

The Development of the Coronation of the Virgin in Trecento Venice: Sources and Meaning

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of the Coronation of the Virgin in fourteenth-century Venice and the uses to which it was put for the purposes of perpetuating civic mythology and expressing Venetian ambitions regarding the cultural appropriation of Padua. Chapter one deals with the earliest example of Italian Coronation of the Virgin imagery in Rome and provides a theological and iconographical background for this development. Chapter two provides a comparison for the degree to which the early Roman images established authoritative examples for the monumental Coronations of the Virgin in Florence, Orvieto and Siena. Chapter three establishes the civic developments of the early trecento in Venice and explores the forms that Marian veneration took in the city. The fourth chapter introduces Guariento's Coronation of the Virgin for the Venetian council hall as the turning point in Venetian Coronation imagery, expressing not only the city's own mythology but also its cultural colonizing ambitions. After Guariento's decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio the Coronation of the Virgin increasingly became emblematic of Venice itself.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the Coronation of the Virgin motif has been investigated by many scholars as one of the most significant late Medieval additions to the corpus of Marian iconography.¹ However, this scholarship has focused much of its energy on determining and recording the geographical origins and iconographical minutiae of Coronation of the Virgin imagery in Northern Europe.² In Italy major studies on this iconographical development have not addressed specific issues of authoritative meaning and dissemination within the context of the late Middle Ages. Thus the diversities and similarities of meaning of the Coronation of the Virgin within different locations have been understudied. The one exception to this rule is the Coronation of the Virgin imagery in the Roman churches of S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore, on which much has been written.³ Monumental images of the Coronation of the Virgin in other regions of late Medieval Italy have been less fortunate in attracting the attention of scholars. Fourteenth-century Venice, where the motif became an integral part of civic imagery, is one such place. The aim of this thesis is to explore the local significance that monumental Coronations of the Virgin had, in trecento Venice, for policies of cultural appropriation; and to define how

¹ See P. Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge: Les Origines et les premiers développements d'un thème iconographique (Montreal: L'Institut des Etudes Médiévales, 1980)

² See Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge ; Mary Tuck Echols, The Coronation of the Virgin in Fifteenth-Century Italian Art (Ph.D. Diss, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1976); Geertrude Coor-Achenbach, "The Earliest Italian Representation of the Coronation of the Virgin." Burlington Magazine 99 (1957), 328-330; G. Zarnecki, "The Coronation of the Virgin on a Capital from Reading Abbey," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 13 (1980), 1-12.

³ See E. Mâle, The Early Churches of Rome (London: Ernest Benn, 1960); E. Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face: Antiquarianism in Twelfth-Century Art," Art Bulletin 62 (1980), 6-20; W. Tronzo, "Apse Decoration, the Liturgy and the Perception of Art in Medieval Rome: S. Maria Maggiore," Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, ed. W. Tronzo (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989), 167-193; J. Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV and the Decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 36 (1973), 1-50; H. Henkels, "Remarks on the Late 13th-Century Apse Decoration in S. Maria Maggiore," Simiolus 4 (1971), 128-149.

this tradition compares to similar developments in Central Italy where specific local requirements also formed a large part of the motif's specific meaning. In the following pages I will argue that the use of images of the Coronation of the Virgin in fourteenth-century Venice served to legitimize local institutionalized myths of the city's past, present, and future. It became one of the main carriers of cultural influence for the city, typifying and embodying aspects of the Venetian cultural appropriation of Byzantine and French courtly developments. I will also explore the popularity of the Coronation of the Virgin in trecento Venice as an expression of the city's perceived cultural supremacy over its rivals in Carraran Padua from whom it co-opted many of its ideas and motifs.

The Coronation of the Virgin

The Coronation of the Virgin was increasingly prevalent in late medieval life. It formed the central image of altarpieces, episcopal instruments and other forms of devotional apparatus; it adorned tombs and the sacred apsidal and tympana space of churches; and even found their way into civic council chambers. Like the iconography of the Madonna and Child before it, the Coronation of the Virgin visually expressed the unique relationship between the Virgin and Christ, with an emphasis on her intercessory powers for humankind. Previous visual renditions of the Virgin's demise had focused on her Dormition and Assumption as situated within a chronological narrative framework. But by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with the development of Coronation of the Virgin iconography, the event increasingly became an isolated theophanic moment occurring outside of historical time in the Last Judgement kingdom of redeemed humanity. Within this meditative context a monumental Coronation of the Virgin image sought to include the viewer in the scene as a witness. In a public, civic setting the post-apocalyptic image of the Virgin and Christ enthroned, among the saintly and redeemed souls, implied the viewer as a member of its heavenly court. Unlike an image of the Last Judgement, the object of a

Coronation of the Virgin, in this case, was not to frighten the viewer with the possibility of future terrors, but to inspire him or her to faith as an honoured member of the elect court. The implication inherent in a semi-illusory paradise was that the viewer was already included in the redeemed court of post-apocalyptic heaven. It was this inclusivity that lay at the centre of its visual power as a channel for prayer. This thesis's primary focus is on how this power was re-directed in monumental Coronations of the Virgin to convey specific, localized messages for viewers in trecento Venice. I have included comparison chapters addressing the development of monumental Coronation of the Virgin imagery in Central Italy beginning with one of the earliest examples in Rome. The Roman images discussed here, provided the authoritative examples for other large scale Coronation monuments in Central Italy. However, these city centres also sought to preserve their own indigenous culture, resulting in an ambivalence toward contemporaneous Roman principles. In trecento Venice, on the other hand, authoritative examples came from entirely different sources. This difference will be explored at length and will elucidate the Coronation of the Virgin's inherent ability to convey consistent, general messages about inclusion to a large group of people while simultaneously conforming to suit more parochial concerns.

Methodology

This thesis addresses the evolution of Coronation of the Virgin imagery in trecento Venice. The main focus will be Guariento's pivotal '*Paradiso*' fresco of 1366 in the Sala del Gran Consiglio, as the iconographical and semiotic keystone in this development. In this image was concentrated the specific, localized meaning that the Coronation came to have for the city of Venice with all of its implications for the appropriation of mainland culture. Moreover, its unprecedented use on this scale, in a civic context, and its effect on the form and function that future Coronations of the Virgin in the city were to take, make it the obvious central point for an exploration of this type of monumental imagery.

The focus of this project is on the specific meaning that the Coronation of the Virgin had for trecento Venice in terms of cultural appropriation and mingling in the monumental art of the republic, and it therefore does not involve a survey of the many Coronations of the Virgin in the area⁴. For reasons of length, neither does it involve an in-depth stylistic analysis of the images, a discussion of workshop practices or a re-creation of the vast complexities of cultural trade routes to Venice.⁵ Instead, the effect of a general climate of mingled French chivalric influences with established Byzantine traditions and Carraran humanism, on Venetian cultural developments will be the primary point of interest.

The aim of the first chapter is to provide a theological and social framework for the development of Coronation of the Virgin iconography and to clarify how its Roman application in the churches of S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore compared to the uses and meanings of the theme in other parts of Italy. The development of this sort of imagery in these two churches demonstrated not only the migration, from Northern Europe, of iconographical themes and liturgical changes in the conceptualization of the Virgin but also the malleability of this new motif to serve local political/social and religious concerns. One example of these local concerns is evident in the Papal agenda to appropriate images of the Virgin, especially in a Coronation context, to make reference to their own position in Christendom. The development of the Coronation of the Virgin in Rome, as the product of a distinct cultural plurality in the city provided a valuable contrast to the situation in trecento Venice where Roman prototypes, a century earlier, were of less direct importance.

⁴ For a survey of Coronations of the Virgin in fourteenth-century Italy see Echols, "The Coronation of the Virgin," Appendix iv.

⁵ For in depth stylistic analysis of Venetian art of this period see Rodolfo Pallucchini, La Pittura Veneziana del Trecento (Venezia: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1964); R. Van Marle, The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting, The local Schools of North Italy of the 14th Century, vol. IV, (The Hague: 1924); E. Sandberg-Vavalà, La Pittura Veronese del Trecento e del primo Quattrocento (Verona: 1926).

In chapter two the issue of an authoritative Roman image comes to the fore with the use of the Coronation of the Virgin on the cathedrals of Florence, Orvieto, and Siena. This chapter, in tandem with chapter one, attempts to establish the influences and meanings of Coronations of the Virgin in Central Italy by dealing with monumental images within the Roman sphere of cultural influence. Although these three cities sought to preserve political distinction and independence from Papal Rome it was often Roman prototypes, more than others, that influenced the form their public monuments took. However, the messages of these Coronation images which dealt with local issues of *civitas* and allegiance to the *commune*, did not have the same impetus behind them as did Papal Roman versions. They had specific meaning for the city they adorned, a message underscored by the inclusive nature of the Coronation of the Virgin motif.

The third chapter establishes similar civic developments of the late quattrocento and early trecento in Venice, which also addressed notions of *civitas* but sought its authoritative influences outside of Rome. It was my object here to trace the evolution of Coronation of the Virgin imagery from other types of official Marian imagery popular in the first half of the trecento, especially under the patronage of doges Francesco and Andrea Dandolo. During this era of Venetian cultural expansion the republic not only strengthened its connections with Byzantium and France but also set its cultural sights on Padua. During the reign of Francesco Dandolo an increasingly chivalric and princely concept of Venetian institutions became more codified. This development was reflected in ducal commissions of the day which focused on Annunciation imagery in the city as the new expression of the Venetian *praedestinatio* legend. Paolo and Marco Veneziano worked under Dandolo patronage, and their work was significant for the changing focus of this type of civic iconography. However, it was not my intention to address the *corpus* of Paolo and Marco's work in the early trecento, but rather to discover how some of their painted renditions of the Virgin, along with those executed by their contemporaries, influenced the

florescence of civic meaning that the Coronation of the Virgin motif would enjoy, in Venice, after the 1360s.⁶

The fourth chapter introduces Guariento's '*Paradiso*' in the Sala del Gran Consiglio of the Palazzo Ducale, and the monumental Coronations of the Virgin that came afterwards. This chapter focuses on the rebuilding and decoration of the new Palazzo Ducale in 1340 as a reflection of the growing Venetian rivalry with Padua. The decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, including its Coronation of the Virgin, reflected the Venetian co-option of Paduan chivalric humanism to suit its own specific needs. This conflation of republican humanism and courtly ceremony was not considered contradictory at the courts of the trecento Veneto where princes saw themselves as heads of republican states and their palaces and family chapels as natural arenas for these two streams of thought to meet and mingle. The last quarter of the trecento in Venice saw an expansion of this idea in the tomb decoration of the doges. As Marian Coronation imagery became more closely connected with the Venetian state, the local viewer was increasingly coming to understand that the Virgin's fate was intermingled with his own.

Before introducing the project a review of the existing literature is in order. To my knowledge there has been no previous study completely devoted to the development of the Coronation of the Virgin in trecento Venice as a carrier of local civic meaning. Phillippe Verdier's monograph, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge: Les origines et les premiers développements d'un thème iconographique* deals primarily with the iconographical development of French examples and does not adequately address the significance of Coronation of the Virgin imagery in Medieval Italy beyond Rome. Verdier provides an

⁶ For a survey of Paolo and Marco Veneziano's body of work see M. Muraro's *Paolo da Venezia* (London: Penn State University Press, 1970); E. Sandberg-Vavalà, "Maestro Paolo Veneziano," *The Burlington Magazine* LII (1930).

interesting and important study of the Northern European Coronation of the Virgin tradition, but his attention to the Italian versions is cursory.

The literature dealing more directly with Italian Coronation imagery tends to focus primarily on issues of authoritative image, political papal messages, and the public role played by the Coronations of the Virgin, in the Roman churches of S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore, in annual feast of the Assumption processions.⁷ This concentration of scholarship has emphasized Rome's authoritative influence on the Coronation of the Virgin's subsequent Italian popularity, an assumption that has been perpetuated in the relatively small *corpus* of literature on the motif in Italy.⁸ Although the presence of the Coronation of the Virgin in key Venetian sites has been addressed by Rodolfo Pallucchini in La Pittura Veneziana del Trecento, and Michelangelo Muraro in his monograph, Paolo da Venezia, in both these works the discussion is subsumed in a general body of work and dealt with as an iconographical footnote to the Venetian arts of the fourteenth century -- the mere result of a Venetian fashion.⁹ The theme did however find enough local significance to be depicted on the east wall of the newly constructed council hall, an instance of site specificity that indicates the key importance of the motif for the city. Because of the current fragmentary condition of the original fresco programme much of the literature that does address it has focused either on reconstructions of what was once there or on the specific iconography of the Coronation of the Virgin fresco which makes up the bulk of the surviving visual evidence. This project proposes to address some of the questions missing from this literature: What specifically local message was it meant to convey to the viewer?

⁷ See Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 1-50; P. Hetherington, "The Mosaics of Pietro Cavallini in S. Maria in Trastevere," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes XXXIII (1970), 84-106; Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 6-20; Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 167-193.

⁸ See S. Sinding-Larsen, Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic, (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1974), 47-48.

⁹ Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 93; Pallucchini, La Pittura Veneziana, 117.

Why was a Paduan artist chosen to execute it at a time of tension between Venice and Padua? How does it reflect this relationship? And what was its effect on future Coronation of the Virgin images in the city and on the mainland? In his book, Christ in the Council Hall, Staale Sinding-Larsen sees the inclusion of the 'Paradiso' in the Sala as a part of the larger religious iconography of the Palazzo Ducale, marking it as a "State Church" in which the Coronation of the Virgin acted as altarpiece.¹⁰ He constructs the Coronation as depicting an early conflation of Venice and the *Mater Ecclesia*, a form developed from the traditions established at the church of S. Maria in Trastevere.¹¹ Sinding-Larsen sees this conflation as a part of a more general trend among Italian civic decorative cycles rather than as an image with a message specific to Venice. Andrew Martindale, in his 1993 article, "The Sala del Gran Consiglio and its Fourteenth-Century decoration," also passes up the opportunity to explore these issues. He denies any local significance of the Coronation of the Virgin for the republic by describing the image as, "...perhaps a gigantic but routine piece of high medieval piety" and focuses his attention on a valuable reconstruction of the Sala's original programme.¹²

Debra Pincus's book, The Tombs of the Doges of Venice, on the other hand, does attempt to establish this important connection for official state imagery. Her book emphasizes the growing importance of the Virgin and Christ's double patronage for the republic through the changes in ducal tomb decoration of the period.¹³ This patronage found important expression, according to Pincus, in the 'Paradiso' of the council hall.

¹⁰ Sinding-Larsen, Christ in the Council Hall, 55.

¹¹ Sinding-Larsen, Christ in the Council Hall, 47 & 55 and Martindale "Sala," 93. Martindale claims that the trecento was too early for Venice to be "capable" of making connections between personifications of Venice and Mary or the church.

¹² Martindale, "Sala," 93.

¹³ D. Pincus, The Tombs of the Doges of Venice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 54.

However, she is more reluctant to see a visual continuation of this message through possible Coronation images that adorned later official apparatus.¹⁴

This reluctance, prevalent in the literature, to address the codified meaning that the Coronation of the Virgin came to have for official state propaganda has to do with the perception of trecento Venice as the conservative, repetitious precursor to Renaissance innovation and dynamism. Consequently, trecento potential for new and original developments is often indirectly dismissed as ‘too early.’¹⁵ Venice’s clear interest in cultivating and appropriating modern concepts of French courtly culture and mainland humanism indicate the opposite.

To understand the significance of the Coronation of the Virgin in trecento Venice as an image reflecting state policies of civic identity and cultural appropriation, it is necessary to explore the significance of location for these monumental images.

¹⁴ Pincus, *Tombs*, 152, 160. Because of a lack of evidence Pincus is reluctant to assume that a Coronation of the Virgin originally was at the centre of the fresco decoration of the tomb of Doge Marino Morosini.

¹⁵ Martindale, “Sala,” 109. Martindale denies any possible conflation of symbolic meaning between the Virgin Mary as a just mediatrix queen and the personification of Venice in the trecento, stating that, “It is most unlikely that there was any grandiose concept underlying the iconography, a fourteenth century ‘myth of Venice.’” But it seems to me that there are a number of trecento visual instances in which Venice is depicted in a regal way not only as queen but as supreme law giver which must have had some visual resonance for the viewer as reminder of the coronation imagery that was all over Venice at the time. For instance in the sculpted roundel on the Palazzo Ducale facade facing the Piazzetta. Also Venice’s foundation day was associated with the Annunciation of the Virgin which is depicted on either side of the Sala coronation image. There are clearly a number of theoretical and visual precedents being set for the beginning of this sort of interpretation in the trecento where myth-making was well established. See also Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall*; E. Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); D. Romano, *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and P. Fortini-Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past*, 2nd ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) for a construction of the trecento in Venice as a transitional era in Venetian history that created the foundations for later developments in state propaganda.

Chapter 1: Maria Regina

Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Maria in Trastevere

The so called “proto-Coronation” mosaic in the apse of Santa Maria in Trastevere (fig.1) seems to sit, so to speak, on the precipice of something startlingly new in late medieval Marian imagery. When Pope Innocent II commissioned the redecoration of one of Rome’s oldest Marian churches in the district of Trastevere, his choice of apse decoration would be a visual manifesto for the changing conception of Mary in twelfth-century Rome. The subject of this apse decoration was, of course, determined by the church’s dedication, but its form represented the beginnings of a new Marian tradition which suited the needs of Late Medieval Roman art. The serene gaze of the Virgin and her son, enthroned together on a golden *synthronos*, represents a definitive break with previous Marian apse decoration. Instead of a more usual Madonna and Child, the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere depicted the Virgin and her adult son enthroned together in paradise as *Sponsa* and *Sponsus*. Although the image is considered a ‘proto-coronation,’ that is, the crowned Virgin and Christ enthroned together as king and queen, it is also the earliest example of what would be a long tradition of actual Coronation of the Virgin imagery in Italy. In Rome these beginnings were continued in the apse of S. Maria Maggiore (fig.2) completed by Jacopo Torriti around 1295 under the patronage of Pope Nicholas IV. Unlike S. Maria in Trastevere, the apse depicts a full narrative of the Virgin’s life culminating in her Coronation. The dynamism of this moment, in which Christ places a crown on her head and proclaims her queen of heaven, marks all Italian Coronation scenes to follow. Between 1140 and 1143 at the behest of Pope Innocent II the church of S. Maria in Trastevere was completely rebuilt and redecorated. The first Church, founded by Pope Calixtus I in the third century had, according to legend, been built on the site where a miraculous fountain of oil had appeared at the exact moment of Christ’s birth. The apsidal

mosaic of the Late Medieval church depicted the Virgin enthroned with her adult son on a *synthronos* in a post-apocalyptic paradise setting typical of apse decoration in earlier Roman churches like S. Prassede. Initially, the *synthronos* had been used in imperial Rome to designate an advisor or companion of the emperor, and the idea was later appropriated as a convenient Christian pictorial device by which the heavenly Jerusalem could be easily identified.¹⁶ Early Christian visual tools were also used in many other aspects of the new apse decoration at S. Maria in Trastevere. Like the apsidal imagery of the sixth-century Roman church of SS. Cosma and Damiano, Christ and the Virgin were situated in an early Christian pictorial framework flanked by saints and above a frieze of lambs.¹⁷ The frieze consisted of six holy lambs issuing from Bethlehem on one side and on the other side six more issuing from Jerusalem. All twelve walk toward the lamb of God which stands in the centre atop a mountain from which flow the four rivers of paradise. Christ is placed on the traditional central axis of the composition over the lamb of God, and his right arm rests on his mother's shoulder. She in turn gestures modestly toward her son and Lord. The couple are flanked on the left by Innocent II (who presents a model of the church), St. Lawrence, and the martyred founder of the church, Calixtus I. On the right are St. Peter, the martyred Popes Cornelius and Julius I, and St. Calepodius. The *synthronos* formula was at this time a popular means of depicting Cantic 4:8 in which the Bridegroom first designated his 'beloved' as his Bride. The Canticles are clearly emphasized in the decoration of the apse through the inscriptions. The scroll held by the figure of the Virgin herself reads: LEVA EIUS SUB CAPITE MEO E DEX(T)ERA ILLIUS AMPLESABIT(UR) ME, in a paraphrase of Canticles 2:6 and 8:3 in which the Bridegroom

¹⁶ In reference to the Song of Songs as discussed by Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 11.

