

The Frescoes at San Leonardo al Lago

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work at Padua. A rather more probable solution on these lines would be that the cycles are more or less contemporary, but that the later frescoes at Assisi were not carried out until either the whole, or at least the upper two-thirds, of the decoration in the Arena Chapel had been completed. Nothing, however, that anyone has so far observed about the two cycles allows one to say with logical conviction more than that the decoration of the Arena Chapel was finished by 1308, and probably carried out in 1305-6, and that the major part of the cycle of *The Legend of St Francis* was complete by 1307.

These conclusions do nothing to exclude the possibility that *The Legend of St Francis* was, in fact, painted in the 1290's, and this opens up the whole question of the sequence of events at Assisi. It is generally agreed that the decorations in the choir and transepts by Cimabue and his assistants were painted first, and it is usually, although not always, held that these were followed by the Old and New Testament scenes on the upper walls of the nave, the scheme being completed by the depiction of *The Legend of St Francis*. The question of the lapse of time involved in this succession of events is complicated slightly by the break in style which occurs between the work of the master who began the series devoted to the Old and New Testaments, carrying out the first two bays from the crossing, and that of the Isaac Master and his assistants, who finished the series by painting the two bays nearest to the entrance.

In the fresco of *The Presentation* (Fig. 11), on the right of the window in the upper part of the wall on the left of the second bay from the entrance to the nave, there is definite evidence of overpainting. Beneath the cosmatesque ciborium, which is so closely related in its decorative detail to the building in the Isaac Master's *Descent of the Holy Ghost*, can be seen the remains of an earlier, and differently constructed ciborium painted in the same style as the building which encloses the earlier painter's *Marriage Feast at Cana* (Fig. 13). The distinctive egg and dart moulding used by the early master for the arch and cornice of his ciborium is clearly visible across and beneath the left-hand capital and curtain of the Isaac Master's new construction. There are also extensive indications of the original structure above the head of the Virgin and immediately to the right of the existing ciborium. There has evidently also been some overpainting of the heads, since the three-quarter view of that of the Virgin, in particular, is,

both in structure and in outline, quite unlike anything to be seen elsewhere in the Isaac Master's work, whilst its shape closely resembles that of the head of the Virgin in the earlier painter's now ruined fresco of *The Adoration of the Magi* (detail, Fig. 12).¹³

Since it is unlikely, to say the least, that the Isaac Master was busily overpainting his predecessor's fresco whilst the latter was still at work in the church, there must have been a pause in operations when the second bay from the entrance was still to be completed. This break may well, on stylistic grounds, have been of some duration. In any case it accentuates the difficulties of anyone who believes that *The Legend of St Francis* was largely carried out by 1307 at the latest, and possibly during the nineties, and yet, who at the same time feels obliged by the most recent arguments concerning the date of Cimabue's work to place the latter in the period between 1288 and 1292. This leaves a maximum interval of twenty years and a minimum of as little as six years in which to cover the enormous stylistic range that is presented by the four major groups of frescoes in the Upper Church.

Fortunately, the appearance of the Orsini arms upon the representation of the Palace of the Senators in the fresco of *St Mark* in the vault of the crossing does not, as has been argued,¹⁴ prove that the design was carried out between 1288, when Matteo and Bartolo Orsini were Roman senators, and 1292, when Matteo di Rinaldo Orsini held similar office. Since, in the final quarter of the thirteenth century, there were also Orsini senators in 1277, 1280, 1286, 1289, 1293, and 1300, the appearance of the family's coat of arms cannot be used to prove that Cimabue's work was carried out in the late eighties or early nineties, rather than at the end of the seventies or beginning of the eighties where it is stylistically far more comfortable.

There is, therefore, no need to feel that an improbably rapid sequence of events at Assisi militates against the seemingly clear evidence that *The Stigmatization of St Francis*, incorporated by Giuliano da Rimini in the altar-piece now in the Gardner Museum at Boston, derives directly from the corresponding fresco in the cycle of *The Legend of St Francis* in the Upper Church at Assisi – a fresco that must, as a result, have been painted by 1307 at the latest.

¹³ Illus. Photo. Anderson 26890.

¹⁴ See C. BRANDI: *Duccio*, Florence [1951], pp. 127-34, note 10.

EVE BORSOOK

The Frescoes at San Leonardo al Lago*

ART-HISTORICAL research relies so much on photographs that it sometimes happens that the reputation of a work can be obscured by the arbitrary and indifferent eye of the photographer. This has been the fate suffered by the fourteenth century frescoes in the church of San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena. The large pictures of scenes from the Virgin's youth which cover the walls of the chancel are

* For Professor Johannes Wilde's 65th year. I would like to thank Dr Ursula Schlegel and Signor Paolo Vivante for helping to make this Sieneese adventure possible.

among the most important monuments of Sieneese painting during the second half of the century. Their importance lies not only in the scarcity of Sieneese fresco cycles which have survived from this period, but in the refined execution and the remarkably progressive character of some of the compositions. Yet, for those who never found their way to the church, the frescoes were only known through photographs which incompletely documented and misrepresented them; the two details which were published gave no hint at all of their most interesting disposition, and were so smoky and dim

that it was difficult to discern any conspicuous merit in their painter.¹ With new photographs, at last the quality of the pictures and the unusual features of the whole decorative arrangement become clear.²

It is a surprise to come upon a fresco scheme of such scale and metropolitan polish in an almost forgotten country church. Services are rarely held in it, there is no longer a resident parish priest, and even the lake with which the church's name is coupled has long ago been drained away. The rough thirteenth-century building is now merely an appendage to a farm whose inhabitants find it a convenient shelter for bicycles, and accord its frescoes a casual affection for the sweet, pastel colours, and a mild respect for the monumental proportions. But during the fourteenth century, San Leonardo was a renowned Augustinian convent, and in 1309 one of Siena's clerical heroes, Agostino Novello (whose miracles were commemorated in Simone Martini's painting in Sant'Agostino, Siena), chose the place for his retirement.³ Of this convent there remains only the monastic hall church, a part of the chapter room⁴ (now used as a hayloft), and traces of the colonnaded cloister.

