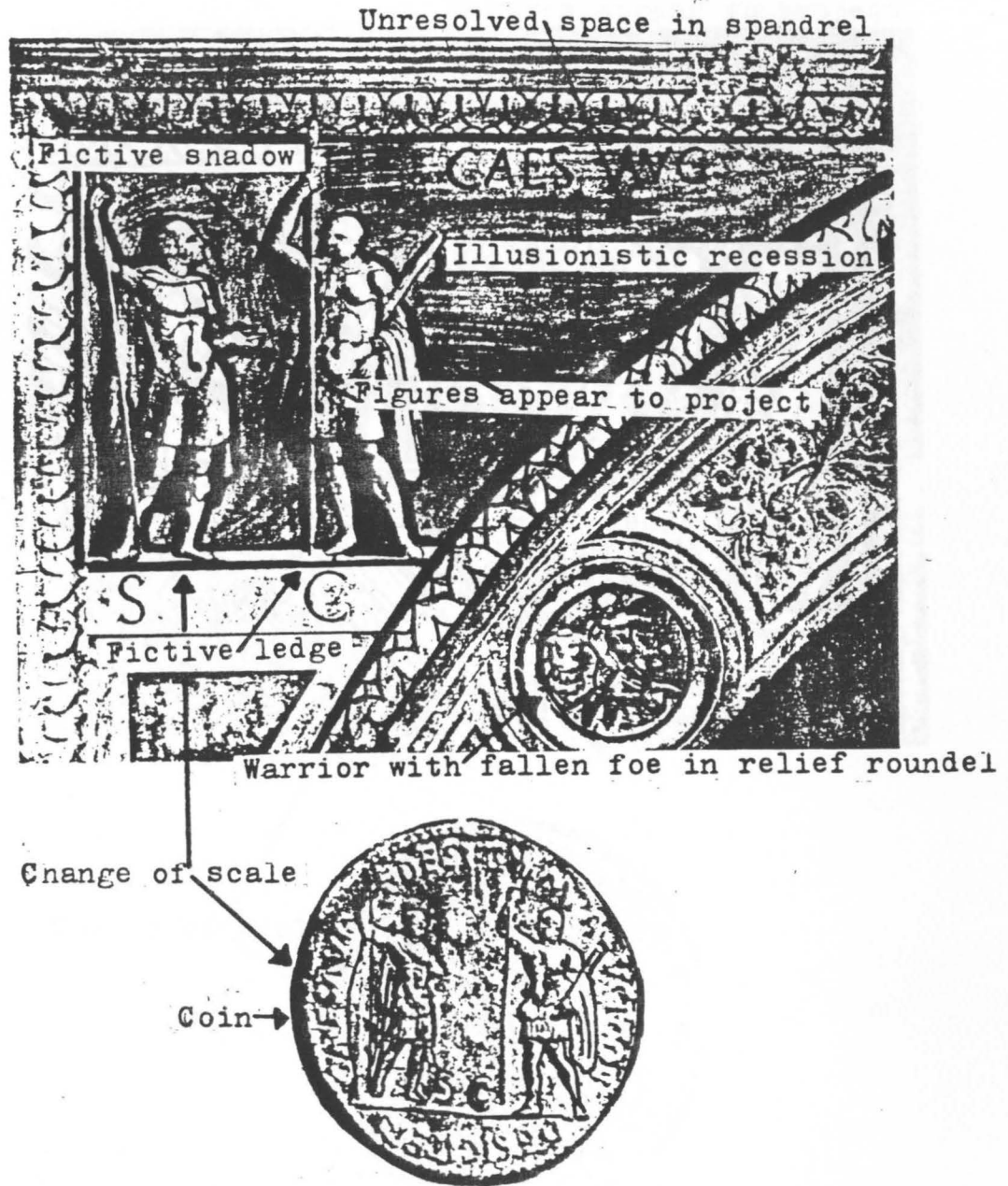


Figure 24 : Grisaille spandrel on the left side of Francesco Sassetti's tomb showing two Roman soldiers with the inscription CAES.AVG.S.C. Copied from a Vespasian Sesterce with Titus and Domitian in the British Museum, London

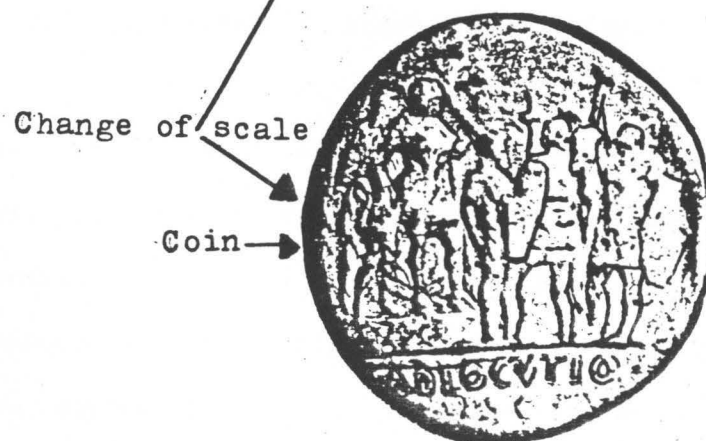
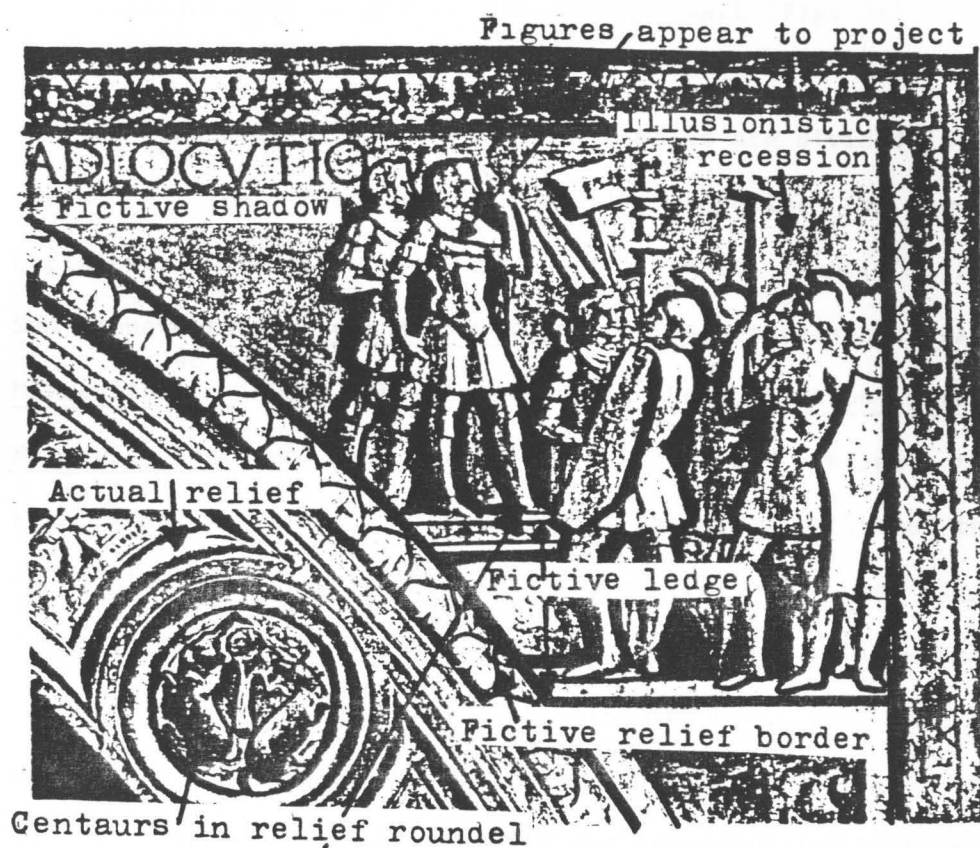


Figure 25 : Grisaille spandrel on the right side of Francesco Sassetti's tomb showing the Adlocutio, or Roman address to the troupes.

VII THE NARRATIVE WALLS : THE STORY OF ST. FRANCIS AND THE
ILLUSIONISTIC SYSTEM OF THE "OPENED" WALL (Fig. 26)

In the Sassetti Chapel the narrative walls are divided into three tiers. The Franciscan narrative occupies the two upper registers. The story portrays events from St. Francis' life, from San Bonaventura's Legenda Maior and Tommaso da Celano's Tractus de
48
Miraculis. Only the fresco of the Resuscitation of the Roman
Notary's Son, on the altar wall, does not reflect the main Franciscan narrative. Drawings of the altar wall show that the Apparition of St. Francis at Arles (Pl. 91) was originally
49
intended for this area. The change was possibly a reference to the death of Sassetti's first-born son, Teodoro, and the subsequent "miraculous" birth of another son, named Teodoro
50
II. This is allegorized in the Resuscitation scene which is placed, significantly, above the Nativity.

The left lunette of St. Francis Renouncing his Worldly Patrimony (Pl. 81) has a semi-circular composition which encloses the central figures of the kneeling St. Francis and his father. The figures on the periphery of this semi-circle have their backs to the spectator, who is included as an active "onlooker". The frontal plane of the fresco appears dissolved by the lack of attention to the objective surface of the wall.

The painted shadow beneath the lunette framework functions on two

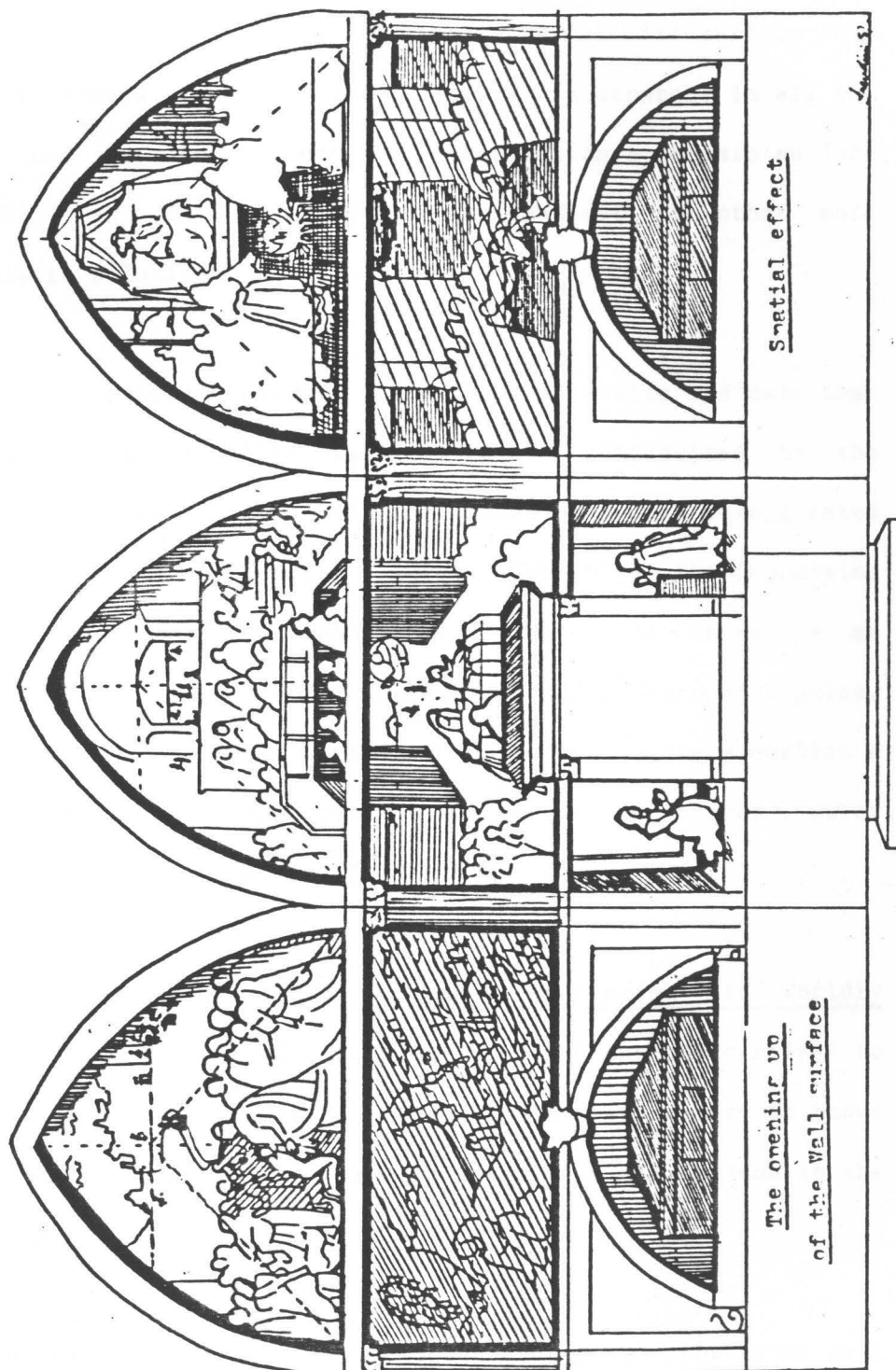


Figure 26 : Different solutions to the "opened" wall in the Sassetti Chapel at Santa Trinità, Florence

levels (Fig. 27). Firstly, it emphasizes the projection of the lunette framework into chapel space, and secondly, it is also counter-illusionistic because it implies a definite surface onto which the shadow falls. This feature is apparent in all the lunettes and has the effect of establishing a certain surface objectivity on the upper walls in contrast to other more illusionistic solutions.

Although the painted shadows beneath the lunette indicate that there must be a solid wall, this is compromised by the illusionistic penetration of the scene and the exaggerated diminution of the furthest figures. This gives the impression of looking through a transparent "window" as there is no transitional space between the foreground and background figures. The lack of categorically defined objective surface enables a communication between the picture and real space to occur, which
 51
 "opens" the wall in terms of illusionism.

The sacred narrative of St. Francis Renouncing his Worldly Patrimony is extended with personal associations which relate to Sassetti's worldly ambitions. Instead of Assisi the fresco shows a view of Geneva, where Sassetti first made his fortune in the
 52
 Medici Bank.

The next episode in the Franciscan story, on the altar wall lunette, is the Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule (Pl. 82). It too, has an unconventional setting: instead of Rome, the subject

is transported to Florence. The town square of Florence, with the city hall and the Loggia dei Signori, is visible at the rear of the fresco.⁵³ The only Roman reference in the fresco is in the arches of the background architecture, which may refer to the Tempio della Pace, based on the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine (Pl. 95).⁵⁴ In a similar way, it will be seen, Ghirlandaio used the entrance arch fresco in which Augustus beholds a Vision on the Capitoline Hill, to communicate the idea of Florence as the new Rome (see below pp. 221-222).

Drawings show that the fresco was originally designed in a church interior (Pl. 94).⁵⁵ The fresco could relate to the theme of peace, important to Florence and to Sassetti himself after the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 and could be symbolic of a reconciliation between Florence and the Papacy which took place in December 1482.⁵⁶

The use of Florentine settings for Roman subjects may also refer to legends of Florence succeeding Rome as Roma Nuova, for with its rule, it was believed, would come the rule of peace.⁵⁷ The fact that the Pope is seated on a dais with an arcade leading up to it also consolidates his power and "... implies a certain temporal eminence and a general line of approach towards him along the arches of the arcade."⁵⁸

The inclusion of the portraits of Lorenzo de' Medici, Francesco Sassetti and their sons and tutors (Pl. 82) emphasizes Sassetti's political aspirations within the spiritual significance of the scene.⁵⁹ In this way, Ghirlandaio's Confirmation of the Rule

juxtaposes "... an unexceptional representation of Franciscan narrative with what is clearly to be understood as a contemporary equivalent in the foreground."⁶⁰

The centre of the fresco is "perforated" by a painted staircase which can be presumed, in terms of illusionism, "to run immediately inside the wall".⁶¹ This "opens" the lower portion of the lunette and the spectator reads the recessional space, out of which the figures appear to be climbing, as a "hole" in the wall (Fig. 28). Two of the figures, the Medici boys, look at the spectator and out into the actual space of the chapel. This makes communication on this level more emphatic and the visual passage between the reality of the fresco and the reality of the space in which the spectator stands is unimpeded.

There is no indication of the picture surface and "... the staircase gives a powerful impression of architectonic form".⁶²

The illusionism of this central puncturing of the fresco allows a visual step to occur into the space of the spectator.⁶³ The Confirmation of the Rule is no longer conceived of as an object but as an imagined view through an opening in the chapel wall. Only the painted shadow beneath the lunette framework, like that of the St. Francis Renouncing his Wordly Patrimony, locates the fresco on the wall surface.

Despite the effect of the painted shadow the lack of planar definition predominates. This causes "... the objective

pictorial space in front of the depicted scene itself to have the effect of being a direct continuation of the real room in which the observer is standing."⁶⁴

Ghirlandaio's system of "opening" the wall compromises the barrier between the spheres of reality and fiction. This must, of course, take place with the observer's sanction, and within the fiction of the situation, the figures climbing out of the staircase in the fresco of the Confirmation of the Rule also climb into the actual chapel.

The right wall lunette of the Trial by Fire (Pl. 83) is less illusionistic. The eye of the observer is invited into the fresco along patterned floor tiles which appear to dissolve the frontal barrier of the chapel surface. The scene is centralised by the fire, which separates two groups of figures, on either side of the lunette, from the focal point of the Sultan himself. The fresco contains no identifiable landmarks or any other unconventional feature.⁶⁵ On either side of the Sultan's throne landscape scenes again appear to "open" the background, destroying the actual solidity of the chapel wall by means of illusionism. As in all the lunettes, the painted shadow beneath the arch counterbalances this apparent dissolution of the frontal plane and background recession by implying a definite surface.

The "open-wall" system of the Sassetti Chapel lunettes is modified by the use of painted shadow. The central tier of the

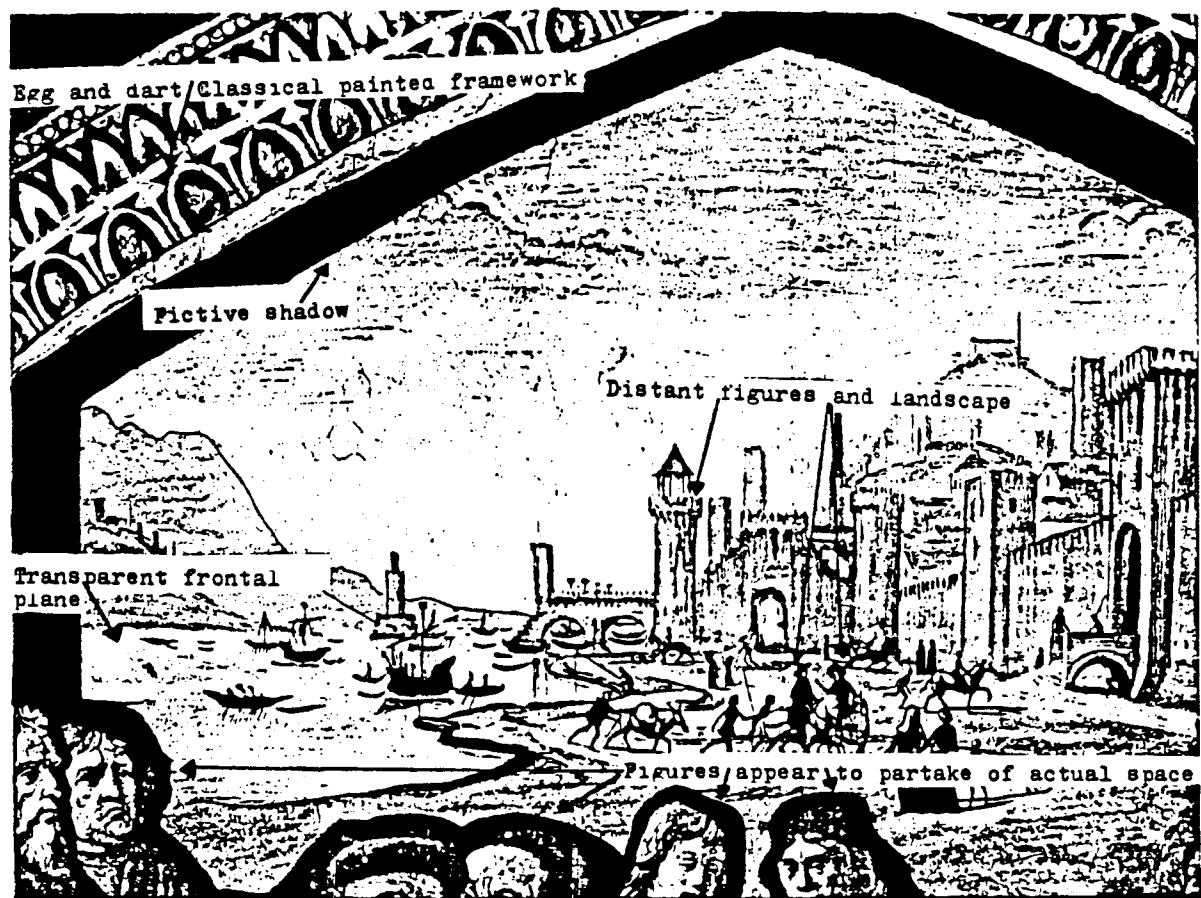


Figure 27 : Detail of St. Francis Renouncing his Worldly Patrimony, showing a view of Geneva.