¹⁷ Kitzinger. "A Virgin's Face," 7.

is called upon to embrace his Bride.¹⁸ Clearly, the iconography of the mosaic was derived from the Canticles which were beginning to play a larger role in exegetical thinking about the Virgin. The bride described in the Song of Songs was interpreted either as a prophetic ode to the Virgin Mary or as a celebration of Christ's relationship with his church on earth. By the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries these two concepts were synthesized as the Virgin came to signify the church and vice versa.¹⁹ The inscription in Christ's book underscores this development by paraphrasing Canticle 4:8. It reads: VENI ELECTA MEA ET PONAM IN TE THRONUM MEUM, in an invitation to his chosen bride to share his throne.²⁰ These two inscriptions may have also been adapted from the liturgical responses of the annual feast day of the Assumption on August 15. The first four verses of the dedicatory inscription between the frieze of lambs and the main apsidal figures underscore, in no uncertain terms, the honor and wisdom of Mary whose privilege it is to sit at the right hand of Christ:

HIC IN HONORE TUO PREFULGIDA MATER HONORIS REGIA DIVINI
RUTILAT FULGORE DECORIS IN QUA CHRISTE SEDES MANET ULTRA
SECUA SEDES DIGNA TUIS DEXTRIS EST QUAM TEGIT AUREA
VESTIS

This choice of decoration for one of the most prominent churches in twelfth-century Rome set a standard in local Marian iconography which would evolve, over the next few centuries, into a more overt glorification of the Virgin's queenship in heaven. In the thirteenth century the decoration of S. Maria in Trastevere would be adapted to keep up with changes in the new Marian imagery which it had helped to create.

¹⁸ "His left hand should be under my head; and his right arm should embrace me" trans. M. Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 122.

¹⁹ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 44, 83-84.

²⁰ "Come my chosen one and I shall place thee on my throne" (trans. Marina Warner *Alone of all her Sex*, 122.)

The precedent set by the decoration of the apse in S. Maria in Trastevere, over a century earlier, was perpetuated in the choice of decoration for one of the most holy Marian churches in Rome. By 1295 work on the apse decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome was completed and signed by Jacopo Torriti and his workshop. These mosaics picked up the iconographical thread left by the mosaicists from S. Maria in Trastevere depicting an elaborate Coronation scene exalting the Virgin as divine *Avvocata*. Initially, the redecoration of S. Maria Maggiore was the project of the first Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV, whose successful campaign for the papacy was due in part to the support of the Colonna family. The Colonna, whose Franciscan interests and strong ties to the church of S. Maria Maggiore gave them a vested interest in its decoration, were forced to abandon the ongoing project in 1297, a few years after Nicholas IV's death, when they fell from Papal favour. By 1306 the church's other patron, Cardinal Giacomo Colonna, was reinstated by Clement V and work was resumed on the transept and facade decoration. In a manner similar to S. Maria in Trastevere, the Virgin and Christ were depicted together on a traditional *synthronos* situated in the apocalyptic paradise symbolized by a hovering mandorla. But, in this mosaic, Christ actively places the crown on his mother's head to designate her as his queen in heaven. The Virgin gestures modestly toward Christ, as a throng of angels and saints look on. Depicted on either side of the mandorla are the tiny kneeling donor figures of Cardinal Giacomo Colonna and Pope Nicholas IV, who witness the Coronation of the Virgin, together with Sts. Francis, Paul, and Peter on the left and on the right John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, and St. Anthony.

As is customary in Italian churches, Torriti's overall decorative scheme has as its central topic the life of the church's titular saint. The zone below the conch of the apse is decorated with a series of narrative scenes drawn from the life cycle of the Virgin, beginning with the Annunciation and followed from left to right by the Nativity, her Dormition, the Adoration of the Magi and the Presentation. The central Coronation image in

the apse coincides vertically with the Dormition, deliberately placed out of sequence in the narrative cycle to create this visual tie. The life of the Virgin was constructed visually with this unusual vertical emphasis, and the narrative events of her life thus unfold in disjunction to serve this compositional vertical and to make specific thematic links.²¹ This creates an additional narrative which is read upward from the Dormition, to the Assumption, to the Coronation in rapid succession. As in S. Maria in Trastevere, references to the Song of Songs feature largely in the inscriptions. The book which Christ holds in his left hand contains the same paraphrase of Canticles 4:8 as that held by the figure of Christ in S. Maria in Trastevere. The golden letters of the inscription below the mandorla also appear also to be derived from the liturgy of the feast of the Assumption in its exaltation of her queenship. This regal nature of the Virgin served a number of important purposes in this setting, not the least of which involved a constant reminder of the Last Judgement when, as queen of heaven, the Virgin would intercede with God on the behalf of humanity. Torriti's reference to this future probability is highlighted by the addition of a moon at her feet as a reminder of the Virgin's imminent appearance on Judgement day as "... a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars."²² In addition, the Nilotic scene which marks the foreground of the apse, and the vegetal scrolls which decorate the area above the saints, are clearly based on earlier Roman models.²³

The integration of these traditional apse mosaic motifs with the new Coronation imagery created a link between the historical past and present which served to direct the viewer's attention to the implication of the apocalyptic future when all will be judged by

²¹ Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 9.

²² Revelations 12.1

²³ Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 12 The foliate scrolls seem to me very much like the decoration in S. Clemente or Santa Costanza in Rome. There may be a connection with the decoration in these two early Christian churches.

God and, it is hoped, be championed by the Virgin in her role as *mediatrix*. But what of the larger connection between S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore? Which one was the authoritative image? The addition of the Marian life-cycle to the drum below the proto-coronation image in the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere indicates some key shifts in thinking about Marian imagery since the twelfth century. These added narrative scenes were completed by Pietro Cavallini, probably by the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and were, for a long time, considered to be older than Torriti's narrative Marian cycle in S. Maria Maggiore which is firmly dated by inscriptions to 1290 and 1295.²⁴ The traditional assumption that Torriti was influenced by Cavallini in his use of a predella-like Marian cycle has been based on the tenuous dating of Cavallini's mosaics in S. Maria in Trastevere to 1291. The recent reevaluation of the date of Cavallini's mosaic opens up the possibility of a visual dialogue between the two relatively contemporaneous Marian cycles. Along these lines, it should be pointed out that Cavallini's mosaics of the life of Mary were added to the already existing composition, and "proto-Coronation" image in the apse whereas Torriti's narrative mosaics in S. Maria Maggiore were envisioned, from the start, as a part of an overarching compositional theme. Also, the decoration in S. Maria in Trastevere tends to be more compositionally independent and anecdotal than that of Torriti in S. Maria Maggiore.²⁵ In essence, according to William Tronzo, the Marian imagery in S. Maria in Trastevere was clearly rooted in the early Medieval and Roman traditions of interpreting the Virgin in more abstracted theological terms.²⁶ In light of this shift in thinking the addition

²⁴ Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 169-70.

²⁵ Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 9.

²⁶ Before the thirteenth century the events of the Virgin's life and death were officially viewed throughout western Europe in more uncertain terms than in the following centuries when her bodily Assumption into heaven was more widely accepted as fact. Torriti's apse in comparison with the earlier 'proto-coronation' of S. Maria in Trastevere clearly reveals a shift in attitude toward the nature of the Virgin and the subsequent change in her iconography from revered mother to holy queen and intercessor. See Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 189 and Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 9.

by Cavallini of a strip of narrative Marian scenes to the existing twelfth-century mosaics in S. Maria in Trastevere seems to imply that Torriti's mosaics were a consideration and that, as suggested by Tronzo, Cavallini's later mosaics were added to update what must have been considered by the early fourteenth century a rather "old-fashioned" decorative program.²⁷ If the dialogue between the decoration of these two churches is any indication, the changing attitude toward the Virgin in Rome of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries manifested itself in a desire to emphasize her increasingly intercessory role in liturgical ceremonies, as we shall discuss next.

Iconographical Development: The French and Byzantine Connection.

This development in exegetical thinking about the Virgin was not confined to Rome or indeed to Italy. It can be traced throughout western Europe as a seemingly spontaneous phenomenon congruous to the development of the cult of Mary. With the steadily increasing interest in the Virgin had come a number of apocryphal anecdotes associated with the Virgin's 'dying' moments, particularly her Dormition and her Assumption. These anecdotal bits and pieces found their earliest written form in the Pseudo-Melito and later Jacobus de Voragine's Golden Legend, which were themselves derived from the scriptural Canticle in their description of her final glorification in heaven.²⁸ The iconography of the Coronation of the Virgin itself, according to Phillippe Verdier, was made up of these scraps of knowledge about the Virgin's demise, and occurred almost simultaneously in England, France and Rome in the twelfth century. The earliest known sculptural Coronation of the Virgin, possibly a column capital from Reading Abbey, England, (fig.3) was found in

²⁷ Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 192.

²⁸ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 16. See also Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, vol. II, trans. William Granger Ryan, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 96. Jacobus draws heavily on the bridal imagery of the Canticle in his account of the Virgin's Assumption.

1949, and has since been dated to no later than 1130.²⁹ However, the deterioration of the capital has made the subject difficult to decipher. Is it really a coronation, or a baptism? And is the female figure actually the Virgin, or an early allegory of the church?³⁰ A slightly later carving on the tympanum of Quenington in Gloucestershire (fig.4) is a more clearly identifiable Coronation of the Virgin, and is contemporaneous with the triumph of the Virgin in S. Maria in Trastevere. At Quenington the veiled female figure shares a throne with Christ as he places a crown on her head. In France the earliest extant triumph of the Virgin image is found on the tympanum of Notre-Dame de Senlis dated to circa 1153. However, this is not a coronation proper, but rather a precursory enthroning of the Virgin with her son, as at S. Maria in Trastevere. The influence of Senlis was soon felt in Chartres (late twelfth-century), Laon (1195-1205), and Paris (after 1208), all of whom followed suit with Triumphal Virgin images.³¹

This development may have been due to the increased popularity of exegesis on the Song of Songs which at this time generally interpreted the bride as an allegory of the church. The next logical step in exegetical thinking was to fuse the concepts of the Virgin and the church. The closest contemporaneous images in Italy that approach the Virgin in Triumph theme are on the bronze doors of Pisa Cathedral (1179) and Monreale (1185), both of which depict a Byzantine-style Assumption of the Virgin into Paradise, without Christ.³² According to Verdier a text of 1137 mentions a painting at Montecassino, no longer extant, of a Last Judgement depicting the Virgin seated with Christ. Also, after 1183 on the tympanum of Lodi cathedral in Lombardy, the Virgin was also depicted seated with Christ, although not on a synthronos, and as the more humble intercessor for a specific

²⁹ Zarnecki, "A Capital from Reading Abbey," 11.

³⁰ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 17.

³¹ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 9.

³² Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 73.

individual.³³ Clearly, it is not until the late thirteenth century that the Coronation of the Virgin in its most active sense becomes popular in Italy. It began with a rebirth of interest in the Virgin's life and became an exercise of trial and error, cutting and pasting together the effects of scripture, apocrypha, imagination and naturalization. This process of iconographical development is a testament to the growing cultural plurality of late Medieval Europe in which geographic and ethnic boundaries were changeable and sometimes indistinct. The lines of trade between north and south were increasingly open and ideas as well as material goods were more transferable than ever. It was in this climate that the Coronation of the Virgin imagery found a foothold in Roman society. It emerged from the fusion of a traditional Byzantine veneration for the life of Mary and the southward flow of Northern European stylistic ideas.

One of the more common arguments concerning the iconographical and stylistic development of the two Roman images of the Virgin in question refers to their French influences. The 'grandfather' of this argument is Emile Mâle, who posited a number of theories as to how the Coronation or 'proto-Coronation' theme found its way south to Rome. Although many of his theories have since been challenged, Mâle was one of the first modern scholars to suggest that Torriti's Coronation mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore had been influenced by an iconographical formula popular in the decoration of twelfth and thirteenth-century French cathedrals.³⁴ At the old church of Notre Dame de Paris a stained glass window, donated by Abbot Suger of St. Denis, had as its subject a "Triumph of the Virgin" which depicted the Virgin and Christ enthroned together. Mâle famously argued that during Pope Innocent II's period in France, during a Papal schism, he had seen the window which ultimately influenced his commission of a 'proto-Coronation' apse mosaic

³³ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 45.

³⁴ Mâle, Churches of Rome, 144.

for S. Maria in Trastevere in 1140.³⁵ This hypothesis has been refuted on a number of occasions but the basic idea of the development of Coronation imagery in Rome as a direct result of French influences has persisted. It has been postulated that a similar influence can also be detected in the apse composition of S. Maria Maggiore, completed more than a century after S. Maria in Trastevere. The similarity of the vertical narrative along the central axis of the S. Maria Maggiore apse to the tympana of French Gothic cathedrals [such as at Nôtre Dame de Paris (fig.5)] is strong evidence for the sort of cultural cross fertilization made possible by a number of new developments in both France and Rome.³⁶ Increased pilgrimage and the papally sanctioned crusades to the Holy Land encouraged greater mobility between cultures and new ideas quickly traveled these freshly opened routes. This facilitated the dissemination of many new philosophical and ecclesiastical ideas and texts. In the first half of the twelfth century the famous Cistercian monk St. Bernard of Clairvaux preached exegetical sermons on the Song of Songs, citing it as an Old Testament allegory of the mystical union between Christ and the Virgin who represented his church on earth. St. Bernard was a supporter of papal authority and was closely associated with Pope Innocent II, who avoided schism in the early years of his reign by seeking refuge in a sympathetic France. The widely spread effect of St. Bernard's sermons, combined with a general mood of heightened Marian veneration, is reflected in the development of Triumph of the Virgin imagery on French cathedral tympana. This sort of exegetical thinking about the Canticles also resonated in Rome through the liturgy of the feast of the Assumption and found its way into the inscriptions in the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere.³⁷

³⁵ Mâle, Churches of Rome, 142.

³⁶ See J. Gardner, The influence of Popes' and Cardinals' Patronage in the Introduction of the Gothic Style into Rome and the Surrounding Area, 1250-1305 (Ph.D. Thesis, 1969)

³⁷ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 8, argues for the literary roots of the development of the Coronation of the Virgin in Rome rather than as the result of purely French sculptural influences.

It is possible, as suggested by Mâle, that Innocent II's French connections and the subsequent increase of a French presence at the Papal court may have inspired the commission of this type of apsidal decoration in Trastevere. However, it is doubtful that any one French image or sermon was reproduced by Innocent II; rather, the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere must have reflected a general idea of Mary that had begun in Northern Europe and had been adapted to suit Roman needs and customs. The continued influence of French ideas concerning the triumph and coronation of the Virgin in the thirteenth century was also evident in Torriti's Coronation apse in S. Maria Maggiore. As mentioned above, the vertical composition of the narrative which began with the Dormition, followed by the Assumption and the Coronation of the Virgin recreated the popular visual formula of French cathedral tympana decoration of the time.³⁸ Although this deliberate placing of the Dormition along the central axis disrupts the narrative order of the entire Marian cycle in the conch, Torriti chose this technique to emphasize the central concept of Coronation. At this time in Rome the choice of a French technique was not particularly unusual. What is interesting is the change that takes place in iconographical forms. The decoration of the apse in the church of S. Maria Maggiore makes a visual leap from a Triumph of the Virgin as seen in S. Maria in Trastevere to a full-fledged Coronation. Was this also the result of direct French influences or mere coincidence of interest with the rest of western Europe?

This evolution toward full Coronation imagery in thirteenth-century Rome has been consistently argued as the logical second step from the French visual and exegetical presence in the city, first seen in S. Maria in Trastevere. Yet, in part, the increased iconographical emphasis on the Virgin and her Coronation must have also been due to the influence of thirteenth-century Franciscan texts which saw her queenship and intercessory powers as absolute.³⁹ It is equally important however to note the intercessory clout of the

³⁸ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, fn.113.

³⁹ Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 10.

Virgin in the East, where iconic images of Mary were integral to the protection of Byzantine cities and her cult was well established. Although actual Coronation of the Virgin images were the fruit of a western European imagination, the Byzantine empire had provided the seeds of this development by expanding and disseminating imagery of the Virgin's life-cycle. These sorts of Byzantine images made their way into Italy by way of illuminated manuscripts, which were bought and sold in trade centres like Rome as rare and precious commodities.⁴⁰ The iconographical form of the Coronation itself may have also been influenced by Byzantine coin and mosaic images of the emperor being crowned by Christ or by the Virgin, although the degree to which these objects were available in the west is unclear.⁴¹ In any case, the demand in trecento Rome for ancient and modern Byzantine art created a local Roman industry that made its own Byzantine-style paintings. It is evident that an early Roman/Christian aesthetic was sought in the decoration of S. Maria in Trastevere and to some degree in S. Maria Maggiore, but an overtly Byzantine stylistic influence is more difficult to detect. It has also been suggested that the faces of both the Virgin and Christ in the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere were derived from important Byzantine-style icons used in Rome's feast of the Assumption procession.⁴² In his discussion of the mosaics in S. Maria in Trastevere, Ernst Kitzinger challenges Mâle's franco-centric hypothesis and argues for understanding the twelfth-century decorative program of the church as an example of antiquarianism. Kitzinger repudiates the theory that French cathedral art alone influenced the creation of this mosaic, and instead searches for the major roots of this new theme in the Canticle scripture and in the liturgy of the feast day of the Assumption.⁴³ Kitzinger agrees with Mâle on the importance of this part of scripture

⁴⁰ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 59.

⁴¹ Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*, 113.

⁴² Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 10.

⁴³ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 8.

to the development of *synthronos*/Coronation imagery; however, he is quick to point out that *synthronos* iconography also had its roots in classical antiquity and Byzantium, and had been commonly used in earlier Christian imagery to depict the relationship between the holy father and son.⁴⁴ Kitzinger makes one further stylistic argument for the repudiation of Mâle's hypothesis by arguing for a deliberate case of antiquarianism in the rendering of the Virgin's face at S. Maria in Trastevere. He suggests that the face of the Virgin in the mosaic was a direct reference to the icon of S. Maria Nova which was painted in a self-consciously Byzantine style.⁴⁵ The icon in question was integral to the annual feast of the Assumption procession as a destination point for the Lateran icon of Christ during the ceremony. Thus, according to Kitzinger, the apse mosaic of S. Maria in Trastevere was more indebted to indigenous Roman traditions, and perhaps Byzantine ones, rather than French. As well, it has been pointed out that the Virgin types in both S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore are different from later Coronation of the Virgin scenes. Instead of the more usual humble crossing of arms across her chest, that dominates later Italian coronation imagery, the two apse mosaics feature a Virgin who gestures toward Christ in a Byzantine act of intercession. This may have been an unconscious choice on Torriti's part to continue certain iconographical precedents set in the apse of S. Maria in Trastevere, or perhaps it is a testament to the continuing Byzantine influence on the arts of the city.

Marian Veneration & Popular Piety

By the late Middle Ages the earlier uncertain attitude toward the Assumption had given way to an acquiescence toward the Virgin's divine nature. The mid twelfth century saw the emergence of a new theological understanding of the Virgin's Assumption into

⁴⁴ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 10.

⁴⁵ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 13.

heaven as a corporeal as well as a spiritual event.⁴⁶ This shift arose out of a number of new developments in religious thinking about Mary which saw many of their roots in Cistercian critical interpretation of the scripture concerning her life. As late medieval society sought a more humane and approachable religion, attitudes toward the cult of the Virgin began to grow more personal and fervent. Between 1135 and 1153 the Cistercian theologian, Bernard of Clairvaux, produced 86 sermons in which he discussed the Song of Songs as a spousal relationship between Christ and the *Sponsa*, who personified the church. The Virgin and the church were often interchangeable concepts in exegetical thinking of the day, and it was just a matter of time before St. Bernard began to describe the *Sponsa* not only as an allegory of the Roman church but also as an Old Testament prefiguration of the mystical union between Christ and his mother.

The glorification of the Virgin as queen and bride in these sermons was widely copied and helped to provide the ideological blueprint for apocryphal stories of the Virgin in *The Golden Legend*, where considerable use was made of the Cantic to describe her Assumption into heaven.⁴⁷ The possibility, suggested in St. Bernard's sermons, of intimacy with Christ through an advocacy Virgin had hit on an essential ingredient for the cult veneration of Mary that was to follow. The visual result of this new thinking about the Song of Songs can first be detected not only on French Cathedral tympana but also in French and German manuscripts of the time. By the mid- twelfth century, manuscripts began to feature exegetical images of the enthroned *Sponsa* and *Sponsus* of the Cantic as Christ crowning a female personification of the church or sitting on a *synthronos* with her (fig.6).⁴⁸ As the vehicle for Christ's introduction into the world the Virgin inspired

⁴⁶ Verdier, "Suger," 228.

⁴⁷ Jacobus da Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 77-97.