So far, no documents concerning San Leonardo's frescoes have been found.⁵ Nineteenth-century guides and inventories regarded them as the work of a fifteenth-century Florentine painter variously identified as 'Pietro di Lorenzo' or 'Pietro di Lorenzo Pratese'.⁶ Since then, the pictures have found a regular if somewhat obscure spot among the footnotes to histories of Trecento Siene painting where they are usually ascribed to an unknown follower of the Lorenzetti and occasionally to Lippo Vanni.⁷

¹ The photographs made by Lombardi of parts of the *Presentation* and *Marriage* scenes were published by V. LUSINI: *Il Duomo di Siena*, I, Siena [1911], unnumbered illustrations on pp.289, 290, 291; and by ANDRÁS PÉTER: 'Pietro és Ambrogio Lorenzetti egy eltpusztult freskó – ciklusa', *Az Országos Magyar Szépművészeti Múzeum Évkönyvei*, VI [1931], with supplementary German summary, Figs.6, 23. Details of the Angel Gabriel, the Virgin, and the ceiling were photographed by Croce, but to my knowledge were never published; see Croce photographs Nos.2794, 2796, 2797.

² The new photographs were made by Rodolfo Reali for a group of six subscribers: the Frick Art Reference Library of New York City, the Biblioteca Hertziana in Rome, the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, the Berenson Library at Settignano, Dr Richard Offner, and myself.

³ For bibliography and a brief history of the Beato Agostino Novello, see GEORGE KAFTAL: *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting*, Florence [1952], col.117.

⁴ A large section of a fresco representing the *Crucifixion* with a crowd of mourners and Roman soldiers is still to be seen through the dampness, mould, and grime on the north wall of the chapter room. If the moisture and the rotting beams are not soon attended to the fresco will be lost altogether. Mr Berenson has attributed the picture to an early follower of Giovanni di Paolo, see *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*, Oxford [1932], p.249.

⁵ Other decorations no longer in the chancel but cited in nineteenth-century accounts of the place include a large altar-piece of the *Madonna* by a follower of Duccio; it had two wings which were added later. See VASARI-MILANESI, *Vite*, etc., I, Florence [edition of 1878], pp.653–4, note 1; and FRANCESCO BROGI: *Inventario Generale degli Oggetti d'Arte della Provincia di Siena* [1897], p.207. Cf. GUGLIELMO DELLA VALLE: *Lettere Senesi . . . sopra le Belle Arti*, II, Venice [1782], p.43, for the probable date of the additions between 1356 and 1369.

⁶ Cf. BROGI, *op. cit.*, p.207; B. A. BRIGIDI: *La Nuova Guida di Siena e dei suoi dintorni*, Siena [1897], p.192; EDMUND G. GARDNER: *The Story of Siena and San Gimignano*, London [1904], p.312. LUSINI, *op. cit.*, I, p.299, persists in the early fifteenth-century dating, but attributes them to an unknown follower of the Lorenzetti.

Pietro di Lorenzo and Pietro di Lorenzo Pratese were two different Florentine painters about whom little is known; see the articles in THIEME-BECKER: *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler*, xxvii, p.22.

⁷ Among the writers who attribute the frescoes to a fourteenth-century follower of the Lorenzetti, see CROWE and CAVALCASELLE: *A History of Painting in Italy*, II, London edition [1908], p.120; WALTER ROTHES: *Die Blütezeit der Senesischen Malerei*, Strassburg [1904], p.52; ADOLFO VENTURI: *Storia dell'Arte Italiana*, v, Milan [1907], p.722; CURT H. WEIGELT: *Die Sienesische Malerei des Vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Florence–Munich [1930], pp.94, 117; PÉTER, *op. cit.*, p.33; MILLARD MEISS: *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death*, Princeton

The Madonna was a frequent subject for Siene mural painters.⁸ The largest cycle known to have been painted was carried out by Pietro Lorenzetti in twelve scenes on the tribune walls of the Pieve at Arezzo.⁹ In Siena itself, the façade of the Ospedale della Scala was painted with the Virgin's *Birth*, *Presentation in the Temple*, *Marriage*, and *Visitation*, designed by Pietro and his brother, Ambrogio Lorenzetti.¹⁰ Both of these schemes have been destroyed but several of the Lorenzettis' panel paintings reflect the compositions of the lost frescoes.¹¹ In fact, these Lorenzettian illustrations of Marian scenes became the models for Siene fresco and panel paintings of these subjects for the next 150 years.¹² The frescoes at San Leonardo form a part of this long tradition and of the remaining Siene murals on this theme, these pictures observed the models more closely than any others.¹³ Some twenty-five years ago, Dr András Péter drew attention to this relationship as far as the *Presentation* (Fig.18) and *Marriage* (Fig.19) scenes are concerned.¹⁴ The rich but clear architecture embracing the entire breadth of the pictorial field, the spacious interiors through which the protagonists seem to move at their leisure, the conversational mood – all these bespeak the Lorenzettian prototypes. The same applies to the mechanics of composition: the gathering of the action towards the centre of the picture coincides with the centralized foreshortening of space and mass so that the most important moment and the formal preparation for it contrive to align themselves along the vertical axis of the Gothic arched field.¹⁵ However, the two most striking features of the scheme – the disposition of the *Annunciation* and the angelic music makers – have so far escaped critical attention.

[1952], p.28, note 58. The attribution to Lippo Vanni appears in MR BERENSON's lists: *Pictures of the Italian Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, p.590, and in PIETRO TOESCA: *Il Trecento*, Turin [1951], p.596.

CroWE and Cavalcaselle's account of the paintings at San Leonardo differs curiously from what other nineteenth-century observers noted and from what is to be seen now: 'frescoes . . . by followers of the school of Lorenzetti decorate the choir . . . and represent scenes from the life of the Saviour, the Virgin and Saints, much damaged and rudely executed'.

⁸ The theme was occasionally taken up with conspicuous success by Florentine mural painters – e.g. Cimabue in the choir of San Francesco at Assisi, Giotto in the Scrovegni Chapel at Padua, and in the lost decorations for the Tosinchi chapel in Santa Croce (see WALTER and ELIZABETH PAATZ: *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, I, Frankfurt am Main [1940], pp.572, 603, 693; and GIUSEPPE MARCHINI, *Rivista d'Arte*, xx [1938], pp.215 ff.), and by Taddeo Gaddi in the Baroncelli chapel of the same church. Although Siene painters were occasionally influenced by Florentine mural compositions when other themes were illustrated (e.g. compare Giotto's *Dance of Salome* and *Assumption of the Evangelist* in the Peruzzi chapel to the Lorenzettian versions of the same subjects in Santa Maria dei Servi in Siena), the surviving evidence shows that they remained entirely independent of Florentine schemes when the Virgin's story was represented.

⁹ Cf. VASARI-MILANESI, *op. cit.*, I, pp.473 f.

¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*; LORENZO GIBERTI: *I Commentari*, I, Schloßer edition, Berlin [1912], p.41; AZZOLINI UGURGIERI: 'Isidoro', *Pompe Sanesi*, Pistoia [1649], p.331; DELLA VALLE, *op. cit.*, I, p.209.

¹¹ See E. T. DE WALD: *Pietro Lorenzetti*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press [1930], pp.5 ff., and VASARI-MILANESI, *loc. cit.*; according to Vasari, the Arezzo cycle began with the *Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple* and finished with the *Nativity of Christ* and a painting of the Virgin's *Assumption* on the ceiling. Among the panel paintings by the Lorenzetti themselves, see especially Pietro's *Birth of the Virgin* in the Opera del Duomo of Siena and Ambrogio's *Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple* in the Uffizi, Florence.

¹² For an account of the derivative paintings see PÉTER, *passim*.

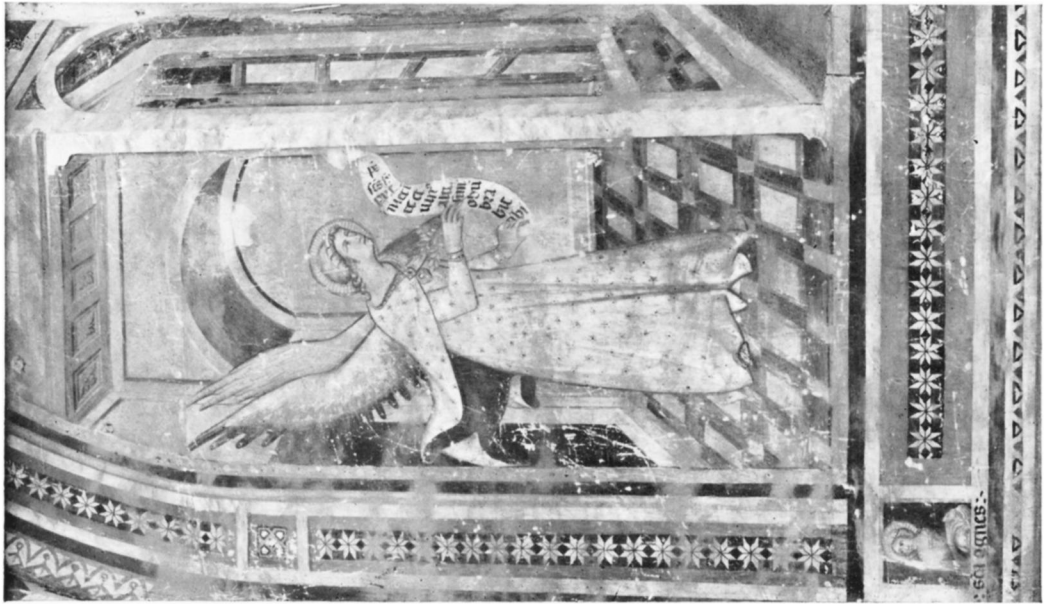
¹³ Other Siene fresco cycles of scenes from the life of the Virgin, but which are less closely associated with the Lorenzettian prototypes, are Bartolo di Fredi's wall paintings in the chapel to the right of the choir in Sant'Agostino at San Gimignano, and the early fifteenth-century paintings in the sacristy of the Siene cathedral (see LUSINI, *op. cit.*, I, pp.286–91, with illustrations).

¹⁴ PÉTER, *passim*.

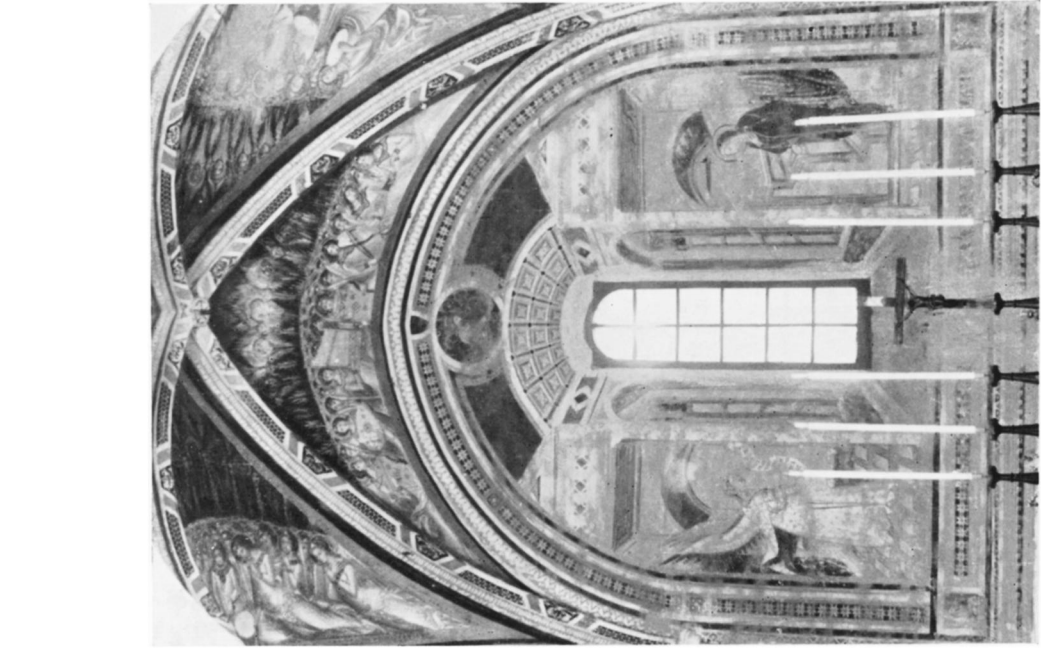
¹⁵ The narrow dentiled frieze painted between the socle and the ochre and terra-cotta coloured border bands below each scene reinforces the centralization of the compositions because its teeth are foreshortened towards a central point.