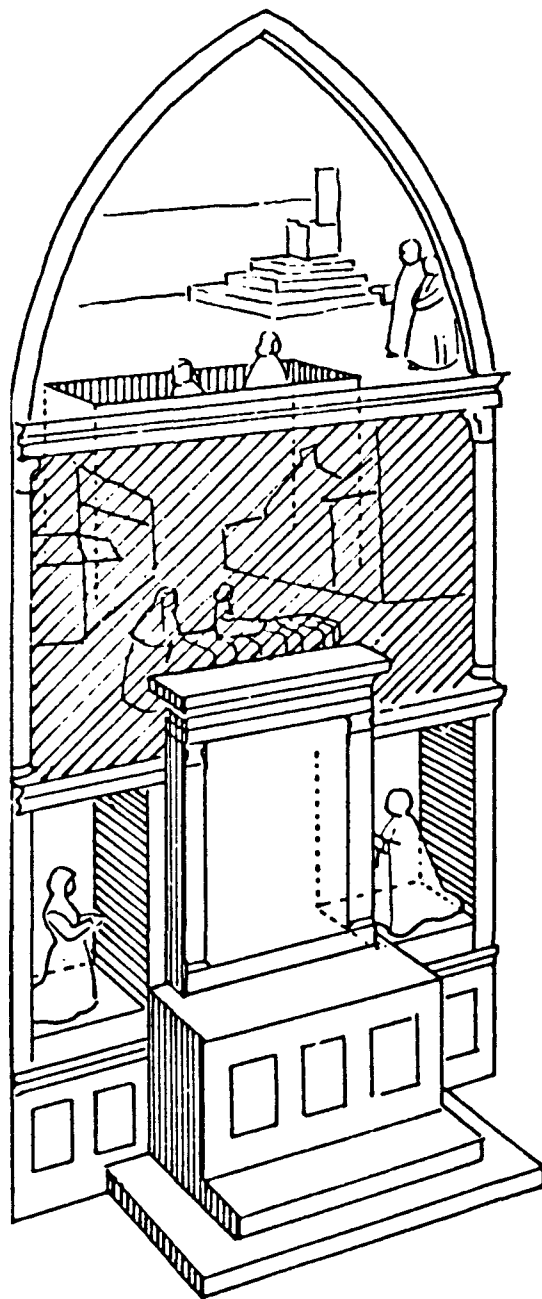


Figure 28 : Spatial effect of the rear fresco of the Sassetti Chapel when the lunette section is taken into consideration.

narrative programme lacks this definitive shadow, except for a narrow shadow beneath the fictive architectural framework divisions. There is, therefore, a greater communication between the frescoes and real space in this area than in the lunettes. To the observer who looks at the wall as an undivided whole, or approaches the painted surface from the sides, the lunettes no longer appear "open" but are defined, with the help of the painted shadow beneath their framework, as painted wall.

The Stigmatization of St. Francis (Pl. 84), on the second tier of the left wall, is placed above the tomb of Nera Sassetti. The fresco portrays a realistic view of a La Verna where the miracle took place and also includes a river with buildings along its banks.⁶⁶ The city represented, Pisa, stands at the end of the Arno river which begins near La Verna.⁶⁷ The panoramic scene is dominated by a mountain in the background and, to the left, winged angel-heads in a mandorla.

The inclusion of the source of the miracle of St. Francis' stigmatization, Christ surrounded by his angels, allows communication with the observer to be heightened. The "vision-like" images alert the observer to two levels of reality, the conceptual unreality of the figures in the mandorla, and the perceptual illusion of reality in the pictorial space of the fresco. Christ and his angels are part of "eternal life" while the narrative scene is part of "imminent reality".⁶⁸ In this way, the didactic content of the scene is emphasized.

The narrative and the vision are on different "levels of reality" which make the images efficacious in terms of didacticism. The visionary reality of Christ and his angels is indicated to both St. Francis and the spectator by its more abstract, idealized pictorial form which is a step removed from the viewer's reality. This contrasts with the more realistic representation of the narrative scene. This duality, "real" or abstract, places the images on different symbolic levels and draws the spectator's response by guiding his experience of each pictorial image and accentuating its meaning.

Fictive pilasters frame the scene of the Stigmatization of St. Francis, as all those on the central tier of the chapel. The border between this false architecture and the fresco is undefined and the spectator sees what appears to be a transparent "window" through which the pictorial scene may be viewed. This impression is greater than that in the lunette area, because the false architecture restructures the position of the frontal plane of the fresco in relation to the actual wall surface.⁶⁹

The Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son (Pls. 85, 86), on the altar wall, gives an outside view of the Piazza Santa Trinita, instead of the Piazza San Marco where the miracle was supposed to have taken place.⁷⁰ The original Romanesque facade of the church is visible on the right and on the left is the Palazzo Spini from which falls the tiny figure of the notary's son.⁷¹

The painted altar construction in the middle of the fresco rises with a double cornice and conceals the foreground in the middle of the scene (Fig. 29).⁷² Shadow is again important and falls over the ground surface of the picture. Two Franciscans kneel in prayer, to the right of the fresco. They appear to be the only witnesses of the revelation. The outer of the two figures is so near to the limits of the fresco's frontal plane that a fold of his garment falls over the lower framework and can "... thus be assumed to reach out into real space."⁷³

Several types of illusionism occur in the Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son. The illusionistic fold of the kneeling Franciscan "spills" over the barrier of the framework and projects into the space of the observer. The flanking false architecture of the central tier pilasters add to the impression of an "open" wall. The illusionism in this "open-wall-system" is, however, inconsistent in the central tier of the Sassetti chapel as all the frescoes have a high viewpoint which negates the complete deception of this area as an actual continuation of the spectator's own space in the chapel.

The perspective of the fresco is centrally focussed with tightly grouped figures on either side, along the receding lines of the buildings. This concentrates the action on the open central space where the miracle of the resuscitation takes place. A woman, with her back towards the spectator, is placed directly in front of the bier on which the boy, whom St. Francis in Heaven

has raised from the dead, is sitting. This enhances the viewer's sense of participation as an onlooker in the posthumous miracle.⁷⁴

The concluding scene of the Franciscan narrative is the Death of St. Francis (Pl. 87), on the right wall of the chapel. Like its companion fresco on the same wall's lunette, this scene has a setting with no specific identity.⁷⁵ The fresco is directly above Francesco Sassetti's tomb and juxtaposes the death content of the scene with Sassetti's mortal remains in a symbolic parallel. The semi-circular composition of the figures surrounding the dead St. Francis echo the architectural formation of the columns and the domed altar behind them. The painted columns in the scene relate to the illusionistic fictive pilasters that frame all the frescoes on the central tier of the chapel. In the Death of St. Francis the interrelation of pictorial and fictive architecture gives credibility to the impression of a continuation of architectural definition into the pictorial space of the fresco. In this way, an "opening" of the frontal plane again occurs as pictorial architecture, as both frame and fresco, extend the actual space of the chapel in fictive terms.

The permeation of real space into the zone of the fresco eliminates any visual barrier to the spectator's entry. This dissolution of the objective quality of the surface, as physical material, results in the creation of "... pictorial space as an annexe of the observer's space."⁷⁶



Figure 29 : The Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son

The central narrative tier of the Sassetti chapel manipulates illusionism by means of false architecture. The persuasion of the spectator in believing that the imitation architecture is real is emphasized by the lack of surface attention and the cogency of the perspectival illusionism. Only the narrow painted shadows beneath the horizontal framework, which separates the narrative registers, alerts the spectator to the reality of a surface which is deceptively dissolved through illusionism.

VIII THE ALTAR WALL: THE NATIVITY AND THE DONOR PORTRAITS

The Nativity (Pls. 88, 89) was a favourite theme for altarpieces in private burial chapels because of its Eucharistic associations. Ghirlandaio's rendering of the scene shows the infant Jesus lying in front of an empty sarcophagus which alludes⁷⁷ to life after death. This association relates directly to the miracle of the child in the Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son, above. In this way, the symbolic themes of death and resurrection appropriate to a burial chapel, are emphasized.

The Sassetti tombs, instead of being beneath the floor, are enclosed in their lunette-shaped niches so that they are exactly⁷⁸ aligned with the empty sarcophagus in the altarpiece. The concretizing themes of death, salvation and rebirth are prominent in this area of the chapel. The occupants of the tombs, Francesco and Nera Sassetti, appear between their graves in the sarcophaghi and the Nativity, in the highly realistic form of

donor portraits kneeling in illusionistic fictive "rooms".

The Nativity abounds with Antique references within the Christian event of the birth of the Saviour. The all 'antica manger-sarcophagus and triumphal arch in the distance, to the left of the painting, have Classical inscriptions by Fonzio.

Using the story of Pompey, Fonzio introduced the theme of successive reigns of the Hebrews, Romans and of Christ. The manger-sarcophagus used for the Saviour's crib, together with the ancient pillars supporting the roof of the temporary shelter, are foundations for the new temple succeeding its Hebrew and pagan predecessors. 80

The inscription on the Roman sarcophagus of the Christ-child also refers to the continuity of the Roman empire with the birth of the Redeemer as successive kingdoms give way to Christianity.

The imposing letters on the manger read :

ENSE CADENS SOLYMO POMPEI. FVLVI (VS) AVGR/NVMEN AIT.QVAE ME CONTEG (IT).

The most distant hill on the right of the Nativity consists of an idealised view of Jerusalem. Against this panorama of Jerusalem and ancient Rome, the holy family and their attendants are gathered in front of pagan ruins celebrating the advent of Christ's new Kingdom.

The Sassetti witness the scene, not only in the flanking donor portraits (Pls. 92, 93), but also in the presence of stones in front of the Christ-child, which point directly towards him. Stones or "sassi" were part of the Sassetti emblem and literally the name means "little stones", or someone from Saxony (Sassonia).

On the frame of the altar piece is inscribed :

IPSVM QVEM GENVIT ADORAVIT MARIA

The illusionistic donor portraits of Francesco and Nera Sassetti are on either side of the painting of the Nativity, which is framed by gilded pilasters. This distinguishes the Nativity as a removable oil painting, distinct from the main fresco programme. The donors appear to participate in the Nativity in the guise of
83
onlookers.

The high degree of credibility of the donor rooms creates fictive "punctures" on the wall surface. Actual space appears to permeate and reside within these punctures, creating a continuum between their painted "reality" and their illusionistic "unreality" as part of the space occupied by the spectator. In this way, Ghirlandaio enhances the realism of his imagery to focus the spectator's attention on the donors. The spectator is able, through empathetic and spatial identification with the donor figures, to participate in their hopes for Salvation.

Ghirlandaio's perspective construction achieves the three-dimensional illusion of actual rooms by excluding any stylistic interference with his deception. In order to heighten their credibility he makes the scale of the donor figures equal to that of the spectator and treats the area as a distinct totality. The whole area is clearly demarcated by acanthus-type framework, which is low in reality in relation to the illusionistic pictorial space, and is placed at the spectator's own level in the chapel, so enhancing actual communication.

The deliberate heightening of contact between the donor rooms and the spectator emphasizes the symbolic message of the Nativity and its implications for Redemption. ⁸⁴ The didactic message of Christ's birth as a prerequisite for everyman's Salvation, and its tragic culmination in his death, are implicit in the Nativity. The proximity of the scene to the altar and the transubstantiation of the flesh enacted in the Eucharistic rites of the Mass, are significant.

The donor portraits and the painting of the Nativity concretize the Redemptive theme of the chapel.

IX THE ENTRANCE ARCH AND THE VAULT ; PROPHECIES OF CHRIST'S ADVENT

The frescoes on the entrance arch and the sibyls in the vault link the Pagan iconography in the chapel with the Christian narrative centred in the altarpiece of the Nativity. Prophecies of Christ's Advent are represented outside the chapel, immediately over the entrance arch. (Pls. 104a, b)

In the lunette-shaped scene, above the actual entrance arch of the Sassetti chapel, Antique prophecies are expounded as Augustus beholds a Vision of the Capitoline Hill (Fig. 30). According to the antiquarian sources for the legend it was on this site that it was revealed to Augustus that the Pagan world would give way to the birth of Christ and an era of peace. ⁸⁵ In one version

of the story Augustus saw the Madonna and child amidst a sunburst. This particular imagery was recorded by Jacopo da
⁸⁶
 Voragine in the Golden Legend.

Borsook and Offerhaus suggest that Ghirlandaio's version derives from Suetonius' account of the legend, as a copy of his work was
⁸⁷
 available in Sassetti's library. The sunburst described by Suetonius was, as in Ghirlandaio's fresco of the Vision of Augustus, in the guise of Christ's symbol, the IHS trigram. This symbol could allude to the eucharistic host as well as being an
⁸⁸
 accepted emblem for peace.

The theme of peace is prominent in the Sassetti programme. It is exemplified in the inclusion of the Tempio della Pace in the altar wall lunette of the Confirmation of the Rule. Also, in the Nativity, Joseph shields his eyes in his search for the guiding star of the Magi and his gesture parallels that of Augustus gazing at the sunburst. This links the themes of Pagan and Christian within the chapel's iconographic programme as the star, the sunburst and the Eucharist become, symbolically, one.

In a similar way, the inscription on the manger-sarcophagus in the Nativity refers to a certain augur, Fulvio, who died in the
⁸⁹
 Pompeian siege of Jerusalem. It was predicted that his tomb would serve a new deity, the Christ-child, and Warburg suggests that the name Fulvio may actually refer to Publio Nigrizio Figulo, who, according to Suetonius, proclaimed the moment of

90

Augustus' birth. If this theory is correct, it would establish a further link between Augustus and the Nativity, intertwining the themes of Pagan and Christian. At the same time, this could further explain the Florentine settings in the Roman subjects of the Franciscan narrative, as Agnolo Poliziano discovered texts in the Medici library which declared that

91

Augustus helped in the founding of Florence as Roma Nuova.

On the outside entrance wall, to the right of the Vision of Augustus, is the fictive statue of David (Fig. 31), standing upon a tall painted pillar. He bears the Sassetti arms and functions

92

as "...a prophet of the Saviour's birth". David was known as the prophet of Judgement and relates, iconographically, to the

93

burial function of the chapel. The Dies irae which was sung in the Mass on the first Sunday of Advent incorporated this prophecy and was familiar to all Quattrocento Florentines.

The day of wrath and terror looming,
Heaven and earth to ash consuming -
David and the Sybil's true foredooming!
Ah, what agony of trembling,
Probeth all beyond dissembling! 94

The David, together with the Vision of Augustus, have an illusionistic as well as an iconographic function. The fictive lunette of the Augustus scene is framed with simulated Classical mouldings which appear to be actual relief sculpture. This parallels the type of relief in the actual arch framework,

connecting the two areas. The lower portion of the scene has no visible barrier to impede the spectator's visual entry. Although the viewpoint is high a certain transformation of the wall occurs as the pictorial space is not distinctly separate from the fictive architectural space.

Despite this illusionism, the pictorial space does not bear a completely credible relation to the real space in the Church of Santa Trinità. One of the elements which acknowledges the deception of the fictive lunette as an actual architectural "puncture" is the use of painted shadow. A realistic shadow is painted beneath the fictive lunette surround and this, as in the actual lunettes within the chapel, limits illusionism by pre-supposing that the shadow falls onto a tangible surface.

The frescoes of the Sassetti Chapel display an illusionism which, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is not graded within the picture. In this way, the same degree of reality is assumed to be valid within the whole of the painted area, which as a unit appears to be composed of both pictorial and real space. Although painted shadow indicates that there is still an actual solid surface, this is not stressed objectively, and the homogeneity of perspective in each fresco unit "opens" the wall through illusionism.

An essential requirement for the credibility of this illusionism is the way elements of pictorial space operate in conjunction

with the false architecture which defines either the chapel walls or the edges of the fresco as a unit. In the Vision of Augustus the fictive lunette gives a formal "entrance" to the chapel's symbolism by paralleling the same shape as the entrance arch. The IHS trigram dominates the centre of the fictive lunette, underlining the symbolic didacticism of the Antique imagery. The high position of the fictive lunette indicates, to the spectator, that there is no continuation of his space into the fresco. The fictive architectural frame and format of the Vision of Augustus emphasize the importance of the scene by an architectonic relationship to the chapel entrance.

The simulated statue of David is in Classical contrapposto pose and has a dual function. Firstly, he relates to public statuary in the tradition of Donatello and Verocchio as "heroic sculpture".⁹⁵ In this role he represents a statue. Secondly, the David is illusionistic and the technique of imitating materials places him in a pictorial space which may, according to the fiction of the situation, be seen to incorporate some of the real space from the transept of the church interior. The David is not enclosed on all sides by framework, like the Vision of Augustus, and lacks the limiting barrier created by a distinct frame. His relationship to the space of the church transept is, hence, different. There is neither a perspectival pictorial scene to draw the spectator's eye into the wall, nor any painted enclosure.

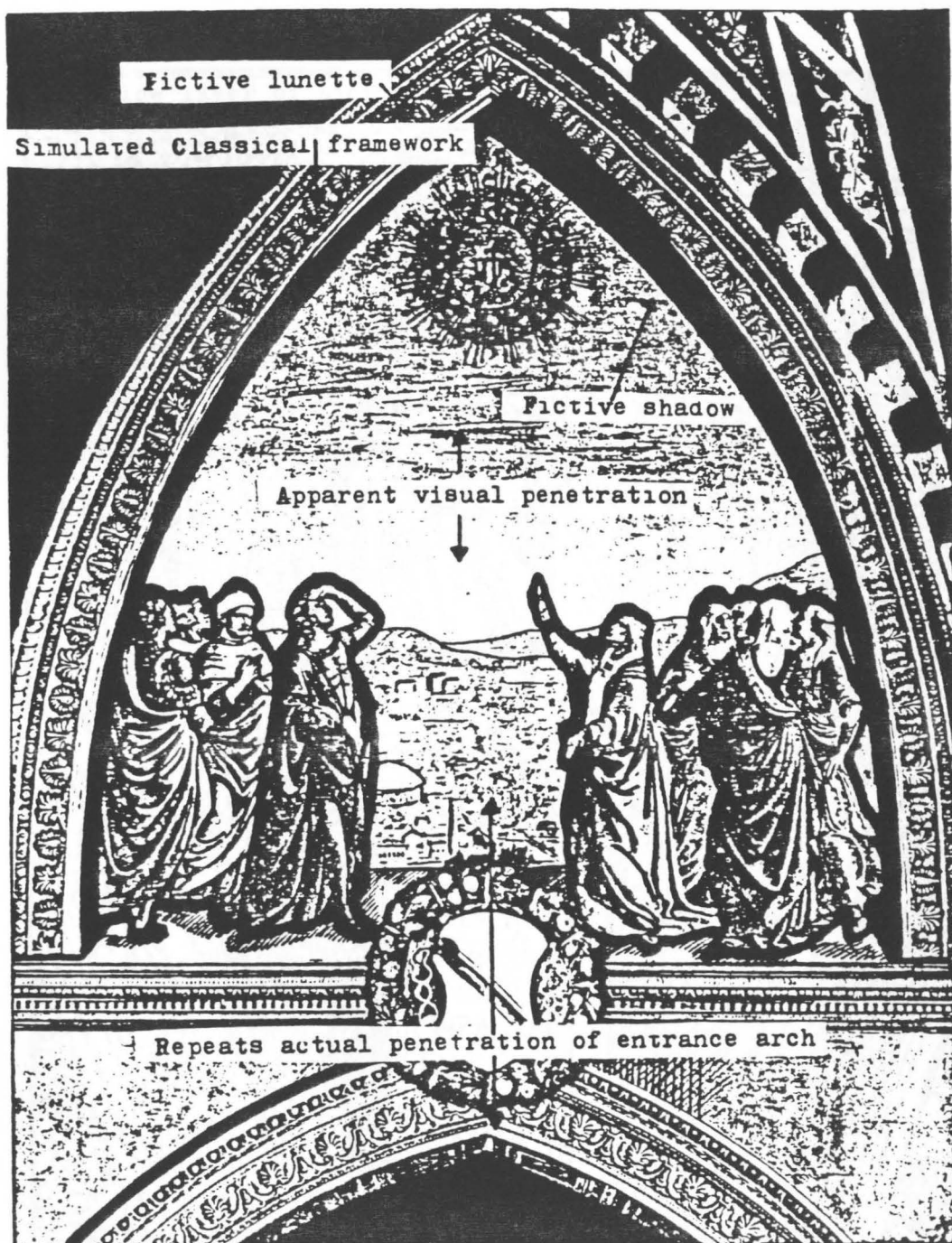


Figure 30 : Augustus beholds a Vision on the Capitoline Hill



Figure 31 : Fictive statue of David

Painted shadows are cast onto the surface of the wall "in front" of which David appears to be credibly freestanding. The depth of the shadows allows the spectator to believe that a shallow slot of space exists between the wall surface and the "sculpted" figure of David. This increases his credibility as projecting into the space of the observer. His position, next to fictive lunettes above the Sassetti chapel entrance, does not counteract this illusionism as he stands on top of a tall fictive pillar which appears to be part of the Church architecture.

