

Lorenzo Monaco's Man of Sorrows

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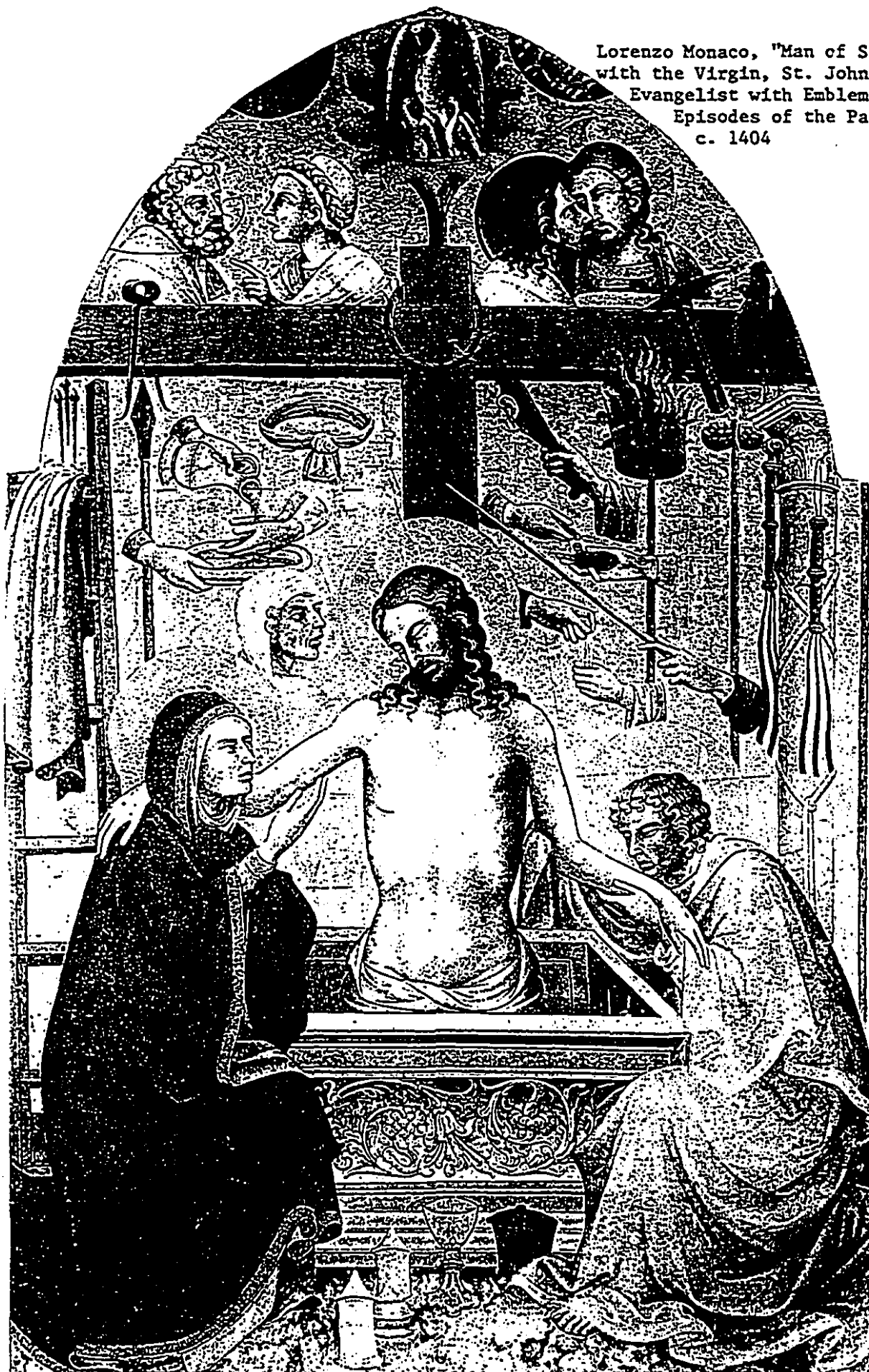
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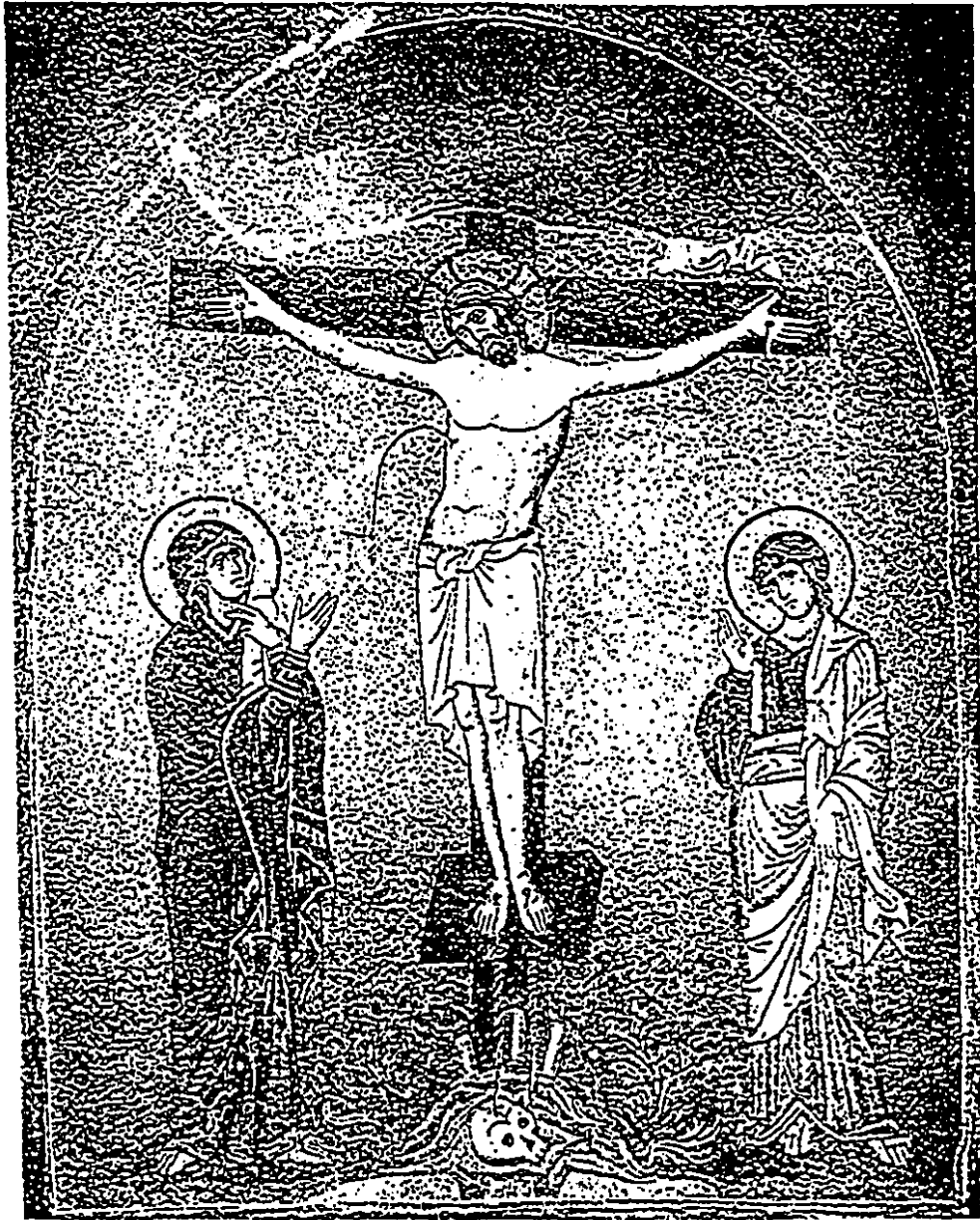
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Lorenzo Monaco, "Man of Sorrows with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist with Emblems and Episodes of the Passion" c. 1404

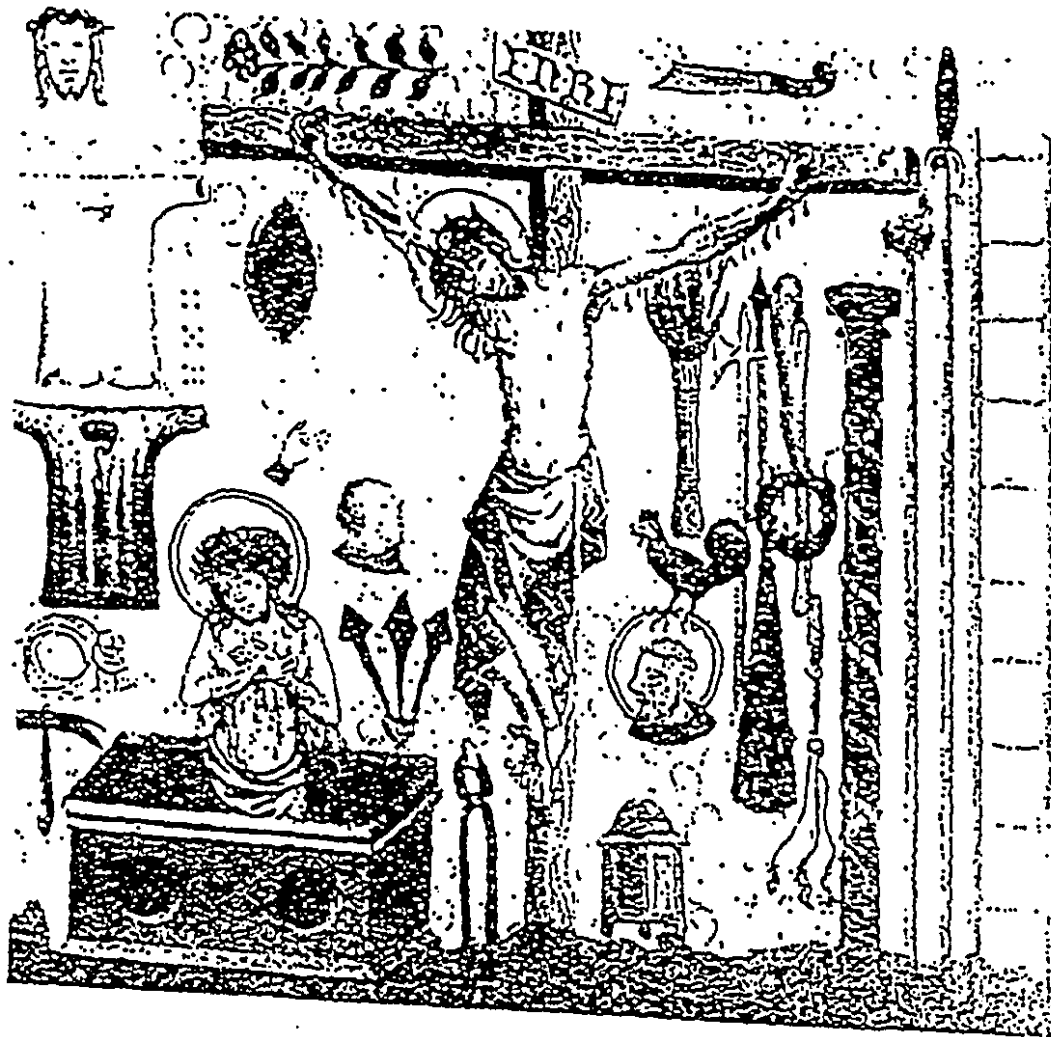




Crucifixion, Mosaic on east wall of north arm in the Church of Dormition, Daphni, 1080-1100.