⁴⁸ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 84. One such example is the *Liber Floridus de Lambert de Saint-Omer*, (University Library, Ghent) fol. 253 in which Christ crowns a personification of the Church with one hand and with the other turns away a personification of the Synagogue. A similar image is seen in

countless comparisons with the church, which saw itself as Christ's teaching tool for humanity. This link was continually perpetuated through visual and written exegesis. The growing popularity of the Song of Songs as a metaphor for the Virgin as queen and bride was reflected in the liturgical ceremonies of the Virgin's feast days in Rome, notably the feast day of the Assumption. The apse of S. Maria in Trastevere was a product of this interest in the Song of Songs. It illustrated the new reading of the Cantic as a metaphor for Christ and the Virgin enthroned together in the heavenly Jerusalem as bride and bridegroom. The inscribed scroll held by the figure of Mary in the apse further indicates its connection to the Song of Songs with a direct quotation of Canticles 2:6 and 8:3 which were a part of liturgical responses on the feast day of the Assumption. By the mid-twelfth century this feast day had developed into one of the city's most important ceremonies. The bride of the Cantic could by this time be freely interpreted as the Virgin Mary whose place as queen and holy consort in heaven was assured by the growing acceptance of the corporeal nature of her Assumption into heaven. In a few generations the popularity of her cult had transformed Mary from the symbolic *theotokos*, who often seemed too distant to comprehend, into a merciful intercessor and mother for humanity.⁴⁹

By the thirteenth century the focus of Marian attention had more definitively switched from the moment of Incarnation to the moment of Assumption and the events that followed.⁵⁰ Images of the Virgin crowned in heaven became more than just glorified metaphors for the church and began to represent the Madonna as Christ's closest companion and humanity's greatest chance for intercession on Judgement Day. Earlier images of a serenely enthroned Virgin and Christ like that at S. Maria in Trastevere gave

the stained glass window of S. Denis. Also the illustration of the enthroned *Sponsa* and *Sponsus* in *Commentary on the Song of Songs from the Cantic of Honorius Augustodunensis* (Staatsbibliothek, Munich Cod. lat. 14550, fol. 1v)

⁴⁹ Warner, *Alone of all her Sex*, 130.

⁵⁰ Warner, *Alone of all her Sex*, 113.

way to a more active image of Coronation in which Christ was shown placing a crown on his mother's head and declaring her his bride. In part this was a result of Franciscan influences on popular religious beliefs and practices of the time. The Franciscans were fervent believers in the cult of the Virgin and strong supporters of the reinterpretation of her Assumption as the moment of supreme Marian glory. This may have been the reason behind the choice of decoration in the thirteenth-century apse mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore. The Coronation of the Virgin was a fitting decorative choice for a church with strong ties to the Franciscan community in Rome. Both its patron Nicholas IV, and the artist Jacopo Torriti, were committed to the ideals of the Franciscan order and sought to reflect these ideals by emphasizing the bodily as well as spiritual Assumption of the Virgin. A few years earlier, in his influential sermons for the feast of the Assumption, St. Bonaventure had made copious reference to the corporeal and spiritual integrity of the Virgin in heaven and emphasized her Coronation there.⁵¹

Although probably not specific to any one sermon or text the transmission of these general Franciscan ideals is evident in the apse mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore where the inscription situates the Virgin in a heavenly choir of angels.⁵² The physical assumption of the Virgin's throne into heaven is also accentuated in the compositional scheme of the church where the Coronation seems rooted in a narrative framework based on a combination of French and Byzantine models.⁵³ This was a trademark of Franciscan imagery which often highlighted the humanity of martyrs by emphasizing the temporality of their lives through narrative. The bodily assumption of the Virgin is stressed in this mosaic through the vertical narrative of the central axis. Thus her existence as an historical being is

⁵¹ Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 10.

⁵² Gardner, "Pope Nicholas IV," 10.

⁵³ Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 191.

highlighted through the visualization of these events as situated in linear time.⁵⁴ Moreover, this concept of the Virgin as a human being bodily situated in sacred history, underscores her overarching purpose in heaven to act as an intercessor for humankind. An image of the Madonna *Avvocata* together with Christ created a sort of neo-Byzantine *deesis* and produced a standard visual formula for intercessory prayer in the later Middle Ages.⁵⁵ The choice of subject for the apse mosaic decoration in S. Maria Maggiore was surely a result of this new attitude toward the Virgin in thirteenth-century Rome as the most effective intercessor between Christ and humanity. But, the question remains: how did the apse images in S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore function as distinctly Roman images? To begin to answer this question is to understand how previous images of Mary functioned physically and spiritually within the city in the Middle Ages. Although the procession of the Virgin's feast day of the Assumption had been a long established ceremony in Rome, it was not until the twelfth century with the phenomenal growth of the Virgin's cult in the West that it took on mythic proportions for popular religion. Since its introduction into Rome in the seventh century, August 15th of every year saw the Virgin's Assumption re-enacted in an elaborate procession that visited all the major churches of the city. During the night of the 14th, after a number of sermons and homilies to the Virgin derived from the Song of Songs, the holy icon of the Saviour was carried from its resting place in the Lateran chapel of St. Lawrence through the streets of Rome.⁵⁶ The procession made its way to many of the major churches in Rome including S. Maria Nova and S. Maria Maggiore; but it was at S. Maria Nova that the icon of Christ was met by an icon of the Virgin and the two were 'enthroned' together on the high altar, marking the moment of

⁵⁴ Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 188.

⁵⁵ Tronzo, "Apse Decoration," 180-81.

⁵⁶ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 45-6.

the Virgin's assumption into heaven as queen and intercessor for humanity.⁵⁷ This meeting of the Lateran icon of Christ and an icon of the Virgin is described at length in a hymn composed around 1000 CE in honour of Otto III's visit to Rome.⁵⁸ One can only imagine the effect the ceremony had on the crowds of Christian Romans who turned out every year to witness the events that unfolded before the mosaic backdrop of the church facades. At S. Maria Maggiore, as at S. Maria in Trastevere, the facade mosaics complemented the Marian subject matter in the apse, preparing the congregation for their encounter with the sacred images within.⁵⁹ The enduring popularity of the event, one of the most inclusive feast days of the year, had deep significance for the sense of popular religion in the area. This annual festival fixed the moment of Assumption indelibly on the imagination of all who witnessed it and who understood its future intercessory significance. Iconic images of Mary and Christ had long been held as some of the holiest images in the city. But, before the cult of Mary had made the concept of Marian intercession so diffusive in the West, Byzantine icons had been fulfilling the role of intercessory protectors for the Roman people. In the popular Medieval imagination the mysterious provenance of the holiest icons gave them a divine authority on earth as direct channels of heavenly will and therefore above all other temporal command.⁶⁰ Their direct intercessory power was seen as protection for the

⁵⁷ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 46. In his article "A Virgin's Face," 17., Ernst Kitzinger argues that the 'enthroning' of the two icons occurred at S. Maria Nova rather than S. Maria Maggiore. His argument is based on a hymnal description of this moment in the procession written around 1000 CE. See H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the era of Art*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) for further information on the feast of the Assumption procession.

⁵⁸ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 17.

⁵⁹ C. Harding, "Images of Authority, Identity and Power: Facade Mosaic Decoration in Rome During the later Middle Ages," *RACAR* 23 (1997), 18.

⁶⁰ H. Belting, "Icons and Roman Society in the Twelfth-Century," *Italian Church Decoration of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, ed. W. Tronzo, (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1989), 32. Belting describes the legend of the Madonna of S. Sisto which belonged to a poor nunnery. The pope of the time claimed this icon for the Lateran collection but the next morning the icon had been mysteriously returned to the nuns. There are a few stories like this one about icons taking the part of the defenseless against institutional authorities. They were thought to channel direct heavenly intervention.

powerless and weak against the potential abuses of institutional authority.⁶¹ They served, in this sense, as intercessory representatives not only for the general populace but also for the churches to which they belonged.⁶² Icons were thus considered active, 'living' entities not just static images which functioned exclusively in and for the papal *status quo*. This established understanding of the intercessory function of iconic images in Rome naturally lent itself to Marian cult interest in the Assumption which had as its central theme the concept of the Virgin as a celestial advocate for humanity. Through the annual Assumption feast procession the people were allowed to participate in sacred history as witnesses of the symbolic marriage between Christ (divine authority) and Mary (the advocate of the people). In her Coronation the Virgin represented the post-apocalyptic apotheosis of redeemed humanity and the procession became a symbolic marriage between Christ and his congregation.⁶³ This complex and diverse relationship of meanings in medieval Rome was central to understanding the function of icons there. It is within this context of popular religion that the functionality of the apse images in S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore may be understood. If the feast of the Assumption procession held such undiluted significance for the Roman congregation, the choice of triumphal Virgin imagery in these two major churches must have also had some deliberate message for the viewer. Ernst Kitzinger suggests that the apse mosaic at S. Maria in Trastevere was meant to specifically invoke this procession. By his calculations the image of the Virgin *Avvocata* enthroned with her son's arm around her shoulders reproduced the moment of meeting between the icons of Christ and the Virgin in the feast of the Assumption procession.⁶⁴ The ceremony is further recalled to the viewer's mind by the faces of the Virgin and Christ

⁶¹ Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 34.

⁶² Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 27.

⁶³ Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 38.

⁶⁴ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 16-17.

which may have been visual quotations of the icons used, and also by the inscriptions which recalled the liturgical responses of the ceremony.⁶⁵ The mosaic figures in this context become themselves like icons to the viewer where the intercessory function of the Virgin was emphasized.⁶⁶ The Virgin in the apse at S. Maria in Trastevere may also represent the church which mediates between God and his earthly congregation. As representatives of specific churches within the Roman community, icons were traditionally utilized in large processions to stage the unity of the Roman church and the Christian community as a whole under the papacy.⁶⁷ In this context the presence of a Marian image thus had a number of functions. An icon of the Virgin or Christ could represent not only the church to which it belonged, or the congregation that prayed to it, but also acted as a visual reminder of the larger Christian congregation assembled under the papacy. Thus icons of the Virgin could also represent the greater Christian populace and in the context of the Trastevere apse Christ embraces not only his mother, or the church, but also his people. The line between popular and papal messages at this point becomes a very thin one. At S. Maria Maggiore the Marian image in the apse functions in much the same way. Through Coronation of the Virgin imagery the respective roles of the Virgin and Christ as advocate and judge of humanity were emphasized in the popular imagination. The mendicant encouragement of a more intimate and individual relationship between Christians and their faith also contributed to the shift in emotional impact between a static enthronement image, in many ways rooted to the past, and the more active Coronation scene which represented a fitting end to the historical narrative in which all Christians would eventually take part. The Assumption feast procession was a yearly reminder of this eventuality. These aspects of the Coronation apse are no different from the 'proto-Coronation' in S. Maria in Trastevere but the biggest

⁶⁵ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 15-16.

⁶⁶ Kitzinger, "A Virgin's Face," 16.

⁶⁷ Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 29-30.

shift between these two churches is their subject. The Coronation in S. Maria Maggiore was completed at a time of greater acceptance of the Virgin as an *Avvocata* for the people rather than as a representation of the church. The moment of non-mediated access to the heavenly kingdom merely by looking upon images of Mary was of continuing importance to Roman Christians and the apse mosaics discussed here provided a continuation of this tradition into the late Middle Ages. The Coronation and proto-Coronation images of these two churches had an evolving function for popular religion in Medieval Rome. The image of the Virgin seemed particularly malleable to the changes in religious thinking of the time and allowed for a number of interpretations within her growing cult.

The Political Bride of Christ

These images could also be reflective of the political concerns of the day. The choice of apse decoration in any Roman church that received papal commissions was sure to make some sort of politically laced statement. The Coronation images in both S. Maria in Trastevere and S. Maria Maggiore are no exception. The first cycle of redecoration in S. Maria in Trastevere was commissioned in the 1140's by Pope Innocent II shortly after his return to Rome from a period of exile in France, where he had sought refuge after the election of the antipope Anacletus II. His recent victory over his enemies and his subsequent return to Rome must have influenced the choice of triumphal imagery for this prominent Marian church.⁶⁸ It has already been mentioned that one interpretation of the Virgin enthroned with Christ was to see her as a personification of the church. This, of course, had its roots in the early exegesis on the Song of Songs which continually made the comparison both in text and in image. In exegetical writing and manuscript illustrations of the time the Song of Songs was also often interpreted as an allegory of a new order (the

⁶⁸ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 44.

church) triumphing over an old one (the synagogue) (fig.6).⁶⁹ The toppling of the ‘misguided’ faith of a previous order would have been an important aspect of the apse at S. Maria in Trastevere in light of the recent papal schism. This connection between the Virgin and the church was not accidental and the mosaics were surely chosen by the papal patron with this in mind. As has been discussed, the *Maria Regina* was used by the papacy as an instrument to convey the legitimacy of their divinely sanctioned rule and exclusive connection with Christ, and in the context of the Virgin’s Coronation this message was underscored.⁷⁰ The subject of the apse was a deliberate choice on Innocent II’s part to make these visual references which emphasized his recent papal triumph in a manner appropriate for the sacred space of a church. The relative inter-changeability of the Virgin and the personification of *Ecclesia* created an opportunity for political messages that rarely went unused by the papacy at this time. This use of Marian imagery always seem to be more concentrated during periods of papal triumph and self-righteousness.⁷¹ The intimacy with Christ, implied in the close embrace between mother and son, establishes the Roman church (Mary) as supreme and its papal leader and patron of the image (standing to right of the Virgin) as the rightful leader of the earthly congregation. Over a century later many of the same sort of political messages guided the choice in decoration for the apse of S. Maria

⁶⁹ In *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 83-86. Verdier cites a number of manuscript examples for this interpretation of the Song of Songs as a dialogue between church and synagogue and the break between them. See also D. Jackson, “Marian Antisemitism in Medieval Life and Legend: A Study Based on Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*” (M.A. Thesis, Univ. of Victoria, Victoria, 1997)

⁷⁰ M. Stroll, “*Maria Regina*: papal symbol,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King’s College, London, April 1995* (London: Woodbridge, 1997), 173. Stroll discusses the interpretation of Mary as *Mater Ecclesia* and as the bride in the Canticle. She also discusses the possible Byzantine origins for this interpretation and the depiction of the Virgin often as Byzantine royalty. Stroll also mentions p.182 the significance of the marriage between Christ and his Church for bishops whose commitment to his congregation is symbolized by a ring. The connection between the Coronation of the Virgin as a legitimizing image and the accoutrements of power is an area needing more exploration. The motif appears frequently on croisers and copes and, most significantly for this project, the Coronation of the Virgin also appears in conjunction with the narrative fresco in the Venetian Sala del Gran Consiglio which attempts to visually legitimize ducal privileges.

⁷¹ Warner, *Alone of all her Sex*, 103-104.

Maggiore. Santa Maria Maggiore had been traditionally associated with the Franciscan oriented Colonna family, and as such received the majority of papal patronage under Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan pope and favorite of the Colonna. The papal declaration here was much the same as at S. Maria in Trastevere. Although there was no threat of papal schism for Nicholas IV to combat during his pontificate, his pride at being the first pope from the relatively new Franciscan order must have been great. Surely the same sort of impetus was behind the choice of such an overtly triumphant image of the Virgin in her moment of highest glory. The traditional inter-changeability of the Virgin and the personification of the church could not have been lost on Nicholas IV, and thus her undisputed reign over the heavenly Jerusalem was emphasized with a full Coronation scene. This reference to the church was evident in the number of Marian icons used in Assumption feast day processions throughout the papal states which were meant to represent Papal presence in the area.⁷² These processions provided an excuse to parade papal icons around the city. By including the Roman populace in sacred events, processions not only made important statements about the power of the papacy but also about the city it governed. The scale and pageantry of the Roman procession sought to present the city as the earthly heir to the heavenly Jerusalem. If the thirteenth-century Coronation of the Virgin mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore was meant to call to mind this Assumption feast day procession, which unfolded annually beneath its apse, perhaps it is not so far a stretch to argue for intended connections between the heavenly and the earthly moments. By linking the Assumption procession on earth with the heavenly one represented by the apse mosaic, glorious Rome visually legitimized itself as the closest earthly thing to the heavenly Jerusalem. In this context the Virgin signified not only the

⁷² Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 38.

papacy and the Roman people but possibly also the city itself crowned by Christ.⁷³

Increasingly, papal patrons were not above using images of the Virgin in glory to make political statements legitimizing their right, as the rulers of Rome, to judge and lead Christendom. By the twelfth century, as the papacy became more monarchical in its structure, the hierarchy implied in Coronation of the Virgin iconography lent itself easily to this sort of political interpretation. These changes in civic administration were reflected in the socially structured festival, and before its abolition in the fifteenth century, city magistrates dealt with an increasing number of conflicts between social groups.⁷⁴ Still, the undiluted power to convey a number of messages to the viewer was the key characteristic of the Marian imagery. The relative ambiguity of her image and her role in Christianity allowed for a flexibility of meaning that could be molded to suit a number of political and social needs.

The ability to simultaneously convey a number of messages through images of Mary enthroned with Christ speaks to the increased dynamism of her role in late Medieval society. From the potent combination of new cultural influences and changes in Western religious culture emerged an iconographical theme that resonated with different layers of meaning. For the political authorities as well as for the individual Christian, the Coronation of the Virgin in an apocalyptic paradise provided a glorious visual reminder of the always imminent Last Judgement. In twelfth and thirteenth-century Rome these eventualities were not lost on the viewer or the patron and their uses of the Coronation theme would set the tone for its later development, especially in central Italy. By the trecento, Coronation of the

⁷³ Warner, *Alone of all her Sex*, 104. It is interesting to note here the what may be the subconscious continuance of the classical tradition of female personification of cities. See also A. Iacobini, "Il mosaico absidale di San Pietro in Vaticano," in *Fragmenta Picta: Affreschi e mosaici staccati del Medioevo romano* (Roma: Museo di Castel Sant'Angelo, 1989), 125-129, fig.10,12., for a discussion of the personification of "Ecclesia Romana" in the fragmentary remains of the early 13th century apsidal mosaic of S. Pietro in Vaticano.

Virgin paintings were to become a staple in the Marian repertory of most Italian city centres; Florence, Siena, and Orvieto all followed the Roman suit, to some degree, replicating not only the iconographical formula established at S. Maria Maggiore but also some of the social and political impetus that lay behind the image. This will be the focus of the following chapter concerning Florence, Siena and Orvieto where new uses of the Coronation of the Virgin pose important questions regarding meaning and locality. How did the location of the Coronation of the Virgin affect its meaning for the viewer? Were the messages that were important for Roman Coronations of the Virgin also important in Florence, Siena, Orvieto or Venice?

⁷⁴ Belting, "Icons and Roman Society," 41.

Chapter 2: The Communal Maria Regina

In central Italy, a century or so, after the 'proto-Coronation' apse mosaic of S. Maria in Trastevere, monumental images of the Coronation of the Virgin appeared, almost simultaneously, on the mosaic retrofacade of Florence cathedral c.1300 (fig.7); in Duccio's stained glass window in Siena cathedral of 1297 (fig.8); and in the apse mosaic of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome of 1292-95. These works foreshadowed the explosion of popularity that the Coronation of the Virgin theme was to enjoy in trecento Italy as a visual representation not only of popular piety but also, in many cases, local civic pride and the interests of the city corporation.

Florence: The Duomo Retrofacade and the Baroncelli Altarpiece

The artistic commissions of late dugento Florence were marked with a sense of the city's special destiny as the new paragon of ancient Roman morals and ideals -- a new Rome.⁷⁵ In an attempt to foster civic pride, this view was disseminated through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by city chroniclers, like Giovanni Villani whose writings made exaggerated claims about Florence's illustrious ancient roots.⁷⁶ Civic pride in Florence was bolstered by a variety of means in the early trecento, which saw an increased interest not only in antiquity but also in the more modern cultural developments which made their way into the city from France, Byzantium, and Rome. The latest French Gothic developments had a well documented influence on Tuscan artists like Giovanni Pisano and Arnolfo di Cambio, among others, not only stylistically but also in terms of

⁷⁵ C. Harding, *Facade Mosaics of the Dugento and Trecento in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio* (Ph.D. thesis, 1983, University of London), 203.

⁷⁶ Harding, *Facade Mosaics in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 204. Notably, the assertion that the eleventh-century baptistery of San Giovanni had been a converted temple to Mars built during Augustus' reign in celebration of his victory over neighbouring town of Fiesole

iconographical organization.⁷⁷ Nowhere is this more apparent in late medieval Florence than on the facade and retrofacade of the Duomo (fig.7). In 1294 the plan to repair the old cathedral dedicated to S. Reparata was abandoned in favour of executing an entirely new project, designed and executed by Arnolfo di Cambio. By his death in 1302, Arnolfo had completed the cathedral facade programme only up to the tympanum level. Subsequent financial difficulties halted the decoration of the new cathedral for a time until 1334, when work was resumed with Giotto as the new head architect. He was, in turn, succeeded by Andrea Pisano and Francesco Talenti later in the century.