THE VAULT

The vault sibyls (Pls. 100-103) relate, iconographically, to the Tiburtine sibyl who stands opposite the Emperor Augustus in the entrance arch "lunette". The Tiburtine sibyl was also present when the apparition of the Madonna and child appeared in the sunburst. All the sibyls are related in terms of the Prophecies of Christ's Advent.

"These sybils are amongst the earliest surviving examples on a monumental scale in Italian art", according to Borsook and Offerhaus.⁹⁶ Ghirlandaio's use of Antique sibyls on the Sassetti Chapel vault, instead of Christian images or Franciscan Virtues, is significant to the iconographic whole. The use of sibyls relates to the Pagan and Antique imagery in the Nativity, the spandrels of the Sassetti tombs and the prophecies of Augustus and David on the entrance arch. This linking of Pagan and

Christian symbolism enabled Sassetti to be glorified in the manner of a Roman, with Antique allegories in his tomb area, without negating the essentially Christian meaning and reverence within his burial chapel. The sibyls' scrolls all prophesize Christ's birth with legible inscriptions and, hence, concretize the fulfilment of their prophecies in the altarpiece of the ⁹⁷
Nativity.

X FRAMEWORK

The Gothic rib-vaults of the Sassetti chapel are articulated with illusionistic floreate framework, edged with simulated Classical mouldings. This framework delimits the pictorial fields for the four Sibyls. Each figure is seated on a stylized cloud in front of a golden sun. Rays emanating from each sun touch the inner borders of the framework and connect the Sibyls to their triangular boundaries.

The central portion of the rib framework extends the floreate system of decoration with trompe l'oeil fruit, flowers and leaves. The three-dimensional "reality" of the images in the framework appear to project into the upper regions of the chapel space. Ghirlandaio uses the most tenuous of visual supports to "hold" this ripe cornucopia of fruit onto the vault surface. Painted ribbons encircle and entwine the fruit in contrast to the actual architectural solidity of the structural function of the rib-vaults. Ghirlandaio's vault framework is non-architectonic

and throws into relief the qualities of the painter rather than the architect by transforming the functional reality of the rib-vaults.

In this way, Ghirlandaio also influences the architectural conditions under which the pictorial forms in the vault are observed. Framework becomes virtuoso, extravagant and illusionistic and "spills" into the space of the observer. The decorative and illusionistic qualities of the Sassetti vault framework affect the solidity and defined structure of the upper enclosure of the chapel.

Architectural grisaille mouldings are used to frame the lunettes and divide the narrative scenes in the Sassetti chapel. These influence and modify the Gothic structure of the architecture with the imposition of Classical form. The illusionism of the architectural nature of the framework is, however, incomplete. Ghirlandaio has painted the central egg motifs in the egg and dart mouldings. This alerts the spectator to the essentially decorative nature of the framework.

The fictive architectural pilasters that frame the central narrative tier are the most credible in terms of architectonic illusionism. The framework has a very high degree of reality. False architecture affects the painted surface of the central tier of the Sassetti chapel by masking the real Gothic architecture instead of underlining it.

By locating his frescoes at a certain depth inside the surface of the wall in relation to the false architecture, Ghirlandaio may cause the pictorial space in front of the depicted scenes to have the effect of being a direct continuation of the real space in which the observer is standing. False architecture, therefore, is a necessary component in the illusionistic system of "opening" the wall surface.⁹⁸ In this way, the false architectural framing pilasters of the Sassetti chapel appear to transform the limits of the actual architectural space.

XI CONCLUSION : THE TOTALITY

Domenico Ghirlandaio's frescoes for Francesco Sassetti's burial chapel in Santa Trinita are an expression of Medicean Florence in which a blending of secular, religious and Classical themes occurs, in conjunction with a system of illusionistic pictorial space.

The different thematic considerations in the programme affect both technique and illusionism. In choosing to place the tombs on the lowest tier of the chapel their physical reality is contrasted with the fictive reality of the donor portraits, juxtaposing the themes of death and Salvation. The spectator is invited to participate in the heroic themes of the Classical imagery in the tomb spandrels and in the devout highly "realistic" portraits of the Sassetti which makes him conscious of his own mortality.

The burial function of the chapel is explicit and is heightened, visually, by the niches of the donor portraits which appear to "puncture" the altar wall. This increases the illusion of actual space residing within the wall and the spectator's own physical environment may, in consequence, appear to be extended into the "world of the frescoes."⁹⁹ The reality-effect of the donors, which illusionism seeks to render credible, emphasizes their "human" aspect, facilitating contact with the spectator.¹⁰⁰

A contrast of different degrees of reality-effect can be extended to include the whole programme in the Sassetti chapel.¹⁰¹ The altar, in particular, can be analysed as different imagined views through an "opening" in the wall. Although painted shadow does, to an extent, counteract this illusionism, pictorial space has the effect of being a continuation of real space, allowing a degree of "visual entry".¹⁰²

The illusionism of the central "hole" in the Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule is particularly effective in negating any boundary that could stress the surface of the wall. This creates what Sandström terms an "opening in the barrier".¹⁰³ A connection between the space of the fresco and that of the observer is also facilitated by the impression of being able to "... climb up onto the scene of the picture".¹⁰⁴

The allegorical structure of the chapel is cogently divided for clear didactic meaning. The vault sibyls dominate the upper

regions of the chapel and are defined by highly illusionistic borders which infringe on the spectator's space, alerting him to the importance of their role within the iconographic totality. The distinctive framework of trompe l'oeil fruit is not used elsewhere in the fresco cycle. In a similar way, the allegorical imagery in the Vision of Augustus and the David is clearly separated by technique and placement. The fictive lunette is defined by painted relief, whereas the David is immortalized as a grisaille sculpture.

The Sassetti chapel programme separates narrative, personal allegory and allegories related to Prophecies of Christ's Advent into units or compartmentalized areas. It actively involves the participation of the intellectually aware spectator in adding all the iconographic parts together. The addition of these parts make up the chapel's conceptual whole.

CHAPTER 6 : SYMBOLISM AND MORTALITY - ILLUSIONISM, GRISAILLE AND
THE PROSCENIUM IN THE STROZZI CHAPEL FRESCOES

This chapter sets out to examine levels of illusionism, reality and allegory in the Strozzi Chapel in relation to the spectator, the surface of the wall and the architectural enclosure so as to arrive at an integrated totality.

The use of grisaille, false architecture and Antique allegory will be analysed as part of a Christian message which forms the conceptual structure of the programme. The perceptual structure of the chapel is apparently expanded and contracted by illusionism. The Gothic interior of the Strozzi Chapel is transformed by fictive architecture, columns, cornices and statuary. Pictorial illusionism, eradicates the boundaries between the painter and the architect. At the same time, the allegorical imagery of the programme influences, and indeed sometimes determines, the degree of illusionism required to place images on different symbolic and spatial levels of meaning or unreality. All these issues will be addressed in this chapter.

I CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE LITERATURE

The complex iconographic symbolism of the Strozzi Chapel has received a comprehensive analysis in John Russell Sale's

monograph and this area of the dissertation owes much to his¹ research methodology. Sale does not, however, touch on the spatial illusionism of the programme or examine the iconography in other than a literary manner.

In their monographs on Filippino Lippi, Alfred Scharf and Katherine B. Neilson both describe the subjects of the painted² decoration of the chapel in a similar way to Sale. Besides, however, suggesting a source of an object here and there, neither attempted to explain the thematic content of the iconography in relation to the patron Filippo Strozzi or the pictorial illusionism on the chapel walls. The interest of both these authorities is primarily formal and stylistic but related to chronological issues rather than the structuring of images for a perceptual and conceptual cohesion.

Several other works follow the lead of Scharf and Neilson but none add to the understanding of the illusionism of the Strozzi programme or its relationship to iconography, the spectator and³ the surface of the wall. Peter Halm's recognition of the importance of the altar wall in relation to the meaning of the iconographic whole has been significant to this area of the⁴ research. He indicated a number of sources for the inscriptions on the altar wall. These important inscriptions were also unravelled by Emanuel Winternitz, the historian of music, who analysed the humanistic and essentially Christian⁵ content of the themes, disguised by Pagan allegory.

Winternitz does not attempt, however, to relate the imagery of the altar wall to the rest of the chapel frescoes. Spatial considerations are not included in his overview, which concentrates on musical imagery.

Eve Borsook has remained a fundamental source for this chapter as all others in the dissertation.⁶ In 1970 she published two major articles in which she outlined new facts about Filippino Lippi in relation to his patron Filippo Strozzi, including documents of contractual payments.⁷ This presentation of new facts, however informative, neither explained the meaning nor the illusionism of the fresco programme.

Sven Sandström's analysis of the left wall of the chapel provided a point of departure for the study of the pictorial illusionism⁸ of the frescoes in relation to the architectural wall. The use of the term proscenium is part of his terminology but Sandström does not extend his appraisal to include the altar wall, grisailles, framework or meaning of the fresco cycle.

This chapter sets out to present an analysis of iconography in relation to illusionism which does not occur in the literature.

II HISTORY

In 1221, the year of the death of St. Dominic, the Order that he had founded only a short while before was already rich and

powerful and was able to obtain, in Florence, land for the construction of a monastery and a small church dedicated to Santa Maria della Vigne.⁹ This is the site where the Church of Santa Maria Novella now stands and it is within this Church that the Strozzi Chapel is placed. Work on Santa Maria Novella was begun by two monks, Sisto and Restoro, in 1246, but the structure was not completed, in its essential parts, until 1360.¹⁰

The choir and transepts were started by 1279 and work appears to have continued in the nave, without substantial change of plan, until its completion in the early fourteenth century.¹¹ The short-headed, cruciform plan of the Church has a straight-ended choir, four flanking chapels and square or near-square bays for crossing and transepts and belongs to the vaulted, aisled Basilican type plan. Filippo Strozzi acquired rights of burial to his family chapel adjacent to the main altar in 1486.¹²

III PATRONAGE

From his earliest days Filippo Strozzi had an abiding concern for the great Dominican Church of Santa Maria Novella (Pl. 105) where the family's Trecento chapel, located on the left side of the nave close to the entrance of the old monk's choir, was dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas. The chapel boasted the remains of the illustrious prior of the monastery, Beato Alessio Strozzi, who was buried there in 1383.¹³ Members of Filippo Strozzi's own family, including his mother and father and his first

wife, Fiametta Adinari, were buried there. This chapel, endowed by Tommaso Strozzi with Orcagna's painted panel on the altar and frescoes by Nardo di Cione, witnessed the piety and wealth of the Strozzi family at an earlier age.¹⁴ Filippo Strozzi's desire to emulate the magnificent chapel of his ancestors was part of his plan to "rifare la nostra casa" and was linked to his family's exile from Florence and the misfortune it had undergone.¹⁵

A brief re-appraisal of how Strozzi's banishment affected his patronage will serve to introduce his personal involvement in the whole chapel-fresco programme to be analysed.

On 4 July, 1428 Filippo Strozzi was born. Six years later on the return of Cosimo de' Medici to Florence, Filippo's father, Matteo di Simone Strozzi, was confined to Pesaro for five years because of connections with Palla di Nofri Strozzi and the Albizzi faction, who were against Cosimo's return to power.¹⁶ Less than a year later, in the spring of 1435, Matteo died of the plague. Filippo's mother, Alessandra, who was not under ban of exile, brought her remaining children back to Florence where they lived frugally on the limited resources left by Filippo's father.¹⁷

Filippo left Florence in March 1441, aged thirteen, and began his road towards the re-establishment of the future prosperity of his family. The degree of his success is marked by his appointment as one of the correspondents of the Medici Bank in Naples by 1445.¹⁸

In 1458 a second adverse political turn of events affected the Strozzi family. The sons and descendants of those men exiled in 1434 were officially banished from Florence by the Otto di Guardia, the legal body of the city.¹⁹ Despite these reversals the financial power and personal influence of the Strozzi brothers grew rapidly in the succeeding years, and their connections aided them in their effort to return to Florence. After Cosimo de' Medici's death in 1464 these hopes became a reality. Following the tradition of other prominent Florentine families Filippo began, in the late 1470's a programme of building, beginning with religious foundations.²⁰

Securing the rights of patronage of a large chapel in such a Church as Santa Maria Novella was no easy affair. The chapel chosen by Filippo Strozzi was dedicated to the Evangelist and was, originally, under the patronage of the Bardi family in the fourteenth century.²¹ After one or two changes of ownership it passed to the Boni family in the early fifteenth century.²² Bono Boni, who died in 1476, was buried in the chapel and he spent more than 300 florins on its decoration before he lost his wealth.²³ Strozzi agreed to pay the full 300 florins due to the Boni family by the monastery before acquiring the jus patronatus to the chapel.²⁴ On the 3 July, 1486 the terms of the Papal Bull, issued to Filippo Strozzi by Pope Innocent VIII, were carried out and the patronage of the chapel became official.²⁵ From the nave of the Church of Santa Maria Novella it was much more visible than the chapel of Filippo Strozzi's

predecessors and became a personal monument to his pride and
²⁶
 achievement.

IV ARCHITECTURE

The Strozzi Chapel was built c. 1279 and is a narrow Gothic
²⁷
 structure with a ribbed quadripartite vault (Pl. 106). The
 articulation of the rib-vaults is emphasized, pictorially, by
grisaille framework. The chapel architecture is dominated by a
 large stained-glass window recessed into the altar wall. This
²⁸
 window was installed in the chapel in 1489. Beneath the
 window, behind the altar, is placed Filippo Strozzi's tomb,
 designed by Benedetto da Maiano but only completed after
²⁹
 Strozzi's death on the 14 May 1491. No payments are recorded
 for the tomb, marble framework and relief work before the 27 June
³⁰
 1491. Filippo Strozzi carefully described the location of
 his tomb and that of his descendants:

... and the tomb for myself, to be placed below the
 glass window on the side behind the said altar, and
 the other tomb (to be) in the ground, also behind
 the said altar, at the foot of my tomb, for my
 descendants. ³¹

The use of grisaille and false architecture, supports and
 columns, changes the visual dimensions of the chapel architecture
 through pictorial illusionism. The width of the chapel is
 apparently expanded by painting into the corners huge ornamental
 piers with their bases set back from the front edge of the

pictorial scenes of the frescoes. The altar wall is also reconstructed by false architecture (Pls. 107-110). The viewer is presented with what appears to be an extended tomb and the whole wall is unified in a fictive grisaille triumphal arch. The altar wall is, in this way, symmetrically redesigned by false architecture on either side of the real framework of the semi-circular framework of the central tomb area. This results in a bilateral division, on either side of the lancet window, (Pls. 108-110) achieved by fictive columns rising from false pedestals. This pictorial-architectural illusionism changes the high, narrow pointed Gothic wall of the Strozzi Chapel into an apparently new architectural structure reminiscent of the Arch of Constantine.

The architecture and, hence, the actual space of the interior of the Strozzi Chapel is also altered by the illusionistic fictive pilasters which frame all four corners of the chapel itself (Pls. 113-118). The high degree of credible "reality" of these pilasters intrudes on the spectator's perception and shapes the apparent dimensions of the architectural enclosure.

The illusionistic treatment of this false architecture affects actual space in another way. Firstly, fictive filigree relief work on the surface of the piers, or pilasters, establishes a certain tactile fluctuation on the surface, which is decorative rather than planar. Secondly, the false architecture appears to

have a considerable depth which changes the position of the frontal boundary of the frescoes into a pictorial stage, or proscenium, causing the actual surface of the walls to appear recessed. Pictorial illusionism alters the perception of architectural structure and by implication the boundaries of the spectator's space.

V ARRANGEMENT OF THE FRESCOES

The frescoes in the Strozzi Chapel portray scenes from the Lives of Saints Philip and John the Evangelist with Four Patriarchs (Fig.32). They were painted between 1487 and 1502 by Filippino Lippi (born in Prato in 1457 and died in 1504).³³

The iconography of the Strozzi Chapel was prepared by Filippo Strozzi himself. The arrangement of the frescoes specifically adheres to contractual agreements between Filippino Strozzi and Filippino Lippi signed on the 21 April 1487 although Lippi did not execute the murals until much later.³⁴ In the vault were to be four figures, all male. On each of the two side-walls were to be two narratives. The window wall would be painted, but differently from the side-walls, and the dado would be specified by Filippo Strozzi at a later date.³⁵ The vagueness of these instructions points to an established acquaintance between Strozzi and Filippino Lippi but the details of the decoration must have been clear because Strozzi ordered his heirs, on his deathbed, to continue the decoration "secondo el principio di gia cominciato".³⁶

The fresco arrangement of the Strozzi Chapel consists of four Patriarchs in the vault portraying Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jacob (Pls. 106, 119). On the right wall are events from the life of Strozzi's patron saint, Philip. The lower scene illustrates the episode of St. Philip before the Altar of Mars (Pls. 111, 112), and the lunette shows the Crucifixion (Martyrdom) of St. Philip (Pl. 111). On the left wall are events from the life of St. John the Evangelist, who is the titular of the chapel. Here the chronological sequence is reversed from the Philip scenes "... in order to make representations of physical sacrifice appear at the same level".³⁷ Thus, the scene of the Torture of the Evangelist (Pl. 115) appears in the lunette and the Raising of Drusiana (Pls. 115-118) on the lower wall.

VI THE VAULT: ICONOGRAPHY AND ILLUSIONISM

Filippino Lippi commenced painting in the vault in c. 1489.³⁸ Of the four Patriarchs in the series of the vault the fresco of Adam (Pl. 119b) is the most significantly placed above the altar wall and Strozzi's tomb. Adam, as the first sinner, is placed in the most visible cell so that his role in man's mortality is stressed in relation to the tomb and the spectator entering the chapel. Adam, representative of a beginning, in Biblical terms,³⁹ is the first divinely created man.