Pietro Nelli and Tommaso del Mazza, Predella with Christ as Man of Sorrows, center panel. Impruneta, Chiesa Collegiata.



Cologne Master, Altarpiece with Cycle of the Life of Christ, central panel: Arma Christi, c. 1340-1370.



Master Franke of Bremen, "Man of Sorrows" c. 1460.

Abstract

This thesis examines Lorenzo Monaco's altarpiece the *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, with the Emblems and Episodes of the Passion*, (c. 1404) under historical, religious, political, and liturgical rubrics. While comparing various depictions of the Man of Sorrows, this project places Lorenzo Monaco's unique interpretation within the context of events surrounding the painting's conception and realization. With particular attention to Lorenzo's distinctive composition, techniques and juxtaposition of imagery, this study shows that his *Man of Sorrows* in fact conveys a complex message about Florentine society in Late Gothic times.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine le retable de Lorenzo Monaco intitulé l'Homme aux Chagrins avec la Vierge, St. Jean l'Évangéliste, avec des Emblèmes et Épisodes de la Passion, (c. 1404) sous des rubriques historiques, religieuses, politiques et liturgiques. En comparant certaines représentations de l'Homme aux Chagrins, ce projet met l'interprétation unique de Lorenzo Monaco dans le contexte d'événements entourants la conception et la réalisation de la peinture. Portant une attention particulière à la composition, technique et juxtaposition des images de Lorenzo, cette étude démontre que son portrait de l'Homme aux Chagrins transmet, en effet, un message complexe de la société Florentine à l'ère Gothique.

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Master Franke of Bremen, *Man of Sorrows*, c. 1420, Cologne.

Simon Marmion, *The Mass of St. Gregory and the Man of Sorrows*, c. 1460.

For My Grandparents

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond and Patricia Emery

And

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph and Virginia Susee

Preface

This thesis intends to formally analyze the composition of Lorenzo Monaco's painting, the *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, and the Emblems and Episodes of the Passion*, from c. 1404, to excavate a contemporary reinterpretation of the imagery within its historical context. The liturgical framework, literature, and history from his time are extremely significant for the understanding of this painting within its context of fifteenth-century Florentine society. The social and religious circumstances of Florence will form a portion of my thesis as they relate to the panel's compositional elements. The analysis of the vignettes, or unbordered pictures, within this painting forms a major portion of this composition. Much of the juxtaposition in the *Man of Sorrows* form groups of vignettes and aid our reading and understanding. This thesis will examine other images of the *Man of Sorrows* to consider similarities and differing approaches as reflected by their compositions. Also, it will explore the reasons why this particular painting pushes the dynamics of composition to convey new meanings within its social context.

First, the composition and the elements of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows* shall be dissected as it creates a realm with distinct divisions that aid in the reading of this painting. I have since found most unique and important material about the *Man of Sorrows* is its composition itself, which has become the basis for this current analysis.

Traditionally, scholars have focused upon the works of Lorenzo Monaco to establish a chronology of stylistic and iconographic development in attempts to understand him as an artist. His paintings were used typically as part of a scale to define artistic talents relative to Renaissance ideals.

This perspective alone serves as a challenge, for I prefer to consider Lorenzo Monaco a late Gothic painter, to suggest his establishment in traditions, and not its dismissal as the term early Renaissance painter implies. An argument, which I would like to stress more, is the notion that other art historians have not discussed this painting specifically to understand the imagery within the relevant social context. As with this painting and others from the late "International Gothic" most paintings have been analyzed for their colour and stylistic developments heading towards the ideal form of the Renaissance. This thesis attempts to point out the problems peculiar to labels and meanings that are associated with Late Gothic and Early Renaissance definitions. Instead this thesis will freshly focus on the specific context of the painting alone. The previous studies focusing on late Gothic painting and the techniques of the artists are necessary as the past research always reveals the next notion that needs to be addressed or re-addressed.

Additionally, Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* has been viewed simply as a quiet reminder of Christ's sufferings, whereas a close examination of the painting reveals a strong foundation of liturgical, political and theological atmospheres, unfolding as a complicated message.

Second, the *Man of Sorrows* also demonstrates in some way a possible political commentary of the Great Western Schism (1378-1417), which provides an additional key to comprehending Lorenzo Monaco and his Florentine society. Specific relations among people and organizations, social or religious, as core to the community, which Lorenzo worked and lived, framed his painting. Lorenzo Monaco became a practicing member of the Camaldolese order, which offers insights into his beliefs and those of his patrons, and what they would have expected his paintings to have communicated. Historical accounts

of the Camaldolese order and the life of Lorenzo converge into the topic of the Great Western Schism by associations between different organizations within Florence and around the region and the views they embrace.

Third, Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows, with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist with Emblems and Episodes of the Passion* will be investigated into sections. The objects and the specific juxtapositions within this composition of Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* are intentional but the intentions are specific to his particular message.

As an artist in the Florentine community, Lorenzo Monaco served as a notable avenue between the roles of confraternities and monasteries. These social groups within the Florentine community, in light of their re-evaluated role in the Great Western Schism, forms an arena for specific yet substantial topics for the reading of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*. These questions present a different depiction and definition of the era, society, and the artist. The *Man of Sorrows* exists not only as a religious painting of its time, but also conveys a plethora of messages operating with several social constructs.

Chapter One

This chapter will convey the importance of the painting's imagery to its intended audience. In a close formal description of each of the elements in this painting, it will explore the specific significance of each object and its placement. First, a brief unveiling of the artist Lorenzo Monaco and synopsis of earlier scholar evaluations and interpretations. Then, however, we must examine the overall composition of Lorenzo's painting, for its relative linkage of each element to its neighbours, and then we can work with each object separately, in their identities defined by the *Biblia sacra latina*. This approach will then allow us a thorough foundation upon which we might then precede into the painting's historical and social associations.

This chapter will further explore different depictions of the *Man of Sorrows*, to place Lorenzo Monaco's work in the context of the given iconography, with its evolving meanings throughout its history. This investigation not only will familiarize the reader with the theme *Man of Sorrows* generally, but will also lay the foundation for a close examination of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows* in terms of its compositional meaning and purpose. This compositional and iconological study will allow us to consider how Florentine society and its predominant scholars led Lorenzo Monaco to work with the specifics that he did in his *Man of Sorrows*. Other paintings of the *Man of Sorrows* can serve as a template and foreground for this study, as they offer a concise articulation of varying understandings and purposes. Because each painting encompasses distinct underlying messages beyond my main concerns, I will limit my focus primarily to their composition and the subjects that they present. This thesis has no intention of defining a

regional style, but rather presents a specific individual's interaction with society through his painting.

An overview of the artist Lorenzo Monaco and his role in the Florentine community, will be identified as an interpreter of the society. The previous literature studies his artistic style and technique that does not facilitate the purpose of this thesis. The second section will focus on the composition and imagery that identifies a *Man of Sorrow* painting. A *Man of Sorrows* painting is composed with specific identifiable objects and characters usually following a particular composition. In them, Christ stands in the painting and is either flanked with his mother Mary on His right and St. John the Evangelist on His left, or is surrounded by Passion imagery from the narrative leading up to Christ's Crucifixion, or both.

The third section discusses Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*. It discusses each image and compositional element that appear in Lorenzo's painting. Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows* will be analyzed and compared to the previous representations. Lorenzo's imagery will then also be identified separately as to better understand the meaning of each character and object.

Lorenzo Monaco

As an artist depending on educated patrons, Lorenzo Monaco participated in the community and economy of Florence, ever sensitive to the conditions of the market and flow of wealth. The complexity of this market, however, too frequently becomes simplified in portrayals of fifteenth-century Florence as a Renaissance city. A quick survey of Florentine painting from the era reveals that the usually cited paradigms of the Early Renaissance, including Donatello and Masaccio, represent a minority voice in terms of over-all production, in which Late Gothic aesthetics prevailed. In "A Crucifix and a

Man of Sorrows by Lorenzo Monaco," *Art Quarterly*, 1955, Eisenberg states:

'The tendency of the early Quattrocento was to emphasize the mystical aspects of religious themes, which he attributes to the "cut-out" formation of Christ with the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist flanking either side. Mysticism is brought to a deeper level with the juxtaposition of focussed vignettes rather than a detailed, linear narrative.'¹ Please note that the *Man of Sorrows* discussed in the 1955 article by Eisenberg is a different *Man of Sorrows* focus than in this thesis.

The past century has produced a large body of literature pertaining to the rules for reading Gothic painting, with taxonomies of stylistic developments, regional styles, and uses of color, as well as attention to the affects of social and political climates on the over-all outcome and production of the work. Most of the literature concerning Lorenzo Monaco either focuses upon his stylistic development, his use of color, and the artists who influenced him. Georg Pudelko deals with the stylistic tendencies of the artist and identifies Lorenzo specifically as a Sienese artist who worked in Florence. He further states that Lorenzo's works follow the style attributed to Giotto and Taddeo Gaddi. Moreover, Pudelko's discussion of the *Man of Sorrows*, or the *Pieta* of 1404 is deemed as a "more systematic drawing of linear outlines".² Mirella Levi D'Ancona also addresses similar issues of Lorenzo's style of painting in her article "Some New Attributions to Lorenzo Monaco," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. XL, no. 1, March 1958, where she only addresses his development of style throughout his career. Frederico Zeri wrote in his "Investigations into the Early Period of Lorenzo Monaco", *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CVI, no. 730-741, January 1964-6,

¹Eisenberg, "A Crucifix and a Man of Sorrows" *Art Quarterly*, 1955.

²Pudelko, "The Stylistic Development of Lorenzo Monaco-I", *The Burlington Magazine*, 1938 pp.237-241.

and vol. CVII, no. 742, January 1965, about the developments and key nuances which attribute the paintings to Lorenzo Monaco. Only Marvin Eisenberg breaks major new grounds with his vast compilation of sources pertaining to Lorenzo's life, in assembling a catalogue of all the works attributed to the artist.³

According to Eisenberg, the first documentation of Lorenzo Monaco in Florence is his entrance into the monastery of San Michele Visdomini as Piero di Giovanni. He then transferred to Santa Maria degli Angeli in 1390. Several early sources point to Lorenzo as being a native of Siena, but according to Marvin Eisenberg, his Florentine style and background in painting proves to be more significant in terms of defining his heritage. However, Pudelko could have termed him Sienese to account for his more Gothic sensibilities. This issue shows only how questions of style colour our understandings of the past according them to our own, later inscribed definitions of style. Whether or not Lorenzo still had ties in Siena poses an unanswered question. Eisenberg's extensive account of Lorenzo Monaco places his birth in the mid 1370's, to make him around the age of twenty when he became sub-deacon of the Camaldolese order, the lowest rank within a monastic setting. Shortly after being ordained deacon at Santa Maria degli Angeli in 1396, his workshop near the end of the century became more independent from the monastery. His work involved special requests of replicas of his previous paintings, such as with the *Coronation of the Virgin*, c.1414. Particular requests from patrons was not uncommon, and the community of artists shared new developments of style and avenues of specific characteristics the patrons desired. Agents of the patron sought painters for altarpieces, as a particular approach was pursued.⁴

³Eisenberg, *Lorenzo Monaco*, 1989.