14. Detail showing *Angels* in vault, by Lippo Vanni. Fresco. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



15. *Angel of the Annunciation*, by Lippo Vanni. Fresco. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



16. General view of the window wall of the chancel, painted by Lippo Vanni. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



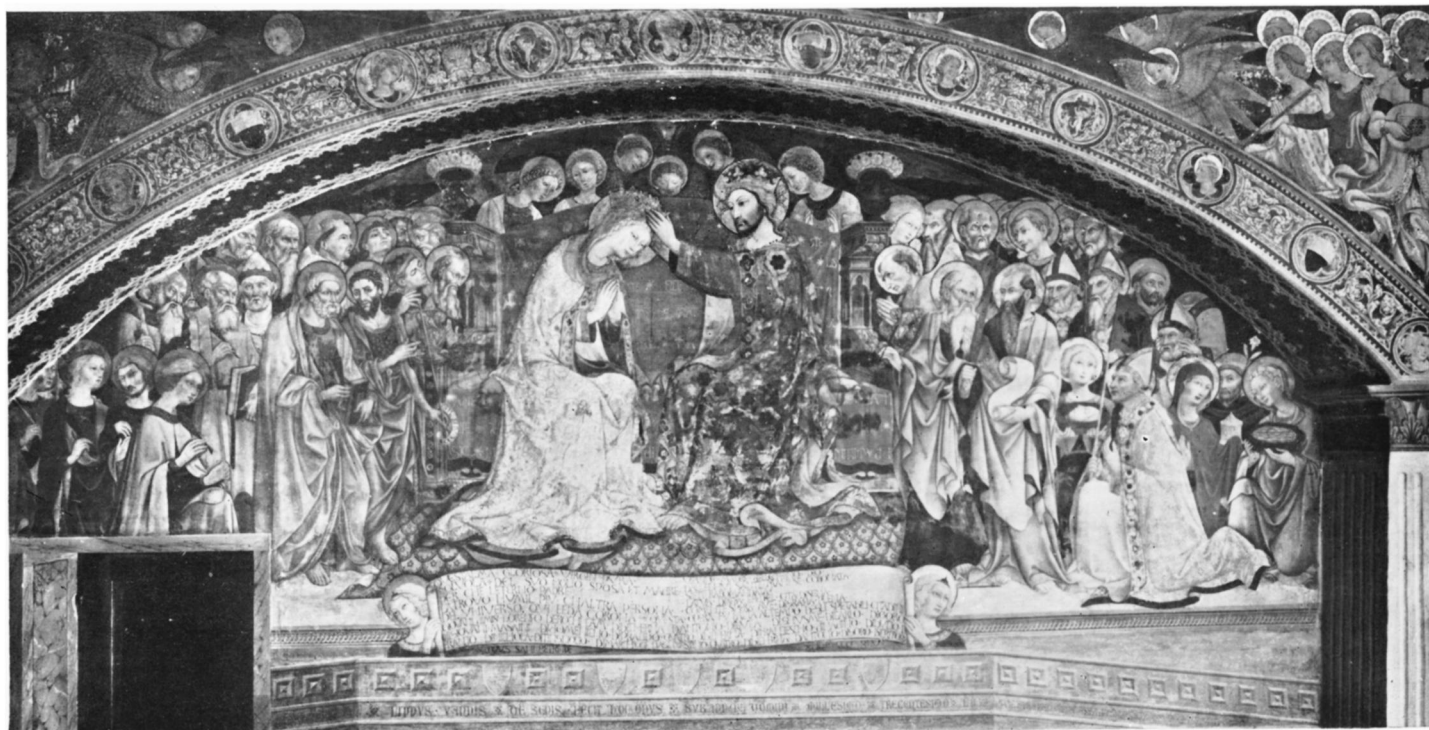
17. *Virgin Annunciate*, by Lippo Vanni. Fresco. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



18. *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, by Lippo Vanni. Fresco. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



19. *Marriage of the Virgin*, by Lippo Vanni. Fresco. (San Leonardo al Lago, near Siena.)



20. *Coronation of the Virgin*, signed by Lippo Vanni and dated 1352; repainted by Sano di Pietro in 1445. Fresco. (Sala della Biccherna, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.)

For several reasons the *Annunciation* (Figs.15–17) is the most important picture in the cycle. As one approaches the choir it is the first picture one sees – it is on the window wall facing the entrance (the *Presentation* and *Marriage of the Virgin* occupy the walls to the left and right of it), and it is directly above and behind the high altar. The placing of the *Annunciation* in just this position was hardly fortuitous. Apart from its narrative importance as the crucial episode in the Virgin's life, the *Annunciation* is symbolic of Christ's Incarnation. As the priest raised the host during the central moment of the mass, this picture must have seemed to the faithful congregation a thrilling materialization of its mystic significance.

From a purely art-historical standpoint, the reason why the *Annunciation* is the most interesting of the three scenes represented here is that it is a very rare instance in Sieneese mural decoration where the design not only took cognizance of the architectural conditions of the site, but exploited them for purely pictorial ends. There had been a long tradition for placing the *Annunciation* on either side of an arched opening – witness the twelfth-century mosaics in Sicily and Giotto's fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel where the Angel and Mary are found on the face of the arch framing the choir entrance. But there is only one other instance where the narrow planes which recede from a main wall to a window are painted in such a way as to extend the illusion of a spatial compartment: this is in the *Annunciation* in the Oratorio of San Galgano on Montesiepi which is now generally accepted as the work of Ambrogio Lorenzetti.¹⁶ Exactly the same architectural features preside over the window wall of the Oratorio as at San Leonardo. The edges formed by the angular meeting of the broad, flat, and slim retreating wall surfaces are painted with columns which give support to the arched compartments containing Mary and the Angel. Thus the structural features of the wall were not only blended into the framework of a scene, but they provided the painter with an occasion for creating a convincing pictorial illusion of three-dimensional space. The window was also made into a dramatic constituent of the scene: its function as an actual and symbolic source of illumination was recognized.¹⁷ The painter at San Leonardo certainly looked to these compositional inventions of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's as a model – even to such details as the carefully foreshortened, coffered ceilings which curve over each room and over the top of the window binding the two parts of the picture together. But the San Leonardo painter carried the experiment a step further: he offered the spectator two different but simultaneous views into the same picture space. The broadest view shows a

¹⁶ Before the discovery after the war of the frescoed *Maestà* in a niche of the sacristy of Sant' Agostino in Siena, the attribution of the Montesiepi frescoes to Ambrogio was disputed. The close relationship of the composition in Siena to that on one of the walls at Montesiepi is now generally recognized as a confirmation of Ambrogio's authorship; see TOESCA, *op. cit.*, p.590, and CARLO VOLPE: 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti e le congiunzioni Fiorentine-Senesi nel Quarto Decennio del Trecento', *Paragone*, No.13 [January 1951], p.45. Due to improper lighting in the chapel, the absence of electricity, and the remoteness of Montesiepi for the professional photographer, these frescoes have not been completely documented by the camera. While illustrations of some of the compositions exist, the most interesting one – the *Annunciation* – has been photographed only in details; see GEORGE ROWLEY: 'The Gothic Frescoes at Monte Siepi', *Art Studies*, VII [1929], pp.107–27, Figs.1–9. For illustrations of the Sant' Agostino *Maestà* see RAFFAELLO NICCOLI: 'Scoperta di un Capolavoro', *Capolavori dell'Arte Senese*, Florence [1946], unnumbered plates.