The narrative function of Adam expresses, in symbolic terms, the concept of mortality in the chapel and underlines its function as

a place of burial. The Patriarch is associated with a spiritual re-enactment of a "... continuing allegory of the Fall."⁴⁰

Through the figure of Adam, both Filippo Strozzi and the observer as a visual participant are represented in the allegory of original sin and the ensuing punishment of death.⁴¹ In this way, the spectator is introduced to the dominant themes of symbolism and mortality within the chapel and the fact that Adam wears the tunicas pelliceas described in Genesis 3:21 is, according to Augustine, a visible clue to his mortal nature and his future death.⁴²

The presence of Eve, the barren tree, the hoe and the sheltering child all indicate a time after the Fall and expulsion from Paradise.⁴³ The dry and broken tree about which the serpent is entwined becomes, likewise, a symbolic parallel with the Biblical tree of Knowledge, the lignum scientiae boni et mali of Genesis 2:16. It functions as an allegory of the penalty of sin which becomes, symbolically, a two-fold death, physical and spiritual. The few sprouting branches indicate, to the spectator, that through Christ's death on the Cross life everlasting is possible for all.

The flourishing of part of the dry tree could also be an allusion to St. Bonaventura's lignum vitae and would represent a symbol of hope in which Adam, as a direct prototype for Christ, relates in his position above the altar wall, to both the place of Strozzi's mortal remains and the Eucharistic rites of the Mass.⁴⁴

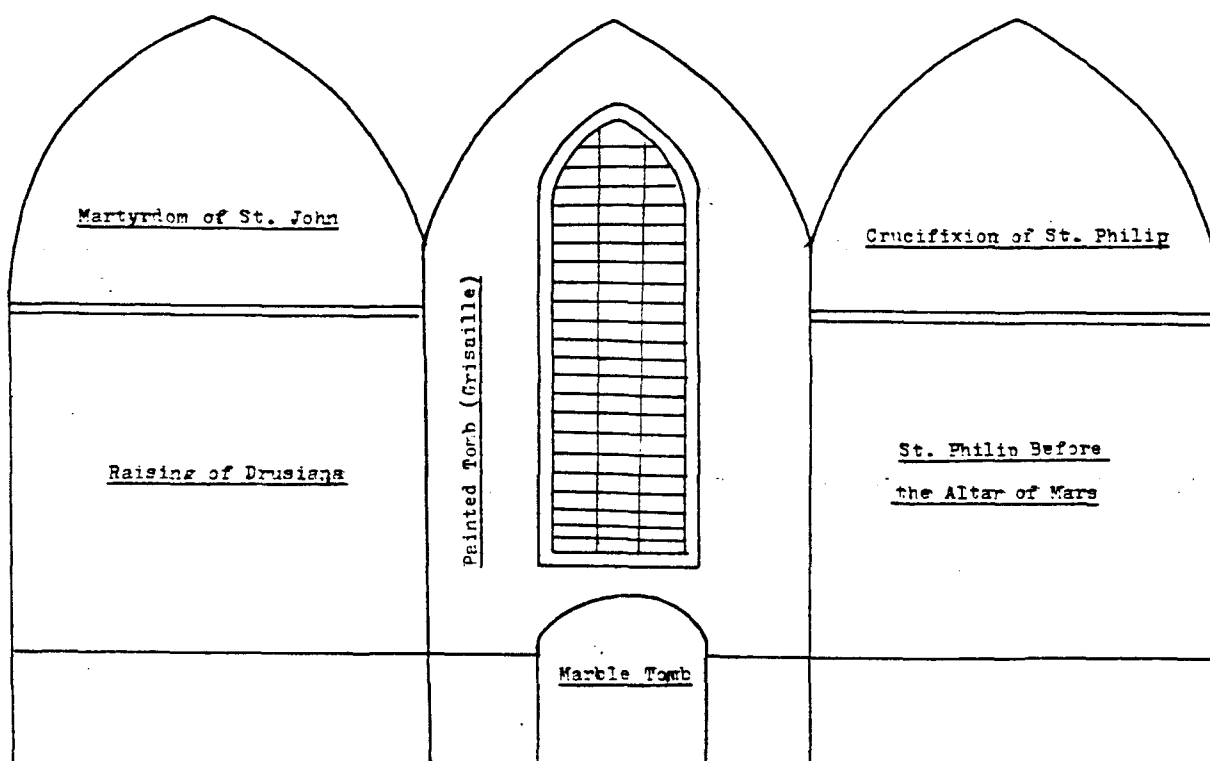


Figure 32 : Arrangement of the frescoes in the Strozzi Chapel.

Illusionistically, Adam dominates the vault severely and is enclosed on all sides by fictive roll mouldings and grisaille framework. The cloud on which he sits is composed of grisaille angels and fictive marble plaques inscribed with his name, which exert an ambiguous sense of visual "weight" in their simulation of texture. Adam's dominance of the vault relies, however, less on his robust realism and monumentality within the curved vault than on his symbolic linking to the altar wall and his relation to the spectator as Adam-everyman. The high symbolic level of his meaning within the vault is indicated not by conceptual distance but, conversely, by a heightening of his illusionistic reality. The total unreality of this fiction is attested by the grisaille plaques and angels, and the observer is able to re-assess the vault in terms of celestial space.

The three other Patriarchs also play a symbolic role in the chapel's iconography. Noah reclines to the west of the vault, above the events from The Life of St. John the Evangelist. Abraham (Pl. 119a) is opposite, to the east above the narrative of St. Philip, and Jacob sits above the chapel's entrance, hidden from outside. In this way, Noah and Abraham, above the left and right narrative walls respectively, relate to the scenes of martyrdom and torture. The spectator is encouraged to see them as intercessors offering hope in the face of martyrdom, for as Noah (Pl. 106) was saved from the Flood so Isaac was delivered from death at the hands of his father. Noah can also be interpreted as an Old Testament pre-figuration of Christ.

Abraham is portrayed in the vault without Isaac, and Filippino has chosen to show the sacrifice of the lamb instead. Eucharistic parallelism with Christ as the sacrificial lamb may be made.

The implicit Resurrection theme of the burial chapel is extended by the figure of Jacob above the entrance. He is portrayed in lectione and he holds a vessel in his right hand while his left hand points to a scroll. Several allegorical meanings can be inferred from the book, vessel and scroll, and may refer to Jacob's dream of the heavenly ladder and subsequent anointing of the stone as a reference to Christ's Resurrection.⁴⁷ The anointing with oil is a direct reference to the rites of death in the ceremony of Extreme Unction. Jacob reaffirms the burial function of the chapel and indicates its sanctity with the inscription on his scroll : Hec est Domus Dei et Porta (Cae)le, which translates as this is the house of God and the door to Heaven. The spectator is confronted with this message on leaving⁴⁸ the chapel precincts and is reminded of his own mortality.

The vigorous contrapposto of the vault figures and their size in relation to the limited confines of their severies, gives them an illusionistic dominance over the architectural structure of the upper area of the chapel. They appear to sit on shallow platforms, very close to the lower vault framework and, in consequence, have a spatial reality which appears to overlap this

barrier by continuing into the actual space of the chapel. Their low eye-level rendition increases their apparent monumentality so that, in terms of illusionism, they appear to be sitting above the spectator and leaning outwards, over their confining framework, into chapel space. A few visual clues enable the viewer to see the fiction of this apparent intrusion into chapel space.

Firstly, the grisaille borders enclose the Patriarchs on all sides, creating a limited barrier which forms an active connection with the architecture of the vault. This introduces different degrees of reality-effect between the vault Patriarchs and their framework. The spectator must take into consideration that neither the fictive architectural framework nor the paintings of the Patriarchs concern reality but only seek to render credible their unreality for iconographic and symbolic reasons.

Secondly, instead of the more conceptual approach to religious subjects which characterized earlier chapel programmes by a certain distance or abstraction from the real, pictorial illusionism is used to underline spiritual meaning. The technical means at Filippino's disposal are still in harmony with the symbolic intention of the artist and are used to determine the attitude of the observer, albeit in a less hieratic way. Pictorial illusionism in the Patriarchs is not intended as an artistic trick but is a means of bringing the beholder into

closer communion with the allegorical and symbolic subject-matter of the vault as part of the programme as a totality.

The didactic effectiveness of the Patriachs relies on their illusionistic relationship with the viewer's reality. Instead of choosing either abstract or idealized modes of representing areas of high symbolic reality within the chapel iconography, Filippino chooses a heightened perceptual contact with his observer through metaphor and illusionism.

VII THE SIDE-WALLS: ALLEGORY, ILLUSIONISM AND THE PROSCENIUM (Fig. 33)

The right wall depicts The Saint Philip Cycle. When Filippo Strozzi acquired rights to his burial chapel the convent of Santa Maria Novella agreed to celebrate Mass on May 1 of every year in honour of the patron's name-saint, Philip the Apostle.⁴⁹ Filippino's iconographic source probably derives from da Voragine's Legenda Aurea which relates how Philip, after twenty years of preaching in Scythia, was taken by heathens and constrained to sacrifice before the statue of the Pagan God, Mars. A dragon suddenly appeared from the base of the statue and killed the son of the priest officiating at the sacrifice and two tribunes who had led Philip to the altar in chains.

According to the Legend, St. Philip promised to raise the dead if the pagans broke up the figure of Mars, to which they agreed.

St. Philip commanded the dragon to retreat to the desert and
 resuscitated the three dead men.⁵⁰ This account explains the
 major action of the lower scene which belongs, chronologically,
 before the scene of the Crucifixion of St. Philip in the lunette.

In the lower scene of St. Philip before the altar of Mars (Pls.
 111-113), Filippino chose to depict the actions of the apostle in
 an all'antica mode and selected a few motives from available
 Antique monuments to give his setting a measure of
 authenticity.⁵¹ Filippino modifies his ancient models to suit
 his own needs, using them as points of departure for his own
 imaginative recreation of the Antique.⁵² The huge open air
 altar behind the statue of Mars dominates the entire scene of the
 fresco. Across the top of the altar's hemicycle runs the
 inscription: EX.H.TRI/D.M.VICT, which has been interpreted by
 Sale as meaning, in its non-abbreviated form, "From this Triumph,
 Victory to the Greatest God", (EX H(OC) TRI(UMPHO) D(EO) M(AXIMO)
 VICT(ORIA).⁵³ The impressive scale of the altar and the
 extravagant profusion of detail have the narrative function of
 serving to aggrandize the importance of Mars, the Roman god of
 war. This has an essentially Christian iconographic significance.

The use of Antique imagery, whether derivative or fantastical,
 indicates to the observer that St. Philip does not confront a
 diminutive image of an empty god but faces the might and
 splendour of the Pagan world.⁵⁴ The statues of Victories with
 bound captives surmounting the cornice of the monument to

Mars are symbols of his triumph and free variations belonging to
 55
 Filippino's own imagination.

Yet other images build up the triumph of Philip over his Pagan adversary. Mars' attribute of the wolf is a medieval, not an
 56
 Antique symbol, and means greed, tyranny and cruelty. In a similar way, the lance Mars holds is broken, indicating that his power, in symbolic terms, is on the wane in contrast to Philip's raised hand, which is a gesture representing the spiritual power of Christianity. The paraphernalia of the Antique build up symbols which are further elucidated, for the spectator, by different solutions to pictorial space in relation to levels of meaning and illusionism.

The power of Philip is indicated as a supernatural intervention on Christ's part in two ways. Firstly, a tiny symbol of the Cross appears on the upper right of the fresco. This is contrasted with the symbol of the broken lance, retaining its original Antique meaning that shattered arms signify defeat and
 57
 subjugation. Christ also raises his own hand in blessing, paralleling the gesture of Philip and the victory over Paganism. This subtle linking of images indicates that the inscription on the altar does not relate to Mars but to Christ, who becomes the
 58
 true victor and the Deus Maximus. Secondly, the intrusion of the miniscule figure of Christ supporting his Cross on his shoulder becomes the most important event in the fresco and the viewer acknowledges its importance in purely conceptual terms.

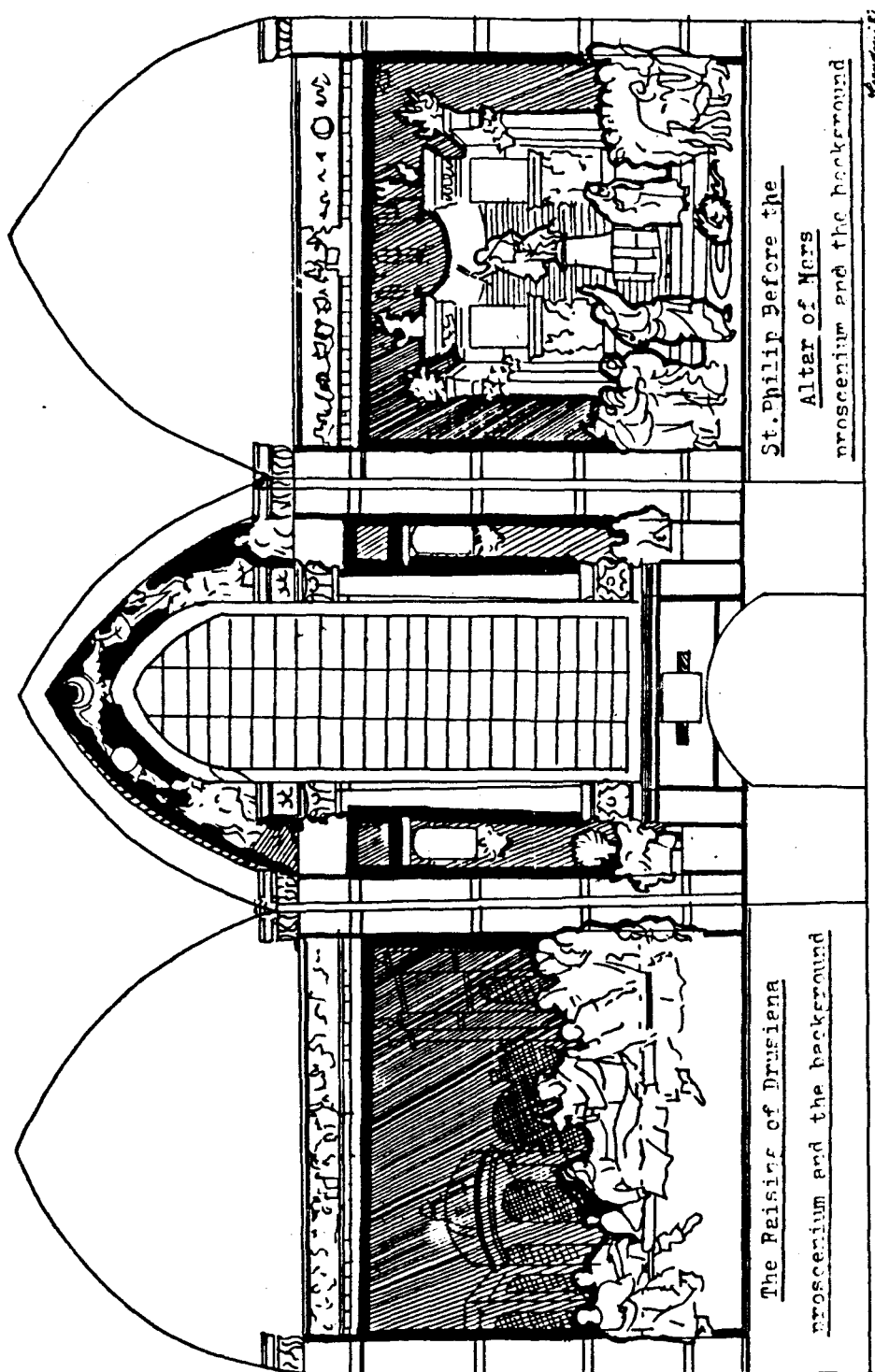


Figure 33 : The relationship between the background and the proscenium in the Strozzi Chapel frescoes.

This enhances the didactic message of Christ's intervention in the fresco of St. Philip before the altar of Mars.

Several elements introduce the spectator to the pictorial illusionism of the fresco of St. Philip before the altar of Mars. The significance of the scene and its position in relation to the wall surface are established by a wide fictive frieze which separates the fresco from the lunette. This wide grisaille border simulates an actual frieze and casts illusionistic shadows onto the surface of the fresco beneath it (Pls 111-113). This false architectural frieze alters the perception of the fresco's frontal plane. The lower edge of the frieze is defined by painted shadow and it appears to be positioned in front of the fresco. This locates the painted scene at a certain depth inside the wall surface while the objective pictorial space in front of the fresco has the effect of being a continuation of the chapel in which the observer is standing.

Cult implements in fictive bas-relief appear to protrude from this "frieze", culminating in two putti or angels. These putti hold in one hand a flaming lamp and in the other support the sudarium or towel used to wipe Christ's face on the way to Calvary.⁵⁹ This sudarium projects forward into actual space, heightening its spiritual meaning by creating contact with the space of the spectator. Behind the sudarium is painted a gilded chalice, topped by a paten, the former to hold the wine for the Mass, the latter to support the host.⁶⁰ All these images are

apparently modelled in higher relief than the fictive frieze and all are centred directly above the Pagan statue of Mars, once more indicating the triumph of Christianity. This symbolic linking is emphasized by a change in the visual position of the frontal plane.

From below the framework division of the fictive frieze hang three painted lamps on chains, an illusionistic feature establishing, for the spectator, that the foremost plane of the fresco is recessed behind them. This pushing back of the surface is further accentuated by the framing of the fresco, on either side, by fictive pilasters. These provide decorative and highly illusionistic false architecture that combines with the fictive frieze in creating a three-dimensional box-like recession which in turn, establishes the further plane of the fresco as a backdrop. In this way the spectator no longer reads the surface of the fresco as contiguous with the painted figures but, conversely, as drawn behind them.

By pushing back the frontal plane, the foreground of the fresco of St. Philip before the altar of Mars has no lower barrier above the fictive dado to impede visual entry and can be read as a stage or proscenium. The pictorial figures move freely on this proscenium in a space which, in fictional terms, appears to be a direct continuation of the space of the chapel. In this way the pictorial figures and the viewer share the same kind of space. Sandstrom recognized that Filippino uses this illusionism to define the wall as a wall but that "... it has ...

been drawn behind the protagonists who are now pushed forward into the part which is defined by the false architecture as an ingredient of the chapel room, unable in any way to return to the sphere of the picture."⁶¹

In order that this illusionism may function effectively, the background must have a low level of reality which stresses its planarity and opacity. It is not "opened" in any way and, like a Vitruvian stage-setting is described as a type of "back-cloth", the sides of which are defined by the false architecture, similar to the way periaktoi or side-cloths function in three-dimensional stage settings.⁶²

Two elements deriving from Antique stage settings are important to Filippino's illusionism: the proscenium and the fixed background.⁶³ Both these features appear in the fresco of St. Philip before the altar of Mars. Filippino has broken through the boundary between back figures and frontal stage "... by placing the heathen priest with the altar structure in the rear section of the room, while the apostle and the spectators are in front on the proscenium."⁶⁴

The scene of the Martyrdom (Crucifixion) of St. Philip (Pl. 111) concentrates on the realism and mechanics of the elevation of Philip's cross and faithfully records da Voragine's account of St. Philip, who was seized and crucified as an old man of eighty-seven.⁶⁵ The angularity and abrupt movement of the

figural types are contrasted, on the right of the fresco, with
 66
 two fancifully garbed soldiers. These Roman warriors are
 nowhere mentioned in the Legenda Aurea and their inclusion
 underlines the contrast between the beginnings of Christianity
 and the Pagan world established in the fresco below. Balancing
 the soldiers is a group of three male observers to the left. St.
 Philip's cross is a simple tree and refers to the lignum vitae as
 one leafy sprig still grows from its trunk beneath the saint's
 feet. This alludes to the Christian hope of renewal that from
 death spiritual life will be attained.

Illusionistically, the lunette is not framed by false
 architecture and lack of this feature limits its interconnection
 with actual space. The figures still occupy a shallow stage but
 it is less pronounced and they belong, essentially, to the realm
 of the fresco rather than that of the observer. The lunette
 still appears slightly recessed behind the painted shadow beneath
 its upper framework. Illusionism is increased because the depth
 of the shadow appears to be equal to the depth of the fictive
 pilasters in the fresco of St. Philip before the altar of Mars.
 This establishes the whole right wall, up to the vault, as a
 continuous decorative surface at an imagined depth of
 approximately a "metre and a half" further back in space in
 67
 relation to the actual position of the chapel wall.