⁴Thomas, 1995: 94-96, 215.

While the workshop had separated from the monastery itself, Lorenzo still participated with its spiritual life as a monk. As noted before, he continued to draw his assistants from the monastic community of Santa Maria degli Angeli to help with many later productions. Eisenberg notes yet another dichotomy between Lorenzo's strong dedication to the solitary life afforded by the monastery and his workshop's requiring him engage constantly in the public sphere.⁵ However, we must avoid emphasizing too much a separation between the public workshop and monastic life, for as Eisenberg notes:

Individual church ledgers show that lists of local artists were on occasion included in the records, presumably to ease the task of selection in the event of commissioning a new altarpiece.⁶

According to Lino Vigilucci, Lorenzo was an "exemplary monk, who loved silence and meditation".⁷ This attribute offer us insights into the *Man of Sorrows*, as the contemplative nature of the order and the artist may at first give the painting a rather calm and clear message, which it then prompts its viewers to explore further through compositional cues. In this manner, it would adhere to the introspective meditational practice prescribed by the Camaldolese order. As a public expression of monastic purpose, the painting also complements one other aspect of Lorenzo's life, his role as a deacon, to which he received appointment in 1396. Suiting this capacity, his paintings would function as sermons, communicating between the monastic and the public realms.

⁵Eisenberg, 1989: 4-5.

⁶Thomas, 1995: 95.

⁷This may or may not exactly be true, but the attributes of Lorenzo may bring out the character and personality of the monk. Lorenzo did elevate to the position of deacon and therefore measured to an ideal Vigilucci, 1988: 87.

Man of Sorrows

A *Man of Sorrows* painting varies in illustration yet has recognizable characteristics. In a *Man of Sorrows* painting, Christ often appears in a tomb or before a cross standing between Mary and St. John the Evangelist. At times Mary and John are dismissed and the main characters are of Christ with Peter and Judas. In addition to the characters, Christ appears with symbolic depictions of the Passion. These symbols include nails, whips, pliers, a hammer, spears and a knife.

During the Byzantine period, the *Man of Sorrows* emerges from images of Christ on the cross or in his tomb, with Mary and John the Evangelist flanking each side of the Christ figure.⁸ The evolution of mourning figures begins in fourth century Rome, but in the ninth century regularly includes the characters of Mary and John. The *Crucifixion*, c. 1080-1100 in the Church of Dormition, Daphni, provides an example of how these three characters typically came together. Also, the same characters appear in the *Pala d'Oro*, c. 1102 in San Marco, Venice. While neither image portrays Christ within his tomb, he stands between the two other figures as in some later representations of the *Man of Sorrows*. Gertrude Schiller in her *Iconography in Christian Art, The Passion of Jesus Christ* of 1972 deconstructs the meanings of each object within representations of the *Crucifixion* and *Man of Sorrows*. The *Man of Sorrows* "is strictly a devotional image which can encompass the Passion, the *Crucifixion*, and the *Deposition*" all in one painting.⁹ The *Man of Sorrows*, in a more general sense, resembles a mourned and venerated image. The image also evokes a "supra-temporal nature of the Passion as Christ seems to be removed from the realm of time. With the imagery of the abbreviated scenes of the Passion floating in space, and the

⁸ Shorr, "The Mourning Virgin and St. John" *The Art Bulletin*, June 1940, pp. 61-69.

⁹ Schiller, 1972: 212.

depiction of Christ as alive, but after the Crucifixion, eerily reminds us that he is no longer a human but a god.¹⁰

A recognizable formula for the *Man of Sorrows* involves particular characteristics, including a combination of the instruments of torture with Christ standing in a tomb. These instruments metonymically indicate the episodes of the Passion. There are several combinations of formulas in various paintings, which involve varied mixtures of the imagery. Earlier depictions of the *Man of Sorrows* illustrate a fairly uniform composition, in which the instruments line up in a concise manner. Some depictions of the *Man of Sorrows* show no instruments of the Passion, such as in the predella with *Christ as Man of Sorrows*, c. 1375 by Pietro Nelli and Tommaso del Mazza. In this painting, the specific stature of Christ marks him as the *Man of Sorrows*.¹¹ The more typical inclusion of instruments in a *Man of Sorrows* painting creates a division between a narrative versus a more abstract atmosphere.¹² Other depictions of the *Man of Sorrows* display a more involved Christ figure with his instruments of the Passion, for example, in the panel by Master Francke of Bremen, c. 1420, now in Cologne. Christ actually clutches painted icons, as angels hold other imagery close to his body.¹³ Simon Marmion's *Man of Sorrows* combined with *The Mass of St. Gregory*, c. 1460/70, has an interaction of ostensibly "real" space with the more abstract, almost stage setting, backdrop of the Passion instruments.¹⁴ A wider survey of the numerous depictions of the *Man of Sorrows* underscores how each painting displays its own uniqueness, appropriate to its creation for a

¹⁰Schiller, 1972: 209-210.

¹¹Lane, 1984: 126.

¹²Eorsi, 1986: 34.

¹³Eorsi, 1986: 34.

¹⁴Eorsi, 1986: 34.

specific audience and patron. Even within this expected variety, however, Lorenzo Monaco creates a vastly different atmosphere with his *Man of Sorrows*.

Lorenzo Monaco's Man of Sorrows

Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows with the Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, and Episodes and Emblems of the Passion*, 1404, currently resides in the Gallerie dell' Accademia of Florence. Eisenberg states that the coats of arms at the base of the painting have "defied identification", and the earliest recording that we have of the painting is that of an acquisition from a Cav. Carovana, an English painter, and an art dealer William Blundell Spence of Florence in 1871. Later the Uffizi bought the painting from Spence in 1886, then was transferred to the Accademia in 1919.¹⁵

Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* includes much of the traditional imagery, namely, the instruments of the Passion floating all around Christ (recalling the painting by Simon Marmion in their disassociated background) with Mary and St. John the Evangelist crouched below him. It emphasizes interactions, not only with the Christ figure as in the panel by Master Francke. Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* has been identified as a *Man of Sorrows* image combined with *Arma Christi*, because of the inclusion of the abbreviated scenes of the Passion.¹⁶ Instead, expanded to involve the disembodied hands of the tormentors who inflicted pain upon Christ, all codifying the principal events of the Passion scenes around him as he exchanges intimate glances with his mother and John.

Let us first turn to a basic reading of the figures and objects within the composition, one guided by the over-all shape of the painting. The primary figures within this painting begin in the center, but the pointed

¹⁵ Eisenberg, 1989: 99.

¹⁶ Schiller, 1971: 209.

shape of the wood panel aids and directs the viewer to a cyclical motion, thus creating a continuous flow. The center of the composition encompasses the three figures: Christ, the Virgin, and St. John the Evangelist. These three main characters draw the viewer's attention to the left and right of the composition. From a reading that begins in the center, the figures draw the viewer's attention to the elements of the periphery.

The left and right scheme forms the primary division of the composition. The Virgin kneels to the right of Christ. Following the detailed edge of the Virgin's robe leads the viewer straight to the ladder. Christ's hand also directs the viewer's attention to the ladder as his hand rests upon his mother's shoulder, overlapping the ladder. The face of an elderly woman situated between Christ and the Virgin interrupts gaze between them. The pinkish garment folded over the top of the ladder points our attention to various objects radiating in several directions to the perimeter.

The hand holding the basin overlaps a spear that points vertically to some of the instruments of the Passion, including the pliers and the nails. The hands above the basin draw the viewer towards the piece of cloth tied in a circle. Although the cross above Christ creates one of the primary horizontal division between the upper and lower sections of the painting, it seems to unify the left and right scheme without posing an interruption. Above the wooden beam of the cross on the right appear two characters, Peter and the maid.

The shape of the wood panel uses the perimeter to lead back to the center. The first image we encounter at the top of the composition is the sun. The Pelican, an actual emblem, sits at the top of the composition. The absolute top of the pinnacle has no division of left and right, but then,

beyond the Pelican, to the left, appears the moon. Just as quickly as the ascension to the point of the gothic frame occurred, the descension towards the left side of Christ begins the next series of images.

Along the perimeter, one encounters first the moon, on the left side, below which appears the face of Christ juxtaposed with that of Judas. The image of the moon combined with the figures of Judas and Christ alludes to a theme of death as the sun fades during the Crucifixion of Christ and the moon comes into sight. Just below the face of Christ rests the hammer, which forms a frame-like area around the cock on top of the column. The handle of the hammer points the viewer to the stick holding the sponge of vinegar and the column, which draws us downward to St. John the Evangelist, who wears a pinkish garment recalling the folded like-coloured garment on the ladder standing on the right side. As St. John holds Christ's arm, the viewer follows the shape of Christ's arm towards the hands acting out the scene of the casting of the lots. The spear which stabs Christ's side acts as an intersection, but does not interrupt the flow of the reading. The spear secludes a series of images related specifically to the Kiss of Judas, such as the thirty silver pieces, the torch, and St. Peter's cutting of the soldier's ear.

The foot of St. John the Evangelist and the foot of the Virgin direct the viewer to the lowest half of the composition, where the tomb in which Christ stands appears, along with the chalice and tins that hold the sacrament. Also at the base below the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist are the two small coats of arms resting on the surface of the original frame, indicating the patrons. From this description, let us turn to a fuller

discussion of each character and object to explore a further understanding of them.

Anna Eorsi in her *International Gothic Style in Painting* notes that a division between the left and right within Master Francke's painting presents "open restless forms with intersecting lines", something to which I will return in discussing the composition of Lorenzo Monaco's panel. In Lorenzo Monaco's painting, one immediately notices no linear chronologies within the composition whatsoever. Closer inspection dispels any initial appearances of chaos, for the juxtaposition of the objects and figures reveals a clear, schematic organization.

The Right Side of Christ

The Synoptic Gospels provide the definitive source for the liturgical descriptions of the objects and characters in Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*. The first image I will identify involves the object on the right side under the horizontal beam of the cross: the white cloth, usually referred to as a blindfold. The blindfold was added later to the pictorial narrative of the Passion in the fourteenth century.¹⁷ Besides the other people and objects placed on the right side of Christ, including the Virgin, Peter, and the ladder, the blindfold differs from the other imagery, as it appears without any hands or faces acting the applicable scene. This lack of associated hands underscores a difference between the left and right sides of the composition, for the scenes in the left half emphasize much more definitely the role of hands acting out vignettes.