¹⁷ For a discussion of a similar use of light in some fifteenth-century paintings see MILLARD MEISS: 'Light as Form and Symbol', etc., *Art Bulletin*, XXVII [1945], pp.175–81.

chequered pavement which in true Lorenzettian fashion is foreshortened towards the centre,¹⁸ strengthening the formal and psychological tension between the two protagonists. The narrower vista through the open arch painted on the walls sloping to the window, discloses the view from a different angle: the floor pattern turns in on itself and moves towards still another pictorial compartment suggested by a threshold with a slightly opened door.

This attempt to give a double view does not, of course, concur with what we would actually see if placed in the same position just outside such rooms. But it does represent an effort to break down the barriers between the space of the spectator and that of the holy personages. This had been a consistently advancing tendency in Sieneese composition for almost a century, and it is worth while to look back for a moment on its development. One of the simplest devices used for creating a transition between the worlds of the image and of the spectator was by means of an architectural frame. In Tuscany, this seems to have first appeared in the panel paintings of Guido da Siena and his school, where simple arcades separate and organize the imagery.¹⁹ Once this habit of

¹⁸ Cf. Ambrogio's small *Madonna Enthroned* and the *Annunciation* of 1344 (Nos.65 and 88, Pinacoteca, Siena), the *Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple* of 1342 (in the Uffizi, Florence), and his *Annunciation* at Montesiepi. Among Pietro's works, note the *Nativity* in the Opera del Duomo of 1342. All of these pictures painted between c.1340 and 1344 indicate that the Lorenzetti's interest in perspective composition as expressed in patterned pavements with centralized foreshortening was a late development in their careers.

¹⁹ For a discussion of Sieneese frames and the Sieneese effort to achieve illusions of a spatial continuum between picture and spectator, see the fundamental article by PROFESSOR RICHARD OFFNER: 'Guido da Siena and A.D.1221', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XXXVII [1950], pp.63 f. Among the Dugento Sieneese paintings especially the *St John* dossal and the *St Peter* dossal (Nos.14 and 15, Pinacoteca, Siena) which undoubtedly reflect earlier examples because their style shows fully developed, fully understood conventions of composition. The architectonic concept of the frame is also apparent in the lobed arched frames in dossals Nos.6, 7, and 58 (Pinacoteca, Siena), and in the *Maestà* by Guido da Siena in the Palazzo Pubblico of the same city. The *Madonna and Child* in the Pinacoteca (No.16), formerly dated 1262, also once had a lobed frame; see *ibid.*, p.62, note 2. See also Vigoroso's panel of 128? in the Perugia Gallery.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons why the architectural frame appeared in Siena before other Tuscan cities. An arcade suggests two things: first, a certain degree of spaciousness which is associated with such forms in actual buildings; and secondly, it suggests movement and continuity in the sense that the arch moves from one point towards another strengthening the bonds between the objects it frames. One has only to compare dossal No.15 to the Florentine dossal in the church of Sant' Angelo in Vico l'Abate (Fig.56a in the catalogue for the *Mostra Giottesca* by SINIBALDI and BRUNETTI, Florence [1943]), to see why the architectural frame was uncalled for in a roughly contemporary Florentine composition of the same kind. The main image swells the boundaries of its compartment – and by its absolute frontality and overpowering scale it gains an impressive – an almost hypnotic imminence without suggesting its physical existence in an actual space as does the *St Peter Enthroned* in No.15. The arcade surrounding the Apostle merely heightens the sense of his approachability and the foreshortening of the throne, and his outstretched foot pausing on the lower edge of the frame indicates the line of his possible advance forwards. In contrast to Sieneese dossals, the main images in Florentine panels are usually static in posture and non-demonstrative in gesture – thus they need no spatial justification. An arched frame around such compositions would have been superfluous; in fact, it would have introduced a conflicting element of realism to the clarity of its severe diagrammatic system of representation (aside from the example at Vico l'Abate, see the dossals by the Magdalen Master in Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs; Florence, Accademia, No.8466; New Haven, Mus. in the Yale Collection). In Siena, on the other hand, it seems that images became involved with each other by gesture and movement at an earlier date. The architectural frame kept each identity clear while reinforcing their association. It also acted as a kind of obstacle course against which the physical and psychological tensions between figures or events might be measured.

Arcaded frames do not appear in Florentine works before about 1270 (see tabernacle No.3 at Yale illustrated in RICHARD OFFNER: *Italian Primitives at Yale*, New Haven [1927], Fig.5; and Migliore's dossal of 1271, Accademia, Florence, No.9153 illustrated in *Mostra Giottesca*, *op. cit.*, Fig.65a). A little later, Cimabue

architectural framing established itself as a pictorial principle, elaboration set in. Duccio's altar-pieces and those by some of his immediate followers have the tiered and turreted complexity of Gothic church façades.²⁰ In fact, their shape and style recall that of Siena's own cathedral front which was being built under Giovanni Pisano's supervision at just that time.²¹ The saints and prophets peer at each other and at the world much in the same way as the statues on the façade. Some of the panel paintings of the Lorenzetti carried this a step further. So far, the cusped and gabled arcades had succeeded in giving a credible illusion of scale, dimension, and sequence to the images and scenes which they framed. The emphasis, however, was on the relationship of the painted images to each other,²² and therefore a realistic continuum of space behind and in front of the immediate line of action was not explored. But in Pietro Lorenzetti's *Annunciation* of 1320 on the Arezzo polyptych, the colonette of the arched frame was used as a point of reference from which a receding pictorial space was extended. The sphere of action was at once immensely enlarged with the alternate possibilities of allowing it to advance or recede. The same thing occurs but with heightened effect in Pietro's famous *Birth of the Virgin* of 1342 (Opera del Duomo, Siena). Seen from a certain distance, the three containing arches become something more than a frame: they assume the proportions of actual members in an arcaded room. The figures no longer pay any attention to the original framing, separating function: an attendant sits directly behind one pier and a maid bringing fresh linen emerges from behind another. The frame thus acquires a double significance: it sets the scale of the painted interior of which it is an integral part, and it is also a portal through which the spectator is urged to pass. The foreshortened patterned pavement was introduced to facilitate the impression of depth and the easy access to it. Ambrogio's *Madonna Enthroned* (No.65, Pinacoteca, Siena), *Presentation of Christ* (Uffizi, Florence), and his momentous *Annunciation* of 1344 (No.88, Pinacoteca, Siena) carried this kind of composition to its final stage through the empirical formulation of