The left wall portrays the St. John the Evangelist Cycle

(Pls. 115-118). Of the numerous events for John in the Legenda Aurea only two appear in the Strozzi Chapel: the attempt to martyr him at the Latin Gate in Rome, and his raising of Drusiana at Ephesus in Asia Minor.⁶⁸ In the lower fresco the saint has just interrupted the funeral cortege of Drusiana and has raised her from the dead.

The iconography of the chapel is linked into a totality as the major frescoes of the lower registers both contain the theme of miraculous raising, while the upper scenes portray Christian martyrdom or, with St. John, attempted martyrdom. The theme of resuscitation from death in the lower areas of the Strozzi Chapel is aligned with the position of Strozzi's tomb on the altar wall. This theme of Spiritual life after Death is concretized by the lower sections of the chapel architecture in relation to a theme of Resurrection. The upper parts, in harmony with the verticality of the Gothic structure, imply "... an ascension to Heaven through virtue".⁶⁹ In this way the Strozzi narrative moves chronologically and symbolically upwards implying two ways to negate death: through Christ and through martyrdom.

The fresco of the Raising of Drusiana (Pls. 114-118) appears to represent a Pagan funeral rather than a Christian ceremony. This can be explained in relation to narrative and meaning. When the apostle John interrupts the funeral cortege he not only meets the death of a Christian friend but also confronts the Pagan funerary ritual and has to contend with the power and mysteries of Pagan religion. In this way he parallels the same kind of confrontation as Philip in relation to the might of Mars in the opposite fresco on the right wall.

Yet the vision of Antiquity presented in the Raising of Drusiana is far different from that in the St. Philip fresco. There, military power was counterbalanced by Christ appearing victoriously in the sky in a zone of celestial space which emphasized the spiritual defeat of the Pagan world and the false god. In the scene of Drusiana the symbolism is more enigmatic. To the left of the fresco an aged pontifex, his head covered to indicate his sacerdotal role, carries a cinerary urn, probably intended for Drusiana's ashes. The female figure next to him holds a pitcher intended for libation and a banner with the inscription: (CO)NCLAMATUM. Halm sees this as a reference to
70
the Pagan ritual lament over the dead.

Other symbols of human mortality include sprigs of cypress, a subtle reference to Pluto, god of the underworld to whom they were dedicated, on the staff of the banner. The skull on Drusiana's bier reinforces this imagery of death. Sale puts forward the suggestion that the goddess Diana becomes, in the fresco, an iconographic counterpart to Mars in the Philip scene
71
opposite. Diana is, in fact, the only Pagan divinity with whose worship and sanctuary St. John came into contact in the
72
Legenda Aurea. The crescent on top of the circular temple, to the left of the fresco, is her symbol and appears to corroborate this theory. It is also the most generic and widespread symbol of the Strozzi family, whose three crescent moons are part of their imprese and refer to their desire to trace their beginnings to Fiesole, whose symbol is also the
73
crescent.

The Strozzi also held the moon, associated with the goddess Diana, in special esteem because it is the astrological home of Filippo Strozzi's own zodiacal sign of Cancer. It is not conclusive if the goddess Diana is alluded to in the fresco because her image does not appear.

Like Philip, across the chapel, John is aided in his task of demonstrating the power of Christianity but in a less obvious way. From the dark clouds above St. John, rays of light emanate and can be seen as a demonstration of spiritual aid and illumination. This symbolism is directly related to the grisaille frieze which separates the fresco from the above lunette.

This fictive relief is filled with rows of burning lamps. The centre is directly aligned with the opening in the clouds and portrays a liturgical cross, supported by two angels, in highly illusionistic bas-relief. An open book below this cross is inscribed with the words IN HOC SIGNO VINCES, recalling the
74
miraculous vision of Constantine. This also refers to the Legenda Aurea in which da Voragine records the vision of the first Christian emperor in the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross on the 3 May, thus further linking the symbolism of the two
75
lower walls of the chapel. The symbolism in the fresco of the Raising of Drusiana is heightened by Filippino's illusionistic remodelling of the wall architecture in relation to the space in which the observer stands. The scene is, again,

framed by false architecture and these fictive pilasters have a slightly higher viewpoint than that of the spectator's eye-level. Again the pilasters are inset and the proscenium runs in front of them.⁷⁶ The broad, decorative grisaille border of fictive bas-relief emphasizes the plane of the painted surface in relation to the apparently recessed background wall, and the scene is bounded on all three sides by fictive elements.

The background is, therefore, enclosed within the frame moulding.⁷⁷ In this way, the triumphal arch, round temple and ruined loggia in the rear, surrounded by mouldings on all three sides, appear to be cut off from the foreground. The proscenium alone is occupied by pictorial figures. It is possible to imagine a line connecting the two false foreground pilasters so that all these figures are placed in front of this invisible demarcation.⁷⁸ The proscenium is, therefore, extremely narrow. In the corners of the chapel, actual stone shafts complicate the reading of the false architecture so that a merging of real and false occurs.

Filippino emphatically stresses the solidity of the background as a recessed wall in both lower frescoes. The congruence of the perspective in the background buildings in the Drusiana fresco is not aligned with the foreground pilasters.⁷⁹ The former are set at a slightly oblique angle, while the latter are parallel to the frontal plane. This purposeful lack of connection between two types of painted architecture, fictive but functioning like real structure (the pilasters) and pictorial (the background)

prevents any illusionistic penetration of the back wall. It is, therefore, logical that by limiting the illusionism of the background, which has a low level of reality, Filippino enhances the illusionism of the foreground figures who have a high degree of reality. In this way it is the figures rather than the whole scene who have the highest claims of three-dimensional existence as part of the spectator's own reality in the chapel.

The attempted martyrdom of the Evangelist in a cauldron of boiling oil is the subject of the lunette fresco. In the fresco John appears unharmed and praying in the burning pot while the emperor commands the attendants to make the fire even hotter.⁸⁰

The Torture of the Evangelist is composed with the saint in the centre, the emperor Domitian to the left, and the executioners and attendants displayed to left and right. Filippino has recreated an ancient tribunal of justice counterbalanced by the innocent Evangelist, who remains calm and unharmed in the cauldron of oil. Once again, all the Antique symbols of power serve to emphasize the Christian triumph of both martyrs in the lunettes. This is important to the spectator who can identify with the hope offered every Christian in the face of the death.

This didacticism motivates Filippino's attitude to the Antique and has a moral as well as an iconographic purpose. Saints John and Philip are represented as poor and barefoot in contrast to the magnificent symbols of Antiquity. In this way, Filippino was

able to indulge his, and his patron's, interest in the Antique world without compromising its Christian message.

The lunette has the same kind of illusionism as its counterpart on the right wall. The spatial solutions of the proscenium and the recessed wall in the narrative side-walls of the Strozzi chapel are a means of linking both areas with each other, actual architecture and the space of the observer. Meaning is consolidated in real and fictive terms within different parts of the chapel. Different solutions to pictorial illusionism occur on the altar wall.

VIII THE ALTAR WALL: ALLEGORY AND MORTALITY, ILLUSIONISM,
GRISAILLE AND TROMPE L'OEIL (FIG. 34)

Illusionism depends, on the altar wall (Pls. 106-110), on how false architecture and sculpture act against other elements in the chapel to create credible deceptions on the surface. Filippino Lippi combines Pagan and Christian symbolism on the altar wall through the use of both allegory and illusionism. Rather than divide the wall into separate compartments, Filippino treats it as a unified whole by means of fictive architecture. At the same time, he takes into account actual architectural features, such as the Gothic shape of the wall, the Renaissance tomb with its sarcophagus with its semi-circular framework and the high narrow lancet window. ⁸¹ Filippino unites all these elements by means of fictive columns in the form of a triumphal arch. The two inner columns appear to

project from the wall surface, as do their pedestals and upper entablature. The window is, in this way, apparently further recessed than it actually is.

This system of symmetrical verticality is repeated, with less illusionistic projection, on the outer corners of the altar wall, which are articulated by the same fictive pilasters as the narrative side-walls. This links the altar wall to the narratives by means of false architecture. On the other hand, the altar wall has been clearly distinguished from the side-walls by means of grisaille. The scale of the figures on the grisaille altar wall has, also, been sharply reduced.

Contrary to perspectival theory, but effective for symbolic meaning, the figures increase in scale the higher they are placed on the wall. Classically inspired false architecture, the use of grisaille, illusionism and allegory will all be seen to be integral to an evaluation of the altar wall. Where forms are gilded or coloured they stimulate the observer's eye to focus on points of symbolic interest within the whole wall. An interpretation of the imagery of the altar wall is also crucial to its meaning in relation to illusionism.

THE TOMB

Filippo Strozzi's sarcophagus (Pl. 109) is placed behind the chapel's altar and would have been originally covered by a paliotto, or liturgical cloth. The juxtaposition of the

altar, tomb and grisaille coloration of the whole wall results in a unified structure which can be seen as an extended tomb. Borsook has called it "... an illusionistic extension of the tomb proper as a portal to eternity"⁸³. This is emphasized by the use of the Classical arch which, as a normal feature of funerary architecture, was ideally suited to represent the theme of Christian apotheosis and the ascension of the soul to heaven.⁸⁴

The entire ensemble of Strozzi's sarcophagus with its reliefs of the Madonna and Child in a tondo-shaped garland, surrounded by four flying angels, is enclosed by a marble arch (Pls. 107, 109, 110).⁸⁵ The sarcophagus is of dark basanite. The sculpted features on the tomb, placed within the actual realm of death, promise hope for Strozzi's mortality, in terms of symbolism. The Madonna and Christ child "... offer the promise of future life."⁸⁶ This is related to Strozzi himself, represented by the recumbent lamb, in the central keystone of the tomb-surround. The higher relief of the lamb, which is also a symbol of humility and patient sufferance, is sculpted in a reclining position on a small marble stage. This creates a limited step out into the space of the spectator while partaking, symbolically, in the Eucharistic rites of the Mass on the altar itself.

The pictorial depiction of Filippo Strozzi's spiritual pilgrimage begins at the bottom of the altar wall in the tomb area. This is expanded by the imagery in the tomb spandrels. A change in

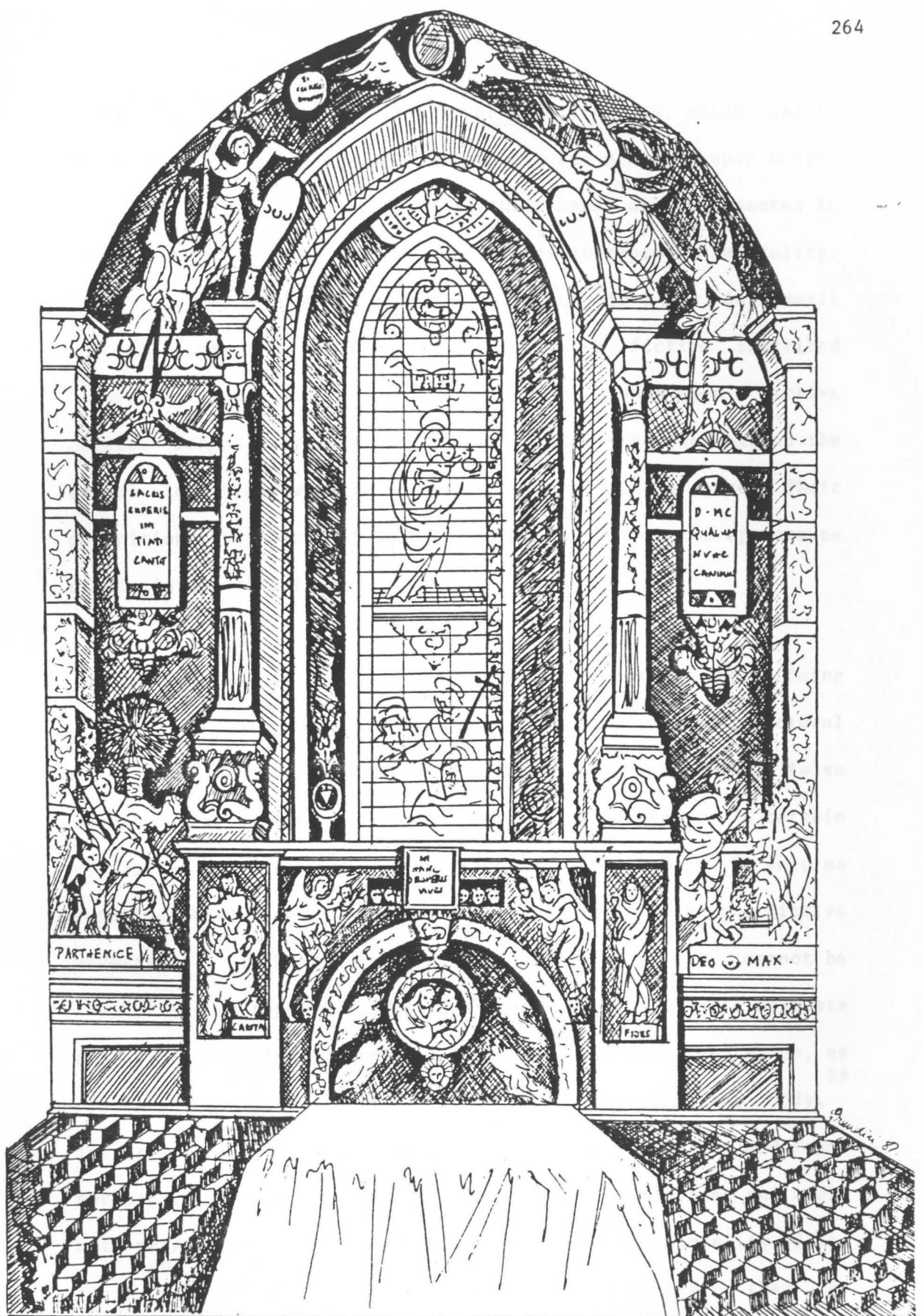


Figure 34 : The altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel.

technique, from actual relief to grisaille occurs, which results in a change in illusionism. Winged figures standing upon skulls and holding skulls and bones in their hands are represented in the spandrels above the tomb and appear to represent mortality. Between them are more skulls, laid out in a row, in a small chamber that is partially hidden by a fictive inscribed tablet.⁸⁷ Each of the winged figures stands upon a fictive painted ledge. In this way they appear recessed behind the actual tomb framework in a shallow slot of fictive space. Their definition by means of painted shadow gives them the appearance of simulating relief.

The outer garments and wings of each figure overlap the defining edge of the tomb spandrels, casting shadow onto the architectural mouldings of the fictive pedestals that carry the false architectural columns flanking the window embrasure. A certain ambiguity characterizes these figures, as they can be seen as existing both behind the tomb arch but in front of the fictive pedestals. Although the figures are winged they cannot be identified as angels, due to their lack of haloes. Sale suggests they are divinized personifications of Death and Sleep which, as⁸⁸ funerary erotes, escorted the Soul departing the body.

Images of Thanatos and Hypnos appear on Christian and Pagan sarcophagi alike and would be appropriate in this area and would not negate their function as symbols of the mortality of the flesh.⁸⁹ In a similar way the row of skulls behind them also serves as memento mori symbolizing man's corporeal state after⁹⁰ death.

The fictive plaque in the centre of the tomb spandrels is

directly above the keystone relief of the recumbant lamb in the marble framework of the Strozzi tomb. It also appears to be on the same spatial level. The plaque is framed by triple roll mouldings and is painted illusionistically in order to place it in front of the niche, in which the skulls are situated, and the winged figures.

The inscription NI HANC DESPEXERIS VIVES has been translated, by Sale, as meaning "Unless you scorn this (death) you will live".⁹¹ Winternitz offers a slightly different interpretation: "If you do not shun the water, you will live."⁹² He sees this as a paraphrase symbolizing Spes, as Hope would complete the three Christian Virtues of which Caritas and Fides form the dados of the left and right fictive pedestals respectively. These nuances in interpretation do not alter the fact that the illusionistic plaque is a symbolic message, related to Strozzi, but also directed at the spectator warning him to be conscious of his own mortality and his need for Redemption.

THE FICTIVE PEDESTAL FIGURES: CARITAS AND FIDES (Pls. 110, 123). The grisaille figures of Caritas and Fides (Figs. 35, 36) form a symbolic counterpoint to the mortality of the tomb area, implying that death is overcome by Charity and Faith. Each figure is represented as a sculptural bas-relief with gilded attributes. Their symbolic importance on the altar wall is stressed by their location on the column pedestals upon which a major portion of "the structural metaphor of immortality, the triumphal arch,"⁹³ rests.

Caritas holds two infants, one suckling at her breast, and another hiding behind her voluminous drapery. The grisaille group is framed on all sides by fictive roll-mouldings and is situated within a shallow recessional illusionistic space.

Within this fictive space the figures appear to have a monumental sense of weight which is emphasized by their painted cast shadows. To the right of Caritas a "block" of stone is inscribed with her name and surmounted by an urn with gilded flames. Her crown is also gilded, pointing out to the spectator her symbolic role in the programme of the altar wall while indicating that she is not, in fact, a sculpture but a painting. The figures are not held onto the surface of the pedestal but overlap its boundaries. A hand and foot of each of the infants, respectively, is painted over the framing roll-mouldings. Part of Caritas' gown also protrudes into actual space so that her contact with the spectator and his own reality is enhanced. Both visual communication and a certain accessibility are afforded the viewer as the figural group of Caritas is placed at his own eye-level.

Fides is represented as a single figure and, centralized within the dado of her pedestal, holds both a gilded chalice and cross. She also stands on a block inscribed with her name. Each of her gilded attributes are symbolically emphasized by a change from grisaille to gold-leaf, in order to underscore the message that Faith overcomes the fear of death. The chalice and the cross are

both symbols of Redemption. Only the lower hem of Fides' gown overlaps the mouldings which frame her spatial position within the pedestal. The shadow she casts onto the wall indicates that she is, illusionistically, more free-standing than her counter-part Caritas.

This slight nuance in terms of her projection into actual space may be explained by the importance of Faith in the ascending imagery of the altar wall. Both Caritas and Fides interact with the realm of mortality in the tomb, which they frame on either side, and, by means of their illusionistic step into the space of the viewer, enhance their didactic message as Theological Virtues.