The emphasis of each object, with or without accompanying hands, has a distinct placement and role within the painting, one which we'll find central

¹⁷Schiller, 1972: 191.

to myriad relationships between the objects and compositional patterns, later on in this evaluation.

The basin and pitcher present another vignette, one of several that remind the audience of the *Last Supper* and *Pilate Washing his Hands* after he had sentenced Jesus.

Videns autem Pilatus quia nihil proficeret, sed magis tumultus fieret: accepta aqua, lavit manus coram populo dicens: Innocens ego sum a sanguine justis hujus: vos videritis¹⁸

Both the basin and blindfold represent a perplexing question, as they do not follow a theme of faith. Both are linked with the mocking of Christ, but appear separate from the rest of the imagery.

The woman to the right of Christ stands out prominently as just her head appears next to Christ. Although she physically was placed next to Christ's head, she does not seem to be part of the scene within the triangle of the Virgin, Christ, and St. John the Evangelist. This woman could possibly illustrate the scene of one of the many women who followed Christ from Galilee.

Et cum esset in Galilaea, sequebantur eum, et ministrabant ei; at aliae multae, quae simul cum es asenderant Ierosolymam.¹⁹

However this woman most likely represents Pilate's wife.

sedente autem illo pro tribunali misit ad illum uxor eius dicens nihil tibi et iusto illi multa enim passa sum hodie per visum propter eum²⁰

¹⁸"When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, and that there was danger of a riot, he took the water and washed his hands before the people saying: 'I am innocent of the blood of this just one, as you will see'" Matthew 27:24.

¹⁹"And there were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome: Who also when he was in Galilee followed him, and ministered to him, and many other women that came up with him to Jerusalem." Mark 15:40-41.

²⁰"And as he [Pilate] was sitting in the place of judgment, his wife sent to him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Matthew 27:19.

The garment laid over the ladder also presents a significant image that coincides with the other imagery on the right side of Christ. It, too, reminds the viewer of more than one scene, as the scarlet robe given to Christ during his mocking, and also as his garment for which the soldiers had cast lots at the Crucifixion.

Et exuentes eum, chlamydem coccineam circumdederunt ei.²¹ [and]
Diverserunt vestimenta ejus, sortem mittentes.²²

Even though it references the two scenes, it remains whole, not as of yet divided yet by the soldiers. An accompanying reference which shall be address shortly, appears just on the left, the drawing of straws, which supports this latter reference. The cloth's marking two scenes underscores the non-chronological nature of the painting, for the *Mocking* took place before, while the division of the garment happened at the moment of the *Crucifixion*.

Another scene, which catches the audience's attention, involves the two figures at the top right half of the painting. An older man stands facing a woman who points to him with her finger.

at ille negavit coram omnibus dicens nescio quid dicis: exeunte autem illo ianuam vidit eum alia et ait his qui erant ibi et hic erat cum Iesu Nazareno et iterum negavit cum iuramento quia non novi hominem et post pusillum accesserunt qui stabant et dixerunt Petro vere et tu ex illis es nam et loquella tua manifestum te facit tunc coepit detestari et iurare quia non novisset hominem et continuo gallus cantavit et recordatus est Petrus verbi Iesu quod dixerat priusquam gallus cantet ter me negabis et egressus foras ploravit amare ...²³

²¹"They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet cloak" Matthew 27:28.

²²"They divided his garments, casting lots" Matthew 27:35.

²³"But he denied before them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest.

And as he went out of the gate, another maid saw him, and she saith to them that were there: This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man.

"And after a little while they came that stood by, and said to Peter: Surely thou also art one of them; for even thy speech doth discover thee. Then he began to curse and to swear that he knew not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus which he had said: Before the cock crew, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth, he wept bitterly."

Matthew 26:70- 75.

Finally, the image of the sun meets at the perimeter just before the central object of the pelican feeding its young in the tree. The sun has been identified in this time of Christ's crucifixion as:

statim autem post tribulationem dierum illorum sol obscurabitur et luna non dabit lumen suum et stellae cadent de caelo et virtutes caelorum commovebuntur...²⁴

The sun brings a dramatic effect to the imagery, especially when coupled with the image of the moon. Not only are both the sun and moon used as temporal markers in the composition, but they also stay within the dichotomies of the left and right scheme. Furthermore, the sun also illustrates another opposing object, relating the right side with the left, for visually our eyes move from the sun, across the painting to the moon, and back again. The sun acts as an element to the specific imagery of the right half of the painting, yet also acts as a visual element, to aid the viewer to read the painting from one side to the other.

These images on the right side of Christ placed specifically around one another in this confined area create a particular theme. The left side of Christ communicates the theme of betrayal as the imagery focuses specifically on these images all related to the betrayal and Christ's death. Then as a foil, the right side of Christ chooses to attend to faith themes. The one primary character being Mary who is associated with less violent objects, or objects, which cause the audience to think of, characters whom lapse to faith after betrayal committed. The left side of the painting complements that of the right; in concert they then present a synthesis forming the grander theme

²⁴ "And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved;" Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24.

of the painting. The right half of the composition constitutes the most clearly identifiable imagery, which serves as the foundation for the progressive meanings that unfold progressively in the painting with each interaction with the scenes on the left.

The Left Side of Christ

Reading of the right half becomes redefined as one considers it in relation to the left half of the composition, in an intricate interlacing of imagery flowing cyclically. The sun leads the audience to the moon directly across from it, the next object that can be identified with elements from the scripture from the Synoptic Gospels.

Both the sun and moon are specifically tied to the moment of the Crucifixion. The objects below the sun and the moon further clarify their relationship. Under the moon, Judas kisses Jesus, marking the *Betrayal*, while under the sun, Peter denies Christ, in a complementary betrayal. As mentioned earlier, the sun and the moon reciprocate the vignettes below them of the left and right sides coinciding with the tones of left as betrayal and right as good. First, we need discuss the objects and scenes below the moon on the right half of the painting, for specifically the *Betrayal* sets the tone for those complementary vignettes on the left.

Adhuc eo loquente, ecce turba: et qui vocabatur Judas, unus de duodecim antecedebat eos: et appropinquaret Jesu ut oscularetur eum. Jesus autem dixit illi: 'Judas, osculo filium hominis tradis?'²⁵

The torch, on the left side of Christ parallel with the column, is only mentioned in the Gospel of John, but visually plays a significant part in the

²⁵ As he was yet speaking, behold a multitude; and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near to Jesus, for to kiss him. And Jesus said to him: Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss? Luke 22:47-48.

telling of the story of the *Betrayal*, because the flames of the torch reach up, overlapping that scene, to create a faster-paced reading of this particular section of the painting. After the soldiers arrive with the torches, one of St. Peter, out of fear, cuts off the ear of one of the soldiers, Centurion.

unus autem quidam de circumstantibus educens gladium percussit servum summi sacerdotis et amputavit illi auriculam.²⁶

The rest of the objects nearby specifically involve Judas, directly or indirectly. We actually witness the transaction of Judas receiving his payment of thirty pieces of silvers for his deed of identifying Jesus in the Garden.

Et ait illis: Quid vultis mihi dare, et ego vobis eum tradam? At illi constituerunt ei triginta argenteos.²⁷

We also see as a result of the *Betrayal* the casting of lots for pieces of Christ's garment, referenced also by the garment discussed earlier.

Left and Right Scheme

Because of the dichotomies between the right and left side of Christ, the vignettes create foils of the story, which relay to other scenes, which may or may not be depicted. Also, both on the left and right we have illustrated two distinctions between the two betrayals and what makes the scenes opposite. These betrayal scenes also differentiate the reproachments of two characters of their betrayals. For instance, Peter's betrayal is

²⁶ "An one of them that stood by, drawing a sword, struck a servant of the chief priest, and cut off his ear." Mark 14:47.

²⁷ "And said: What will you give me to betray him to you? They weighed him out thirty pieces of silver" Matthew 26:15.

forgivable, as he realizes his true faith to Christ and since he acted out of fear. On the other hand, Judas' actions directly effected Christ's life and Judas played a larger role of the betrayal. Both betrayals serve to illustrate the temptations of betrayal driven by fear and greed.

This scheme on the left of betrayal and death is coupled with the theme of faith and forgiveness on the right side of Christ. All of the imagery follows this compositional schematic equation. This theme maintains its significance throughout the composition with the continuation of the discussion of compositional elements and characters.

The Perimeter

Certain elements within the perimeter are connected either through visual ties by objects stretching over areas or by juxtapositions to other elements. The significance of the objects in the periphery develops the already substantial thematic narrative. For instance, the whips hanging on the column are also a main element of Christ's Passion.

Et postquam flagellaverint, occident eum, et tertia die
resurget.²⁸

Keeping with the theme of betrayal, the cock that marked the moment of *Peter's Denial of Christ* stands on the top of the column where the whips hang, to underscore how betrayals so intertwine with the Passion of Christ.

Not all of the objects stem from orthodox textual sources, but rather had grown into the culture from oral or even written apocrypha. The Synoptic Gospels do not mention the ladder, for instance, which appears in so many representations of the Passion. Along with objects omitted from the Synoptic

²⁸"They will flog him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise again" Luke 18:33.

Gospels, there are also images not specifically from the Life of Christ, but which came to serve symbolically, such as the pelican and its young.

The Upper Narrative

The pelican at the apex of the painting consolidates the liturgical reading of the entire painting, serving as its emblematic essence. Interestingly, this image of the pelican is emblematic. However, this object is not from the New Testament. The pelican at the top of the section of the altarpiece was first noted in Physiologus Book of *Beastiere*, as an early Christian work gave description of real or fabulous animals, each having an allegorical interpretation. Written between the third and fourth centuries in Alexandria, translated into Latin in about 400 AD, then various translations followed during the middle ages.²⁹ Over a century earlier, Dante, himself a Florentine native, referred to Christ as "Nostro Pellicano" within *La Divina Comedia*.

Questi e colui che giacque sopra 'l petto del nostro pellicano, e questi fue d'in su la croce la grande office elate.³⁰

Christ as our pelican alludes to the act of Christ's ultimate self-sacrifice for humankind, for the pelican allegedly sacrificed itself by pecking its chest to bleed so that the young could feed off it and survive. In direct contrast, Peter and Judas, the two figures that betray Christ in the Passion appear below the pelican. Although betrayers of Christ, by their juxtaposition, Peter and Judas can also be viewed as the young feeding off the adult pelican, that symbol for Christ. Their betrayals, after all, teach

²⁹Knight, "Physiologus", *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://newadvent.org/cathen/12068a.htm>, March 2000.