By 1357 Arnolfo's plans had been modified to fit newer tastes and the Duomo facade above the tympanum level was executed according to a changed plan which would itself be replaced in 1587 with a Renaissance facade. However, Arnolfo's original sculptural plan for the facade of the new Duomo dedicated to Mary provides an important insight into changing church facade decoration at the end of the *dugento* and beginning of the *trecento*: it developed a Mariological programme, reminiscent of French Cathedral sculpture, wherein the Nativity and Dormition narrative relief groups over the facade portals were consummated with the Coronation of the Virgin mosaic added to the retrofacade by the early *trecento*.⁷⁸ It is not known for certain whether or not this Coronation mosaic was an original part of the 1290's scheme, which initially called for a sculptural facade culminating in the Madonna and Child enthroned and flanked by SS. Zenobius and Reparata.⁷⁹ But the Coronation of the Virgin mosaic was probably in place by approximately 1320-21 when the facade wall of the cathedral was thickened to support

⁷⁷ See M. Weinberger, "The First Facade of the cathedral of Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 4 (1940-41), 69. and "Remarks on the Role of French Models within the Evolution of Gothic Tuscan Sculpture," *Studies in Western Art I, Romanesque and Gothic: Acts of the Twelfth International Congress of the History of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 203.

⁷⁸ Weinberger, "First Florence Cathedral Facade," 69.

⁷⁹ G. Richa, *Notizie Istoriche delle Chiese Fiorentine divise ne' suoi Quartieri*, vol. 6/10, (1757), p.52ff. cited in Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 228, fn. 129.

the enframing around the central door and a tomb in the retrofacade wall.⁸⁰ The appearance of the Coronation of the Virgin which, stylistically, is not of the 1290's also indicates an early trecento date for the retrofacade mosaic. The seated Madonna of Humility gestures toward Christ who crowns her with one hand and blesses her with the other. The holy couple are attended by the four beasts of the apocalypse and a host of angels and seraphim, a possible allusion to the Last Judgement which usually had pride of place on the retrofacade of medieval churches.⁸¹ The substitution of the Coronation of the Virgin for the Last Judgement in this context is a reflection of the emerging trecento popularity of the theme as a post-apocalyptic paradise of the redeemed. With the later addition of the Coronation mosaic the facade programme of the Duomo was 'updated' in a way that foreshadowed the future standard in central Italian cathedral facade decoration typified by the mid to late trecento programmes executed at Orvieto and Siena. By the early fourteenth century it would have been considered almost *retardataire* not to include a Coronation of the Virgin in the visual programme of a cathedral dedicated to Mary. Like the monumental Coronation of the Virgin in the apse of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, the motif on the retrofacade of Florence's Duomo has a similar civic resonance. The question of whether or not the decoration of Florence cathedral was influenced by the Roman examples previously discussed is a difficult one to answer. Florentine cathedral, like all other cathedrals of the time and area, provided a public space for both ecclesiastical and civic activities in the city. In fact, it was a city's principal monument on which to represent the interests of the *commune*. Therefore, any images placed within this space were not arbitrarily or carelessly chosen by the civic authorities merely to suit fashion. It is within this context that the Coronation retrofacade mosaic must be understood. Its intended audience would have been all Florentine citizens who came to worship, meet and even conduct business in and around

⁸⁰ F. Toker, "Florence Cathedral: The Design Stage," *Art Bulletin* 60 (1978), 223-4.

⁸¹ Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 230.

the Duomo, and in this sense the Coronation of the Virgin would have been subject to the same sort of political and religious development as the Coronation in the apse of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome completed only a few years earlier. Also, the facade mosaic decoration of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome complemented the mosaic coronation in the apse in the same way that the sculptural facade of the Florence Cathedral does the Coronation on the retrofacade. Both churches presented a unified Mariological decorative programme that included the interior Coronation of the Virgin as the culminating moment of the programme begun on the exterior.⁸² In Florence, where the Coronation of the Virgin was placed on the area traditionally reserved for the Last Judgement, rather than the apse, it was the local interests of the communal government in place of the Papacy that were represented. Although, there is no certain way to determine that the new Mariological programme of the Florentine Duomo was directly influenced by S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, it does reflect a simultaneous flowering of interest in this theme in the area. The Coronation of the Virgin became popular iconography in more exclusively religious settings, notably as one of the preferred subjects of Franciscan altarpieces.⁸³ One of the most prominent Coronation images of this type is Giotto's Baroncelli altarpiece (fig.9) in the Baroncelli chapel of S. Croce, dedicated to the Virgin of the Annunciation, which developed a Mariological programme culminating in the polyptych of the Coronation of the Virgin within a paradisaical court. The Baroncelli chapel decoration was begun, if not completed, by 1334, approximately fourteen years or more after the addition of the Duomo retrofacade, and was intended, by virtue of its being in a family chapel of a Mendicant church, for a Franciscan

⁸² See Harding, "Images of Authority, Identity, Power," 18. in which the facade is discussed as a backdrop for feast day festivities and as a transitional space to prepare the viewer for his or her encounter with the holy relics, images and spaces within the church.

⁸³ J. Gardner, "Some Franciscan Altars of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *The Vanishing Past: Studies of Medieval Art, Liturgy and Metrology presented to Christopher Hohler*, ed. A. Borg and A. Martindale. (Oxford: BAR International Series, 1981), 34.

audience.⁸⁴ The Coronation of the Virgin theme in contexts of high visibility and civic importance seemed to co-exist with a more personal, meditative interpretation which allowed the viewer not only to meditate on Mary's elevated position in heaven and her role as intercessor for mankind, but also to contemplate the ultimate goal of future inclusion in the post-apocalyptic court of the redeemed elect.⁸⁵ The courtly aspect of Coronation images provided, in this context, an appropriate backdrop for, and reflection of the pomp and pageantry of religious ceremony.⁸⁶ The inclusivity of this visual message which implied the viewer as its witness was of prime importance to the Franciscans and other mendicant orders which, in the trecento, often commissioned Coronations of the Virgin to decorate church, chapel, and convent altarpieces as a means of prayerful focus. This was in part due to the particular deference these orders showed to the Virgin and her cult. However, these images also functioned in a more specific way for the monks and nuns who meditated upon them. As discussed by Jeffery Hamburger in his book Nuns as Artists, the Coronation of the Virgin had particular resonance for cloistered nuns who were expected to cultivate a similarly intimate relationship with Christ as his 'bride.'⁸⁷ In this context the Coronation of the Virgin represented an intimate image of spiritual communion with Christ that was

⁸⁴ J. Gardner, "The Decoration of the Baroncelli Chapel in Santa Croce," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 34 (1971), 105-106.

⁸⁵ More work needs to be done on the use of Coronation of the Virgin images in funerary chapel contexts. The Baroncelli chapel like, that of the Lupi in the Franciscan church of Sant'Antonio, Padua, contains family tombs. Both decorative schemes, among others, include a Coronation of the Virgin.

⁸⁶ D. Norman, "'Hail Most Saintly Lady': Change and Continuity in Marian altarpieces," Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400, vol. 2, ed. Diana Norman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 207.

⁸⁷ J. Hamburger, Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 116, 151. Hamburger discusses at length the recurrence of eschatological and bridal themes in the devotional drawings of Medieval cloistered nuns which give visual expression to the major characteristics of cloistered female spirituality in the middle ages: "... the longing for paradise, the desire for Christ, the mystical bridegroom and intense Eucharistic devotion..." 170.

espoused by Franciscan belief as the means to pass into a transcendent realm.⁸⁸ This mystical aspect of the Coronation of the Virgin was often emphasized in smaller manifestations of the theme. Portable painted or ivory polyptychs were more easily meditated upon and encouraged a degree of spiritual intimacy that was difficult to achieve through the contemplation of monumental imagery. Monumental apse mosaics or frescoes were necessarily more inclusive and more focused on a sense of the awesome glory and redemptive power of the heavenly court of Christ and the Virgin.

Orvieto: The Duomo Facade

Outside of trecento Tuscany, the Coronation of the Virgin was put to increasingly elaborate uses as part of the mosaic decoration for the Gothic gables of cathedral facades. The cathedrals of Siena and Orvieto are most notable in this category as both were originally intended to have at their apex a mosaic of the Coronation of the Virgin. Giving the Coronation of the Virgin pride of place on a cathedral facade was not unusual for trecento Italy, no doubt influenced in part by French cathedral facades of Reims and Rouen.⁸⁹ The use of mosaic was not native to Siena and Umbria who had to import mosaicists from Rome and Venice in order to fulfill these grandiose plans.⁹⁰ The trouble taken to establish these extremely expensive mosaic workshops, where there were previously none, indicates a significant financial commitment on the part of the civic authorities.⁹¹ Like the decorative programmes of the Florentine Duomo and S. Maria Maggiore in Rome, the master plan for the decoration of the Orvieto cathedral called for

⁸⁸ Hamburger, *Nuns and Artists*, 139.

⁸⁹ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 14-15.

⁹⁰ Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 21.

⁹¹ C. Harding, "The Production of Medieval Mosaics: The Orvieto Evidence," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 73-102.

agreement between the facade and apse in terms of both arrangement and subject matter. Both the facade mosaics and the apse frescoes of the Orvieto Duomo feature a prominent Coronation of the Virgin image and both are arranged along tiers. (figs.10 & 11.) At its conception the facade decoration of the cathedral was to be dedicated to the life of the Virgin Mary. In 1366 work began on the facade starting with, on the lowest level, scenes from Genesis, the tree of Jesse, life of Christ, and the Last Judgement. The lunette above the central portal depicted the Madonna and Child enthroned and flanked by angels; on the second level the life narrative of the Virgin extended along the vertical axis from the central portal to the crowning gable, which would have depicted the Coronation of the Virgin in glory.⁹² On May 30th, 1370 Ugolino di Prete Ilario was commissioned to paint the apse fresco of the Cathedral beginning at the top with the vault images of the Coronation of the Virgin, and Christ in Glory surrounded by an elaborate hierarchy of angels, cherubim, seraphim, and saints.⁹³ The life of the Virgin in the apse vault is depicted with a decided emphasis on verticality beginning with the funeral of the Virgin, her Assumption, and her Coronation.⁹⁴ This verticality is reminiscent of Torriti's apse mosaic in S. Maria Maggiore in which the Virgin's Dormition was placed out of sequence in her life cycle in order to deliberately make this vertical connection.⁹⁵ Although most Umbrian towns, including Orvieto, under papal rule in the trecento cultivated a degree of independence from Rome, it would have been Rome's greatest churches which exerted the most influence on Orvietans

⁹² Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 255. Although the Coronation of the Virgin mosaic was planned from the start it was not actually executed until 1713.

⁹³ Z.A. Cox, *Ugolino di Prete Ilario*, (Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1976), 47-48.

⁹⁴ Cox, *Ugolino di Prete Ilario*, 46.

⁹⁵ Cox is almost deliberately obtuse in his insistence that this is one of many indications that the Duomo programme is heavily influenced by Sieneese artistic styles without ever addressing the possibility of a Roman connection. See Cox, *Ugolino di Prete Ilario*, 45, 81, 103, 116.

when dedicating and decorating their own cathedral.⁹⁶ This influence is reflected not only in the arrangement of the apse fresco decoration but also in the dedication of the apse chapel to *S. Mariae Maioris* and in the early *Opera* document that states, in no uncertain terms, on Sept. 6th, 1290 that, "...this church [Orvieto] is to be constructed nobly and solemnly, in the image of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome..."⁹⁷ The development of facade mosaics at Orvieto cathedral may also have been a reflection of this early intent to emulate great Roman churches. Facade mosaics were an old Roman tradition for the exterior decoration of important churches like S. Pietro in Vaticano which represented on its mosaic facade, in medieval feudal terms, the papacy's unquestioned overlordship of Christendom as the favored vassal of Christ.⁹⁸ The decision to have facade mosaics at all, and to include in them, the Coronation of the Virgin speaks to the direct influence of S. Maria Maggiore's entire decorative programme on Orvieto cathedral.⁹⁹ The construction of this elaborate mosaic facade may have also functioned in the same way that Roman examples did, as backdrops for annual feast day processions relating to the Virgin. In Rome, the Assumption day procession was one of the most important of the liturgical calendar and involved the city's most prominent Marian churches. In fourteenth-century Orvieto, the Assumption day procession was modeled after the Roman one in its pomp and splendor, and involved the communal government officers who gathered in procession every year to pay allegiance to the ecclesiastical authorities of the town.¹⁰⁰ In the same way that the

⁹⁶ Harding, *Facade Mosaics in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 108.

⁹⁷ L. Fumi, *Statuti e Regesti dell'Opera di Santa Maria di Orvieto* (Rome, 1891), 86. "...quod ipsa ecclesia [scil. Orvieto] nobilis et solemnus ad instar S. Mariae Maioris de Urbe...construatur..." (cited in Harding, *Facade Mosaics in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 253. fn.43.

⁹⁸ Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 155-8.

⁹⁹ Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 253-4. The Orvieto facade does not imitate the facade of S. Maria Maggiore in particular but rather the interior mosaic cycle where of course the Coronation mosaic was in the apse.

¹⁰⁰ Harding, *Facade Mosaics in Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 104.

Assumption procession in Rome was enacted against the backdrop of the church facades of S. Maria Nova, S. Maria Maggiore, and others the Orvietan version occurred against the town cathedral which like the procession itself combined civic communal and ecclesiastical concerns.

Siena: The Duomo Facade

In Siena, the Duomo facade functioned under many of the same civic precepts as at Orvieto. The decision to modify the town cathedral was made in 1285, in an era when many central Italian city-states were looking for new, modern, ways of expressing their civic pride and religious faith. The rebuilding and redecoration of the state cathedral was an effective means of publicly achieving this. In thirteenth-century Siena, the so-called “city of the Virgin,” veneration of Mary had become an act of civic as well as religious allegiance.¹⁰¹ Her cult was the locus of state processions which found vigorous public expression and for which the town cathedral, dedicated to the Virgin’s role in the Incarnation, provided a glorious backdrop. As at Orvieto, the Assumption day procession involved a civic pledge of allegiance to Mary, although in Siena’s case it was directly to the Virgin that the commune prostrated itself rather than the ecclesiastical authorities.¹⁰² As at Florence and Orvieto cathedrals, it was also the civic government which oversaw the commission and decoration of the Sienese programme, which involved almost all aspects of Marian veneration: altarpieces were commissioned for the chapels dedicated to her feast days; the facade sculptural and mosaic programme dealt with her life cycle; a late thirteenth-century stained glass window designed by Duccio depicted her Dormition, Assumption, and Coronation (fig.8); in short, the cathedral provided an arena for Marian visual exegesis

¹⁰¹ Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 245-6.

¹⁰² Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*, 246.

in the city.¹⁰³ The Coronation of the Virgin was also a planned part of the original trecento facade (fig.12). As at Orvieto cathedral, it was to surmount the Duomo facade in the crowning gable and provide a backdrop for all public processions, and as at Orvieto it too was not executed until much later.¹⁰⁴ However, the fact that at both Orvieto and Siena the theme was included in these trecento designs as the consummating image on the most public of medieval structures is significant. The same is true for the addition of the Coronation of the Virgin on the retrofacade of Florence's Duomo. These additions may reflect an awareness of French tympana development or they may have been conscious emulations of Roman decorative programmes; either way they signify an understanding of the civic uses to which new Marian iconography could be put in the trecento context of popular, mendicant, visual literacy. Not only did a town's cathedral facade decoration provide the backdrop for civic processions but they also created a glorious backdrop for the city itself and its citizens who, as viewers, were automatically implicated in the heavenly court of the elect depicted in Coronation of the Virgin imagery. The increasingly common use of the Coronation of the Virgin in locations of prime importance, visibility and prominence in trecento Italy makes use of this implied intimacy. The crowning gable of a cathedral that towers above a city visually calls upon its citizens to witness and take part in the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem of which it is a part. Similarly, the Coronation of the Virgin in the retrofacade of Florence cathedral calls upon the city's congregation to see itself not as the cowering, miserable defendant at the Last Judgement but rather as a part of the triumphant court of the redeemed elect destined to enjoy the justice of the heavenly Jerusalem. The Mendicant attitude toward imagery, encouraged by the agenda of civic inclusion and personal communion with the heavenly court, helped to create an atmosphere in which the viewer was empowered by 'direct' contact with paradise. In this sense the

¹⁰³ Echols, "The Coronation of the Virgin," 45-6.

¹⁰⁴ Harding, Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio, 250-51.

Franciscan use of the Coronation to channel a personal communion with Christ and the Virgin is put to a greater civic use by implicating the entire city, that was able to view it publicly, in the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The development of the Coronation of the Virgin theme in dugento and trecento Rome, Florence, Orvieto, and Siena, generally characterized by the few examples cited above tends to represent the major strands of uses and meanings for the Coronation in a monumental and public context, in central Italy. The authoritative intent of these images for developments in Northern Italy is more difficult to determine. Although there was certainly contact and exchange of ideas between Central and Northern Italy much of the communal and Papal interest displayed in the Coronation of the Virgin images discussed above did not translate in northern centres like Padua where public monuments, by the mid trecento, shifted away from communal ideology to express local dynastic concerns.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in trecento Venice, Coronations of the Virgin came to have additional meaning specific to the city's evolving civic agenda.

¹⁰⁵ D. Norman, "The Glorious Deeds of the Commune": Civic Patronage of Art," Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400, vol. 1, ed. Diana Norman, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 153.

CHAPTER 3: Venezianità

Cultural Expansion: The Beginnings of Change

If the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Venice laid the foundation for the city's future as a great Maritime power, and the thirteenth century was a period of Venetian conquest, then the fourteenth century must be acknowledged as a crucial time of re-adjustment and consolidation as the republic took measures to survive into the future without the upheaval that had devastated its mainland cousins.¹⁰⁶ The first rumblings of this new focus on consolidating the city's power were heard in the latter half of the thirteenth century when attitudes toward how the doge was to be regarded were tinged with a new imperialism. This found its first expression in the dogate of Ranieri Zeno (1253-68) which marked the conflation of the doge as a princely ruler with his role as leader of the *civitas*.¹⁰⁷ The elaborate pageantry and ducal display that characterized the court life during his reign underscored this. In honour of his election as doge, Ranieri Zeno held one of the city's first public courtly spectacles, which lasted over several days and included among its activities a tournament between two sons of the noble Venetian families -- Tiepolo and Ziani.¹⁰⁸ Also, under Zeno the marriage ceremony of the doge to the sea, or *Sensa*, showed its first signs of becoming the near apotheosis of the doge that it was to symbolize in future enactments.¹⁰⁹ Ranieri Zeno's dogate expressed this new imperialism by putting all forms of ducal public display to the service of glorifying Venice's official institutions, including

¹⁰⁶ G. Luzzato, *Storia Economica di Venezia dall XI al XVI Secolo*, 2nd ed. (Venezia: Serie Saggi, 1995), 87.

¹⁰⁷ Pincus, *Tombs*, 64.

¹⁰⁸ Martin da Canale, *Les Estoires de Venise: Cronaca Veneziana in Lingua Francese dalle Origini al 1275*, ed. Alberto Limentani (Florence: Civiltà Veneziana, 1972), 128-131.

¹⁰⁹ Pincus, *Tombs*, 64.

his own tomb which depicted the enthroned Christ in no uncertain terms. The inclusion of this motif indicated one of the first usages of the ducal tomb as a platform for messages about the nature of the Venetian *dogado* which, like the Byzantine empire and the Papacy, sought to associate its head of state with the enthroned Christ in its official imagery.¹¹⁰ What was begun by Zeno was continued in the reign of the next doge, Lorenzo Tiepolo (1268-75), who is likewise described in Martin da Canale's *Estoires de Venise*, as the nucleus of an elaborate court spectacle in which he and his wife, the dogressa Marchesina, received the homage of all of the city's guilds.¹¹¹ The years that followed this elaborate ducal spectacle were difficult ones in Venetian history. The fourteenth century was born in a less than auspicious climate, with rebellion at Zara, escalating hostilities with Genoa, and most unsettling of all, an attempted coup in the 'most serene republic' itself, all of which put ducal extravagance to bed for a time. The second decade of the new century witnessed a re-emergence of interest in the ducal persona as an expression of both Venetian empire and *civitas*. By 1320 this re-kindled interest in the office of the doge manifested itself in an attempt to publicize the historic 'Peace of Venice' narrative, by Bonincontro di Bovi, in which Doge Sebastiano Ziani orchestrated a resolution to the 1177 conflict between the two great powers of western Europe. The Venetian version of the story constructed the doge as the moral linchpin in the problem, a noble prince at his ease with popes and emperors, and victorious on land and sea. In Bonincontro's version special attention is paid to legitimizing the official accoutrements of the *dogado* by fabricating Pope Alexander III's granting of specific privileges to the Venetian office.¹¹² This focus on ducal accoutrements extended, symbolically, to the *zoia*, or ducal crown used in the 'coronation' of the doge and other official ceremonial events, which was by 1329 identified, with the other objects discussed

¹¹⁰ Pincus, *Tombs*, 66-7.