following Sieneſe precedent (from Guido da Siena and the derivative works of the Maestro di San Francesco who painted at Assisi; for illustrations of the latter's work see OSWALD SIRÉN: *Toskanische Malerei im XIII. Jahrhundert*, Berlin [1922], Figs.71-74), painted a trilobate cusped frame around some of his monumental pictures on the choir and transept walls of the Upper Church of San Francesco at Assisi (a point also noticed by GERTRUDE COOR-ACHENBACH: 'An Early Italian Tabernacle', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXXVI [1944], pp.131-2, and notes 6-9). But the architectural framing system does not seem to have really taken root in Florence until after 1300 in Giotto's frescoes at Santa Croce and in some of the panel paintings of his early followers (cf. the *St Stephen* in the Horne Collection, Florence, illustrated in *Mostra Giottesca*, *op. cit.*, Fig.100; and diverse works reproduced in RICHARD OFFNER: *A Corpus of Florentine Painting*, Section III, II, part I, New York [1930], pls.i, iv, xxi-xxii).

Elsewhere in Tuscany before 1300, architectural frames appear in paintings dependent on Sieneſe examples; see especially the dossier from San Silvestro now in the Museo Civico, Pisa, and illustrated in SIRÉN, *op. cit.*, Fig.60; similarly, compare Deodato Orlandi's *Madonna and Saints* of 1301 in the same museum, *Mostra Giottesca*, *op. cit.*, Fig.11.

²⁰ See polyptychs Nos.28 and 47 in the Pinacoteca, Siena; Ugolino da Nerio's polyptychs in the Ricasoli Collection, Brolio, and the leaves formerly in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin; illustrated in GERTRUDE COOR-ACHENBACH: 'Contributions to the Study of Ugolino da Nerio's Art', *Art Bulletin*, xxxvii [September 1955], pp.153-65, Figs.1-3, 9; Simone Martini's polyptych of 1320 in the Museo Civico, Pisa.

²¹ Cf. also Giovanni Pisano's addition to the crown of the Baptistery at Pisa. For illustrations of both the Sieneſe and Pisan monuments see HARALD KELLER: *Giovanni Pisano*, Vienna [1942], Figs.15-16, 30, 40, 43.

²² Although, some of the images also gaze towards the spectator appealing for his participation in the adoration of the main image.

one point perspective.²³ The *Annunciations* at Montesiepi and San Leonardo were reflections of this process.²⁴

The San Leonardo painter's special consideration for the spectator's point of view in the chancel is evident in the arrangement of the other pictures too. The paintings begin quite high up on the wall - at about six feet above the ground. In accord with this, the steps of the temple up which the little Mary has just clambered rise steeply before us and we can see up into the richly inlaid pergola. Similarly, we can see the cofferings on the ceiling and under the arch of the building in which the Virgin receives Joseph's ring. But the most striking instance (if one may use the term here) of *dì sotto in sù*, is the painting of the angelic host filling each section of the quadri-partite ribbed vault. Blue and red winged seraphim, and a crowd of angels, singing and playing, gaze down on the scenes below. So intense is their absorption and so jubilantly do they celebrate the events which are being enacted beneath them that their trumpets, violin bows, and swinging censers burst the very frames of the ceiling.²⁵ This is a unique instance in medieval painting where such a deliberate break through a soffit's boundaries occurs.²⁶ For a further development in ceiling decoration one must look to baroque painting. The whole thought of using a ceiling as a place for representing action was something quite new; earlier instances of such compositions do not exist and other contemporary examples in Assisi and Florence did not adapt their composition so successfully to the lofty

²³ See note 18. The *Annunciation* of 1344 was painted for a chamberlain of San Galgano. Its foreshortened pavement has much in common with that in the frescoed *Annunciation* in the Oratory at Montesiepi dedicated to San Galgano, and may indicate that the commissions of these two works were related in time as well as in patronage.

See ERWIN PANOFSKY: 'Die Perspektive als Symbolische Form', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-5*, Berlin-Leipzig [1927], p.279.

²⁴ Later Sieneſe paintings of the fourteenth century rarely used the foreshortened pavement device to work out an approachable space between spectator and image. Among the exceptions see some of Niccolò di Buonaccorso's paintings, Barna's *Christ Among the Doctors* in the fresco cycle of the Collegiata at San Gimignano, two tabernacles by an unknown Sieneſe painter - Nos.156 and 183, Pinacoteca, Siena, illustrated in EVELYN SANDBERG-VAVALÀ: *Sieneſe Studies*, Florence [1953], Figs.78-79; and Paolo di Giovanni Fei's *Birth of the Virgin* in the same gallery. With the exception of Barna's picture (derived from Duccio's representation of the subject in the *Maestà predella*) and tabernacle No.156, the compositions are all dependent upon Lorenzettian prototypes. Cf. MEISS: *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death*, *op. cit.*, p.23.

²⁵ The ceiling paintings have undergone modern restorations, but Dr Enzo Carli, the Superintendent of Fine Arts for Siena, kindly informed me that these projections over the framework were present before the repainter got to work; the posture of the angels alone indicates that the projections were planned from the first. There is no other instance in Sieneſe ceiling decoration of such a composition or of such overlappings of the frame. But behind this unique example, there is a long tradition in Sieneſe panel paintings of angels in spandrels who lean down on the adjacent frame to gaze in adoration at the main image below. Among the examples see the pictures of the *Maestà* by Guido da Siena in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, and by a follower in the Pinacoteca (No.587); Duccio's panel of the *Madonna and Child* in the Perugia Gallery; the panels of *Worshipping Angels* attributed to Ugolino da Nerio in the Los Angeles County Museum (see COOR-ACHENBACH, *Art Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, Fig.7); two pictures by 'Ugolino-Lorenzetti', (Nos.76 and 80, in the Pinacoteca, Siena; illustrated in SANDBERG-VAVALÀ, *op. cit.*, Figs.69 and 70). Pietro Lorenzetti is known to have painted a revolutionary composition of the *Assumption of the Virgin* with choirs of angels on the chancel ceiling of the Pieve at Arezzo, and it is just possible that such an arrangement preceded the San Leonardo soffit decoration.