³⁰"This is the one who lay upon the breast of Him our Pelican; and this is He to the great office from the cross elected." (Dante, *Paradiso* c. XXV 112-114).

the need for salvation through Christ, who as the pelican, adopts a sapient parental role to humankind as his children. As diametric examples, Peter and Judas point out the need for repentance. Yet, the children of the pelican are innately innocent only needing survival. Whereas in contrast, Peter and Judas are not innocent but serve as examples, as ignorant, for others to learn from. They too in a different sense though need a parent for survival. As the adult pelican, Christ sacrifices himself for the salvation and survival of the needy. In both cases, the similarity between the survival and salvation are viewed by the audience, one from a more simplistic source of Physiologus, but then applied to Christ. The viewer then begins to associate the imagery between the sacrificing of both the pelican and Christ as interchangeable. The nearby chalice and the other communion objects directly involves the viewers, who through the rite of Communion, participate in the eating of the body [bread] and blood [wine] of Christ, as an act of salvation. In this manner, the audience enters personally into the theme of the painting.

The pelican at the apex of the painting also clarifies the meaning of the scene of Christ with Mary and John the Evangelist. Without the pelican, there would be clearly only a distinct good and bad side, even in relation to St. John and the Virgin, an arrangement fixed by the cross, which divides the composition straight down the center. The characters of Judas and Peter at the top of the painting dwell above the cross itself, separated from the lower half of the painting. There will be a greater discussion about the relationship of the vertical and horizontal divisions later in chapter three. Lorenzo Monaco has placed all elements involved in the betrayal on the left side of Christ, the *sinistra*, or sinister side. For this narrative of left

and right, bad and good to stand true, the image of the gird would have to represent a scene of faith rather than as part of any betrayal. The woman at Christ's right may represent the woman from Galilee, however her close juxtaposition to the ladder, and Pilate's washing of the hands indicates that this woman represents Pilate's wife. Most important to the composition, each character and object here relate to the major and reoccurring theme of faith. Lorenzo Monaco explores and practices a web of interrelated relationships, which mirror the narrative of the Passion with illustrations of various relationships in their myriad interconnections. Juxtapositions among the images primarily teach us the strife of Christ, yet other messages to the viewer also extend beyond this first theme through compositional divisions and character placements.

This chapter illustrates how various juxtapositions of vignettes not only guide their reader's comprehension, but also set out a map of diverse methodological strategies that the remainder of this thesis will develop. The questions that arise from this reading involve the composition of the imagery and the specific juxtaposition of images. We also need ask how each episode relates to the others, given their careful selection from the broader field of narratives from the Passion. In an attempt to understand the semantics of this painting, I will look immediately to Florentine society, other depictions of the *Man of Sorrows*, and finally the political realm, which shaped fifteenth-century Florentine society.

Chapter Two

As we have discussed the painting at some length, it is necessary to also bring Florence under inspection in light of how its society shaped Lorenzo Monaco and his audiences. First, looking to specifics, one particular political figure of Florence during the era of Lorenzo Monaco and his impact upon the culture.

Coluccio Salutati

Florentine culture nurtured a flourishing humanist culture focused upon the Classical writings and philosophies; a following sparked by Plutarch, himself a native of Florence. One particular man stands out in association with Lorenzo Monaco and his monastery: Coluccio Salutati, who had a major impact on the overall community of.

Scholars dispute the effect of Coluccio Salutati on his contemporaries. Bertold Ullmann, in *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati*, c. 1963, claims that Coluccio made no lasting impression on Florence, a view point that contrasts sharply with substantial evidence that Coluccio's writings were distributed in several drafts throughout the monasteries of Florence and around surrounding towns. Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists of 1390-1460*, 1963, notes that Coluccio was very much involved in the politics of Florence and that:

De Tyranno, Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan feared the pen of Coluccio Salutati more than he feared a troop of horseman.³¹

This statement opens an interesting avenue as Giangaleazzo Visconti was

³¹ According to Martines, this was a political commentary, not literary, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Commentari rerum memorabilium* (Frankfurt, 1614). Martines, 1963: 252.

elevated to the position of Duke by King Wenceslas IV.

...the status of duke was assailed as a dismemberment of the empire and enabled the electors to act as the indignant defenders of the integrity of the Reich against a wasteful and proliferate king.³²

Giangaleazzo Visconti did not achieve popularity from his new status within some Italian regions, as Milan posed a threat to Florence's power, and therefore Wenceslas did not redeem himself. More information regarding Wenceslas will be discussed in greater detail later in the thesis.

Salutati's views and words made him a popular figure of Florence. In several instances, written statements also ensured that prosperity and materialistic comforts be given to his sons, both in Florence and outside of it, after his own death in 1406.³³

According to Ullmann, Salutati followed both the doctrines of Seneca and the Bible, as most people did at this time, along with the writings of Petrarch, St. Augustine and others. In fact, he spent most of his time writing letters that became particularly famous while he resided in Florence. He wrote private and public letters to many other men in the notary profession, but also to several other persons including people as diverse as

...three popes, several cardinals, bishops, heads of state in Italy, including the King of Naples, Humanists such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, Antonio Loschi and Giovanni Conversino da Ravenna, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Margrave of Moravia, Juan Fernandez de Heredia, Jean de Montreuil, and one woman.

These letters also range in content from translations of text from ancient sources, literary criticism, debated historical questions, and diverse philosophical themes.³⁴ Ullmann discusses the style as well as the themes of Salutati, which the Humanists had seen as intimately linked, in keeping with

³² Wysiwyg://133http://www.britannic.../printable/5/0,5722,109155,00html. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999.

³³ Martines, 1963: 252-254.

³⁴ Ullmann, 1963:20-21.

Classical as well as medieval traditions.

Salutati influenced Florentine society in other ways as well, for his opinion was sought and respected. An admiring student, Giovanni da San Miniato, once wrote to him to voice his disillusionment in studying the Classics as a poet. Salutati advised Giovanni to explore the monastic life, specifically to enter the Camaldolese monastery Santa Maria degli Angeli, which he eventually did.

It is here where Coluccio Salutati becomes more intertwined with Lorenzo Monaco and Santa Maria degli Angeli. In 1381, Coluccio wrote *De seculo et religione* fulfilling a request of a Camaldolese monk who had wished that his "determination to remain in the monastery be strengthened."³⁵ This manuscript consists of several books each addressing specific benefits of monastic life. So many copies were made for different monasteries that over thirty copies still exist today. Book I addresses the evils of secular life, while Book II discusses the joys of monastic life. This intersection of the secular and the monastic causes Ullmann to ponder whether Salutati wrote more as a medieval scholastic or a humanist in content as well as style.³⁶ Ullman states that Salutati rarely quotes medieval writers, yet remembers to include his Biblical and Classical sources. This mix suggests to me that Salutati may have venerated the Classics, however he used them in such a way indicative of a person or population that still thought in medieval terms.

Salutati also contemplated other topics which directly coincided with themes of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*. One of Salutati's treatises approaches the subject of free will, a familiar theme throughout Lorenzo Monaco's painting. It is in Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* that free will is emphasized with the characters of Peter and Judas. Both Peter and Judas

³⁵Ullmann, 1963: 26.

³⁶Ullmann, 1963: 47-49.

demonstrate to the viewer two types of free will, and the particular consequences faced by each are not illustrated but known. Salutati's *De fato et fortuna*, surviving today, was quite popular when completed around 1396-1398. His discussion of free will demonstrates its popularity as a topic of the time, and it is imperative for us to grasp Coluccio's political and social popularity in order to comprehend where this society operates on particular beliefs and attitudes, specifically towards the Great Schism.

According to Lauro Martines, the Camaldolese Monastery Santa Maria degli Angeli was a mecca for humanists, statesmen, prelates, and visiting literary figures.³⁷ Martines notes, however, that the participants of the humanist gatherings in Santa Maria degli Angeli avoided the subject of Florentine politics as early as in the 1420s, because the presence of Ambrogio Traversari, Medici, Valori, and the Pieruzzi in the group almost made it become "torn and dissolved."³⁸ Martinez also attempts to draw our attention to Salutati's cynical attitude and emotions towards politics as a whole. At this time, he was concerned with the unification of Italy and wanted to put an end to the Schism. So much aggravation and frustration gave way to a series of letters by Salutati that attracted much attention. At one point an Antipope was elected and Salutati wrote a letter to the French cardinals whom he held "responsible" for the Schism. Devotedly a Florentine and one of their strongest voices, Salutati otherwise despised the interference of the French, English, and Germans, although he remained always civil to all foreigners.³⁹ Coluccio Salutati brings understanding to the Florentine community and Lorenzo Monaco and also offers some insight to the Great Western Schism. With a clearer comprehension of Coluccio's ties with

³⁷ Martines, 1963: 311.

³⁸ Martines, 1963: 311.

³⁹ Ullmann, 1963: 79-81.

the Florentine community, we assume that society believed and supported his views respectfully. Although there is no clear documentation that states a relationship between Coluccio and Lorenzo, the notion that Coluccio and other prominent figures discussed political and social issues within the walls of Santa Maria degli Angeli points out that Lorenzo and other monks within the monastery were aware of the meetings and the subjects discussed. Coluccio's views were negative and outspoken towards the Great Western Schism he wanted an end to it.

A key figure in Florentine life, Coluccio Salutati articulated the popular political and ethical thoughts of his city, those foundations of method and reason for this time frame. His writings give us an intellectual frame within which we might better understand the subtleties of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*. As there exists an ambiguity between a distinct following and nuances of Coluccio's writings, the same stands for Lorenzo and his *Man of Sorrows*.

The Camaldolese Order

Where Coluccio Salutati presents us a key to the intellectual, yet popular sensibilities of Lorenzo's era, the Camaldolese monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli brings together the two directly, socially and professionally. To fully understand the life of Lorenzo Monaco, we must review the history and focus of the Camaldolese order. Several contemporary sources thoroughly record the history of the Camaldolese from the account of its founder, St. Romuald, but then go on to relate inconclusive and often contradictory information, when compared among themselves and with later literature.⁴⁰

⁴⁰In fact another method of distancing one self from the world included the changing of ones name upon entering a monastery, Ullmann, 1963: 170.

Also, we must look to the spirituality of the Benedictine order as well, because its roots lie at the core of the beliefs and practices of the Camaldolese order. The Benedictine Rule reveals many of the beliefs and characteristics of the order, particularly in its focus on two basic foundations for spirituality: humility and obedience to God. Prayer, central for the Benedictines, sought to promote conscious thoughts, on issues such as the monk's own personal sin, God's continual presence, and the monk's need of his mercy. There could be no separation between the love of God and the love of one's brethren in order to achieve the perfect love for which St. Benedict strove.

In the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, A. Giambbani describes the purely contemplative and eremitic practice of the Camaldoli, which followed the model of St. Romuald. The account written by Vigilucci, *Camaldoli: A Journey Into Its History and Spirituality*, illustrates a man who traveled extensively, trying twice to journey to Hungary, but failing to because of illnesses. Curiously enough, this constant travel made him more nomadic than eremitic, but Marvin Eisenberg in his *Lorenzo Monaco*, 1989, explains that the Camaldolese followed the Observance Movement of the Benedictine and Franciscan orders, both of which ideally were against rigid institutionalism.⁴¹

After the Black Death, the monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli experienced great wealth and prosperity, as it was the only Camaldolese center thriving in Tuscany. A while later in 1390, the monastery faced a dispute between Giovanni da Samminiato and humanist scholar Coluccio Salutati. This dispute promoted the famous writing *Lucula Noctis* of 1405, by Giovanni Dominici, who held an antihumanist attitude in thinking that

⁴¹Eisenberg, 1989: 6.

classical literature led to sin. Coluccio Salutati thought differently.