PARTHENICE, DEO MAX AND MUSICAL ALLEGORY (Pls. 110, 116, 117, 121, 122)

On either side of each column base is a group of music-making figures. That on the left reads, on its "inscribed" base Parthenice (Pl. 121, Fig. 37), a latinized Greek word meaning,⁹⁴ according to Sale, virgin or virginal. That on the right reads Deo Max (Pl. 122, Fig. 38), an abbreviated form of Deo⁹⁵ Maximus, meaning "to the greatest God". These inscriptions can be linked to the side-walls in an analogy between Christian and Pagan Symbolism. Parthenice is the virgin mother of Christ and the goddess Diana, becomes her Antique counterpart in the⁹⁶ Raising of Drusiana. In the same way the Deo Max inscription interpreted as a



Figure 35 : Left tomb spandrel of the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel with figure of Caritas, winged figure and row of skulls

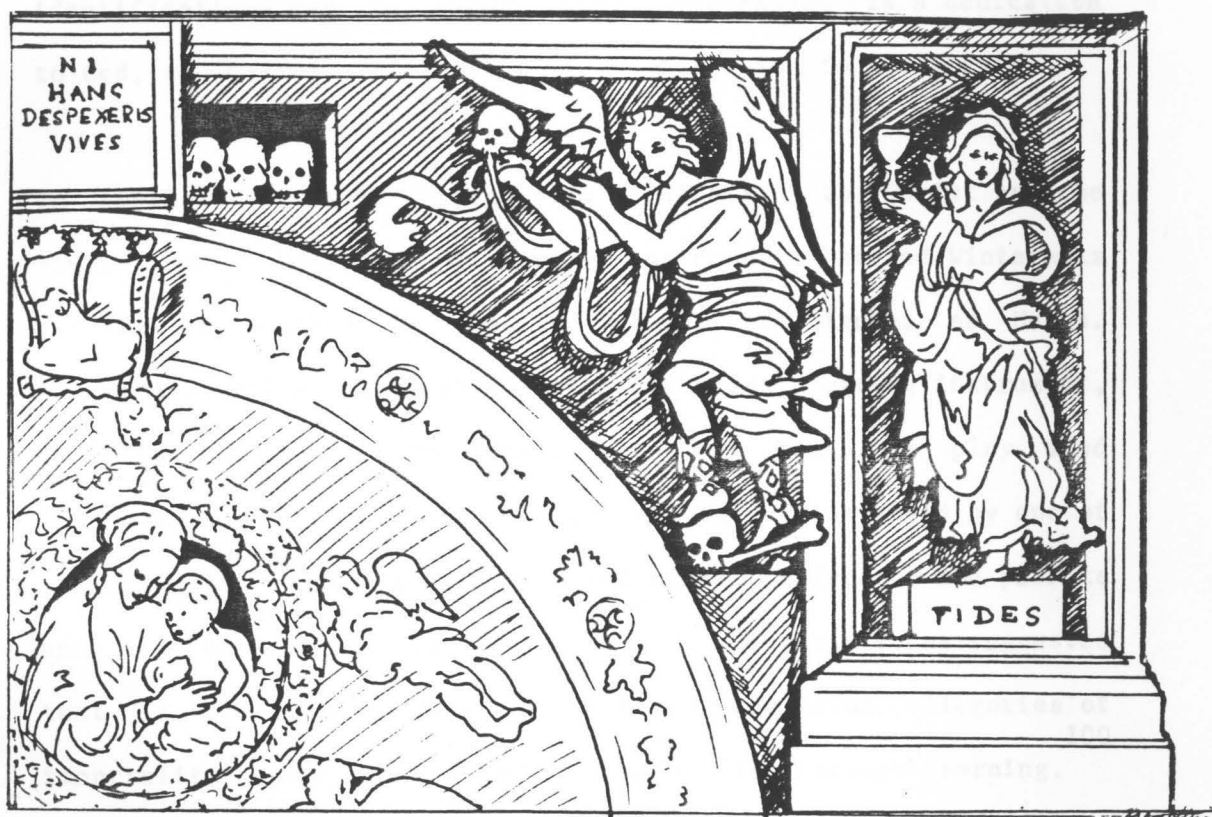


Figure 36 : Right tomb spandrel of the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel with figure of winged figure and row of skulls.

dedication to Christ also refer to his triumph over Mars, in the fresco of St. Philip before the Altar of Mars on the lower right wall thus creating a link between the Christian and Pagan worlds.⁹⁷ In this way the victory over Paganism is recalled on the altar wall. Before analysing this further a primary identification can be established: "DEO MAXIMO" is a dedication to God, to Christ; "PARTHENICE" is a dedication to the Virgin.

In contrast to Sale's suggested dedication to Christ and the Virgin, the depiction of musical instruments has led Winternitz to the explanation of the two groups of figures as Muses. Winternitz points out that Parthenice holds a string instrument, or plectrum, while two winged putti at her feet play wind instruments.⁹⁸ The seven pipes of the syrinx, held by one of these putti could, being a sacred number, allude to the planets and the harmony of the universe.⁹⁹ Winternitz has suggested that if the figures are seen as Muses they become allegories of immortality based on ideas of apotheosis through learning.¹⁰⁰ Sale, however, maintains that their Christian dedication remains, although conceived in the antiquarian spirit that runs through the whole chapel. It is possible that Filippino was aware of their allegorical function and that the attributes of antique Muses could be used in conjunction with their essentially Christian symbolism. The plectrum held by Parthenice may refer to accounts in popular writings by Poliziano, which described it as having power over Pluto's sceptre and, hence, death itself.¹⁰¹ A bone plectrum is also held by the right figure in the Deo Max

group. This must, however, be related to their Christian symbolism: through the Resurrection and the Ascension, both Christ and Mary conquered death; similarly Strozzi hopes to conquer his own death.

The close proximity of both figural groups to the Virtues indicates that they also play a role in the elevating of Filippo Strozzi's soul. Music and the vita contemplativa become two roads to beatitude and Salvation. Winternitz' interpretation of the groups as Muses must be related to their Christian function representing Virgin and Christ. This is specifically alluded to in the fresco of Parthenice by the inclusion of a gilded palm tree which refers back to Gabriel's proffering of a palm to the Virgin on the Annunciation of her role as mother of Christ. Additionally, in an Antique reference the palm is symbolic of virtue and victory over death and becomes, according to Winternitz, a symbol of Eternity.¹⁰² In this manner Christian symbolism and Antiquarian allegory are combined.

The figures of Parthenice and Deo Max, become metaphorical and spiritual sponsors for the soul's journey towards immortality. This affects their degree of illusionism. The figures are no longer completely in grisaille. The putti or angels have brilliant blue wings and their colour is repeated in the ribbons which entwine the hair of the female figures in both groups. Their hair is also subtly coloured, while the musical instruments are gilded. The fluidity of the poses indicates that the spectator cannot consider them as sculptural equivalents nor as fictive reliefs.

The figures are placed, in terms of illusionism, behind the pedestals of Fides and Caritas. This apparent recession is, however, not evenly maintained. To the left, Parthenice, seated on an elaborately sculpted stool, twists so that her hand, the plectrum and the putto she assists with his syrinx, overlap the fictive corner pilaster. The left figure in the Deo Max group turns, in graceful contrapposto, to strike the central lyre, and appears to be situated behind the figure of Fides. The right figure, in contrast, leans forward, resting her chin on her hand and a large portion of her body and her flowing hair overlaps the right corner pilaster.

The Deo Max figures have other Antique references to the intellect. The figure on the left could refer to Erato the leader of poetry and sacred hymns, while that on the right could refer to Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy.¹⁰³ Even if Winternitz' assertion is correct the Deo Max group functions in an entirely Christian way. The figures partake of the spectator's own reality through their position on the chapel wall, their overlapping of the fictive pilasters, and their contrasting textures and poses. This indicates that they are not fictive sculptures but, close to the spectator's own reality, underscore Christian symbolism through Antique allegory.

The illusionism of the Parthenice and Deo Max figures is greater than that of the tomb area or the Caritas and Fides pedestals. The spectator is alerted to their ambiguous reality as he cannot view them in the same way as the proscenium figures on the

narrative side-walls, while their essentially grisaille coloration indicates their level of 'unreality'.

The Christian and Antique references in the figures of Parthenice and Deo Max indicate allegorical and spiritual meaning. Their high degree of illusionism, being represented as liminal, invites the spectator to see them on a different level of reality. This would indicate that two types of reality coexist in the figures: Christian and Pagan metaphor (analogy) and illusionism (imitation).

Even the musical associations of the Parthenice and Deo Max groups pertain to the theoretical and metaphysical nature of music of a higher order; as Winternitz has pointed out, many of the instruments cannot be played.¹⁰⁴ This is the musica umana which symbolizes a conquering of Death, as it is believed to bind man's physical, as well his spiritual, nature.¹⁰⁵ If music, personified on one level by Parthenice and Deo Max, aspires to this cosmic stature on the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel, then it has a powerful association with both the roles of the Virgin and Christ as synonymous with divine law and metaphysical truth.

The allusions to music on the altar wall continue above the Parthenice and Deo Max figures in the fictive plaques. On either side of the window, on the upper painted entablature, a kneeling angel supports an ornamented stone plaque in the space above the figures of Parthenice and Deo Max. Both fictive tablets bear inscriptions that refer to the musical associations of the wall

and its Christian content. The inscription on the left plaque reads : SACRIS/SUPERIS/INITIATI CANUNT and translates as, "To the Sacred Powers above the initiated sing".¹⁰⁶ Sale suggests that the "initiati" refer to those who devote themselves to the contemplative life and indirectly, to Strozzi himself.¹⁰⁷ This symbolically aids his soul, through the representation of knowledge, to accomplish its heavenly ascension. Winternitz imbues the inscription with a reference to Platonic doctrine, with which Filippo Strozzi and Filippino would have been familiar.¹⁰⁸ According to this doctrine immortality was not granted to every soul but only a select few. The "initiati" could thus refer to Strozzi as part of this elite chosen for eternal life.¹⁰⁹

The right plaque reads : D.M./QUONDAM./NUNC/D.O.M./CANIMUS. Sale relates the D.M. to the Deo Max group and translates the inscription as "Formerly to the Greatest God, we now sing to the best and greatest God".¹¹⁰ The message appears to be connected with the Deo Max figures not only in their role as musical Muses, but in their more Christian interpretation as references to Christ. It could also be a celebration of the victory of Christ over both Paganism and human ignorance.¹¹¹

The illusionism of these fictive plaques is increased by an elaborate system of ribbons which begins at the top of the Gothic window. These ribbons appear to "hold" up the plaques and two angels, crouching on the fictive entablature above, appear to lean out into actual space while suspending the bulky "stone" plaques



Figure 37 : Parthenice group on the left side of the altar wall
of the Strozzi Chapel



Figure 38 : Deo Max group with pedestal lyre, on the right side of the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel

in front of the wall surface. Weighty pieces of fictive architecture suspended in mid-air, even if supported by angels and floating ribbons, create an ambiguous instability on the surface of the altar wall. The ribbons must then, according to the credibility of the illusionistic system, be seen as part of the allegorical imagery and not as "real". They also serve to connect the plaques to other verbal messages in the round stone grisaille tablets in the very apex of the altar wall. This enables the spectator to follow and connect the revelations written on the plaques and to understand their symbolism.

The central plaques, on either side of the window (Pls. 106-110), appear to be situated behind the fictive columns flanking its recessed embrasure. At the same time they cast prominent painted shadows, implying that they are not attached to the wall but suspended slightly in front of it. This suspension of fictive reality is reinforced by the looping of the ribbons through the upper portion of each plaque. Immediately below this loop is a large shell motif flanked by two marine forms. The essentially funerary significance of the shell, coloured a rose-brown in contrast to the grisaille plaque, has an implicit reference to the Resurrection.

Godby relates the shell to the Anadyomene myth: the Romans used the scallop shell on sarcophagi and other funerary monuments as "the shell upon which the soul floats away to the other

112
 world". The conspicuous placing of the shell, and the change
 in technique, implies that Filippino was aware of the Roman use of
 the shell as an expression of hope for life after death. The
 marine forms could refer to dolphins which often replaced the
 shell as "a vehicle for the souls of the dead".
 113

The two round upper plaques at the top of the altar wall reinforce
 this funerary theme. Their importance is attested by their
 prominence and large scale. Together they form the united
 inscription : SI SCIRES/DONUM DEI, (Pl. 124) which translates as
 114
 "If you knew the gift of God". To know the gift of God is,
 in itself, a sign of the attainment of wisdom possessed only by
 the "initiati" like Filippo Strozzi himself. His hopes for
 beatitude and Salvation are clustered in the apex of the altar
 wall. The Strozzi crescent is in the centre of the Gothic arch,
 with wings outspread to symbolize the spiritual flight of his
 soul. Below it, in the window embrasure, the Strozzi eagle is
 portrayed in gilded relief, also with opened wings. Depicted as a
 moulting-falcon or eagle, this image is a symbol of the
 115
 regeneration and Resurrection of Strozzi's soul.

THE TROMPE L'OEIL ANGELS (FIG. 39) (PL. 120)

These highly coloured angels, seated on top of the fictive
 entablature, are the largest figures on the altar wall. They no
 longer belong to the painted architectural construction of the
 altar wall but appear to belong to actual space. Their shields

overlap the window embrasure giving them an independent existence as part of the upper regions of the chapel enclosure. Their drapery clings to their bodies as if windswept by the dizzy height of their position in the chapel and they look down on the mortal spectator from a zone of celestial space. Their highly credible trompe l'oeil reality must be seen in conceptual terms. This heavenly realm has the highest spiritual reality in the stratification of levels of meaning on the altar wall. There is no barrier between actual and illusionistic space in this area.

The monumental scale, realistic colour and illusionism of these angels indicate that they belong on a different level of reality to the grisaille architecture below them. Symbolically, their triumphant immortality dominates the altar wall in a merging of actual and illusionistic space.

THE WINDOW (PLS. 106-110)

The only other area with glowing colours, apart from the upper angels, is the stained-glass window, which "...seems to rise like
116
a burning flame from the dark sarcophagus". Its intense luminosity contrasts with the near monochromatic tones of the grisaille wall. The window is framed by stained-glass borders with leaves and flowers, interspersed with urns and patriarchal heads. In the upper part of the window are placed the Virgin and Child. This confirms the identification of the Parthenice and Deo Max figures, on the altar wall, as also identifiable as the Virgin and Christ cloaked in Antique allegorical symbolism.

The Virgin also plays a role as mediatrix for Strozzi's
 117 soul. In the lower part of the window stand Filippo
 Strozzi's apostolic patrons, St. Philip and St. John the
 Evangelist. Two verbal messages occur on the window. One
 illusionistically simulates a "stone" tablet in glass, and is
 again suspended with ribbons, held by angels, above the Virgin.
 It reads MITIS ESTO, which is the Strozzi motto of patient
 suffering. Another inscription can be read from the pages of the
 open book held by the two lower saints (Pl. 108). Although partly
 obliterated, the selection of phrases appears to have been chosen
 118 for the glorification of Filippo Strozzi himself. The
 accumulation of all these images relates to the word EXPECTO
 beneath the Strozzi gilded eagle in the apex of the window
 embrasure.

This whole area can be seen as a spiritual embodiment of hope.
 According to Peter Lombard, "Hope is the certain expectation
 (expectatio) of future beatitude, coming from the grace of God for
 119 preceding merit."

The window area, juxtaposed against the grisaille walls of the
 fictive triumphal arch, becomes integral to the reading of the
 illusionistic fluctuations on the surface as a unified system of
 changing levels of reality in order to visually represent
 Strozzi's apotheosis in the area of heaven (the trompe l'oeil
 angels). It is this zone of the highest illusionism in the chapel
 that is the furthest from his earthly remains in the tomb. At the
 same time it is the nearest to Adam as the first man to bring

death into the world. In this way, it is necessary for the observer to recognize that the large angels are representative, in terms of both illusionism and conceptual meaning, of an attempt to negate the finality of Death.

IX THE TOTALITY

The complexity of the allegorical symbolism in the Strozzi Chapel is clearly graded, for the spectator, into different types of illusionism related to a unified symbolic intention.

Firstly the vault (Pl. 106), presided over by the Patriarchs and framed by grisaille borders with interlocked stylized volutes, male heads in leaf forms, and the repetition of the triple Strozzi crescent, does not function illusionistically but encloses architectural space. The rib-vaults are emphasized and actual space is defined, while the scale and illusionistic projection of the Patriarchs into chapel space is contained by means of pictorial barriers formed by framework.

Secondly, the side-walls allow a communication between the observer and the frescoes to occur by placing the figures of the lower scenes on a narrow stage that appears to be part of actual space. Fictive and real space become symbiotically related in these areas. The planarity of the recessed backgrounds emphasize that the architectural structure of the walls are closed to any illusionistic penetration and remain structurally intact but further back in space.

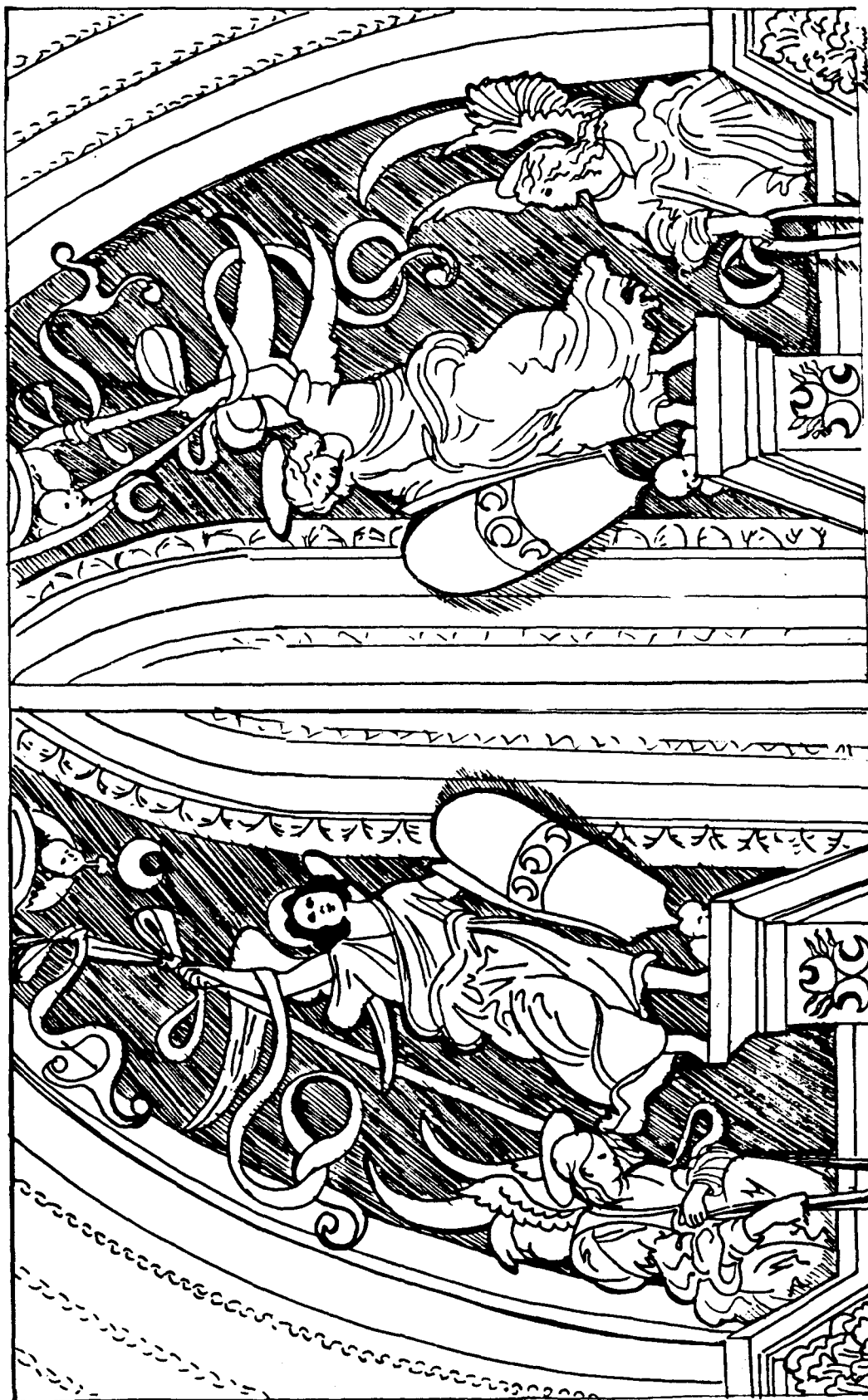


Figure 39 : Trompe l'oeil angels at the apex of the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel.

Thirdly, false architecture restructures the entire chapel and alters its apparent spatial dimensions. The grisaille architecture of the altar wall recreates an architectural ambience which has nothing to do with the actual Gothic structure of the Strozzi Chapel. This illusionistic redefinition of the wall creates, however, a symmetrical format for the ascending images in order to clearly construct each step on the visual journey towards the symbolic culmination in the apex of the wall. The Strozzi Chapel-fresco programme has a unified conceptual structure related to the patron's desire for the Resurrection of his soul, and the perceptual system of allegory and illusionism allows certain areas to appear to infringe on actual space to heighten contact and meaning. Despite the complicated layering of illusionism the Strozzi Chapel remains, essentially, surface-conscious. The sense of surface is not planar, but tactile, not in the original position, but visually pushed back. Yet the wall remains a wall and only the pictorial figures enter into spectator space. The one area where false architecture projects into the chapel is on the altar wall so that pictorial space for the allegorical figures may be reconstructed.

The highly cerebral gradations of illusionism in the Strozzi Chapel are motivated by a logical system which includes the spectator in Filippo Strozzi's desire for the concretization of his visual journey of celestial beatitude.