¹¹¹ Martin da Canale, *Les Estoires de Venise*, 270-305. (Cited in Pincus, *Tombs*, 76.)

¹¹² Pincus, *Tombs*, 88-89.

by Bonincontro, as an important state object cared for by the *procuratori*.¹¹³ In addition, the funeral of doge Giovanni Soranzo, who oversaw this renaissance of dignity in the ducal persona, adequately reflected these interests with its public pomp and ceremony. Soranzo's funeral was the first fully recorded public occasion that focused on the Palazzo Ducale and S. Marco. Previous doges' funerals had been private family affairs with the ducal remains innocuously interred in the family crypt or a local parish church. With Soranzo's elaborate 1328 burial in the S. Marco baptistery the doge's persona was added to the list of objects belonging to the state.¹¹⁴ This was an eventuality in Venice as the doges' power over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was gradually curtailed in favour of the oligarchy formed with the closing of the Great Council in 1297.

After Bajamonte Tiepolo's unsuccessful attempt to usurp ducal power in 1308-10, the Venetian constitution restricted the doge to little more than an honorific post, reigning without power, as a symbol of the republic.¹¹⁵ The courtly pomp and pageantry peculiar to the Venetian state in the last half of the thirteenth century became acceptable again as the city became less a commune of mobile and free citizens and more a state of social rigidity and oligarchic privilege. With this early trecento shift in focus, Venice began to seek a greater connection with mainland Italy.¹¹⁶ The impetus for this change in attitude toward the mainland was in part due to the worrying accumulation of mainland territories by the Scaligeri lords of Verona who sought, in amassing northern Italian land territories, to control access to transalpine countries. Venice, in alliance with Florence and a number of

¹¹³ See Pincus, *Tombs*, 210, fn. 7. which cites sources for the inclusion of the *zoia* as a state object.

¹¹⁴ Pincus, *Tombs*, 89-90.

¹¹⁵ G. Volpe, "L'Italia e Venezia," *La Civiltà Veneziana del Trecento*, vol. 2, ed. V. Branca, (Venice: Sansoni, 1979), 22-23. A situation he describes as follows: "Il Doge...divenne un Re che regna e non governa, una personificazione della Repubblica, un simbolo, una bandiera, ben visibile da lontano."

¹¹⁶ L. Coletti, "Le Arti Figurative," *La Civiltà Veneziana del Trecento*, vol. 2, ed. V. Branca, (Venice: Sansoni, 1979), 63-4.

Lombard cities, was eventually successful in curbing Scaligeri ambitions with the added effect of drawing Venetian attention to the mainland's cultural and political potential. Any territorial ambitions Venice may have been germinating at the time were, however, put on hold in favour of a plan of civic consolidation on a massive scale. During most of the first half of the trecento, Venice reorganized itself in order to survive relatively unchanged for another few centuries and escape the fate of mainland communes whose state sovereignty had been destroyed by divided political loyalties.¹¹⁷ The city began to define itself as an ideal microcosm where justice and morality ruled; an idea reflected in the major public building projects undertaken at the time which included major churches, private palaces, civic granaries and of course the Palazzo Ducale itself.¹¹⁸ The degree to which the final conflict with the Scaligeri over Padua in 1339 influenced these projects is a matter of conjecture but the alliance between Florence and Venice in this conflict put Venice in a position of strong cultural contact with major mainland centres like Bologna, Florence, and its closest mainland neighbour Padua under its new Carrara lords. The opening of these cultural and intellectual highways strengthened the civic propagation of the 'myth of Venice' which had begun in the late thirteenth century with state projects including local historical and romance literature.¹¹⁹

In the years before Andrea Dandolo's *dogado* this civic pride was nourished by a series of encouraging events in the city. In 1339, along with the victory over the Scaligeri

¹¹⁷ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 29-30. For more information on the constitutional influence of mainland Guelph and Ghibelline divisive loyalties on Venice see G. Maranini, *Le Costituzioni di Venezia*, 2 Vols., (Venice, 1931), 390-91. cited in Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 29-30.

¹¹⁸ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 38-39.

¹¹⁹ See Martin da Canale's *Estoires de Venise*, and also *Les Prophecies de Merlin*, ed. L.A. Paton, (London, 1926-7) Written in the 1270's by a Venetian author posing as "Master Richard of Ireland," *Les Prophecies* recounts the stories of Arthur's court interwoven with Merlin's supposed prophecies regarding the future greatness and political morality of "...les bons mariniers..." who live on the "...grant ille de mer..." This Arthurian romance is a thinly veiled account of recent Venetian history in which Venetians battle Pisans, Muslim infidels, and Ezzolino da Romano of Verona, who is described as an evil dragon. Cited in J. Lamer, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380*, (London, 1980), 101, fn. 16.

in Padua, Venice also signed a treaty with Mastimo della Scala securing Treviso and Bassano as the first of Venice's important mainland territories. In 1340, new state granaries were built along the Grand Canal near the ducal palace which itself was preparing to undergo massive expansions; in 1342 an accord was signed establishing a short peace in the conflicts with Genoa and there was a renewal of Venice's treaty and commercial agreements with Byzantium under emperor John V Paleologus.¹²⁰ In essence, the first decades of the trecento marked an interest in mainland Italy while simultaneously strengthening Venice's own internal political and cultural situation and maintaining and increasing its already established connections with Byzantium and France.

The Byzantine Connection

Although previous to the trecento Venice was relatively isolated from mainland Italian cultural developments and politics this was not the case for its contacts with Constantinople and France. Almost since the city's foundation the Byzantine relationship with Venice had been a strong if often troubled one, protective and competitive at the same time. The substantial Greek community in Venice and its sister, the famous Venetian quarter in Constantinople, attested to the strong ties between the two cities in terms of both cultural and commercial trade. Greek art was traded with regularity in the republic and Byzantine-style icons were so popular among the citizens that Venetian workshops developed their own local tradition of icon production. Although Venetian connections with France did not have the same strength in terms of antiquity, the addition of Medieval French culture into Venetian life had an especially potent effect after the Fourth Crusade, which saw French crusaders collaborating with Venice in the devastating 1204 sack of Constantinople and the subsequent establishment of the Latin kingdom in

¹²⁰ D. Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo (1343-1354) and Visible History: The San Marco projects," *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy, 1250-1500*, ed. C.M. Rosenberg, (Notre-Dame: Notre-Dame University Press, 1990), 191.

Byzantium. In the years following this event the depth of Venetian ambitions concerning Byzantium became clear. As the dominant material benefactors of the Fourth Crusade, Venice became the principal claimant to the honorific of the 'new Constantinople,' and its doge was likewise officially styled as the "lord of a quarter and a half of a quarter of the Roman empire."¹²¹ Even after the passing of this 'golden age' in the thirteenth century, and the fall of the Latin Kingdom in Constantinople, the Byzantine imperial court was never far from the Venetian civic consciousness as the example of an ideal bureaucratic government, and to some degree most court display, civic ceremony and state art in the republic reflected this.¹²² The persistence of the much noted Byzantine style in trecento Venetian painting is indicative of this attitude.¹²³ However, it is important to note that Venice, as one of the most important western centres of trade, sat at the crossroads, in many ways, between Occident and Orient commercially, politically, and culturally. Since merchandise bound for transalpine regions and the ports of the Byzantine empire passed through its territory Venice could never have been as self-contained and culturally isolated as has been the popular view. Venice simply chose to emulate the splendor of the most codified and culturally dominant political unit in Christendom, whose tastes and traditions were already a founding part of their own culture. The early years of the trecento reflect a continued interest in emulating Byzantine traditions and tastes. In the fourteenth century, as a result of the renewed relationship with Paleologan Constantinople, Byzantine mosaicists and painters came to the city to work. The effect these Byzantine artists had on the cultural output of Venice is clear in the work of major artists like Paolo Veneziano and his elder brother Marco, both of whom provided the area with sumptuous panel paintings

¹²¹ D.S. Chambers, The Imperial Age of Venice, 1380-1580 (London, Thames and Hudson, 1970), 18.

¹²² H. Buchthal, Historia Troiana: Studies in the History of Medieval Secular Illustration (London, Warburg Institute 1971), 55.

¹²³ Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 1.

that reflected a modern Byzantine presence in the city, and a Venetian state policy which encouraged it. In terms of subject matter too, the Byzantinizing art work of Venice reflected a continuing civic desire to emulate Constantinopolitan tastes and traditions. Like their Byzantine counterparts, doges Francesco Dandolo (1329-39) and Andrea Dandolo (1343-54) employed official architects, painters, mosaicists, and goldsmiths to work in the service of state material glorification.¹²⁴ And like its Byzantine counterpart, Venice also sought to associate itself more closely than heretofore with the Virgin Mary, a development that found its way into an increased production of intercessory Marian images in the Venetian territories, particularly by Paolo and Marco Veneziano who were extremely prolific painters of panels of the Virgin enthroned.¹²⁵ Constantinople had long associated itself with the intercessory protection of the Virgin and the court of heavenly saints, which was considered analogous to the Imperial court in which the courtiers applied to the emperor for intercession on behalf of a friend in the same way that a saint would apply to Christ or the Virgin.¹²⁶ In this way the emperor was compared to Christ as *Basileus*, in a *deesis* with the Virgin and John the Baptist as his intercessory courtiers. Although Marco and Paolo Veneziano were products of this environment of Byzantine cultural influence their paintings interpret these Byzantine traditions in a way that is trecento and Gothic.¹²⁷ Their focus is on Mary's role as intercessor, a motif already popular in the East and increasingly so in the West. In a Venetian context she is rarely depicted in a *deesis* as a courtier equal to John the Baptist; instead she is visually elevated to her position as Christ's enthroned mother and

¹²⁴ M. Muraro, "Petarca, Paolo Veneziano e la Cultura Artistica alla Corte del Doge Andrea Dandolo," *Petrarca, Venezia e il Veneto*, ed. G. Padoan, (Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore, 1976), 165.

¹²⁵ See Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, for Paolo and Marco's Madonna and Child images. See also S. Moschini Marconi, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia Opere d'Arte dei Secoli XIV e XV* (Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dell'Stato, 1955), plate 13. There are also a number of other Madonna and child panels, attributed to Paolo in parish churches and museums of the Veneto as well as international museums.

¹²⁶ C. Walter, "Two Notes on the Deesis," *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 26 (1968), 318.

¹²⁷ R. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 18.

queen. Panels featuring this type of Madonna and child painted by Paolo Veneziano in the 1330s to 50s graced many Venetian churches, although their functional capacity in these small local churches is more difficult to determine (fig.13). In most known cases however, the Virgin is depicted as royalty, often crowned and enthroned, and always sumptuously dressed in the gold embroidered cloth of an eastern princess. In local images of her Coronation by Christ, like that now belonging to the National Gallery in Washington D.C., dated to 1325 and attributed to Marco Veneziano (fig.14), the Virgin appears in the same royal guise as in Madonna and child images but she is now the full-fledged queen of the post-apocalyptic heaven seen on French cathedral tympana and the fruit of a purely western imagination.¹²⁸ As Rodolfo Pallucchini points out, appropriation of Byzantine culture was so established in Venice that it was often difficult to tell a Venetian painting from a 'Greek' one. This artistic influence flowed both ways. Through Paolo Veneziano and his workshop Venetian artists began to form a distinct style of work that mutated iconography from the mainland through subtle Byzantinizing additions, and these were in turn exported and copied in Byzantium.¹²⁹

Another aspect of this Byzantine influence must be explored, especially in the early trecento context of state myth making and consolidation. With the new proliferation of Marian images in Venice a statement was being made about the city's role as a new Constantinople. Before the disaster of 1204, Constantinople was well known to rely on a sacred icon of the Virgin to protect it from its enemies. During times of war the *Nikopoia* was paraded around Constantinople in a plea for protection from destruction. In the sack of the city in 1204 the *Nikopoia*, or standard of the Byzantine empire, was captured from Alexius V Murzouphlus in battle. The icon was supposed to have gone as spoils to the

¹²⁸ R. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 24-5. Pallucchini states that the use of vibrant colours and gold in the clothes of the Virgin is an eastern characteristic, however the Virgin's throne somewhat unusually, reflects Roman cosmatesque elements.

¹²⁹ Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 62.

Cistercians, but the *Nikopoia* never made it to Citeaux. In a 1325 inventory of the S. Marco treasury an icon of the *Nikopoia* is first mentioned, which by the sixteenth century would be revered in Venice as the palladium of the Byzantine empire captured in 1204 and brought to Venice. The fact that the icon, which is now acknowledged to be neither of Early Christian or even Byzantine origin, was deemed important enough to gain entry to S. Marco treasury, at least by 1325, indicates that it may have been actively considered the *Nikopoia* of Constantinople as early as the first decades of the fourteenth century.¹³⁰ If this is true, the consequences for the development of Marian veneration in fourteenth-century Venice are enormous. In Constantinople itself the cult of the Virgin dated back to the seventh century when Mary became the official patron saint of the city and its most important intercessor with God. In this capacity, Constantinopolitan veneration of the Virgin developed as a part of an imperially sponsored programme to restore unity to the city.¹³¹ It is possible that with the belief in the Venetian state ownership of the sacred *Nikopoia* of Constantinople, Venice succeeded in inheriting from Constantinople not only its splendor and power but also, in the same way that they had ‘inherited’ the protection of St. Mark, that of the Virgin. By usurping Constantinople’s claim to the Virgin’s protection through ownership of the supposed *Nikopoia*, Venice once again set itself up as the predestined seat of heaven on earth. This is reflected in the retrofacade mosaic of S. Marco on which is depicted a *deesis* grouping with the Virgin and St. Mark on either side of an enthroned Christ as his most important intercessors in Venice. As the fourteenth century

¹³⁰ R. Katzenstein, *Three Liturgical Manuscripts from San Marco: Art and Patronage in mid-Trecento Venice* (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1987), 214-15. Katzenstein also argues that a miniature of St. Luke painting the Madonna’s portrait in one of the Marciana codices was perhaps meant as a visual argument for the authenticity of the Byzantine provenance for the *Nikopoia* in the S. Marco treasury. See also J.W. Barker “Byzantium and the Display of War Trophies.” in *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis*, ed. John Springer Langdon et.al. (New Rochelle: 1993), 45-58.

¹³¹ C. Walter, “Bulletin on the Deesis and the Paraclesis,” *Revue des Études Byzantines* 38 (1980), 266. In reference to an article written by Averil Cameron, “The Theotokos in 6th-century Constantinople,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 29 (1978), 78-108.

progressed the Marian veneration in the city, although initially based on Byzantine precedents, took on an increasingly Gothic form as Venice adjusted the focus of its civic rituals and associations from Byzantium to include the European West.

The French Connection

Venetian fortunes before the fourteenth century were tied in not only with the culture of Byzantium but also increasingly with France. This was due, in part, to Venice's role in the Fourth Crusade during which the city served as the resting point between East and West for pilgrims and French crusaders. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries France had become a potent western power in economic, cultural, and religious terms. In the early years of the fourteenth century this became even more clear with the removal of the Papacy to Avignon from its traditional seat in fractious Rome. In essence, France had become the locus of western European power for the late Middle Ages. As an international centre and crossroads for the mingling of different cultures and influences only Venice could come close to competing, in the trecento, with Avignon and relations between the two cities were strong.¹³² The influx of new French cultural influences into Venice co-existed, for a time, with the more established Byzantine culture, but by the end of the thirteenth century French Gothic culture began to assert itself in the city through elaborate chivalric pageantry. Venetians bought, sold, and even produced French-style literature and objects; likewise, the behaviour and lifestyle of the Venetian noble families increasingly emulated French courtliness, and the increasingly stratified Venetian state by mid to late trecento promptly followed suit.¹³³ By the late dugento and early trecento the franco-veneto literature style had already taken root in the city and chronicles like the *Entrées d'Espagne*, *Historia*

¹³² Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 2.

¹³³ J. Larner, "Italian Chivalric Culture in the Age of Dante," *Renaissance Studies* II (1988), 129.

Destructionis Troiae, Martin da Canale's *Estoires de Venise*, and Marco Polo's *Milione*, not to mention the numerous other examples of French literary tastes, had also become a part of the Venetian norm.

Other instances of Venetian interest in all things French can be found in documents from the time, such as former Dogaressa Elisabetta Dandolo's will which described French and French style domestic objects reflective of what would have been found in a typical noble's household.¹³⁴ The same shifts were being felt in all the major mainland centres in Italy; the Angevin court in Naples entertained French poets at court and staged chivalric spectacles in imitation of their Royal transalpine cousins, but the behaviour of the Italian communes was also becoming increasingly courtly. In Florence, Brunetto Latini wrote his *Tesoretto* outlining the correct behaviour of courtly men, and Giovanni Villani wrote his chivalric chronicle of Florentine history; the Dominican friars of Santa Maria Novella also felt this influence, and preached to their congregations about the exemplary behaviour of Roland and Arthur.¹³⁵ The people of Treviso, Ferrara, Mantua, Padua and Venice who enjoyed these chronicles and spectacles were not French aristocrats, nor were they connected in any way to pro-imperial sympathies. Their enthusiasm simply reflected the prestige that French language and literature enjoyed, particularly in Northern Italy. The rapidity with which this popularity spread was due in large part to the wandering troubadour minstrels who were the carriers of courtly culture from court to court, and city to city. This oral transmission was affected by the presence of troubadours at dubbings, nuptials, tournaments, and almost every other kind of late medieval festivity imaginable, where hundreds of people gathered from all over. Their professional flexibility could not

¹³⁴ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 7-8. Where he describes the dogaressa's last will and testament as mentioning "banchalia et carpeta francisca; coopertis ad opera francisca." and objects produced in Venice that imitated French products described in the same document as "banchalia laborata in Venecii,," using French models according to Muraro.

¹³⁵ Larner, *Renaissance Studies*, 124-5, fn. 29.

but become one of the primary means of absorbing and spreading chivalric culture so that by the end of the trecento it had become an international, multi-cultural trend more than a French one.¹³⁶ That this was also the case in trecento Venice where tournaments and other forms of courtly pageantry had become frequent can hardly be disputed. Another indicator of French chivalric influence in Venice was the popularity of the Trojan ancestry legend, recounted by Martin da Canale, which credited Venice's foundation to Aeneas' descendants and the supposed ancestors of Venice's noble families. This ancestry motif had been extremely popular in France where the royal family also claimed to trace their ancestry back to ancient Troy. In general, the Trojan ancestry legend and others like it, flourished throughout Italy where it was the fashion among the Italian 'aristocrats' to seek a genealogical connection with Troy.¹³⁷ Throughout northern Italy nobles drew up elaborate family trees linking themselves not only with ancient Trojans, but also with Roland and other great figures, while simultaneously linking their enemies, genealogically, to historical or literary villains.¹³⁸ Transalpine influence also made its way into the Venetian material arts through portable ivories which were being bought, sold, as well as manufactured in trecento Venice. The portable ivories of, usually, French origin that made their way into Venice were primarily small diptychs for clerical or lay devotion. The forms they took were often reminiscent of trends in French monumental sculpture in both their style of elaborately carved pinnacles, tracery and rosettes, and in their mixed Christological and Marian subject matter.¹³⁹ The deeply carved and crowded Last Judgement or Coronation of the Virgin images of French cathedral tympana in the high Gothic era were to some degree

¹³⁶ A. Scaglione, Knights at Court: Courtliness, Chivalry and Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 176.

¹³⁷ E. Muir, Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 66-68.

¹³⁸ Larner, Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 101. See also, Buchthal, Historia Trojana, 5.

¹³⁹ P. Barnet, Images in Ivory, ed. Peter Barnet, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 45.

replicated in miniature in the smaller ivory diptychs, rendering them more conducive to meditation. It was partly through these more portable examples that high Gothic French art permeated other art forms in Italy which benefited from the increased mobility and international trade of the fourteenth century.¹⁴⁰ The influx of these ivory diptychs into Venice had the same effect that the Byzantine icon had had in 1204 as the spoils from the sack of Constantinople flooded through the city and influenced the tastes of the city's patrons of art.¹⁴¹ These portable ivories were so popular in the city that local workshops began to manufacture them to suit local tastes and needs. The popularity of the type of French derived imagery depicted on ivory diptychs inevitably influenced the form and iconography of other Venetian material arts. Among the most often cited are the arcade column capitals of the Palazzo Ducale by Fillippo Calendario dating to the 1340's, which have been described as having not only characteristics of French sculpture, but also some of the characteristics of the French illuminated manuscripts which were circulating in the city at the time.¹⁴² This French influence on Venetian painting, and indeed all forms of Venetian art in the early trecento, was just as potent. It is especially evident in the painting of Marco and Paolo Veneziano who are documented as having worked in the workshop of a 'transalpine' painter.¹⁴³ This possible early exposure to northern European artistic styles through one of the many transalpine artists working in the Veneto, or through the various

¹⁴⁰ C. Little, "Ivoires et Art Gothiques," *Revue de l'Art* 46 (1979), 6.