In 1400, at the age of fourteen, Ambrogio Traversari came to Santa Maria degli Angeli, to become a leading Camaldolese scholar and eventually General of the Order later in the 1430's. While Marvin Eisenberg states that the monks at Santa Maria degli Angeli took an antihumanistic position, Lino Vigilucci explains that Traversari "began his humanistic studies November 5, 1401" at Santa Maria degli Angeli.⁴² Despite the antihumanist attitudes described by Eisenberg, the evidence for humanistic development within the walls of Santa Maria degli Angeli at this time is strong. Traversari's thought thoroughly includes Petrarch throughout his *Ambrosii Traversarii generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad ipsum et ad alios de eodem Ambrosio latinae epistolae*, volume I, in which he discusses Petrarch's vital role in the shaping of the Florentine Republic.

Traversari also wrote of Salutati when a senator of Florence had exalted the humanist and encouraged his philosophy to be tradition of Florentine politics.

...Leontii quoque traditione usus est Coluccio Salutati. In Codice membranaceo Philippi Guadagnii Equitis, ac Senatoris Florentini exstat Colucci opusculum, in quo explicat allegoriam Tragoediae, cui Titulus Hercules Furens...⁴³

The two accounts by Eisenberg and Vigilucci do not coincide here as Eisenberg states that humanism came into the monastery after Traversari came to Santa Maria degli Angeli. However Vigilucci notes that Traversari was only fourteen when he began his humanistic education in the monastery, which suggests it safe to say that the humanistic thought and practices had made

⁴²Vigilucci, 1988: 90.

⁴³ "Coluccio Salutati also used the translation of leontius. In the codex of Philippi Guadagnii Equitis, a Florentine Senator, also survives the little work of Coluccio's, in which he explains the allegory of the tragedy, which is titled heracles furens" (a surviving play by Euripides). Forni, 1968: CCLXXII.

their way into Santa Maria degli Angeli and were well established despite the Observant beliefs and disputes by Giovanni da Samminiato.⁴⁴ Also, around 1400, "a man from the east", Dominic Scarano, became a monk at Santa Maria degli Angeli bringing with him Greek humanist learning. Given the humanist gatherings taking place within the walls of Santa Maria degli Angeli, and the presence of intellectuals such as Salutati, Scarano, and Traversari, Lorenzo Monaco would definitely have been exposed to the developments of humanist thought.

However, the works of Lorenzo Monaco do not characterize the paradigmatic paintings of the Renaissance, an issue that will be examined later in this thesis. Rather than arguing whether his paintings better fit the constraining labels of "Gothic" or "Renaissance", we might instead ask whether his works fit into neither.

At this time of humanistic expansion into Santa Maria degli Angeli, the arts also flourished within the monastery. Lorenzo Monaco achieved popularity and opened his own workshop, which even included fellow monks helping with production. Given this environment, we might anticipate a relatively traditional iconography, firmly rooted in monastic legacy, but also to expect a complex manipulation of this language through innovative compositions and juxtapositions to intelligently probe their spiritual meanings. In many ways, this balance parallels the writings of Coluccio Salutati. As a Medievalist or a Humanist, both Lorenzo Monaco and Coluccio Salutati fall under a definition of ambiguity which defines their era: of a society who claimed humanistic identity without the voicing their continued

⁴⁴ "The Camaldolese scholar Ambrogio Traversari, who came to Santa Maria degli Angeli in 1400 and served as the General of the Order in the 1430's, supported the pietistic, conservative demands of the Observance order and at the same time fostered Florentine humanism" (p. 7). This statement makes it sound like humanism did not arrive to Santa Maria degli Angeli until after Ambrogio's arrival, and that he brought it there in the first place, when in actuality it already existed there with the same dynamics and dualism of humanism and Observance, Vigilucci and Eisenberg, 1989:7.

reliance upon the medieval institutions of monasticism, monarchy, and politics. These dichotomies of the early fifteenth century lie at the core of Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows*.

Chapter Three

The world of Lorenzo Monaco contains many, apparently to the modern viewer, dichotomies, balancing between Gothic and Renaissance, Humanist and Catholic, monastic and urban, personal and public. Might we instead see the diametric nature of these realms as due to our own preconceptions of the age, and instead look to how they could easily co-exist within Florentine society, even as complements to one another? Reassessing our traditional view of fifteenth-century history will better prepare us to understand the *Man of Sorrows* within its own culture. As we have seen, Lorenzo Monaco had ample exposure to the leading ideas of his day, and so would have employed them in his exploration of the significance of the *Man of Sorrows*, for personal introspection and public sermon, for intellectual comprehension and mystical knowledge, and also for present Florentine relevance and a broader universal resonance.

The Characters and Objects Chosen

Now that all the characters and objects have been identified, the question arises as to why such characters and objects were chosen. Lorenzo Monaco set out to communicate a specific message with the images and depiction of particular gestures. The characters of Christ, the Virgin, and St. John the Evangelist appear as iconic presences central to the sense of *The Man of Sorrows* as the essence of the Pieta. The principal theme of the *Man of Sorrows* centres on the dead, or dying, Christ, which traces back to the *Christus patiens* type of crucifix that had evolved over the twelfth century, in replacement of the victorious Christ transcendent over death,

termed the *Christus triumphans*.⁴⁵ As noted before, stripped of any chronological, spatial, or narrative order, the objects and figures float in a synthetic composition prompting symbolic correspondences. Removed from any narrative context, the separate images function as symbolic units conveying basic iconographic meanings, which expand as they interact in the greater composition to promote a more complex understanding of Christ's death.

Juxtaposition of Figures

Let us turn to specific examples to explore how the painting's composition prompts viewers to engage in an active process of discovering meaning within a familiar iconography. Each image on the left side of Christ has a specific tie to the theme of betrayal, which focuses the viewer on the need for salvation in relation to the Passion. The images on the left become through their thematic interaction separated from any actual narratives of the betrayal. Judas and Peter operate as foils to one another in their relation to Christ, to teach wider allegorical and moral lessons. Rather than relating the betrayal stories as histories, the concise images instead reference the original narratives to appropriate their meanings for the greater context of the *Man of Sorrows* and salvation.

Viewing the above scenes of Judas and Peter, it initially appears that Judas is illustrated on the left side of the Christ in the center of the composition. Yet, at the top is a distinctly separate scene of Judas with smaller representation of Christ. It is here where Judas appears on the right side of this smaller Christ figure even though Judas has been placed on the left side of the larger, central Christ, illustrating the *Kiss of Judas*.

The juxtaposition of this theme with the parallel vignette involving

⁴⁵ Discusses the similarities between Christ in Crucifixion and Man of Sorrow representations, Marvin Eisenberg, "A Crucifix and a Man of Sorrows by Lorenzo Monaco", *Art Quarterly*, 1955.

St. Peter further underscores this message. While Judas had kissed Christ to identify which man the soldiers should bring to Pilate, Peter also had betrayed him by refusing to admit being one of his disciples. During the night of Christ's interrogation, a maid points to Peter and says, "'This man was also with him'", which Peter denies successively in three different instances.⁴⁶ While each of them have betrayed Christ, here represented in the physical act of pointing, both on the right side of Christ, because of the separate scene of Judas with a smaller, second representation of Christ, they have done so differently. Lorenzo indicates to the viewer this scheme by depicting one as the accused and one as the accuser. This same type of paralleling occurs in Giotto's Arena Chapel narrative, which mirrors Judas with the Virgin on the apse wall, and also pairs the scenes of the *Betrayal of Christ* with *Meeting at the Golden Gate* with Anna and Joachim. As these examples indicate, Judas had come to represent the standard foil contrasted with images of faith.⁴⁷ In the *Man of Sorrows*, Mary kneels on the right side of Christ (our left), the side of faith, in her role as the "true church" and intercessor for humankind. However, a further reading offers more disclosure for comprehending Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows* and his time.

Another juxtaposition of imagery between the left and right halves of the composition involve water and fire. The torch on the left, associated with the betrayal scene, lies just below the upper depiction of Christ before Judas kisses him. The fire suggests a foreshadowing of the death of Christ, as the flames overlap the cross itself and reach towards Christ. The fire alludes Dante's *Inferno* from the *Divine Comedy* as fire reminds the viewer of hell. As the *Inferno* resembles the key for understanding Dante's *Divine*

⁴⁶Douay Version, *The Holy Bible*, reprint of the 1826 in 1914: Luke 22:64.

⁴⁷Granted the reflecting of the scenes are not as striking as in the Arena Chapel but however does raise the issue of a connected theme present in *The Man of Sorrows*. Derbes and Sandona, "Barren Metal and the Fruitful Womb: The Program of Giotto's Arena Chapel in Padua," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol., LXXX, no. 2, 1998: 282-283.

Comedy, the *Inferno* acts as a key for understanding the composition of Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows*. There are several verses in the *Inferno* that talks about the properties of the *Inferno*, such as who is in the *Inferno* and why. One such being the disclusion of the Virgin.

The Virgin is not expressedly named anywhere in the *Inferno*, Hell being a place where mercy does not enter. 'Donna e gentil nel ciel che si compagne di questo 'mpedimento ov' io ti mondo, si che duro giudicio la su frange.'⁴⁸

The water, on the right side of Christ, however, represents Pilate's washing his hands of the condemnation of Christ, to transfer responsibility of the situation to the populace who has so demanded the Crucifixion.⁴⁹ Water also alludes to the nature and meaning of baptism. That fire, as destructive as it might be, can be extinguished by water suggests possibly a metaphor of faith extinguishing sin. Water and fire are also part of the four elements which classical literature, known through humanistic teachings, discussed so extensively.

The left and right scheme for dividing the composition extends to those images on the perimeter of the panel. On the left side of Christ, a column stands with whips hanging from the Corinthian capital. My proposal for the purpose and placement of this image requires us to first enter an excursus on the politics of the era. Several other depictions of the *Man of Sorrows* do not include this particular placement of the Corinthian capital, but instead place it on the left side of Christ. I suspect that through this device, Lorenzo Monaco addresses the central concerns and frustrations of the Great Schism.

⁴⁸Graudgent, ed., 1972: 24, *Inferno*, Canto II, footnote 94.

⁴⁹Ferguson, 1961: 87.

During this time, the Great Western Schism (1378-1417), brought to the forefront questions on the balance between noble and papal powers in temporal rule, framing more general discussions on the philosophy of government. These debates led many regions of Europe to go on their own separate ways of government in this time of great confusion, one which Walter Ullmann, *The Origins of the Great Schism: A Study In Fourteenth Century Ecclesiastical History*, 1948, characterizes by referring to the Schism as "The Storm".⁵⁰ Ambrogio Traversari noted the behavior of Popes and Kings in his *Ambrosii Traversarii generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad ipsum et ad alios eodum Ambrosio latinae epistolae*, which underscores its currency in world of the Camaldolese Order.