²⁶ The only slightly analogous examples are to be observed in the frescoes by Andrea da Firenze in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella, by Agnolo Gaddi in the choir of Santa Croce in Florence, and by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and others in the sacristy of the same church. In these paintings, prophets lean out of the trefoiled borders to point or wave their scrolls around the edges of the space containing the scenes; for illustrations see TOESCA, *op. cit.*, Figs.556, 558-9; ROTHES, *op. cit.*, Fig.80.

circumstance of their site (Fig. 14).²⁷ Only the small figures in the framework – prophets and saints – occasionally lean out of their compartments to flap a scroll or point a warning finger.

As bold as these foreshortenings and overlappings are, the frames surrounding the pictures are very conservative. Yellow and red bands and wide ornamental ones imitating cosmati work surround the scenes on every side. These frames are quite flat and flush with the surface. They are as free of any architectonic force as those similar borders around Simone Martini's pictures in the Montefiore chapel at Assisi. And like this earlier framework, squares enclosing half-length figures are set into the corners. The only plastic concession here is accorded to the saints on the sides who turn a little with their haloes slightly overlapping the tops of their compartments; the saint in the central square, on the other hand, is seen in strict frontality. A foliated frieze imitating stone carving separates the lower decoration from the ceiling pictures and the slender colonettes in the corners supporting the consoles of the vault ribs are painted in imitation of veined marble. But whatever plastic force these slender articulations have is submerged in the wealth of ornamental bands and friezes surrounding them. The lower parts of the walls were once completely painted with an ornamental pattern of yellow quatrefoils set upon a red ground. Only fragments of this decoration remain, but one can still see that the whole arrangement must have resembled a tautly drawn textile or ornamental inlays like those below Simone Martini's murals at Assisi. Between this wainscoating and the framed pictures above runs a convincing painted imitation of a stone cornice complete with profiled edges and a consoled frieze. But a neutral white band separates the cornice from the picture frames so that any potential structural relationship between the upper and lower parts of the decoration surrounding the pictures is quite flat affirming the flat reality of the wall on which it is painted. The immediacy of the scenes in no way relies upon an implied continuity between the chancel's space and picture space via the frame. Rather, it is achieved by the force of the illusions of space and mass within the pictures themselves. While the internal composition always acknowledges the shape of the surface, in the case of the *Annunciation* it capitalized upon the bending nature of the wall to project an illusion of depth upon it.

The attribution of these paintings to Lippo Vanni was first made by Mr Berenson who did not, however, devote any lines to support it though the other examples cited in his list of works for the master should have made his reasons for the

²⁷ The paintings by a follower of the Lorenzetti in the barrel vault of the transept of the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi might be cited as a possible precedent; but here the architectural conditions are quite different. The smoothly curved vault is covered with compositions which might normally be expected to occupy a flat surface; they take no cognizance of their location above the spectators' heads, or of the curvature of the plane on which they are painted. The only other examples of scenes painted in a vault are those of the so-called Vele Master in the crossing of the same church and in the pictures on the walls of the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Florence. To this list may be added the ceiling by an Umbro-Sienese Master in the monastery of the Sacro Speco at Subiaco and that of the very late fourteenth-century fresco on the vault of the chapter room of San Francesco, Pistoia; for illustrations see B. BERENSON: *Studies in Medieval Painting*, New Haven [1930], Fig. 143, and MARIO SALMI: 'Per la Storia della Pittura a Pistoia ed a Pisa', *Rivista d'Arte*, xviii [1931], pp. 451–76, Fig. 10. In none of these pictures, however, is there any foreshortening of the composition in accord with the spectator's point of view – nor do they acknowledge by posture or gesture the events which are taking place below them.

attribution obvious.²⁸ Recently, Professor Millard Meiss has once again given the San Leonardo frescoes to an unnamed follower of the Lorenzetti; one infers from this that he has rejected Lippo Vanni as their author.²⁹ For this reason a summary of the qualities found in these frescoes and in other works of this master seems to be called for.

There is documentary evidence for extant works by Lippo Vanni from 1345 to 1372.³⁰ As his personality has been defined in Mr Berenson's descriptions of these paintings and works attributed on the basis of their style, Lippo Vanni emerges as an artist with ties to the Lorenzetti as well as to Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi. The connexions between the San Leonardo paintings and the Lorenzetti have already been observed in the compositional schemes and the formal principles underlying them. Precisely the same characteristics are to be found in the miniatures documented as Lippo Vanni's work.³¹ To this may be added the Lorenzettian features in the physical types: the wide faces which when turned show a broad slope from short neck to jutting chin; the heavy lidded, half-closed eyes and lips; the similar way of foreshortening the face when it is turned in three-quarter view by tilting the eyes towards one another and pushing the mouth towards the more exposed side.³² The general friendliness of mood – the chatting ladies at Mary's *Presentation*, and the easy, rather casual handling of the crowd in the *Marriage* scene, are distinctly Lorenzettian. On the other hand, the tensile line, the graceful laxity of gesture – the slender fragile hands, the drapery which falls in angular folds at the hem – sometimes trailing over a step,³³ the description of music making and the observation of its auricular effects – all these are drawn from Simone Martini's style.³⁴ Also in the strain of Simone and his immediate followers, are the delicate sherbet colours – especially the tones of pale pink and cool blue-green which predominate in frescoes and miniatures alike, and which Lippo Vanni's contemporary Barna raised to an acid intensity in his Collegiata frescoes at San Gimignano. But apart from these qualities, which were largely determined by the influence of greater masters, there is one element which was Vanni's special concern and labels his works unmistakably: the fondness for devising striking illusions of real objects and spaces. This is the salient feature of his foreshortened angelic concert and of the complicated

²⁸ BERENSON: *Pictures of the Italian Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, pp. 587–90.

²⁹ MEISS, *op. cit.*, p. 28, note 58.

³⁰ BERENSON: *Studies in Medieval Painting*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–61; *Idem*, *Essays in the Study of Sienese Painting*, New York [1928], pp. 37–42.

³¹ The illuminations for which there exist documents of payment to Lippo Vanni in 1345 are the Choral Book No. 4 in the Cathedral Library, Siena; for illustrations see RAIMOND VAN MARLE: *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, II, The Hague [1924], Figs. 296 and 297. Lippo Vanni's works documented by payment or inscription (or both) include the following: Choral Book No. 4, cited above; the fresco of the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Sala della Biccherna of the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, dated 1352; the triptych in the Roman monastery of SS. Domenico e Sisto, dated 1358; and the almost destroyed *Annunciation* in the cloister of San Domenico, Siena, dated 1372.