¹⁴¹ Little, "Ivoires et Art Gothique," 6-7.

¹⁴² W. Wolters, *La Scultura Veneziana Gotica*, vol. 1, (Venezia: Alfieri, 1976), 45. Wolters rejects previous suggestions that the ducal palace columns were sculpted by a French workshop or that Calendario himself may have studied in France. Instead he suggests French manuscript miniatures and ivory diptychs as the possible carriers of French influence. Wolters also rejects the idea of direct links between French and Venetian workshops citing the lack of evidence for this sort of direct transmission. He sees the two styles as developing along parallel lines of artistic intentionality rather than interdependence. See also p.104.

¹⁴³ See Wolters, *La Scultura*, 45 and Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 25., for a discussion of the so called "Forzetta" document that makes mention of this potential "Teutonic" influence on Marco and Paolo Veneziano.

means of exposure outlined above, was a factor in the Gothicizing style and iconography often used by the two artists in combination with Byzantine elements. It must have been the more general exposure to Gothic ivory diptychs, however, that influenced Marco and Paolo's rendering of the western Gothic iconographic motif of the Coronation of the Virgin, which was gaining the popularity in northern Italy that it had already long enjoyed in northern Europe.¹⁴⁴ The Coronation of the Virgin was a relatively new addition to Marian iconography in the late Middle Ages. Unknown in Byzantium, it was considered in the trecento a particularly French or Gothic way of depicting the Virgin's feast of the Assumption.¹⁴⁵ The Coronation of the Virgin was a popular theme for French ivory diptychs and cathedral tympana but it also seemed to suggest in its elevation of 'Our Lady', an air of Gothic courtliness that aptly reflected the era of epic chivalry in which it was born.¹⁴⁶ Through the panel paintings of first Marco and then Paolo Veneziano it is clear that in the first half of the trecento the Coronation of the Virgin motif was beginning to gain popularity in Venice at a time when the republic sought to emphasize its intimate connections with the Virgin in all of her forms. By the end of the trecento, French chivalric influences were domesticated products in Venice. French trends along with Byzantine traditions had become naturalized within the republic. The co-existence of these two cultural influences found expression in the work of the brothers Marco and Paolo Veneziano and their contemporaries, which reflected similar trends in the Venetian government, religion, and culture. Through this juxtaposition, however, Venice still

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 1.

¹⁴⁵ Katzenstein, *Three Liturgical Manuscripts*, 175-6. Also see above, discussion of the Nikopoia of Constantinople in Venice.

¹⁴⁶ See Barnet, *Images in Ivory*, 65 for a discussion of secular imagery in Gothic ivories, which generally focuses on courtly romance and courtship and the lady as the queen of the castle of love. The Coronation of the Virgin may be seen to function this way in a more religious context as the highest lady in heaven to whom all Christians should pledge allegiance and in a more mystical sense in her role as the bride of Christ and divine mediatrix for the world, as the queen in the court of Christian love.

managed to achieve something distinctly Venetian from the artistic integration of east and west.

Praedestinatio: Developing the Coronation of the Virgin in Trecento Venice

The locus of this cultural appropriation in the early trecento Venetian arts was in the increased production of Coronation of the Virgin imagery in the city. Initially, the Coronation of the Virgin was seen as the climactic point in the Virgin's life narrative which always ended with her Dormition, Assumption, and Coronation as the queen of heaven. But by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Coronation increasingly became an isolated theophanic event, occurring outside of historical time in the future redeemed kingdom of the Last Judgement.¹⁴⁷ Iconographically, this shift in narrative emphasis regarding the Coronation had its roots in *deesis* iconography which likewise occurred in a historically ambiguous, post-apocalyptic setting emphasizing Mary's role as intercessor, along with John the Baptist.¹⁴⁸ As the exegetical fulfillment of the Old Testament Cantic the Coronation of the Virgin was also a visual attempt to understand the nature of the mystical union between Christ and the Virgin.¹⁴⁹ The Coronation of the Virgin in this period was more intimately connected with the view of the Last Judgement than ever before; Coronations began to replace Last Judgements on French cathedral tympana and the two images were sometimes juxtaposed in portable ivory diptych decorations such as in the thirteenth-century ivory diptych at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and

¹⁴⁷ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Verdier, "Suger," 230. See also Walter, "Two notes on the Deesis," 311-336., and "Further Notes on the Deesis," Revue des Études Byzantines 28 (1970), 161-187. In her Ph.D. thesis, Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio, Harding also discusses the popularity of the Deesis theme on church facades and entrance portals in Byzantine churches, French Gothic cathedrals, and on the facade mosaic of S. Pietro Vaticano in Rome. See pgs. 110, 152-3, 226.

¹⁴⁹ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 13.

another one in the cathedral treasury at Lyons (fig.15).¹⁵⁰ In this context it was seen not only as the apex of the Virgin's life cycle but also of Christ's as the moment when the two are joined together as they were at the Annunciation. This view of the Coronation of the Virgin represented a fundamental change in the understanding of the apocalypse in the transition period between the Romanesque and the Gothic toward a more humane religiosity which sought to inspire devotees rather than frighten them with visions of the terrifyingly imminent apocalyptic future. This aim was realized with Coronation of the Virgin images representing the eschatological, "...apotheosis of redeemed humanity..." into the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁵¹ These theological changes made their way into Italy where images of a more iconic Byzantine Virgin as *Hodegetria*, *Nikopoia*, or *Orans* had been popular in Rome and other cities. This was also true of Venice whose civic Virgin had traditionally been in this Byzantine style.

By the fourteenth century Venetian Marian imagery, like the popular Marian imagery of Northern Europe, was becoming increasingly conflated with that of Christ. The trend of juxtaposing Christ and the Virgin's life cycles culminating with the post-apocalyptic Coronation of the Virgin was particularly evident in many French Gothic ivories. These ivories, popular all over Europe, including Venice, juxtaposed elaborately carved scenes of Christ's passion with his mother's life cycle (fig.16).¹⁵² In Venice, one of the first instances of this Christological and Marian juxtaposition in a state context was on the 1253 tomb of Doge Marino Morosini in the narthex of S. Marco, where the figure of Christ in the upper register was placed directly above the Virgin *Orans*, in an early visual

¹⁵⁰ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 10.

¹⁵¹ Verdier, Le Couronnement de la Vierge, 13.

¹⁵² See Barnet, Images in Ivory; D. Gaborit-Chopin, Ivoires du Moyen Age (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1978); R. Koechlin, Les Ivoires Gothiques Français (Paris: A. Picard, 1924), for examples of portable ivory diptychs and triptychs combining scenes from Christ's passion and the Virgin's life at both the Louvre in Paris and the Met in New York city.

instance of their increasingly shared authority (fig.17). As Debra Pincus points out, according to surviving material evidence it is probable that the Virgin *Orans* in the context of San Marco represented the form the Venetian civic Virgin took in the thirteenth century.¹⁵³ The conflation of the Virgin and Christ's authority took on a number of forms in thirteenth and fourteenth-century Venetian state policy the most famous of which was the Annunciation day foundation legend for the city. The legend, which reached official status in the fourteenth century after its first mention by Martin da Canale, had a group of Paduan mainlanders fleeing to the lagoon island in 421 on the auspicious Annunciation date of March 25th, to found the city that would become Venice. Although there had been a number of other grand foundation stories for Venice in the late Middle Ages, including the *Historia destructionis Troiae* in the fourteenth century, it was the Annunciation day foundation legend that enjoyed primacy in state propaganda. Notwithstanding the troublesome role of Paduans in the tale, the foundation of the city under the auspices of the Annunciation and the official beginning of the Roman calendar was too flattering for Venetian civic pride to resist.¹⁵⁴ With a foundation date on the same day as the Conception of Christ, Venice's destiny became intertwined with the will and authority of God. Venetians could thus draw parallels between the predestination of their own conception and that of the Redeemer. Of course, before the Annunciation day foundation legend took hold of the civic imagination Venice's divinely ordained predestiny for greatness as a new chosen people had been made clear through the city's major patron saint, Mark. The thirteenth-century addition of the *praedestinatio* to the Venetian life-cycle of St. Mark, in

¹⁵³ See Pincus, *Tombs*, 53-54. Among the visual evidence cited by Pincus as evidence for this probable connection are sculptural Virgin Orants on the west facade and north flank of S. Marco (Pincus, pl. 37 & 38) and the mosaic in the capella S. Clemente, also in S. Marco, now in its sixteenth century state of restoration after the thirteenth century original. (Pincus, pl.39)

¹⁵⁴ E. Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 71-2. Muir points out that the nuisance of Paduan primacy in the Annunciation legend was dealt with by being generally ignored in Venetian accounts; the Paduan element did not hinder Venetian use of the story.

which the apostle has a prophetic vision of an angel who reveals that his relics will find their final resting place in Venice, is undeniably modeled after Gabriel's Annunciation to the Virgin, a connection that Venetian state propaganda had no qualms about belabouring. In the fourteenth century, Venetian state propaganda shifted its focus from St. Mark to the Virgin as proof of the city's predestination for greatness and its place as an earthly paradise. This connection is underscored in Andrea Dandolo's *Chronica Extensa* and through public Annunciation imagery that began to materialize around the city in a visual development of the legend perpetuated by the state.¹⁵⁵ Annunciation imagery in Venice was therefore charged with a good deal of nationalist feeling as it was co-opted by the city as a part of its civic imagery. With the introduction of French Gothic Coronations of the Virgin into the city, in the form of portable ivories bought during travels or made by local workshops, the dual patronage of Christ and the Virgin found a new means of visual expression in the most elevated way possible.¹⁵⁶ In the early part of the trecento the Coronation of the Virgin as painted by artists like Marco and Paolo Veneziano was probably exclusively patronized by local churches and private clerical or lay individuals who popularized the new French imagery throughout the city with their commissions. But by the 1340s and 50s as the Virgin enthroned imagery became more closely connected with the Venetian state, the popular works of Coronations of the Virgin that graced Venetian chapel altars took on a new layer of meaning for the local viewer who was increasingly

¹⁵⁵ Most notable of public Annunciation imagery is the Annunciation group on the facade of S. Marco facing the Piazzetta as seen in Jacopo da Barbari's 1500 woodcut map which may have been in place in the fourteenth century. Annunciation imagery also made its way onto ducal tombs in the fourteenth century (doges Giovanni Soranzo, 1328, Bartolomeo Gradenigo, 1342 and Giovanni Dolfino, 1361) and under Andrea Dandolo an Annunciation sculptural group was mounted on the columns of the capella maggiore in S. Marco above the pala d'oro. See Pincus, *Tombs*, 29-132.

¹⁵⁶ Wolters, *La Scultura Veneziana*, 102. Wolters cites documents in which small French ivory and alabaster devotional pieces are discussed. A devotional Madonna from Avignon is reported to have been given to group of Venetian Franciscans in 1345 and another one to the prior of S. Nicolò in Treviso. There are many other references to ivory pieces in both private and ecclesiastic collections in the area. See Wolters, 102, fn. 33.

coming to understand that the Virgin's fate was deeply connected with his own. The visual connections between the Virgin and Venice that were already being made through Annunciation imagery were exploited in the c.1340 renovation and rebuilding of the Palazzo Ducale which included on the facade programme a medallion of "Venecia" enthroned as Justice (fig.18). As Debra Pincus note, this may well have been a part of a larger civic project to co-opt perceived Virgin imagery to the greater glory of the state, as was already being done in places like Siena where the connection between the Virgin in *maestà* and the State was very close. With the medallion on the Palazzo Ducale facade:

Venice has taken the enthroned Virgin in widespread use in the city states of Tuscany, merged this with the personification of Justice already deeply enshrined in Italian civic iconography, and glossed the whole with the reference point central to the survival of Venice -- the sea.¹⁵⁷

Thus, by the mid-trecento there was a widespread understanding of the intimate connection between the Virgin and the city of Venice that was beginning to be exploited in state visual statements. The presence of the so-called *Nikopoia* of Constantinople in the city as well as the governmental support of the Annunciation foundation legend created an atmosphere of official Marian veneration that incorporated civic veneration. By the 1360s Venice took this one step further by co-opting the trend for Coronation of the Virgin images in the area to serve its own official ends. The Coronation of the Virgin in the Venetian civic context became the fulfillment of the destiny promised with the Annunciation. If Venice's destiny had been predetermined for greatness by its auspicious foundation date, its connections with St. Mark, and its dual patronage by Christ and his mother, then the incorporation of the Coronation of the Virgin, as the final theophanic moment in history, into the Venetian repertory of official imagery could not have been routinely or carelessly done. With the co-option of the Coronation in this way, Venice also makes use of the image's more popular use on small scale devotional ivories or panels, which were meant for meditation and as a

¹⁵⁷ Pincus, *Tombs*, 122.

focus of prayer. The success of a Coronation of the Virgin in this context was dependent on its power to include, and I propose that the same power was being put to use when a Coronation of the Virgin was placed on a door portal, a facade gable, or as in Venice in 1365 on the wall of a governmental council hall. A monumental Coronation of the Virgin image was meant to include the viewer in the same way it would have done on an ivory diptych. The post-apocalyptic image of the Virgin and Christ enthroned in a heavenly court of saintly and redeemed souls implies the viewer in an act of witnessing as a member of the court itself.

Paolo and Marco Veneziano and the Patronage of Francesco Dandolo

The Coronation of the Virgin panel now in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. (fig. 14) is a perfect example of Coronation imagery in Venice in the first three decades of the trecento. Once thought to have been a part of Paolo Veneziano's oeuvre the Washington Coronation is now considered the work of Paolo's older brother Marco. The conflation of a popular western European iconographic motif with a Byzantinizing style, in terms of its use of vibrant colours and gold, its static figures, and a Byzantine hierarchical typology of paradise, was typical of Marco and Paolo's early work.¹⁵⁸ According to the 1335 memorandum of Oliviero Forzetta, a notary of Treviso, it was Marco who was the head of a diverse workshop which also included his younger brother Paolo, and which produced, in addition to panel paintings, painted work on stained glass, textiles etc., executed in a "teutonic" manner.¹⁵⁹ The Forzetta document also highlights a relationship between the brothers and the Franciscan order. A northern European friar, who may have

¹⁵⁸ F. D'Arcais, "Venezia," in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento*, vol. I, ed. M. Lucco, (Milano:Electa, 1993), 23.

¹⁵⁹ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 24, fn. 76 & 77. As Muraro points out, the Forzetta document indicates that Paolo was at this early date dependent on his brother, often executing drawings based on the subjects of Marco's paintings. At this time Paolo was referred to as "Pittore" rather than "Magister" as his brother was. The first documented instance of Paolo as "Magister" is in the 1345 inscription on the Pala Feriale.

taught Marco, is mentioned in the document. The brothers, who executed work for the Church of San Francesco dei Frati Minori in Treviso, are specifically recorded as living near Santa Maria dei Frati Minori in Venice and as having a knowledge of Franciscan iconography.¹⁶⁰ In his career, which approximately spanned the years from 1333 to 1358, Paolo Veneziano demonstrated a close integration of Gothic subject matter and Gothic styles, from the mainland, with the established Byzantine traditions of Venice. As a result, Paolo has been the recipient of a number of honorifics including the title, "...progenitor of all fourteenth-century painting of Venice."¹⁶¹ But it was his work in the service of Venetian state institutions that would have the most future significance for the development of the Coronation of the Virgin as state imagery. In 1332 doge Francesco Dandolo assisted in concluding a peace between the king of France and the Paleologan emperor of Byzantium. This alliance between East and West afforded a degree of political and economic autonomy for Venice which allowed the city to concentrate once more on strengthening and solidifying itself in the aftermath of the upheavals that marked the first decades of the trecento. Under Francesco Dandolo (1329-1339) there was a new optimism which spawned an "heroic vision" of the city and its role in the world.¹⁶² Francesco orchestrated political and economic treaties and alliances with all the major powers of Europe while simultaneously expressing an equal concern with the spiritual values of the city, in short, promoting an exalted view of Venice at all times and in all places.¹⁶³ This optimism was reflected in the ducal and ecclesiastical artistic commissions of the day which included a flourishing of a genre of literature that aimed to elevate the city's legends, history, and

¹⁶⁰ Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 24, fn. 76 & 77.

¹⁶¹ V. Lasereff, "Maestro Paolo e la Pittura Veneziana del suo Tempo," Arte Veneta, 8 (1954), 86. Although it is argued by Muraro in Paolo da Venezia, 68-69 that Paolo Veneziano's work exerted influence only among a relatively small group of painters in Trecento Venice.

¹⁶² Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 11.

¹⁶³ Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 41.

contemporary events.¹⁶⁴ This era also saw the rise of interest in the Virgin as a patron of the state whose life and interests were increasingly becoming mingled with Venice's. Marian imagery flourished in the form of Byzantine-esque Madonna and child panels once belonging to many of the city's churches and confraternities.¹⁶⁵ This was, of course, due for the most part to a general increase in Marian veneration in western Europe, but Venice, like other Italian city states of the time, was increasingly putting this trend to local political uses. This was not a new idea nor a controversial one in the late Middle Ages when most governments, republican or monarchical, called upon important sacred figures to protect and glorify their reign. There was no perceived conflict of interest in the conflation of religion and politics; the two seemed, rather, to go hand in hand in an era when the interests of the church and the state were very close. In this context the doge of Venice, in the person of Francesco Dandolo, became a conduit for the divine illumination of the city which sought, at every opportunity, to exert itself at least within the city, as the dwelling place of a 'chosen people'. Francesco Dandolo, like doges before and after him, had a particular connection with Mendicant spirituality which encouraged fervent Marian devotion as the means of focusing one's prayers and meditations on God. Through Francesco Dandolo, Mendicant spirituality found a more secure place in state imagery. The Virgin's Annunciation, which had been first linked to the city by Martin da Canale, became even

¹⁶⁴ In Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 41-42, the author cites works by Castellan de' Simone, Rolandino da Padova, Grand Chancellor Benintendi de Ravagnani, and Bonincontro di Bovi's narrative of *The Peace of Venice*. In connection with this trend the Venetian trecento writer Gian Girolamo Natali stated that "The works of poets and historians should not be ends in themselves but should serve to transmit the exploits of heroes and the fatherland." (cited by Muraro, 78 fn. 112.)

¹⁶⁵ There are a large number of Venetian Madonna and Child panels surviving from this period whose original provenance is unknown. Those that are known belonged to confraternities, small parish churches and more significant churches in the area. A number of these types of panels are still owned by parish churches like the Madonna and child, attributed to Paolo Veneziano, at Sant'Alvise in Venice, a similar one at the parish church of Carpineta in Cesena, and a late dugento, early trecento Byzantine style Madonna and child now at the Accademia of Venice but originally from the Duomo of Burano. For further examples see S. Marconi Moschini, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia Opere d'Arte dei Secoli XIV e XV*, 17-18 pl. 15. and G. Mariacher ed *Il Museo Correr di Venezia: Dipinti dal XIV al XVI Secolo*. (Venice: Neri Pozza Editore, 1957), 136. See also F. D'Arcais, "Venezia," 17-87.

more established as a means of recalling the city's predestined foundation in 421. Similarly, the more traditional Madonna and child images which decorated high altars in churches and chapels through the Venetian territories perhaps also functioned, along with their obvious use as a means of focusing prayer, as a reminder of the Marian standard of Constantinople which by 1325 had, by right of its new Venetian ownership, become the standard of the republic as the 'new Constantinople.' It was around the same time that a newer type of Coronation of the Virgin imagery found its way into the Venetian imagination. Previously, the motif had mostly graced monumental and public forms of decoration such as cathedral tympana, apse mosaics and stained glass.¹⁶⁶ But by the third decade of the trecento Coronations of the Virgin were becoming popular subjects for a Mendicant convent, chapel, or church setting.¹⁶⁷ The motif may have found its way into Venice through French Gothic ivories which were owned by wealthy ecclesiastics and merchants alike, but its burgeoning popularity in the area was substantially helped by the Mendicant orders, who encouraged a new kind of personal identification with religious imagery that began to transfer over into a form of state or nationalistic identification. In short, the Virgin of personal devotion and the Virgin as representative of the state became one. The state connection with Mendicant orders in the city is reflected in Francesco Dandolo's burial arrangements. In 1339 the doge was buried, as was his desire, in the chapter house of the Franciscan church of the Frari in Venice. The painted lunette above his tomb, executed by Paolo Veneziano, of himself and his wife Elisabetta presented, on their

¹⁶⁶ See Echols, "The Coronation of the Virgin," 271- 284, appendix iv, for a list of Coronation of the Virgin images in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

¹⁶⁷ The most prominent example of this in trecento Venice is Paolo Veneziano's Polyptych now at the Accademia in Venice, but originally from the church of S. Chiara in Venice. Another regional example is Guariento D'Arpo's Coronation of the Virgin polyptych of 1344, now at the Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena which is thought to be originally from S. Martino, in Piove di Sacco. There has also been some speculation that Guariento may have executed a Coronation of the Virgin for the, now lost, central panel of the altarpiece in the Carrara chapel see, A. Spiazzi, "Padova," *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento*, vol. I., ed. Mauro Lucco, (Milano: Electa, 1992), 115. See J.Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, 18, 27, for short discussion of significance of the Coronation of the Virgin in convents.

knees, to the enthroned Madonna and child, is a hierarchical act of typical Franciscan, Marian veneration (fig.19).¹⁶⁸ Paolo does not use scale to indicate divine hierarchy; the doge and dogaressa are the same size as the more humanized saints. Because the only indication of their subservience is in their kneeling position, all the figures are invested with a relatively equal measure of dignity.¹⁶⁹ The developing connection between Venice, as represented in the person of the doge, and the Virgin is here given direct visual form. The doge, at whom the Christ child gestures, receives the privilege of intimacy because of his great faith, but also because he represents the Virgin's city on earth. The burial of Francesco within the sanctity of a mendicant church was already established among Venice's doges and local aristocrats who generally chose between the Frari and the Dominican church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo (Zanipolo) as their final resting place.¹⁷⁰ But the fact that Francesco's tomb was placed, unusually, in the Frari chapter house indicates a continued association, in the trecento, of the doge, after his death, with his role as governor while alive.