In this way, the conceptual structure of the vault Patriarchs has an important funereal significance as they become emblematic of Christian apotheosis by virtue of their status among the Saved. They are, hence, placed in the architectural and figurative heaven

of the chapel. They point to Christ as an effective means to Salvation and confirm the validity of the chapel as a place of burial. Noah and Abraham, on the vault above the side-walls, offer Divine aid to the martyr. Jacob, above the entrance arch, indicates, to the spectator, the spiritual road to grace through contemplation. Adam signifies the fallen state of man and symbolizes that everyman is under the shadow of death in his mortal state.

This symbolic structure is continued in the narrative scenes where the Antique world is shown in full panoply of its power and authority, but empty when confronted by the spiritual superiority of Christianity. In this way, the Christological content prefigured in the Patriarchs of the Strozzi vault becomes manifest in the frescoes of the side-walls. It is the spiritual power of Christ that lies behind the Christian triumphs and resurrection miracles of both St. Philip and St. John.

Finally, the conceptual structure of the Strozzi chapel culminates in the symbolism of the altar wall. This is carefully indicated, to the observer, by means of the painted architectural format of the triumphal arch. It becomes a visual symbol for the change from one existential state to another and, symbolically, Strozzi's mortal remains in the tomb are transformed into his immortal soul in an upward journey towards the apex of the wall and the zone of Heaven. False architecture and different gradations of illusionism, in the grisaille figures and plaques, are motivated by this desire for the altar wall to function as a portal through which changes of existential status are aided by symbols of virtue, to represent the ascension of Strozzi's soul.

X CONCLUSION

The Strozzi Chapel brings to a close the analysis of five selected chapels and their iconographic relation to actual and illusionistic space.

Filippino Lippi reintroduced the function of the mural plane initially analysed in Giotto's Arena Chapel. He placed this chapel surface in a different visual position from its actuality, but Filippino was aware of surface and structure and orchestrated them for his own iconographic needs. He became, in this way, both architect and painter and the boundaries between the two became, illusionistically, invisible. He reversed perspectival recession in the altar wall so that conceptual structure should dominate the perceptual illusionism and indicate that the zones of Immortality had an existence which was more "real" than the fiction below in the grisailles.

Each pictorial element's subtle intrusion into spectator space alerts him to re-assess each image, for nothing is exactly as it seems, but simulates something else. Yet all is held in symmetrical coherence within the false architecture on both side and altar walls. The spectator must confront the figures on the side-walls as part of his actual space and change his perception in relation to the altar wall, making him aware of more transitional states of being related to an existential development.

As a unified perceptual and conceptual message the Strozzi chapel, with the tomb on the very altar wall, becomes a concretized journey related to the Eucharistic connotations of the Mass and a transubstantiation of the flesh. This is echoed in the changing states of fictive reality which ascend towards the apex of the altar wall and the realm of the Divine.

CHAPTER 7 A MURAL LANGUAGE

Pictorial space and iconography, in the five Tuscan chapel-fresco programmes in this research, have been analysed in relation to their effect on architecture, illusionism and iconography. The purpose of this concluding chapter is to analyse and compare some elements of continuity and change within these chapels in order to establish a mural language. Some reference to similar developments in Tuscan mural painting, of the same period, will be included in this overview.

This conclusion is primarily concerned with methods which affect the articulation of actual and illusionistic space. It also includes a brief re-appraisal of narrative structure and iconography in relation to symbolic content.

The preceding chapters have analysed ways in which Tuscan mural painting evolved, during the Tre- and Quattrocento, into a specific art-form in active connection with the space of architecture. In addition, the different degrees of "reality-effect" in the frescoes have emerged as affecting the type of confrontation between the "total unreality characteristic of the forms and objects which the picture seeks to render credible", and the highly concrete reality of the space in which¹ the observer stands.

At the same time, this illusionism has also been seen to have an objective existence which can be associated with iconographic intention. The manner in which didactic or symbolic questions within the narrative structure of each programme and formal elements intertwine, are very often two aspects of the same phenomenon. Fresco painting has, thus, an inherent dualism: it² is both object and representation.

The balance between the objective aspect of Tuscan mural painting, its imitation of objects (in the frescoes), and its iconographic symbolism combine in an interplay of functions which establish a mural language. The elements which make up this mural language will be analysed in this conclusion.

I METHODS WHICH INFLUENCE ILLUSIONISM IN TUSCAN MURAL PAINTING

(a) FICTIVE "PENETRATIONS" OF THE WALL

Pictorial illusionism may create a penetrable wall surface through "punctures" or "visual holes". The illusionistic perforation of the fictive tombs in, for example, the Arena Chapel, change the surface of the altar wall. This means that through illusionism, a transformation of actual space in the chapel occurs. These painted tombs, or niches, appear to contain space behind the wall surface. They are painted with an effective illusion of³ perspective which works from the centre of the chapel.

The mural language of closing different pictorial tiers off from

one another, through distinct solutions to illusionism, is motivated by the desire to place each tier on the altar wall of the Arena Chapel on separate spatial and symbolic levels of reality.⁴ This method affects the planarity or penetration of the wall surface. If the illusionistic tomb paintings are also considered "cenotaphs", then this purpose is emphasized by the high degree of visual penetration.⁵

This permeation of chapel space into a restricted area of the wall, which is credible in terms of illusionism, is not unique to the mural language of the Arena Chapel. Maso di Banco's tomb mural in the Bardi di Vernio Chapel in Santa Croce, Florence, painted after 1335, also dissolves the apparent boundary between the mural and the wall.⁶ Maso's painted burial niche or avello includes an illusionistic fresco of a painted vision of a praying figure which appears to rise from the actual sarcophagus beneath it (Fig. 40). The distinction between realities, as "true" or "false" is unclear as the illusionistic figure may appear as real as the actual sarcophagus.

The treatment of the painted burial niches in the Arena and the Bardi di Vernio Chapels could reflect the needs of their respective patrons in relation to the theme of death. As bankers, the Bardi lived and died under the shadow of usury, as did the Scrovegni patrons of the Arena Chapel. The illusionistic representation of the Redeemed figure rising from the Bardi tomb may have been meant as a portrait, or a more generic symbol of the

rewards for dying in a state of grace.

A papal Bull of 1336 stated that those who died without sin, might immediately participate in a vision of God.⁷ The illusionistic figure rising from the Bardi tomb may be a concretization of this hope. In a similar way, the fictive tomb chambers, or avelli, on the altar wall of the Arena Chapel are related to hopes of Redemption. The highly illusionistic empty tomb chambers are representative of Christian burial, and, being directly beneath the Betrayal of Judas, also express Enrico Scrovegni's confession of guilt for his family's usurious practices and the willingness to atone. The illusionism in both chapels "punctuates" the wall surface by heightening its fictive reality and establishing greater visual contact with the spectator in relation to these "zones of mortality". As highly credible symbols of the eternal rest of the donors, these areas also emphasize the burial function of each chapel.

This illusionistic language in the treatment of the cenotaph may be extended to include, for example, Masaccio's fresco of the Trinity with Mary, John and Two Donors, painted c. 1425, in Santa Maria Novella (Fig. 41).⁸

The Trinity serves as a monumental altarpiece and the presence of a memento mori beneath the kneeling donor figures contributes to the fresco's funerary significance.⁹ Contact with the spectator is defined, in Masaccio's Trinity, by viewpoint, as some of the images are painted as if seen from below. The perspective of

their vanishing points roughly corresponds to the eye of the beholder standing below. In this way, the frescoes add to architectural space without being a direct continuation of it, because the wall is only "punctured" within a restricted area and the dimensions of actual space are not fundamentally altered. The prominence of the theme of death in Tuscan funerary chapels is often emphasized by an increased illusionism.

In Ghirlandaio's Sassetti Chapel, this is further exemplified by the trompe l'oeil perforations of his painted rooms for the kneeling donor figures on the altar wall. The spectator's eye is deceived in accepting the flat surface as visually penetrable. Ghirlandaio uses perspective to increase this three-dimensional illusionism and excludes any stylistic interference with his deception by making the scale of the donor figures the same as that of the spectator.

Ghirlandaio, like Giotto centres the scene to the viewer's position in the chapel. In contrast, the scale and location of the fictive rooms in the Sassetti Chapel with their mimetic viewpoint appear to actually extend the space of the chapel into the wall as a direct continuation of the viewer's actual space.

Although Giotto also took the central position of the spectator into account in the Arena Chapel, the scale and position of his painted tombs limited the illusionism to "punctures". The



Figure 40 : Bardì di Vernio Chapel showing painted donor rising from the actual sarcophagus

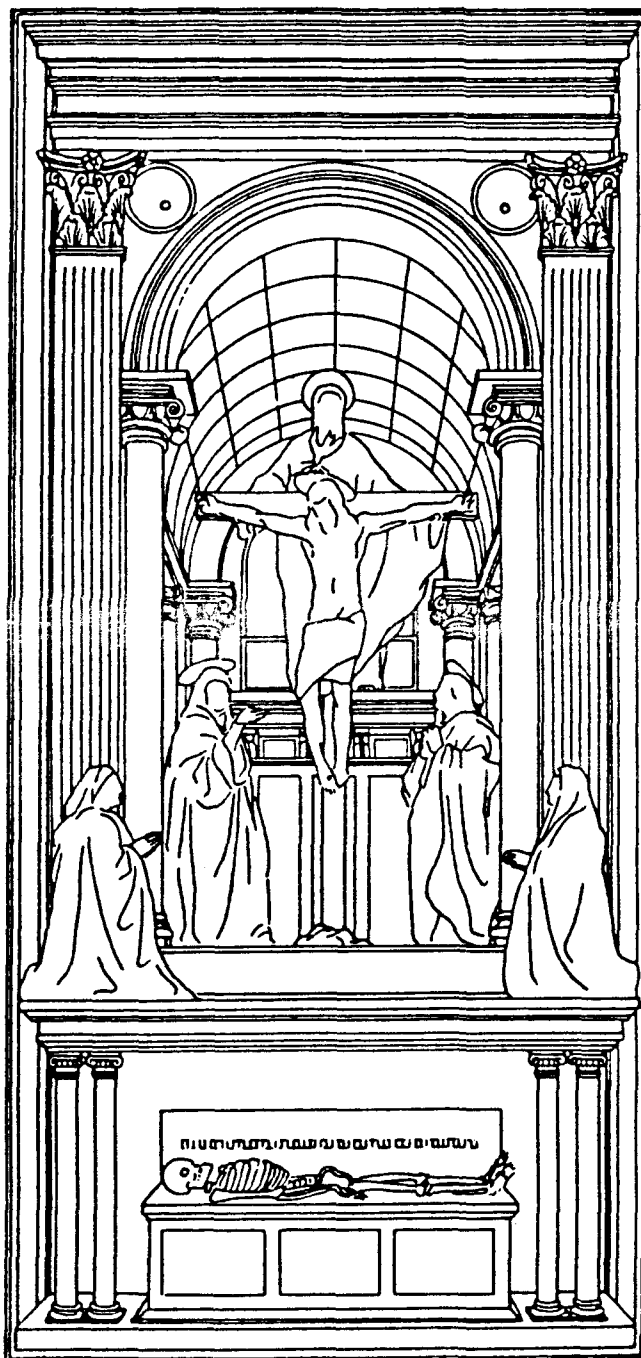


Figure 41 : Masaccio's Trinity with Mary, John and Two Donors, painted c. 1425 in Santa Maria Novella (Drawing Ursula Schlegel.)

continuation of actual space into the wall surface is restricted in relation to the upper tiers of the chancel arch.

Illusionistic entry into the wall surface may also be exemplified by Filippino Lippi's use of scenae frons or stage-like prosceniums¹⁰ in the side-walls of the Strozzi Chapel. This extends the idea of a "puncture" to that of pushing back an entire area on the surface of the wall by means of illusionism. On the lower side-walls a re-modelling of the wall architecture takes place. Fictive framing architecture and pictorial architecture in the frescoes, establish a continuity of actual and illusionistic space. At the same time, the frontal proscenium contains the human figures who, in relation to the "puncturing" of the wall behind them, appear to step out into the space of the spectator.¹¹

"Punctures" in the wall surface open a passage of communication between the frescoes and real space and are part of the mural language of Tuscan chapels. By altering the plane of the wall, the spectator is invited into the space of the frescoes and reads the imagery in a more direct way as a part of his actual space in the chapel.

(b) FICTIVE ARCHITECTURE

Fictive or painted architecture changes both the surface of the wall and the apparent dimensions of space within each chapel

enclosure. It became integral to the mural painting of Tuscany, which often changed the quality or dimensions of its architectural site through pictorial illusionism.

Its use is not exclusive to the Tre- and Quattrocento. The Duecento papal burial chapel in the Upper Church of San Francesco, Assisi, painted by Cimabue between c. 1274 and 1284, has painted Gothic gabled framework in the arcade of the north arm of the transept.¹² The west gallery, above the painted apostles, is also filled with fictive architecture of a Cosmatesque style. Painted architecture frames the whole programme. The fresco scenes are separated by acanthus patterned borders, and above the main series of frescoes the wall appears to be set back. This allows a broad ledge to run uninterrupted around the entire chapel¹³ passing behind the arcading of the transepts. This fictive passageway appears to jut out into the space of the spectator.

All the selected chapels in this research use fictive architecture, with the exception of the Bacci Chapel at Arezzo, which uses only painted architectural framework. In Giotto's Arena Chapel fictive columns with actual stuccoed capitals frame the frescoes on the altar wall and establish a connection between the pictorial parts of the chancel in relation to the dado below. The simulated marble of the dado increases the illusionistic effect of the fictive architecture and links it to the panel¹⁴ section which runs around the entire chapel.

The fictive architecture of painted pilasters which frame the four corners of the Brancacci Chapel also change the surface quality of its walls. This influences, to a limited degree, the apparent dimensions of space in the chapel. The picture surface is transformed by the painted architectural framing combined with a fictive narrow architrave which separates the scenes and runs in an unbroken line from wall to wall. This divides the pictorial field of the chapel walls into two equal parts.

The painted pilasters that fill the corners of the Brancacci Chapel complete the closed framework of the frescoes and enhance the structural logic of the three walls in relation to each other. Nothing appears to intervene between this fictive architecture and the onlooker, and a certain dissolution of the wall surface, behind the pilasters, seems to occur. The wall appears to have "...melted, and reality and picture are one world¹⁵ to the imaginative eye."

This effect is reinforced by the outer definition of the altar wall of the Brancacci Chapel with the same pilasters, and the central recession of the orthogonals, in the Peter Healing and the Death of Ananias, towards the centre of the altar which separates them. Fictive architecture is also linked to a single vanishing point-construction in all the frescoes on the side-walls.

In this way, it emphasizes the spectator's central position in the chapel and is also a means of unifying the disparate spatial

solutions of the three artists, Masaccio, Masolino and Filippino Lippi, by connecting pictorial space with that of the observer.

Fictive architecture has an effect on all the frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel. It counteracts the "bulging" impression of Masaccio's monumental figures, defined by contour and chiaroscuro, which appear to curve forward into spectator space. Fictive architecture provides a necessary boundary which limits this effect by imposing an architectural barrier.

Masolino's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel are also related to the fictive architecture. When this restricted boundary of architectural framing is absent, as in his later work in the Baptistery of the Collegiata, Castiglione Olona, finished 1435, Masolino's frescoes are more illusionistic and appear not to be contained within the dimensions of the wall to the same extent as in the Brancacci Chapel (Fig. 14¹⁶). Instead of his frescoes being conscious of their mural function, they appear to expand the space of the chapel. Fictive architecture has, therefore, a structural function similar to that of real architecture and re-orders illusionism in relation to the limiting barrier of the wall.

This effect of fictive architecture can be seen in the work of Filippino Lippi in the Brancacci Chapel in contrast to his paintings in the Strozzi Chapel. In the former, Filippino was not able to remodel the wall architecture but had to retain the

painted pilasters, attributed to Masaccio, in order to maintain a certain homogeneity in the scheme.

By means of a system of shallow prosceniums and vistas of background which appear to "open" the back wall of the frescoes, Filippino increased their credibility as existing in the same space as the observer in the Brancacci Chapel. The shallowness of these prosceniums, is in direct contrast to the deep stage-like prosceniums of the Strozzi Chapel. This effect is directly dependent on the type of fictive architecture.

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In the Strozzi Chapel Filippino is not working with shallow fictive pilasters but with large painted piers which appear to have considerable depth. These fictive piers articulate the four corners of the Strozzi Chapel. The fictive architecture of both the Brancacci and Strozzi Chapels affects their degree of illusionism, their relation to the surface of the wall and its apparent position, and the quantity of pictorial/actual space which appears to reside within the surface of the wall.

The fictive architecture in the Brancacci Chapel lies between the spectator and the plane of the frescoes in each artist. It is of a different type from the pictorial architecture in the frescoes and is also seen within a different perspective. In this way, the fictive architecture of the Brancacci Chapel is not part of the frescoes to the same extent as that in Filippino's Strozzi Chapel. Despite a more limited illusionism, the fictive

architecture in the Brancacci Chapel does not act so strongly as "frame" to prevent, at least, the central section of each fresco from appearing in some ways to connect with the space of the chapel.

Filippino's solutions differ from Masaccio's because he extends the apparent disparity between the surface of the wall and the fictive architecture by opening up the lower boundaries of the frescoes with a penetrable "stage". The quantity of actual space which appears to permeate into the wall surface appears, in consequence, to be greater than that in Masaccio's frescoes.

Similar problems faced Domenico Ghirlandaio when he tackled the representation of the Last Supper in the Ognissanti,¹⁸ Florence. Ghirlandaio treated the wall as a unity but apparently changed his architectural site through illusionism. This was largely motivated by a change in refectory construction, which after 1450 tended to be lower and vaulted so that the wall area to be painted became horizontal, rather than vertical, in format.¹⁹ Ghirlandaio fundamentally changed the existing architecture, which divided the rear wall of the refectory into two vault bays with an abutment in the middle, by means of pictorial illusionism. The dimensions of actual space appear to be extended into the world of the fresco.

In the Sassetti Chapel Ghirlandaio uses fictive architecture, linked to illusionism, to alter the Gothic structure of the

chapel. In the fictive pilasters that frame, for example, the fresco of Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son the painted central altar and cornice define the limits of the fresco while the outer fictive architecture establish it as an "opening" in the wall.

Ghirlandaio's use of fictive pilasters relates to the Classical type used by Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel but certain differences in pictorial illusionism occur. Whereas in both a certain "dissolution" of the frontal plane occurs, in the Brancacci Chapel this is limited by the different perspectival viewpoint between the fictive architecture and the frescoes which establishes a discontinuity. It is not possible for the spectator to be deceived into believing that these frescoes are "holes" in the wall.

In contrast, Ghirlandaio's fictive pilasters frame scenes which have the same viewpoint and appear to be credibly penetrable, opening out into deep vistas of pictorial space. The viewer is able to make a "step" out into the space of the fresco. The frame of the fictive architecture has the function of acting as a window through which an adjacent stratum of space appears to be visible.

(c) FICTIVE SCULPTURE

The grisaille coloration of the Virtues and Vices in the Arena Chapel distinguishes their function as allegories in relation to

the narrative above them by simulating fictive sculpture.²⁰ At the same time, their monochromatic colour links them to the false marble of the dado.²¹ To distinguish these two areas, in terms of illusionism, Giotto places the Virtues and Vices in positions which are technically impossible for stone sculpture thereby acknowledging their deception as painted statues.

The use of fictive sculpture was often part of a Tuscan mural language which wished to alert the spectator to a change in an image's level of reality which, in certain cases, was related to its allegorical function within a programme. By separating the type of illusionism in the Virtues and Vices from the narrative walls Giotto indicated their allegorical function to the spectator. At the same time, he was able to create a distance between pictorial images and achieve homogeneity in the grisaille coloration of the lower wall.

This allegorical symbolism linked to grisaille fictive sculpture reappears on, for example, the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel. The subtle gradations of the "sculptures" monochromatic colouration give the images a pompe funebre while uniting them to their fictive architectural setting.²²

A link between the Trecento chapel of Giotto at Padua and the late Quattrocento Strozzi Chapel, painted by Filippino Lippi, can be established as part of an ongoing mural language. In the Arena Chapel, the Virtues and Vices become part of the simulated marble

panels of the dado; similarly, in the Strozzi Chapel, the "sculptures" of the Virtues of Caritas and Fides are accepted as part of the false architectural triumphal arch painted on the altar wall. The use of simulated sculpture also increases the figures' sense of austerity, in both chapels, which is suited to their purpose in relation to a funerary chapel.