Throughout the medieval era, the tense monarchical relationship between the German territories and the states of northern Italian region had been evident during the Trecento and beyond. According to Joachim Leuschner, the Italian region was "in a state of upheaval" during the medieval era. City-states and families of the Italian territories were in constant battle, in struggles for political power as a series of lordships, and dynasties of town rulers constructed expanding rule over neighbouring territories. Powerful families created dynasties controlling various towns: the Visconti family, for example controlled the government of Milan, the Este family ruled in Ferrara, and so forth. Robert of Anjou, the King of Naples (1309-1343), occupied an abandoned Rome around 1330, to rule it and its extensive territories. Meanwhile, Florence, Venice, and Genoa, among others, experienced an economic boom driven by the ruling democratic guilds, which brought these towns relative stability, although internal conflict remained between the guilds tried and the ancient families whom they had deposed.

⁵⁰Ullmann, 1948: ix.

Tension among the states often ran high, prompting numerous wars with their inevitable exiles.⁵¹ As part of an international community, each city-state also aligned itself with one of the two over-arching powers, the Imperial powers of the Holy Roman Empire ruled from the German north, and the papacy, who relied on one another for legitimacy, yet struggled with one for dominance.

An incident involving King Wenceslas of Bohemia well illuminates the relationship between the Germanic north and the Italian states at this time. Wenceslas ruled from 1378-1400 in which he acquired the problems left by his father Charles IV. However, his habits and personality did not aid with his relations of critics and society.

Wenceslas' (Wenzle) habitual indolence and drunkenness, vices that increased as he grew older, excited the indignation of his critics. His prolonged periods of residence in Bohemia betrayed his lack of interest in German affairs and allowed the continuous friction between princes, cities, and nobility to develop into open warfare.⁵²

After the papal reign returned to Rome in 1380 with the help of Saint Catherine of Siena and Pope Gregory XI (who had died in 1378), Rome seemed restored as the seat of the papacy after its removal to Avignon in 1309. However, the election of Pope Urban VI failed to please the people of Rome and the cardinals; the cardinals of France decided to elect their own pope, Clement VII. King Wenceslas and the Rhenish electors with territorial rulers recognized Pope Urban, whereas France, the Iberian Kingdoms, Scotland, and Naples supported Pope Clement. Of course, both popes believed himself the only rightful pope.

Wenceslas became caught in between the politics of princes, and seemed less concerned with the papal split. This schism became more of an

⁵¹Leuschner, 1980:109-181.

⁵²Wysiwyg://133http://www.britannic.../printable/5/0,5722,109155,00html. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999.

opportunity for political propaganda, for in 1397 the major committees under Wenceslas wanted to remove him from his official position. Wenceslas continued to divide the land under different representatives, causing tensions with either one or the other of the popes as well as the communities of multiply divided regions for political and economical reasons. On several occasions, King Wenceslas deprived baronial families of their properties and lost their estates where the baronial class conspired armed groups.

Interestingly, Klassen in his *The Nobility and the Making of the Hussite Revolution*, 1978, then describes that Bohemia developed a divided polity by the fourteenth century which enabled the royal power and the land to hold official rights, each having its own offices and vicinity, the royal division having power over both the royal arenas and ecclesiastical districts.⁵³ This point presents an important concept which may have been overlooked, namely the concept of regions operating separately by dukes and nobility, which illustrates not only the microcosm of fragmented order in Europe, but also reflects that of the macrocosm of government and the Holy Roman Empire.

Wenceslas planned to gain power of all the nobility's land but was stopped forcefully by the remaining nobles in power. Fifteen years of keeping the nobility's access to power limited had earned Wenceslas a bad reputation, although not universally, for the royalty of France and England, who lived off of some the properties, supported his polity. However, his plan to end the Schism, came to an end between 1394 and 1403.⁵⁴

Another incident that caused controversy is the death of St. John Nepomuk (Nepomucene or Pomuk). The story begins strangely because there seems to be more than one John Nepomuk who lived in Prague during the second half of the fourteenth century meeting with the same fate. Most modern

⁵³Klassen, 1978: 48.

⁵⁴Klassen, 1978: 49-54.

historians agree though that there was only one John Nepomuk, who was murdered by Wenceslas by being thrown into the river Moldau on March 20, 1393. One version of this gruesome outcome begins with after the ordered death of Abbot Rarek, Wenceslas ordered that no new abbot shall be elected. Four monks elected a new abbot along with the confirmation of John Nepomuk immediately, and Wenceslas put them in prison where they were tortured. John of Nepomuk could not be forced to confess, as he resisted through the many tortures. Therefore, the king paraded John Nepomuk through the city with a block of wood in his mouth, then tossed him into the river. The public deemed Nepomuk as innocent, averring that Wenceslas had murdered an innocent man, which created the status for John as a Saint of the people.⁵⁵

In 1400, the assembly gathered and accused the unpopular Wenceslas of granting concessions of the Empire, because Wenceslas had the duty of "ending the Schism" and had not succeeded.⁵⁶ The electors selected a new person to represent them, Count Palatine Rupert, who as king had little success in correcting Wenceslas' mistakes, and failed in an alliance campaign with Florence against Milan. During the Spring and Summer of 1401, documents record a "nervous and uncertain" tension among the Florentines, because of the indecisiveness on policies created to suppress revolts "with allies and potential allies".⁵⁷ When Wenceslas had refused to resign as Roman Emperor, the Signoria of Florence had asked Pope Boniface IX to urge Rupert to Italy.⁵⁸ After a price was offered for Rupert's visit to Italy, he finally arrived, yet to Florence's surprise, as invader and not protector. In a short period of time, Florence lost Bologna, but fortunately Giangaleazzo Visconti of

⁵⁵Wheatcroft, 1995: 179, 197.

⁵⁶Leuschner1980: 183.

⁵⁷Brucker, 1977: 175.

⁵⁸Brucker, 1977: 176.

Milan died, ending his lengthy siege of the Tuscan city. One contemporary wrote:

...all the freedom of Italy lay in the hands of the Florentines alone, that every power had deserted them...⁵⁹

This moment in history had faced the Florentines with extreme political uncertainty. Between the humanistic meetings in Santa Maria degli Angeli, Colluccio Salutati's role in this whole affair, as humanist who likened Florence's plight to that of ancient Rome, and the dangerous events surrounding their city, the Florentines pulled their resources together in an attempt to create a sovereign society. To conclude what happened to Wenceslas: King Sigismund, his brother, took him hostage in 1402 from Bohemia to Vienna.⁶⁰ In 1409 the cardinals from each region fought further over the papal succession and the Great Council, while Gregory XII (Urban's successor) and Benedict XIII (Clement's successor) rivaled, until both were replaced and deserted with the election of Alexander V from Pisa. Benedict XIII appointed Alexander V as pope of Avignon but how can that be true when Benedict himself rivaled against Gregory XII.

The next couple of decades continued with equal frustration for the Florentines. During 1431-1437, after the Imperial crowning of Sigismund, reforms of the church occurred once again in an attempt to find a solution between the powers. Finally the counsel split, causing the seat of the pope to bounce from Ferrara, in 1439, to Florence, and then back to Rome in 1442. According to Klassen, it seems that the Reformation of the Church did not work, as there still existed a papal split after 1417. The antipapal attitudes were not diminished but rather ignored as the Emperor continued

⁵⁹Brucker, 1977: 185-186.

⁶⁰Klassen, 1978: 58.

with other matters. In 1416, the territory of France, the Roman region, and the German Empire had no definite foundation of language or even statehood while Milan, Venice, and Florence fought periodically among one another; Sigismund unsuccessfully made peace among the regions 1431-1433.⁶¹ The situation among the regions depended upon higher political powers in an international arena, which left each community to deal with the changes in its own manner.

Lorenzo Monaco's role, as painter and monk, in the active, humanistic community of Santa Maria degli Angeli, leads us to look for evidence of how these political and social circumstances affected the art of fifteenth-century Florence, specifically here, in his *Man of Sorrows*. Although ostensibly a religious work, it cannot but address political concerns as well, given the close relationship between the two in that era. The sufferings of Christ and the need for faith, the painting's central themes, would have particular currency in a city long taxed by international political events.

As the locus of Christ's flagellation, an apt metaphor for how Florence perceived itself in its siege, the column would represent an ideal candidate for representing a political commentary within the scheme of this composition. Also other characteristics of what this Schism actually meant does not relate at all with the Great Eastern Schism as it involved a "real revolt against the supreme authority of the church".⁶²

Bishops, princes, theologians, and canonists were in a state of perplexity from which they could not emerge in consequence of the conflicting, not disinterested, and perhaps insincere testimony of the cardinals. Thenceforth how were the faithful to dispel uncertainty and form a morally sure opinion? They relied on their natural leader, and

⁶¹Klassen, 1978: 58.

⁶² Knight, "The Western Schism," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://newadvent.org/cathen/13539a.htm>, March 2000.

these, not knowing exactly what to hold, followed their interests...It was a terrible and distressing problem which lasted forty years and tormented two generations of Christians; a schism in the course which there was no schismatic intersection...⁶³

A sense of unity was lost in the church, which then became a sought notion for a way of living. There seemed no head of the church because there were too many; their guidance was dispersed. At the time of this painting however, a sense of unity was finally and optimally obtained. Florence also as a unity celebrated their society as well as all cultural aspects by inclusion of past and present systems while constantly seeking unity of the "True Church of Jesus Christ", which now took precedence over reform.⁶⁴ During such a period of time where society felt a need to unify, in a sense, their church or the leaders of the church for several generations would not surprisingly cause a particular sensation or obsession with the notion or sense of unity. Unity also creates sense of order, meaning and direction. As mentioned earlier in a quote, Coluccio reflected upon his time that Florence had a certain role, possibly one of the leading towards a sense of unity, a sense of worth by taking her culture and embracing the amalgam of theologians, princes and bishops.

Placed parallel to the column is the staff holding the sponge with vinegar, which refers specifically to the Crucifixion. Our eye automatically travels upwards towards the top with the vinegar-soaked sponge and the hammer used to nail Christ to the Cross, here not held by hands but just hanging off of the Cross itself.⁶⁵ At the base of the column John sits in front, bringing an association between the two images. Why would Lorenzo Monaco associate John, the beloved disciple, with the left side of Christ, on the side of

⁶³ Knight, "The Western Schism," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://newadvent.org/cathen/13539a.htm>, March 2000.

⁶⁴ Knight, "The Western Schism," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://newadvent.org/cathen/13539a.htm>, March 2000.

⁶⁵ Ferguson, 1954: 179.

betrayal, when the composition features such a distinction between left and right?

On the right side of Christ stands the ladder, used by the faithful to remove Christ from the Cross after his death. From the ladder hangs the seamless robe with which the soldiers clothed Christ after stripping him of his clothes. This cloth is the same garment on which the soldiers cast lots as Christ hung on the cross. Above the ladder, itself a symbol of faith as an object of the Deposition, Lorenzo includes more instruments associated with the Crucifixion. The three nails appear out of the Cross to show that they, and Christ himself, have been removed, showing them as objects of the Passion for contemplation.