Running parallel and sometimes intersecting with this Mendicant influence within the city was a more distinctly French style of adapting this new Mendicant piety in a way that was both pious and chivalric. Contemporary images of Marian veneration as represented in the Coronation of the Virgin, bear witness to this type of French taste. Venetian polyptychs, like Paolo Veneziano's S. Chiara polyptych, now in the Accademia, generally depicted either a Madonna and Child enthroned or a Coronation of the Virgin in the centre panel, with a series of saints or saintly narratives in the side panels and predella (fig.20). The effect was often one of courtly splendor. Working within the context of

¹⁶⁸ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 34-5.

¹⁶⁹ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 34-35.

¹⁷⁰ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 93. See also J. Gardner, "A Princess among Prelates: A fourteenth-century Neapolitan tomb and its Northern Connections," *Römisches Jahrbuch Für Kunstgeschichte* 23 (1988), 43. for a discussion of the fashionable trend among royal family members to be buried in Minorite churches.

Mendicant piety, images like the S. Chiara polyptych also incorporated a view of heaven as a worldly and hierarchically ordered court presided over by an all powerful king and his idealized queen.¹⁷¹ By the 1330s and 40s this sort of imagery incorporated the modern Mendicant attitude toward piety with a French Gothic style that came to have a particular significance for Venice. With the S. Chiara altarpiece Paolo Veneziano indicates not only that he is working within the radius of Franciscan influence, indicated in the Forzetta document and in Francesco Dandolo's tomb lunette in the Frari, but also in consideration of modern French courtly tastes for a more worldly and aristocratic heaven. With the receipt of the commission for Francesco Dandolo's tomb in 1339, Paolo Veneziano had established himself as one of the most prominent painters in Venice if not, as suggested by Muraro, the first official painter of the republic.¹⁷² In the next two decades Paolo's prominence would rise with the commission of more important projects for the state, including the Pala Feriale and other S. Marco commissions under doge Andrea Dandolo, who would himself hold Francesco up as a model doge in his *Chronica*, and in his own reign build on the foundations of state and ducal veneration that began with his uncle.

Andrea Dandolo and the Paduan Connection

The war between the Scaligeri lords of Verona and the Venetian republic came to a definitive end in 1339 when Venice and Florence defeated the Scaligeri in Padua and hoisted their standards together over the Palazzo della Ragione. For a short time, before the establishment of the Carrara Signoria, Venetian and Florentine *podestà* jointly occupied the

¹⁷¹ D'Arcais, *Il Trecento*, 40-41.

¹⁷² Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 9. fn. 24. This attractive assertion is based on Muraro's interpretation of documentation from Sept. 16th 1342, in which Paolo is granted a financial provision from the state for the decorations for a public festival. It has been pointed out by other scholars this event does not constitute irrefutable evidence for this claim which must remain speculative.

mainland city. This was the beginning of a strong Venetian interest in the cultural developments of its closest mainland neighbour. In 1340, under the short *dogado* of Bartolomeo Gradenigo (1339–42), an ambitious plan was undertaken to enlarge the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, in order to accommodate the entire Venetian council. The plan incorporated a new style that drew from both the traditional civic palazzo architecture and the princely style of Venice’s nearest mainland neighbours in the same way that governmental policies did. As has been often noted, there was a degree of urgency to the project’s undertaking which was proposed, initiated, and completed in just over forty years, a remarkable feat at a time when building projects were often left unfinished for centuries. This apparent haste was due, in part, to rivalry with the Paduan mainland which had two palazzi: the Reggia of the Carrara and the civic Palazzo della Ragione.¹⁷³ The project reflects Venice’s increased interest in mainland developments and a particular rivalry with its closest mainland neighbour in both political and cultural concerns. The style decided on for the Venetian Palazzo Ducale reflects the hybridity of the city’s culture which absorbed incoming influences and turned them into something typically Venetian. As a statement of civic pride the Palazzo Ducale was no different. It marked the beginning of what was to be a troubled and grudgingly respectful interaction between the two cities in the trecento. The election of doge Andrea Dandolo in 1343 represented the end of the heady optimism of the first decades of the century. Dandolo’s reign witnessed resumed hostilities with Genoa, uprisings in the territorial holding of Zara, and a number of other natural and political disasters, including a 1348 outbreak of plague in the city. Despite these hardships Andrea Dandolo’s reputation as a so-called ‘intellectual’ doge, the first to study at the University of Padua rather than Constantinople, ushered in a period of cultural and political

¹⁷³ G. Perocco, “Il Palazzo Ducale, Andrea Dandolo e il Petrarca,” in *Petrarca, Venezia e il Veneto*, ed. G. Padoan, (Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore, 1976), 172-3. Perocco outlines the urgent nature of the project which was decided in only eight days in December, 1340 by a group of elected officials under penalty of fine for every extra day taken. Perocco states that these deliberations “resembled a declaration of war,” in a cultural sense this may be accurate.

'*Renovatio*' and cultivated ties with Padua.¹⁷⁴ During his reign, Dandolo gathered around him a circle of eminent Humanists including his chancellor, Benintendi Ravagnani, and Petrarch himself. Humanism under Andrea Dandolo mixed with the French courtly attitude that was popular all over northern Italy and was already firmly established in Venice.¹⁷⁵ In this context Venetian humanism fostered the Venetian Republican ideology in which the city became a paragon of European republics: stable, aristocratic -- a place where the social hierarchy was contentedly accepted by its citizens.¹⁷⁶ Along with this came an inevitable shift in the civic perception of the doge, according to the ideal created by Martin da Canale, as a monarchical figure presiding over a "monolithic" governmental structure with his courtly council made up of the city's oldest aristocratic families.¹⁷⁷ Dandolo's goal was to promote an attitude of '*venezianità*,' a form of civic pride and absolutist devotion to the city as the ethical and political ideal.¹⁷⁸ He called for artists whose work had significance for the city's aspirations to exaltation; art in '*Renovatio*' Venice became the material means of expressing the glorious nature of the city.¹⁷⁹ These aspirations found literary expression in Andrea's *Chronica* which covered Venetian history from the foundation of the church at Aquilea by St. Mark in 48 CE to the resignation of doge Jacopo Contarini in 1280. Dandolo's chronicles of Venetian history also included the *praedestinatio* legend of St.

¹⁷⁴ D. Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo (1343-1354) and Visible History: The San Marco Projects," in *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy, 1250-1500*, ed. Charles M. Rosenberg, (Notre-Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1990), 192. See also, Perocco, "Il Palazzo Ducale," 173.

¹⁷⁵ F. Saxl, "Petrarch in Venice," in *A Heritage of Images: A Selection of Lectures*, 2nd ed. (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970), 46-8.

¹⁷⁶ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 304.

¹⁷⁷ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 10.

¹⁷⁸ L. Lazzarini, "'DUX ILLE DANDULEUS' Andrea Dandolo e la cultura Veneziana a metà del Trecento," in *Petrarca, Venezia e il Veneto*, ed. G. Padoan, (Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore, 1974), 139.

¹⁷⁹ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 45-6. Muraro cites the various influences on art of the *renovatio* period which includes Ancient and Christian Rome, Byzantium, and Ravenna and quotes Andrea Dandolo's writings which call for a use of 'noble' or expensive materials in the city's arts.

Mark, the Trojan origins of the city's mainland founders, and the foundation date of March 25th on the feast day of the Annunciation. The aim was to tie Venice's glorious past to its glorious present, and to suggest the predestiny of its glorious future as the city moved from good to better and from better to ideal, an idea that would become increasingly important for the latter half of the trecento in Venice.¹⁸⁰ His emphasis was on presenting an evolved and evolving city-state formed of complex and ancient laws and institutions, led by a series of strong *principes* into the divinely guided future of '*venezianità*.' This devotion to the ideal state is reflected in the words of Dandolo's Chancellor Benintendi in a letter to Moggio da Parma:

I'm not free...but I serve voluntarily a just and extremely Christian prince, not a signore or a tyrant who has power of life and death over me; I love my Republic which is always more dear to me than myself; I serve my country which comes before children, parents and friends and in short, all my own personal needs. This for me is not servitude but the highest freedom.¹⁸¹

Benintendi represents the ideal attitude not only toward the republic but also toward its leader. Dandolo's programme of civic pride also extended into the visual arts, particularly the public ducal commissions for San Marco which would reflect the ideal republic. The baptistery and Cappella di S. Isidoro projects in S. Marco of the 1340s recounted the history of ducal initiative that formed many of the city's institutions; within this unprecedented narrative it is the doge who becomes the hero and the carrier of Venetian history past, present, and future.¹⁸² The undercurrent in this type of decorative programme emphasizes the courtly nature of the doge as prince and the protagonist of the national epic.

¹⁸⁰ M. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 210-211.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in L. Lazzarini, "DUX ILLES DANDULEUS," 128 fn.12 [my translation].

¹⁸² Pincus, "Andrea Dandolo and Visible History," 196-7. The history of ducal initiative is represented in the S. Isidore chapel with a visual narrative of doge Domenico Michiel bringing the saint's relics back to Venice in 1125 from the island of Chios and in the baptistery the ducal tombs along with ducal donor portraits give expression to ducal patronage and service to the glory of the state.

This ideal courtly example was applied to Andrea Dandolo himself who was often described, even after his death, as “*cortese*,” that is, the model of exceptional virtue, beauty, joy, bravery, eloquence, and justice.¹⁸³ This type of ducal narrative was to have extreme importance for state image making in the latter half of the century especially in the decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale.

In this environment of artistic creativity and wealth Paolo Veneziano’s career thrived as he received important state commissions to paint the Pala Feriale and possibly even the private cappella di S. Niccolò in the ducal palace.¹⁸⁴ His last documented work known to us, a Coronation panel dated to 1358, now in the Frick collection in New York, was probably executed for a church or chapel in or around Ravenna (fig.21).¹⁸⁵ Although, Paolo had been one of the foremost painters in Venice, after his death c.1362 his special brand of Venetian painting was in decline. The style of Coronation imagery that had become popular in Padua, characterized by the work of Paduan painter Guariento d’Arpo, became more influential.¹⁸⁶ Andrea Dandolo’s ducal court was, in many ways, more open to mainland culture than any other in Venetian history, and fostered an environment of competition, exchange, and reciprocity in cultural trade, especially with Padua.¹⁸⁷ By the mid century Guariento d’Arpo was one of the area’s most prominent painters, receiving important commissions that often involved Coronation of the Virgin motifs. In 1344 he

¹⁸³ Lazzarini, “DUX ILLE DANDULEUS,” 150.

¹⁸⁴ R. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 35.

¹⁸⁵ D’Arcais, *Il Trecento*, 42.

¹⁸⁶ Muraro, *Paolo da Venezia*, 67. Muraro sees this break from Paolo Veneziano and his workshop in favour of a Paduan style of painting, at least in a state situation, as indicative of the Republic’s desire to insert itself into a mainland or “Italian” context.

¹⁸⁷ D’Arcais, *Il Trecento*, 37.

painted a polyptych which is now at the Simon Norton Foundation in Pasadena (fig.22).¹⁸⁸ The polyptych, with its central Coronation of the Virgin panel and scenes from the life and passion of Christ on the side panels, is reminiscent in its organization, not only of Paolo Veneziano's later S. Chiara polyptych but also of portable ivories which were likewise meant to act as a focus of prayer and meditation in a Mendicant context. In 1350-51 another Coronation of the Virgin image was painted by Guariento over Jacopo da Carrara's tomb, originally at the church of S. Agostino and now at the Eremitani, in which the Virgin and Christ sit enthroned in an architecturally rendered paradise quite different from the contemporaneous Coronation panels of Paolo Veneziano (fig.23). Jacopo da Carrara's tomb was originally in the presbytery of S. Agostino, which briefly became a kind of sepulchral chapel for the Carrara family.¹⁸⁹ In this eschatological context the Coronation of the Virgin must have been meant to remind viewers of the promised redemption and the court of the redeemed that was to be established after the Apocalypse. But by placing this monumental image over the tomb of an important member of the ruling Carrara family, the image began to take on another layer of significance in mirroring the princely courts of the world with that of heaven. The popularity of this essentially courtly Coronation image in the mid trecento attests to chivalric influence in mainland courts. After this important commission, Guariento's growing capacity as court artist to the Carrara was underscored by his commission to decorate the Carrara palace chapel with Old Testament narrative scenes.¹⁹⁰ These prominent examples of Coronation of the Virgin in Padua in connection

¹⁸⁸ A. Fitzgerald, "Guariento D'Arpo." *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 9 (1931), 188. The name of the convent was unfortunately not recorded at the time of purchase although there has been some speculation. It is now thought to have been originally from the church of S. Martino in Piove di Sacco. F. D'Arcais, *Guariento*, 74-75.

¹⁸⁹ Wolters, *La Scultura Veneziana*, 35-6.

¹⁹⁰ F. D'Arcais, "Gli Affreschi del Guariento dell'Accademia di Padova," *Arte Veneta* 16 (1962), 11. D'Arcais dates the decoration of the Carrara chapel to the 1350's after the fresco for Jacopo da Carrara's tomb. She also claims a certain Venetian element for Guariento's style in this period because of its sumptuousness.

with the ruling family in the 1350's would later be put to use in Venice as the visual culmination of state association with the Virgin, which saw expression in a range of public images from ducal tomb monuments to the facade of the Palazzo Ducale. This association would reach its apex in the fresco decoration by Guariento for Venice's most significant political arena, the Sala de Gran Consiglio, in which the Virgin's glorious Coronation in Paradise acts as a reflection of Venice herself as the idyllic, triumphant city that was at the centre of state ideological projects.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Muraro, Paolo da Venezia, 93.

Chapter 4: “The Rule of Justice Lasts Forever,”¹⁹²

The Sala del Gran Consiglio: Power, Longevity, Legitimacy.

In 1340 the achievements of the first decades of the fourteenth century were visually celebrated in an ambitious scheme to renovate one of the city’s most public and politically significant buildings -- the Palazzo Ducale.¹⁹³ The addition of a new wing to the ducal palace enabled an enlargement of the city’s most important governmental room, the Sala del Gran Consiglio, where men from the city’s wealthy and noble families met and determined the laws of the Republic. The impetus for this enlargement was ostensibly to house the expanded Great Council, but it was not unusual at the time for Italian cities to rebuild or renovate their civic palaces in a fit of nationalism and inter-city rivalry.¹⁹⁴ It is the decoration of this ‘new’ Sala del Gran Consiglio, that became the artistic linchpin for the shape and meaning of Coronations of the Virgin in Venice during the last decades of trecento.

In his 1993 article Andrew Martindale proposed a convincing reconstruction of the original fourteenth-century decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, which by 1366 was already underway (fig.24). Instead of a local Venetian painter the committee chose Guariento d’Arpo, the Carraran court painter from Padua.¹⁹⁵ The programme executed by Guariento in this most important of ducal palace rooms carried a great deal of significance for the its function: the upper portion of the north, south and west walls between the

¹⁹² A. Mussato, *Ecerinis*, trans. J. Berrigan (Munich, 1975).

¹⁹³ D. Pincus, “Andrea Dandolo and Visible History: The San Marco Projects.” *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy 1250-1500*. ed. C.M. Rosenberg, (Notre-Dame: University of Notre-Dame Press, 1990), 191.

¹⁹⁴ A. Martindale, “The Venetian Sala del Gran Consiglio and its Fourteenth - century Decoration.” *The Antiquaries Journal* 73 (1993), 79.

¹⁹⁵ In addition to some of the works previously mentioned Guariento is also thought to have decorated the Carrara chapel in the Reggia, no longer extant, in the 1350’s or 60’s. See F. D’Arcais’ *Guariento*.

windows contained portrait pairs of Venetian doges of the past and present, and space was also left for the portraits of approximately 200 years worth of future doges. Beneath these portraits was a narrative sequence depicting the *Discordia* of 1177 between Pope Alexander III and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa I in which doge Sebastiano Ziani negotiated a peace to end the conflict that had upset much of western Europe. The east wall, with its enormous fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin, or '*Paradiso*' was the focus of the fourteenth-century programme (fig.25).

The building and decorative programme was finished by the 1380's when it was handed over to the *procuratori* of San Marco to be put to civic use. However, by 1409 and again in 1411 and 1422 documents recorded the setting aside of specific funds to repair the fresco, which had begun to deteriorate just thirty years or so after completion. Because of Sansovino's mention that the room was not officially used until 1423, it is possible that these documents perhaps referred to a continuation of the work after Guariento's death in 1370 into the fifteenth century, but the fact that the room was handed over to the care of the *procuratori* in 1382 suggests that the programme was completed at least by that time even if not by Guariento himself.¹⁹⁶ Eventually, the majority of the trecento programme was lost in the fire that broke out in 1577, and what little remained of the *Paradiso* was covered up behind Tintoretto's sixteenth-century canvases not to be seen again until a 1903 restoration revealed them to an astonished crew of workers (fig.26).

Until Andrew Martindale's article, which reconstructed the fourteenth-century appearance of the Sala del Gran Consiglio, what was known about the Sala's original decorative programme was dependent on Tintoretto's work, which loosely followed the programme that had preceded it. Martindale's thorough reconstruction of the order and

¹⁹⁶ Martindale, "Sala," 79, 82. It is also possible, as Martindale has noted, that an older council room was used while repairs were being conducted on the Guariento programme, and again while the balcony was added to the south facade and this may account for Sansovino's statement. On the other hand, Sansovino may not have had infallible sources.

form of the fourteenth- century programme demonstrates a number of important changes and continuities from the fourteenth to the sixteenth- century decorative cycles. This reconstruction was based on a 1425 document recording the inscriptions that were once beneath the *Discordia* narrative on what were described as fictive marble niches at the dado level.¹⁹⁷

The Sala del Gran Consiglio was and still is organized along two axes: one which leads toward where the doge's throne would have been placed, directly beneath the *Paradiso* fresco, and the other toward the centre of the north wall, where the cycle of ducal portraits began directly across from the balcony entrance. This orientation is shown in an engraving of the Sala made before the fire of 1577 (fig.27), in which the doge and council are seated beneath the '*Paradiso*' fresco. Anyone who saw this seating arrangement could not fail to grasp the visual connection. However, another tradition is recorded by Sansovino of the doge sitting in the centre of the north wall beneath the point where the cycle of portraits began, possibly accounting for the secondary axis.¹⁹⁸ Martindale notes that it is possible that the room was configured in this way to accommodate two ducal seating arrangements for different occasions and at different times of the year, but this must remain speculative.¹⁹⁹ In the narrative images of the *Discordia* beneath the ducal portraits the doge, and by extension Venice, not surprisingly, plays a starring role. The narrative is a historical one, but it was given a fantastical flavour that exaggerated Venice's role in the conflict and emphasized its part in the negotiated peace of 1177. The *Discordia* was used in this setting to confirm certain Venetian and ducal privileges. The legendary Doge

¹⁹⁷ Martindale, "Sala," 88-89.

¹⁹⁸ Martindale, "Sala," 81. fn.9 (Sansovino. 1663, 324) Martindale lists three key documents which mention a possible second ducal setting arrangement: A.S.V. Great Council *Deliberations*, Major Consiglio Ursa (1415-54) fols. 61r and v, 8 August, 1423; *ibid.*. fol. 100r, 23 August, 1433; and *ibid.* fol.143v, 29 June, 1442. (Lorenzi 1868, doc.163). These documents mention both a *banchum maiestatis* and a *cathedra* or *tronum* with an *arenga*.