This simulation of sculpture and relief occurs in both the Sassetti and Strozzi Chapels. Fictive sculptural relief is painted in the tomb spandrels of Nera and Francesco Sassetti and is related, allegorically, to the realm of death. The simulated statue of David, on the entrance arch of the Sassetti chapel, also indicates his function as part of the allegorical symbolism in the Prophecy of Christ's Birth, which is a secondary theme to the Franciscan narrative. David is also painted as a simulated statue because this is how Florentines knew him best : in the heroic
23
statuary of Donatello and Verocchio.

Filippino Lippi uses simulated relief on the ribs of the Gothic
24
vault of the Strozzi Chapel. This fictive relief also has an allegorical function. The crescent moons represent the most generic symbol of the Strozzi and have several meanings within
25
their family imprese. Placed back to back around a central point, with their horns outward, the crescents allude to the love
26
of the individual for the family. The crescents are placed this way in the Strozzi vault and from their points of contact emerge burning flames. The fire symbolizes the love and affection

growing from the association of various family members.²⁷ The male leaf-heads on the vault framework extend this allegorical function of the Strozzi crescents by referring to human renewal²⁸ and regrowth after misfortune.

Fictive sculpture and relief often have both an illusionistic and allegorical function in Tuscan mural language.

(d) VIEWPOINTS

Changing viewpoints in frescoes or framework are indicators of attitudes to levels of reality which concentrate on specific relationships between the frescoes and the spectator. Two examples will serve to demonstrate this effect.

Giotto's dado and borders in the Arena Chapel are articulated by many small mouldings represented di sotto in su.²⁹ Giotto designed them consistently to appear as if seen from below. The narrative frescoes, however, are designed so that each is an idealized, centralized view directly into the scene. In this way, Giotto combined the mimetic viewpoint with foreshortened mouldings creating a distance between the frame and the fresco. The difference in viewpoint in the Arena Chapel's decorative framing and narrative scenes indicates different levels of reality in the programme. This has been analysed in Chapter II in the section on Giotto's framework in the Arena Chapel. (see pp. 88-96 below)

Filippino Lippi's fantasy of grisaille architectural forms on the

altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel are, like Giotto's mouldings in
the Arena Chapel seen ³⁰di sotto in sù. The fictive architecture
on the Strozzi altar wall and that surrounding the scenes on the
lateral walls also have different viewpoints. The vanishing point
on the altar wall is near eye-level, just above the altar, whereas
the vanishing point of the framing of the lateral walls is the
same as that of each lower narrative scene, about 3 metres above
³¹
the floor.

The abovementioned examples of viewpoints indicate their
importance within the mural language of fresco painting by placing
the narrative and the frame on different levels of reality.

(e) FRAMEWORK

Framework may, therefore, extend illusionism in the same way as
fictive architecture, or be essentially decorative and planar.

Decorative or planar framework is not, however, devoid of
illusionistic aspects. The "keeping of the surface" allows a
passage between two spheres of space to occur; the actual wall
and the painted wall. This makes a backward effect from the
painted surface of the wall into the pictorial space of the
frescoes possible. The frame and the fresco belong, therefore, on
two different levels of space in terms of illusionism.

Giotto's decorative system of framework in the Arena Chapel lays

stress on the actual architecture and the wall retains its quality as surface. The outer red and green liners establish planarity and the framework locks into a decorative grid on the walls of the chapel. Giotto varies this system by including more illusionistic architectural mouldings in the dado and simulated marble insets into his decorative borders. In this way, the three pictorial tiers of the side-walls are treated as a unit.

Where framework does not divide the narrative into compartments, as in the fresco of the Last Judgement on the west wall, the contact between the objective aspect of the concrete surface and the pictorial aspect of the images becomes ambiguous. If this ambiguity is related to the fresco's more conceptual approach to religious didacticism, its level of "unreality" becomes acceptable within the programme.

An appraisal of Tuscan fresco cycles in the period of the Tre-and Quattrocento must include framework as integral to their mural language. Framework mediates between the architecture and the scene, providing embellishment for the former and a context for the latter.

The system of floral borders or Cosmati framework included isolators. This is a very basic factor in all Tuscan fresco painting and consists of a red-brown stripe which may vary in width. Within a fresco border this is called an interior isolator: it serves to "isolate" the scene from the surrounding

border.³² Within this isolator is often placed another band,
 which surrounds the picture field and is known as a "field
 liner".³³ Together they serve to create an easy transition from
 border to scene.

Exterior isolators, bands outside the borders, are also frequent,
 particularly in Tuscan chapel decoration. Their purpose is
 usually to provide a neat construction of borders within an
 architectural ambience in which the angles and corners are not
 always regular.³⁴

The basic form of "non-narrative" fresco decoration in Tre- and
 early Quattrocento mural structure is the band, which stresses the
 objective nature of the fresco's surface, its reality as a mural
 and as part of the wall. The transverse decorative bands which
 curve across the vault of the Arena Chapel, for example,
 articulate its shape by laying stress on actual architecture.³⁵

The Tuscan framework band often included iconographical elements
 within medallions or "stops" into which individual scenes or
 portrait busts were inserted. The two most favoured categories of
 design in Tuscan fresco borders, the Cosmatesque and the floral
 acanthus, are first seen at San Francesco at Assisi.³⁶

Giotto adopted the Assisan arrangement of isolator and field liner
 for the scenes in the two lower registers on the side-walls of the

Arena Chapel.³⁷ Giotto's use of Cosmati work in his Christological narrative re-appears in the Bardi and Peruzzi Chapels.³⁸ The painted framework of both these later chapels has the same "wall-hugging crispness" as at Padua but the negative colour bands (isolators)³⁹ of the Paduan scheme are gone. The Quattrocento chapel of the Bacci family at Arezzo also displays some of these framework features. Mirror-acanthus borders with lattice-quatrefoil iconographic stops articulate Bicci di Lorenzo's vault Evangelists.

The mural language of framework is not limited to a concentration on the objective surface of the wall but may be extended to include an illusionistic modification of chapel space. Sometimes, this system is both the former and the latter, because the artists guide the spectator's perception from surface to illusionism, occasionally achieving a double effect. One of the means used by mural painters in Tuscany to achieve these ends is the simulated architectural border.

Framework may function as an outer demarcation of the pictorial architecture in the frescoes.⁴⁰ In certain circumstances it may also be a way of lowering the fresco's pictorial level of reality in relation to its objective quality as the framework asserts itself as a three-dimensional object. A mural system of simulated architectural motifs developed as part of the language of Tuscan chapels. Florentine mouldings, or cyma recta framework, functioned in the same way as architectural relief.

The prominence of architectural moulding was emphasized by Masaccio's clean, spare, classicizing ornament in the Brancacci Chapel. Cyma recta mouldings were, however, also prominent in Giotto's Paduan programme above the simulated marble dado. Classicizing architectural framework was used by Quattrocento artists even within Gothic chapels. Architectural framework replaced the more decorative and planar borders of the Trecento, and gradually, the elements which produced an easy transition⁴¹ between border and scene were abandoned.

The system of framework in Tuscan mural painting in the Tre- and Quattrocento opens a channel of communication between the frescoes and real space. The stressing of the boundary, created by framework whether decorative or illusionistic, is a necessary condition for effective communication, since it intensifies the interrelation between two pictorial spheres (the fresco and the frame). If this is accepted as underlining two "levels of reality" within the pictorial spheres then there is also an intensification of contact across these categories.⁴² It would be a grave error to consider mural painting in the funerary chapels of Tuscany, in the period under discussion, without accepting framework as a necessary component of its pictorial language.

It is the frame that gives definition to the picture The transition does not only lead into the pictorial space; it brings the observer nearer to the reality of the picture too. 43

II NARRATIVE AND SYMBOLISM

(a) NARRATIVE FORM AND SPECTATOR MOVEMENT

Different types of narrative evolve as part of the mural language of Tuscan burial chapels. The form of the narrative affects the response of the spectator, and often his position in the chapel or his physical movement in following the individual sequences.

In Giotto's Arena Chapel, for example, a continuous, unfolding form of narrative is developed in the sequential progression of the Lives of the Virgin and of Christ. This type of narrative encircled the spectator as a central pivot and made him turn in space, thus establishing physical as well as visual participation. At the same time, this physical movement is graded, for the spectator in several ways. Firstly, he becomes aware of the limits of his actual space as he views all four walls of the chapel. Secondly, the narrative episodes are clearly marked out in order to facilitate a step-by-step progression which unfolds like the successive scenes in a sacred drama. Thirdly, the complex intellectual organization of the scheme introduces the spectator to an elaborate system of association between one fresco and another. This adds layer upon layer of meaning to this
44
"sublime epic of Redemption".

A form of staccato narrative appears in Giotto's Peruzzi Chapel, where he painted the story of St. John the Baptist and St. John

the Evangelist on separate walls. The spectator is affected by this type of sequence and must separate his movement between the two narratives, moving from left to right across chapel space. It is, therefore, the spectator who links the narratives through his physical involvement. The wall-by-wall treatment in the Peruzzi Chapel also depends on symbolic parallelism to create unifying links across the walls.

A similar type of movement occurs in the Strozzi Chapel, which also separates two distinct narratives cycles onto individual walls. The stories of St. Philip and St. John the Evangelist are separated by the width of the chapel space and articulate their own side-walls.⁴⁵ The separation of narrative in the Strozzi Chapel involves the spectator in a further participation in the narrative. Not only must he traverse chapel space in order to view both narrative stories but, through illusionism he is "invited" onto the prosceniums which appear to run in front of each lower fresco. In this way, the spectator must accept that part of his space appears to reside within the wall and, in consequence, the chapel appears smaller than the pictorial space added to it. A transformation in the apparent dimensions of actual space occur.

In contrast to the narrative mode of separate walls for separate events, the even alternation of the scenes in the Bardi Chapel's Franciscan cycle is of an "unfolding" form moving sequentially across the chapel walls. This type of thematic treatment also

occurs in the Franciscan narrative of Ghirlandaio's Sassetti Chapel. The even progression of the narrative in the latter example is, however, linked to a subsidiary theme: the Prophecies of Christ's Advent.

This secondary, more allegorical narrative, steeped in Antique references, is treated in an entirely different manner. Symbolic zones are clearly demarcated for the spectator into specific parts of the chapel. The spectator must view each of these zones separately in order to link allegorical meaning. In this way the Antique Sibyls in the vault cannot be connected to the Franciscan narrative without the spectator's participation in linking them to the allegorical images in the David and the Vision of Augustus on the entrance arch. The spectator must tread certain physical routes in order to connect visual correspondences.

John White suggests that "... in every representational design there is a conscious or unconscious tendency to set up major compositional pathways"⁴⁶ The mural language of Tuscan burial chapels underlines this concept because each artist emerges as being vitally concerned with the creation of methods of controlling spectator involvement. Narrative must be both "contemplative", so that the spectator may understand its symbolic and spiritual import, and "active", thus involving him further by eliciting a physical response based on movement⁴⁷ within the chapel space.

In all the examples briefly introduced in this section, but with the obvious exception of the Arena Chapel, the spectator is led to the chapel through the full body of the Church. Both in their scale and relationship to the Church the Gothic burial chapels are "interludes" of space rather than space itself. The Arena Chapel, in contrast, is itself the space involving the spectator with an immediate confrontation with its narrative programme.

The Petrine programme of the Brancacci Chapel begins in the lunettes but proceeds downwards and from left to right around the chapel. In this way, it "unfolds" around the chapel walls. Within this main narrative progression a separation of allegory occurs. The Old Testament scenes of the Temptation and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve on the entrance piers are to be understood as "allegories for the remission of sins".⁴⁸

In contrast, to this sequential form of narrative, Piero della Francesca's arrangement of the Arezzo cycle, governed by its main theme of the Legend of the True Cross, does not follow a strict chronological sequence. Piero's unique scheme is based upon typological correspondences and reciprocals which encourage the spectator to link meaning across chapel space.⁴⁹ An interconnecting "grid" of transparent lines and directional diagonals fuse the programme into an indivisible totality. The spectator must turn continually from wall to wall, crossing the interconnecting scenes of the altar wall, in order to read the programme. The observer establishes, in this way, a

semi-circular movement in the centre of the chapel.

(b) A SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

One final quality emerges as integral to the mural language of Tuscan burial chapels in which each sacred narrative has its own symbolic structure. Meaning, to different extents in each pictorial programme, determines the quality of narrative.

The integration of form and meaning has, in each sacred narrative, a definite didactic purpose. Each pictorial image or grouping of images reveals different levels of reality or
 50 unreality. In this way, images assume a different form, in relation to the imitation of appearances and the actual reality of the wall.

Iconography affects illusionism by changing the quality of narrative so that specific symbolic messages are underlined. The word "programme" is defined as a "definite plan of
 51 proceeding". Implicit in this definition is the suggestion of a beginning and an end, generating and concluding a self-contained structure through rigorous adherence to a
 52 predetermined and ordered development or "series of events". This accumulation of meaning, as a spiritual development, concretizes the symbolic concept in each narrative programme. This enables a communication to take place between the observer and the narrative.

In order to separate the sacred from the profane worlds, changes in narrative treatment emerged as part of a constant mural language. Thus each programme has a definite purpose of intention, and this intention is shaped, in private burial chapels, by the patron's desire for a narrative which reflects his hoped-for attainment of Salvation. How this intention is manifested, in the end, is by the way in which content is organized, its placement within the chapel, and the manner of its execution.

Each programme has, therefore, specific, individual needs, but all have a similar didactic purpose within the precincts of a place of burial - a concern with death and the theme of Redemption.

This excursus does not pretend to chart the symbolic content of spatial spheres in the Tuscan burial chapel in more than the briefest manner since this subject has been dealt with, in the preceding chapters, within the individual chapels. The purpose of this concluding analysis is to re-establish that there is always a connection between spatial spheres and pictorial elements underlining spiritual meaning. This is integral to the mural language of Tre- and Quattrocento Tuscan burial chapels.

Narrative funerary fresco cycles often combine two apparently irreconcilable realities, which may be loosely labelled the "material" and the "spiritual". The surest way for mural painters to achieve these twin goals and make them accessible to the lay

observer, literate or illiterate, was to illustrate them in different ways. This enabled the spectator's response to be graded and moulded, in relation to each image's place and degree of symbolism within the individual scenes. The summation of this symbolic whole forms the conceptual language of each chapel-fresco totality.

In Tuscan burial chapels, areas of high spiritual symbolism are often placed on the altar wall (in close proximity to the Eucharistic rites of the Mass) or near the donor tombs (the zone of mortality). Between these areas the images are divided into narrative, allegorical or symbolic modes of expression, all of which interrelate to concretize the individual language of the programme.

Within this method, images are placed on different levels of "reality", although this does not, of course, concern actual reality but the credibility of the pictorial forms in relation to the spectator and his actual position in the chapel. Two examples will serve to clarify different approaches to symbolic form.

53

(I) IMAGES WHICH ARE "ABSTRACTED" FROM THE REAL

When artists able to make extremely realistic paintings, chose a more abstract style it was because it suited certain types of images. In this way, reality may refer, in certain contexts, not

to the imitation of the visible but of the ideal. This abstract form of representation, or unreality, is neither a metaphor for reality nor a deception which looks "real". Sometimes, according to this theory, the spiritual meaning of an image required the conceptual imitation of an idea which was held superior to the imitation of physical reality.⁵⁴ Therefore, superior symbolic subject matter was given an idealized representation so that sacred narrative had a more universal character and timelessness.

Giotto's Debate in Heaven and Last Judgement on the east (altar) and west (entrance) walls respectively, in the Arena Chapel, Padua, have been termed "visionary" realities.⁵⁵ These two scenes are ambiguously placed "neither through nor on the wall", in terms of illusionism and must be seen as symbolic rather than representative.⁵⁶ Both walls define the limits of the chapel's spiritual and physical structure. This is reinforced by the positioning and treatment of the scenes, without interior framework divisions, and by their immediate prominence as one enters or leaves the chapel.

Both walls are linked, by means of pictorial identification, with the direction and nature of the narrative walls. Consequently, they are imbued with something of the physical actuality of the chapel, which heightens their identification with the spectator's own reality while indicating a spiritual meaning beyond his immediate surroundings.

The Debate in Heaven and the Last Judgement represent, symbolically, God's plan for man's Salvation. This finds its consummation in the Last Judgement, the final event in the narrative of the programme and in human history according to the Christian scheme of things. Such implicit didacticism in content, is motivated by Giotto's desire to confront the spectator with his spiritual choices. The fresco is a "step removed from the viewer's reality".⁵⁷ Within this conceptual structure an admittance of limited illusionism, in the overlapping gown of the priest accepting the model of the Arena Chapel from Enrico Scrovegni, enables a more direct contact with the space of the spectator to take place.

(II) IMAGES WHICH ARE ILLUSIONISTIC

Illusionistic images may also have a conceptual core, indicative of a high spiritual meaning, similar to that of more hieratic modes of expression, but presented in a different way. Where illusionistic representation differs from more abstract modes of expression is that it "mimics" the visible world as it appears in relation to the individual and his physical situation at a particular time and place. It has been suggested that: "It appears ... that the increasing tendency to formulate the illusion of an extra-pictorial "reality" in pictorial art is one of the consequences of the rise of vernacular literacy".⁵⁸

In the Quattrocento, with the increasing use of illusionistic

methods like perspective, the spectator needed to establish a new
 59
 relationship with didactic imagery. Illusionism, therefore,
 does not represent a devaluation of the "spiritual" by an
 acceptance of the "material" but may, in fact, be an extended mode
 60
 of representing sacred imagery.

Changes in scale and location effect illusionistic images and
 their degree of meaning within each programme. Filippino Lippi
 effectively uses monumental scale in the upper angels on the apex
 of the altar wall of the Strozzi Chapel. The highly illusionistic
trompe l'oeil angels project into the spectator's space. The
 perspective of the wall is reversed so that images increase in
 scale the further up they are placed, or symbolically, the closer
 they are to the vault figures of the Patriarchs, the first Saved
 61
 souls of mankind. This is efficacious for iconographic
 purposes. As illusionistic "symbols", the Strozzi angels give
 "flesh and blood" to this celestial zone of Immortality. They are
 the furthest away from the grim reality of death, in the lower
 Strozzi tomb, and are distinguished from the grisaille allegorical
 figures by their colour and illusionism.

In a different manner from the more "abstract" mode of spiritual
 "unreality" in Giotto's Last Judgement in the Arena Chapel,
 representative of the outcome of man's spiritual choice, the
 dominant "reality" of Filippino's angels concretizes, for the
 spectator, Strozzi's successful attainment of Salvation. Whereas
 Giotto's Last Judgement is more generic, relating to the spectator

as everyman, the Strozzi angels are more particular, relating to the existential journey of the patron's soul.

The more "abstract" and illusionistic modes of representing symbolic levels of perception often co-exist within the same chapel or even the same fresco. This is exemplified by Domenico Ghirlandaio's inclusion of the "visionary" image of St. Francis participating in the highly illusionistic fresco of the Resuscitation of the Roman Notary's Son, on the altar wall of the Sassetti Chapel. His floating torso indicates to both the protagonists in the fresco and the spectator that this is the spiritual source of the miracle and is, therefore, distinct from
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the main narrative and treated in a different way.

Levels of symbolic reality or unreality, abstraction, representation or illusionism, all indicate that the content in different spheres of Tuscan burial chapel fresco programmes must be related to a conceptual totality. A constant didactic core of spiritual meaning, related to sacred imagery and the patron, emphasized by different pictorial means, emerges as integral to the mural language of Tuscan burial chapels.

The grouping of the analyses and conclusions of this research indicate a pattern of change and expansion within a fundamental continuity of intention, expressed by pictorial means, which characterizes the mural language of the Tuscan burial chapel in the Tre- and Quattrocento.