³² Occasionally Lippo Vanni could so faithfully evoke Pietro Lorenzetti's style that given such a detail as the female saint contained in a corner of the frame below the Virgin of the *Annunciation*, it would be easy to mistake the follower for the master. This small figure, it should be pointed out, is not St Catherine which the rudely repainted label mistakenly proclaims, but St Ursula: she is crowned and bears the standard of the Cross in her right hand and the arrow – the instrument of her martyrdom – in her left.

³³ Cf. the hem of the Virgin's gown which trails over the edge of the pedestal to a similar detail in Simone Martini's *Annunciation* in the Uffizi.

³⁴ The closest parallels are to be seen in Simone Martini's singers and musicians in the frescoes of the St Martin Chapel at San Francesco, Assisi.

perspectives surrounding his *Annunciation*. The fresco of the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Fig. 20) in the Sala della Biccherna of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, which he signed and dated in 1352, shows the same quality.³⁵ The picture itself was repainted by Sano di Pietro in 1445, but the unusually convincing fictive architectural base which contains the date and his signature is still clear.³⁶ Other elements visible through the repaints in this fresco which recall San Leonardo's scheme are the fictive pilasters painted on the piers supporting the recess in which the *Coronation* is painted³⁷ (the carved motif on the bases of the pilasters is the same as that around the tops of the ogival walls), and the musical angels in the spandrels who strain towards the main event taking place inside the niche. But Lippo Vanni's *tour de force* in the vein of architectural illusion is the fake polyptych painted in the chapel of the archepiscopal seminary in Siena.³⁸

As for the date of the San Leonardo frescoes, their elaboration of the late Lorenzettian schemes of 1340–4 suggests that they were painted after this period and therefore probably after the Lorenzetti's death which is presumed to have occurred during the great plague of 1348.³⁹ Their Simon-esque refinement of gesture, colour, and line is characteristic of a general recollection of Simone's art among Sieneese painters (such as Barna, Luca di Tommè, Andrea Vanni, the Ovile Master, and others) after the middle of the century.⁴⁰ Yet the nervous tension, the sense of haste in movement, the brittle line, the crowded forms, and the rich ornamental textures typical of Sieneese painting during the century's last three decades are absent from San Leonardo's frescoes. All this implies a likely interval of dating between

1350 and 1365, when memory of the serenity and spaciousness of the Lorenzetti had not yet been disturbed and contracted by the more solemn, the restless, and intense imaginings which soon gripped pictorial imagery during the later decades of the century.

Although it can be definitely shown that Lippo Vanni's frescoes, in spite of their progressive aspects of composition do not belong to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, as was once supposed, it is nevertheless interesting that the painter whose work most closely resembles their pastel colouring, their steep foreshortenings, their fondness for architectural illusion, and the way of exploiting a bending wall for purely pictorial (and not architectonic) purposes is Masolino – particularly in the Baptistry frescoes at Castiglione d'Olena.⁴¹ Usually, the sources cited for Masolino's style include Pisanello, Gentile da Fabriano, and North Italian painting generally. His teacher, Lorenzo Monaco, also figures in this list, but the likelihood that this older painter came from Siena and the significance of this for the development of Masolino's style, has not been given much attention. Yet, Masolino's compositions for pictures of the *Madonna of Humility* at Bremen and Munich, and for the *Assumption of the Virgin* in Naples, are in a direct line of descent from Trecento Sieneese paintings.⁴² These manifest Sieneese leanings taken together with Longhi's convincing suggestion that Vecchietta helped Masolino in the architectural settings for some of the scenes inside the Castiglione d'Olena Baptistry,⁴³ show that the similarities to Sieneese mural decoration such as San Leonardo's is not a chance matter and should be considered as evidence warranting further study of the Sieneese sources of Masolino's style.

³⁵ The inscription reads: 'Lippus Vannis de Senis fecit hoc opus Anno Domini Millesimo trecentesimo LII'. There are also documents of payment for this picture.

³⁶ See Alinari Photo No. P. 62^a 9437.

³⁷ Compare the similar style of the painted piers of the building in which the *Marriage of the Virgin* takes place at San Leonardo.

³⁸ Cf. BERENSON: *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance*, *op. cit.*, p. 589, which is considered by this authority to be a late work. See VAN MARLE, *op. cit.*, Fig. 300, which is, however, only a detail.

³⁹ Neither of the Lorenzetti is mentioned after 1348, the year of the first great epidemic of plague which so fiercely decimated Siena.

⁴⁰ Cf. BERENSON: *Studies in Medieval Painting*, *op. cit.*, p. 5; and MEISS, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁴¹ Note particularly the procession of figures which march round the bending planes of the window wall to listen to the sermon of the Baptist; also the shuttered window painted on the opposite side of the actual window lining; and the characteristic range of pink, green, and pale yellow tones which are so close to the blonde colouring of the San Leonardo frescoes.

⁴² MEISS, *op. cit.*, chapter VI, where the origin of the *Madonna of Humility* composition is described as Simone Martini's. Compare Masolino's *Assunta* to those by Pietro Lorenzetti in the Pieve altar-piece of 1320 in Arezzo; Bartolo di Fredi's triptych in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and the Ovile Master's panel in the Pinacoteca, Siena.

⁴³ ROBERTO LONGHI: 'Fatti di Masolino e di Masaccio', *La Critica d'Arte*, xxv–xxvi [July–December 1940], pp. 170 f.

MARCEL RÖTHLISBERGER

Notes on the Drawing Books of Jacopo Bellini

IT will never be possible to reach a satisfactory solution about the art of Jacopo Bellini and its significance. All his main works are lost – the fresco of the *Crucifixion* of 1436 in the Cathedral of Verona, the portrait of *Lionello d'Este* of 1441 which won a competition against Pisanello, an altar-piece in the Santo of 1460, and, most important of all, the eighteen scenes from the *Lives of Christ and the Virgin* and other paintings executed for the Scuola Grande of St Mark in 1465 and destroyed as soon as twenty years later. On the other hand, there is no artist of his time from whose hand we possess a set of drawings comparable to the complete books of Jacopo in

the British Museum and the Louvre.¹ In spite of the extensive literature on these books, much remains to be said.

The basic studies of the drawings belong to the years around 1910, when the critical facsimile editions of Ricci and Golubew and the studies of L. Venturi, the very detailed accounts furnished by Testi, Frizzoni, Gronau, and others, appeared almost simultaneously. Since then the drawings have been the preserve mainly of Germans: from 1916 dates the study of Lily Fröhlich-Bum; from 1936 that of Herta

¹ The British Museum book is executed in black lead on paper, the other in pen on vellum.