The placement of the instruments of the Passion, including the nails and the hammer, prompts a horizontal reading of the composition. Those instruments associated with the Descent from the Cross are located directly below Peter, while those instruments used to nail Christ to the Cross are located below Judas. These placements further support the compositional division of the right as the location of the good from the left, the locus of the bad.

Multiple Divisions

While the composition marks good and evil through its left and right division, it also guides viewers to read it in other ways, in presenting pairs of vignettes along the horizontal axis, and diagonal correspondences. Situated on the top of the painting, the Pelican mirrors the actual Man of Sorrows at the base, as demonstrated earlier, to indicate how the children of the Pelican feed off the parent as it sacrifices itself for their survival, as Christ sacrificed himself for his followers. The mirroring of the Pelican

and Jesus appear earlier within Jacopone da Todi's *Lauds*, in his "How the Life of Jesus is the Mirror of the Soul". The liturgical imagery provided in Jacopone's *Lauds* also helps translate some of the abstract qualities and juxtapositions of Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows*. As Jacopone identifies himself through Christ as a mirror, so too, would the viewers look to the *Man of Sorrows*.⁶⁶

To see my deformities in the mirror of truth, the life of Jesus Christ, to see them, Lord, in that blinding light! Once I looked on myself as a person of some importance and my self-esteem helped to brighten my days. But as I peered into that mirror the reflected light lit up my life, in mired depths. Looking into that mirror and then at the vile-smelling pit into which I had sunk, I wept bitterly at the chasm between the two.⁶⁷

Also, the sun and moon at the top of the painting correlates in this horizontal mirroring with the characters of Peter and Judas. The fall of night biblically refers to Christ's crucifixion as the earth became dark, while the story of Judas lead to the Crucifixion itself. The horizontal paradox of fire and water presents a horizontal analogy as well with the ladder and the column. In this manner, the horizontal dichotomy created throughout the composition complements the vertical pairings.

In addition to the vertical and horizontal correspondences of the *Man of Sorrows*, we also see several diagonal patterns used to guide the viewer. One of the most prominent diagonals, appropriately enough, follows the sword cutting off the soldier's ear by Peter, from the Kiss of Judas, pointing to Peter in the upper right hand corner. The sword's cutting the ear off on the left also follows the fear and ignorance division, in which associates scenes on the left with ignorance. Lorenzo makes it possible that more than one

⁶⁶Hughes, 1982: 137.

⁶⁷Hughes, 1982: 137.

division serves for any given reading of this painting. Furthermore, he has made it possible to work many readings into one scene.

Another diagonal involves the spear, located on the left, which was used to cut Christ on his side. The cut on Christ's body is actually situated on the right though, creating a division of time and space, again, but also a division of sin and faith. The cut appears on Christ's right side, mirroring the blood of the Pelican's wound above.

The tensions between faith and betrayal stand out as the dominant comparisons between the left and right sides, but the polarization between the halves becomes stronger when the viewer takes the ladder and the column into consideration. Their placement on opposing sides underscores their separation of contemplative religion and its active playing out in the political world. The placement of the column on the left as a political statement underscores its connection to betrayal. While Lorenzo Monaco and his patrons did not indicate whom they might have supported politically, the painting suggests a strong leaning to the maintenance of religion as dominant over any political order. The left side, where Judas through active hands undermines Christian order, directly contrasts with the right, where Peter betrayed and repented, through a contemplative process reflected in the absence of hands in this half.

The overall message of the iconic vignettes, as they each confront betrayal and faith, reflect the cycle of faith, bringing the audience to the themes of Damnation and Salvation. In order to truly believe in Christ's truth, one must also be aware of sin. Lorenzo Monaco makes this message clear by referring the viewer constantly to Christ's Passion, but through his use of iconic, distilled vignettes, he focuses his audience on the struggle of the righteous decision for humans.

In presenting only fragmented icons of a visual narrative, the painter forces the audience to fill in the gaps between scenes, requiring them to turn to memory of the rest of the scripture of the Synoptic Gospels. The discontinuity of Passion scenes in the *Man of Sorrows* produces a flexibility that broadens the audience's understanding of the subject through ambiguity, which engages them in active, contemplative understandings. Through its compositional promptings, viewers come to see the Passion of Christ, as framed by the devotional image of the *Man of Sorrows*, for its larger, theological questions on faith and betrayal.

Not all of the scenes specifically refer to Christ's Passion in Lorenzo's *Man of Sorrows*, which leads the viewer to hesitate and re-evaluate the meaning of the painting. This time of hesitation allows the viewer to notice the primary vertical division of the panel, which exposes the central role of composition for comprehending this painting. By distracting readers from the narrative, confusion directs them to the complex divisions in the composition that guide their understanding. Calling attention to the artificial devices of painting prompts viewers to consider their own processes of perception and comprehension.

The enigmatic qualities of the *Man of Sorrows's* compositional scheme prompt dialogues that allow viewers to reconcile ideas that at first may have appeared totally disparate. For instance, placing the *Kiss of Judas* across from the *Denial of Peter* forces a harmonic dialogue between not only their accepted meanings, but also the viewer's beliefs surrounding them. The audience must reconcile faith and betrayal, even when the message seems to lean towards the ideal of faith. The *Man of Sorrows* has a primary line down the center of the composition dividing good and evil, yet the figures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. John the Evangelist illusionistically

protrude forward, separating them from this division, and from the upper half of the painting. This image of the three characters could stand alone as an image of worship, but Lorenzo Monaco leads his audience to consider these three figures in the particular context defined by the iconic imagery floating around them. That these three characters could stand alone, underscores their innately mystical characteristics. The wood panel painting appears as one piece, yet also appears as a combined version of a triptych as each section of this composition can be read as a separate painting: the Virgin with the ladder, Christ in the center, and John the Evangelist with the column.

Lorenzo Monaco promotes the mystical aura of the painting through its disassociation from temporal and spatial cues. The dislocated hands holding the Passion instruments and acting the scene out presents a disturbing and captivating image that draws the viewer sympathetically into contemplating the *Man of Sorrows*. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration*, 1995, describes the medieval conception and comprehension of Biblical text and figures by:

...theological terms, conceived to represent mystery in bodies beyond bodies, eschatological destiny in stories beyond stories, the supernatural in the visible and familiar aspect in things, beyond the aspect.

Most importantly Didi-Huberman offers another explanation for understanding the medieval thought process with the curiosity of interrelated relationships of Biblical figures within representations. He states that "the depths of figural meaning" offer endless related characters and themes with,

networks where every particle of sacred text entered into an always unique and totally new correspondence with another particle, freeing meaning to an ever greater extent and, with

meaning, freeing faith and the imaginary, by making them swirl

around in this endless kernel-the kernel of mystery, the kernel of Incarnation.⁶⁸

The created interrelated relationships that Lorenzo Monaco brought forth into the composition follows this method of pushing the biblical text and substance to another level of exegesis. Lorenzo Monaco uses composition to expand the meaning of familiar imagery. The inscription at the base of the Man of Sorrows with the word ICARNATIONIS further reiterates the notion of definition and eternal transformation pregnant in a singular image and word. Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows* presents an image of Christ, as many other artists have, one which makes the intangible perceivable in the physical world, but specifically in a focussed consideration that ever unfolds with greater nuances of meaning.

Lorenzo Monaco has made the *Man of Sorrows* a personal and emotionally compelling scene for all viewers, by turning the Passion to private devotion. The coats of arms announces that this painting was a private commission, and also the size of altarpiece defines it as a private work, which clarifies its serving for personal contemplation. The particular compositional placement of familiar figures and objects within zones marking good and evil communicates a precise, individualistic message and subjective commentary, which would suit a personal commentary on the contemporary political situation in Florence.

⁶⁸ Didi-Huberman, 1990: 6.

Conclusion

The themes discussed in this thesis demonstrate the different avenues that a well-planned painting can create, and how in reading a painting, viewers must explore and question their surrounding society. Lorenzo Monaco's *Man of Sorrows* engages the viewer on three levels: the political, the philosophical, and the religious. This thesis only begins to explore the richness of this painting, but asks to re-evaluate Lorenzo and other artists of this era. Modern scholarship has long defined this period through exclusive terms of the Medieval, the Gothic, and the Renaissance, all limited with black and white definitions. As the *Man of Sorrows* shows, Medieval allegory and Renaissance humanism co-exist in an intertwined relationship that served the necessities of expression of this era well. A member of a popular Camaldolese monastery, Lorenzo Monaco, as monk and artist, participated in the social, political, and philosophical arenas of his day.

It would serve us well to examine sermons that Lorenzo Monaco and the other Camaldolese monks commonly preached as a further key to the *Man of Sorrows*, specifically those expounding upon the meaning and imagery of the Passion. By using the *Sacra biblia latina* and Ambrogio Traversari's *Generalis Camaldulensium aliorumque ad ipsum et ad alios de eodem Ambrogio latinae epistolae*, I feel that I have only scratched the surface of this investigation of exploring the complex meaning of this painting. Coluccio Salutati and Ambrogio Traversari offer specific insights into not only

Florence, but also Santa Maria degli Angeli, which ties us to the mind and environment to Lorenzo Monaco. Further examination of their writings in

terms of rhetorical style might permit us greater understanding of how the painting's composition guided its audience.

The *Man of Sorrows* engages its viewers on several levels, all turning on the theme of mystical, contemplative, monastic faith versus operative, too often perfidious, and yet supposedly rational, action in the physical world. In retrospect, we too readily separate these realms, but to the fifteenth-century Florentine, their intersection defined the principal issues of the day. The ambiguities that arise from its reading point leading to the difficulty of these comparisons, and require the audience to actively participate in the unsettling dialogue. Stripped of temporal and spatial cues, the images nevertheless refer to historical narratives, so that the audience might value the physical world more as a source for allegorical symbols than for an immediate reality. The issues concerning the depicted figures embrace larger issues than the scheme of the composition induces, yet for which ultimately cannot provide definitive answers. The fragmentation of the Passion narrative also alludes to the need for contemplation and meditation during fifteenth-century Florence.

We, as contemporary viewers, can only speculate as to the intentions of the painter and his patrons, but because the genre of the *Man of Sorrows* became increasingly popular during the Great Western Schism. Furthermore, remembering that the first appearance of the *Man of Sorrows* imagery evolved soon after the council of 680 with the increase of pictorial control during the Eastern Schism.⁶⁹ Lorenzo Monaco brings the viewer back to Byzantium with

⁶⁹ Schiller, 1972: 199.

the Christ figure depicted frontally, as a three-quarter-length figure with the cross as his background.⁷⁰ Was this Lorenzo's manner of warning his viewers about free will, or to remind his society that they are not experiencing an actual schism? Possibly Lorenzo wished to remain focused upon faith.⁷¹ We must recognize it as a principal vehicle for prompting discussions on the vital political and religious issues perceived by fifteenth-century Florentines.

⁷⁰Schiller, 1972: 199.

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