¹⁹⁹ Martindale, "Sala," 81.

Sebastiano Ziani was thus depicted as a prince equal in stature to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III in his ability to facilitate a peace between the two great men. Although Martindale concedes that no theoretical reconstruction of the original arrangement of the fourteenth-century narrative cycle is foolproof (due to its replacement in both the late fifteenth century and after the fire of 1577), he looks to dugento and trecento Venetian chronicles of the event and to the general literary tastes for a heroic style of *'chanson de geste'* history to determine how the narrative may have originally unfolded.²⁰⁰ Martindale's reconstruction is convincing, and he discusses a number of important cultural influences on the programme, but his reluctance to address its meaning as a whole and his dismissal of the prominent *'Paradiso'* on the east wall as a, "...routine piece of high medieval piety," rather than as an image particularly significant to a Venice, is curious.²⁰¹ He also dismisses as 'too early' any possible conflation of symbolic meaning between the Virgin Mary as a just mediatrix queen and the personification of Venice, stating that, "It is most unlikely that there was any grandiose concept underlying the iconography, a fourteenth century 'myth of Venice.'"²⁰² For Martindale the meanings inherent in the decorative programme of the Sala del Gran Consiglio were no different from any other large council hall of the time in their thematic development of majesty, history, and ruler portraiture. It was meant, as other council halls were, to impress upon the visitor the ideals, history, and leadership of the city. In other words, it was more typically

²⁰⁰ Martindale, "Sala," 88-89.

²⁰¹ Martindale, "Sala," 93.

²⁰² Martindale, "Sala," 109. But it seems to me that there are a number of instances of visual imagery in the trecento in which Venice is depicted regally, not only as queen but as supreme law giver which must have had some visual resonance for the viewer as reminder of the Coronation imagery that was a favorite motif in Venice at the time. For instance in the sculpted roundel on the Palazzo Ducale facade facing the Piazzetta (fig. 18). Also Venice's foundation day was associated with the Annunciation of the Virgin which is depicted on either side of the Sala coronation image. There are clearly a number of theoretical and visual precedents being set for the beginning of this sort of interpretation in the trecento.

Medieval than Venetian.²⁰³ To some degree this is true; however, it is a mistake to ignore the Venetian propensity toward myth making which was vigorously at work long before the Renaissance. While it is true that the conflation of Marian imagery and personifications of Venice would reach a zenith in the fifteenth century, this thesis suggests that in the fourteenth century there was a lively interest in cultivating civic links with the Virgin Mary. Like many other Italian cities of the trecento, Venice sought the Virgin as a personal protectress of the Republic, by crying up their foundation day as the same day as the feast of the Annunciation, an idea that first began circulating with Martin da Canale's *Estoires de Venise*. It can be no coincidence, then, that the Annunciation scene flanks the Coronation of the Virgin fresco in the Sala.²⁰⁴ Martindale however, sees this reading of the Annunciation as problematic because the story of Venice's foundation on that particular feast day involved three colonizing Paduan consuls; fourteenth-century Venetians, he claims, would have preferred the more glamorous foundation tale involving ancient Trojans. Instead, Martindale chooses to attribute this iconographic addition simply to the growing influence of the cult of Mary.²⁰⁵ True as this may be, the Annunciation foundation story was nevertheless gaining in popularity in trecento Venice where the Paduan aspect of the legend may have served the greater purpose of underscoring Venice's cultural supremacy in the area over its mainland neighbour. By the late thirteenth century the Virgin and Christ had developed into, "a double patronage team" for the city which found official expression in a number of ways, including ducal tombs.²⁰⁶ Also, by the mid-fourteenth

²⁰³ Martindale, "Sala," 76.

²⁰⁴ Martindale, "Sala," 93. Martindale suggests that fourteenth-century Venetian minds would not have made the connection between Christ's conception and the city's.

²⁰⁵ Martindale, "Sala," 93.

²⁰⁶ D. Pincus, *Tombs*, 152. Links between Christ and the Virgin are made visually in a number of ways on ducal tomb decoration of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and Annunciations were one of the most prominent ways of doing this. See Chapter 3 above.

century Andrea Dandolo's *Chronica Extensa* and other forms of state patronage further legitimized this foundation theory.²⁰⁷ The popularity of the Annunciation feast day foundation created an important fourteenth-century addition to the larger myth of Venice as a city predestined for greatness just as Christ was at his conception. This concept of *praedestinatio* is emphasized through the visual conflation of the Virgin and Christ in the religious hagiography of the time.²⁰⁸ According to Martindale however, the inclusion of the Coronation of the Virgin, the definitive result of this conflation, in the Sala del Gran Consiglio had no specific meaning for Venice. Images of Marian glory, like Simone Martini's *Maestà* for the Sala del Consiglio in the Sienese Palazzo Pubblico, were not unusual for medieval civic halls. However, the Coronation of the Virgin was an unusual image of Marian glory that does not turn up in a similar civic context anywhere else in Italy. Clearly, this image was deliberately chosen to resonate with the Venetian council in a number of ways. This increasingly official iconography dealt with the 'myth of Venice,' propagated throughout the fourteenth century, as the most just and noble city in Italy, if not the world. This was an idea also sustained by the area's scholars, poets, and writers, not the least of whom was Petrarch, who wrote a number of celebratory passages about the republic of Venice as the geographic seat of Justice and the 'salt of good council'.²⁰⁹

It was in the mid-fourteenth century that one of the first figural emblems of Venice was displayed publicly in a roundel on the Piazzetta facade of the Palazzo Ducale with an

²⁰⁷ Pincus, *Tombs*, 130-1. There may have been a large sculptural Annunciation group on the Porta da Mar facing the Piazzetta at this time as seen in Jacopo de Barbari's 1500 woodcut of the city. Also, Dandolo's patronage in San Marco may have extended to an annunciation group mounted atop columns in the cappella maggiore.

²⁰⁸ Pincus, *Tombs*, 130-31.

²⁰⁹ Petrarch, *Epistolae seniles*, IV,3. Cited in D. Rosand, "Venetia Figurata: The Iconography of a Myth," *Interpretazioni Veneziane: Studi di Storia dell'Arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro*, ed. D. Rosand, (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1984), 177.

identifying inscription as 'Venecia'.²¹⁰ In the roundel Venice is portrayed enthroned and triumphant, holding the sword and scroll of justice and declaring her victory over the furies (fig.18). It is one of the first images in which the personification of Justice was conflated with that of Venice.²¹¹ Justice was, of course, one of the major themes of the entire Palazzo Ducale, whose exterior decoration also incorporated many other images of distributive Justice.²¹² Clearly, the same theme applied to the decorative scheme of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. There was nothing particularly Venetian about this, and figures of Justice understandably figured largely in almost every Italian council hall of the day, including those in Siena and Padua. What is particularly Venetian here is the use of the Coronation of the Virgin scene to convey this message. As has been demonstrated, Venice was already beginning to conflate its own image with the iconographic symbols of Justice on the exterior of the Palazzo. The trecento decorative scheme of the Sala del Gran Consiglio takes this one step further with the addition of the 'Paradiso' to the scheme of ducal portraits and history. The Coronation of the Virgin often occurred visually in conjunction with the Last Judgement as the final moment in history when the new heavenly Jerusalem, populated with righteous souls, is reigned over by Christ and the Virgin.²¹³ Can it not then be considered as the pinnacle of triumphant imagery, on a par and sometimes interchangeable with the Last Judgement itself? If so, it fits with the Venetian interest in associating itself not only with the Virgin but also with images of Justice. The parallel theme in the Sala is, of course, the office of the doge itself, which as a figural extension of Venice in the *Discordia*, represents the mediating, just, and wise qualities of Venice itself; qualities also

²¹⁰ Wolters, *La Scultura*, 46-47, cat no.49. Although the roundel is often dated to the 1420's Wolters argues for a fourteenth-century date, pre 1355.

²¹¹ Rosand, "Venetia Figurata," 179.

²¹² For example the sculptural images on the exterior of the Judgment of Solomon, Adam and Eve and the Drunkenness of Noah and also in the capitals of the Palazzo's arcade columns.

²¹³ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 9.

traditionally associated with the Virgin Mary, in her capacity as queen of heaven and divine *mediatrix* for all Christian souls.

Whether or not the Virgin in Guariento's *'Paradiso'* was meant to represent an image of an enthroned Venice does not detract from the general implied message of the impending justice of the heavenly court whose perfection could not be challenged. Clearly, this was the sort of Justice to which the Grand Council of Venice was to aspire in forming the Venetian constitution. Guariento's *'Paradiso'* puts Venice under the direct protection and guidance of the Virgin, a concept also employed in Siena's Sala del Consiglio with Simone Martini's *'Maestà'* in which the Virgin and child are enthroned with a scroll that reads: "Judge wisely you who rule the earth."²¹⁴ The message of justice is carried on through the other parts of the Sala's decorative programme, particularly in the *Discordia* narrative cycle. The Venetian version of the events leading up to the 'Peace of Venice' in 1177 is mostly a fabrication. Although Venice had been the first site of resolution for the two men, the problem for the designers of the Sala narrative was that in the years preceding 1177 Venice had been on the sidelines of the conflict, and therefore sources for the depiction of Venetian glory were limited. The typically Venetian solution to this problem was to fabricate certain events to fit the needs of state propaganda. The Venetian version of the story thus depicted Alexander III and Frederick I as two noble princes pitted against one another through the machinations of a number of unscrupulous cardinals.²¹⁵ Venice steps in at the eleventh hour to aid the troubled pope, and through a final, fictional naval battle, Frederick is defeated and called by Doge Sebastiano Ziani to Venice to reconcile with Alexander. The doge was depicted as the equal of these two great princes and the deft facilitator of peace and justice in this long fought war. At the end of the Venetian version all

²¹⁴ D. Norman, ed. "For the Honour and Beauty of the City: The design of Town Halls," *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, vol. II, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 41.

²¹⁵ A. Martindale, "Venice and Alexander III -- Two Painted Impostures," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 46/7 (1993/4), 478.

three princes proceed to Rome as equals and are enthroned there together. The narrative is carefully constructed by Venice to explain and legitimize a number of privileges enjoyed in the city, not the least of which was a papal bull, forged early in the fourteenth century with a date of 1177, granting plenary indulgences to pilgrims to San Marco. The idea was that when Alexander sought asylum in Venice he had granted the indulgence and had initiated a number of ducal traditions, including the annual Ascension Day or *Sensa* ceremony in which the doge ‘married’ the sea by dropping a golden ring into the Adriatic. Alexander was also said to have authorized that the doge be preceded in processions by a white candle, that he carry a judicial sword, that he be protected by a ceremonial umbrella and use an official lead seal, among other exclusive royal and papal privileges. All of these things were carefully included in the *Discordia* narrative of the Sala as a means of visually legitimizing the history, traditions, and functions of the doge. These privileges had previously been mentioned in a series of written texts including the *Historia Ducum Veneticorum* of 1230, Martin da Canale’s *Estoires de Venise*, Bonincentro de Bovi’s *Hystoria de Discordia* of 1320, and Andrea Dandolo’s *Chronica Brevis* and *Extensa*, among others, which established the Venetian version of the *Discordia*. These histories were written to legitimize the papal bull that was ‘discovered’ by a cleric in the first twenty years of the century, probably not coincidentally at a time when the Papacy had moved to Avignon and a papal interregnum prevented careful questioning of such claims.²¹⁶

Outside of Venice, narrative cycles of the *Discordia* provide insight into the peculiar development of the Venetian account. The early fifteenth-century version in the Sala di Balìa in Siena’s Palazzo Pubblico agrees with the exclusion of Lombard military participation in the conflict and focuses on the naval battle won with Venetian arms. But it does not have the doge at its focus. In fact, Siena ignores most Venetian interests in the story by omitting all references to the ducal accoutrements and the plenary indulgence. The

²¹⁶ Martindale, “Sala,” 104-5.

only Venetian aspect of the story that is retained is in the final humiliation of Frederick, who receives the pope's foot on his neck as he kneels in reconciliation. However, in the Sienese cycle this event occurs in Rome rather than in front of San Marco, and in place of the three princes enthroned together the Sienese version depicts Frederick and Doge Sebastiano Ziani leading Alexander's horse into the city.²¹⁷ The Sienese version is not surprisingly oriented mostly around the victory of Alexander III, the first Sienese pope. Martindale suggests that the fictitious Venetian version was edited in Siena because the additions gave less credence to the victory of their pope. Clearly, the Venetian account was just that -- Venetian: a version generally accepted only in Venice and taken with a grain of salt by the mainland.²¹⁸

The glory of the republic was another thematic aspect of this programme. It is present in the *'Paradiso'* on the east wall, it is also present in the *Discordia* narrative in which the doge's justice culminates in his glorious enthronement with, arguably, the two greatest powers of Christendom; and finally, it is present in the portrait cycle that caps the entire programme. Beginning with the earliest doges, the portraits pair generations of men in a quasi-dynastic lineage of Venetian republican glory that was meant to extend indefinitely into the future and fill the blank spaces left for the doges to come. The inclusion of this gallery of 'ancestors' strikes one as unusual in a city so pathologically against familial dynasties. The emphasis, however, is not so much on the individual doge as it is on the longevity and power of the *dogado* as a symbol of civic glory. This type of portrait imagery was becoming increasingly popular in western Europe, where examples were most often found at princely courts. In France, both St. Denis and the *Salle des Pas Perdus* of

²¹⁷ C. Walter, "Papal and Political Imagery in the Medieval Lateran Palace," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 21 (1971), 125.

²¹⁸ Martindale, "Impostures," 480. In addition to the fifteenth century Sienese cycle of the *Discordia* there was also an early fourteenth-century inscription and painting on a wall in the Lateran palace in Rome which commemorated the plenary indulgence. This inscription which is no longer extant was also mentioned in Andrea Dandolo's writings. How it got there is a bit of a mystery.

the French kings included forms of dynastic portraiture that underscored the longevity and power of a lineage of rulers. This trend toward portrait cycles was also popular in ecclesiastical settings. Cycles of papal images decorated S. Paolo fuori le Mura and Old St. Peter's in Rome, as well as lesser churches such as S. Piero a Grado near Pisa, in statements of papal longevity and authority.²¹⁹ Closer to Venice, in the mainland territory of Treviso, the Dominican chapter house at S. Niccolò was decorated in 1352 by Tommaso da Modena with an elaborate 'portrait' cycle of distinguished Dominicans, beneath which were medallions containing the names of the Dominican provinces and of the masters-general of the order. Like the portrait cycle in the Venetian Sala, the chapter house cycle at Treviso, albeit in the medallions, leaves blank space for the future addition of new Provinces.²²⁰ The Dominican portraits, like the ducal ones, present a chronologically united image of the institution they represent rather than the individual, and are set in the space where the most important decisions of the institution were made.²²¹

In Venice this form of official portraiture, glorifying the institution of the *dogado*, had already found expression in ducal tombs which by the trecento had become less emblematic of a specific individual or family and more an object of the state built in honour of the city and its greatest public institution.²²² Through their elaborate epitaphs, effigies and general decoration they became some of the first monuments of ducal history to isolate and emphasize the power and longevity of the doges and by extension the city itself.²²³ This tradition was continued later in the century with the inclusion of a ducal portrait cycle

²¹⁹ A. Martindale, *Heroes, Ancestors, Relatives and the Birth of the Portrait*, (The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1988), 29.

²²⁰ R. Gibbs, *Tommaso da Modena: Painting in Emilia and the March of Treviso 1340-80* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 68.

²²¹ Gibbs, 72.

²²² Pincus, *Tombs*, 1-2.

²²³ Pincus, *Tombs*, 2-3.

in the Sala del Gran Consiglio. It seems self-evident that, in the decoration of its civic council hall, Venice was committed to propagating a myth of itself as a just and glorious republic that united in its civic structure the best of all types of government.²²⁴

Mainland Culture: Paduan Developments

It almost goes without saying that in Venice the decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio was used, in part, to visually legitimize local aspects of Venetian institutions to the greater glory of the republic, but what was the context for these choices? And, how did this context affect the overall programme of the room? To determine this we must first turn to the most obvious comparison, which also happens to be geographically the nearest: the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, which provided the closest example of a decorative program in a civic council hall and, which like the Venetian Palazzo Ducale, also had a mandate to promote civic justice. Its decoration, like the facade of the Venetian ducal palace, included images of the judgment of Solomon and various personifications of Justice.²²⁵ However, this seems to be where the visual similarities ended. The elaborate cosmological decorative programme in the *Salone* of the Paduan civic hall was in no way duplicated in Venice's later redecoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Venice clearly looked elsewhere for inspiration. If inspiration for the new Sala del Gran Consiglio in Venice came from Padua at all, it could only have been from the Carrara palace or the Reggia.

After the 1339 defeat of the Scaligeri by Venetian and Florentine allies, the Paduan commune was replaced by a princely court of the Carrara, who established an hereditary dynasty and ruled in the city for almost seventy years. In the mid-fourteenth century Padua

²²⁴ Rosand, "Venetia Figurata," 177.

²²⁵ Martindale has also suggested that the architectural form of the Sala del Gran Consiglio in Venice with its small roundel windows at roof height may have been derived from the structure of the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua. Martindale "Sala," 83.

absorbed incoming developments from Tuscany and Northern Europe, and as a result became a major arena for social, intellectual, and cultural changes in the lagoon.²²⁶ Aristotelian and Petrarchian humanism were cultivated at the famous university and discussed in the Carrara court where the famous Tuscan humanist, Petrarch, was frequently an honoured guest. Artistic patronage consequently shifted away from the perpetuation of civic ideals toward a more celebratory attitude regarding the dynastic regime.²²⁷ However, patronage was not strictly ‘private’ in the Reggia. The programmes of these rooms were designed for the private enjoyment of the family who lived there, but they also provided a backdrop for public ceremonial life including entertaining visiting dignitaries, dynastic weddings, and other public events.²²⁸ Various rooms in the Reggia were decorated with an attention to the classical past discussed by Petrarch and other local humanists and included a portrait gallery of famous contemporary men, including the Carrara and their military exploits.²²⁹ One of the most famous of the fresco cycles in the Carrara Palace was the *Sala Virorum Illustrium* which was decorated with a series of ‘portraits’ of famous ancient imperial and republican Romans based on Petrarch’s biographies *De Viris Illustribus* which had been dedicated to Francesco da Carrara. The Carrara clearly wanted to associate themselves with these famous men as their predecessors in noble behaviour if not in blood. Petrarch himself was initially a staunch republican, but his humanist philosophies, as he grew older, extended to include in his definition of good government the concept of a princely or more monarchical republic which adhered to justice

²²⁶ Saxl, “Petrarch in Venice,” 45.

²²⁷ D. Norman, “ Splendid Models and Examples from the past: Carrara Patronage of Art,” *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, vol. I, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 155.

²²⁸ Norman, “Carrara Patronage,” 159.

²²⁹ Norman, “Carrara Patronage,” 164.

and virtue.²³⁰ As such, Petrarch often frequented the courts of Northern Italy which, in the last thirty or forty years of the fourteenth century, were enlarging small halls in their palazzi to accommodate the trend towards more elaborate court ceremonies and gatherings. These halls were more often than not decorated with complex humanist derived imagery from classical or biblical history.²³¹ At the courts of the trecento Veneto this conflation of republican humanism and courtly ceremony was not considered contradictory. Northern Italian princes saw themselves as heads of republican states and their courts and palaces were the natural arenas for these two streams of thought to meet and mingle.²³² Venice also felt these shifts, and during the mid-century reign of Doge Andrea Dandolo functioned not only as a commercial and political crossroads but also as an intellectual one marked by an influx of humanist and Aristotelian thinking. Even Petrarch established himself in Venice for a while. Although most of the existing humanist decorative cycles of the Carrara Reggia date to shortly after 1366, when Guariento began his work in the Venetian Sala del Gran Consiglio, the ideas at work are strikingly similar. The concept of a portrait cycle, implying a connection with the noble acts of the distant past, is reflected in both the Palazzo Ducale and in the Paduan Reggia, as is the idea of elevating and glorifying the rulers of a republic and their noble deeds. Of course, these ideas are not new nor are they confined only to courtly situations, but the clear choice that Venice makes to focus on the princely endurance of their ruling institution, rather than the more broadly thematic concept of good civic government demonstrated in the Palazzo della Ragione and in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena, speaks to a particular kind of choice-making in Venice that is deliberate. Doge Marco Cornaro, who is named in an inscription beneath Guariento's *'Paradiso'* as the doge in

²³⁰ J. Corley Richards, "Altichiero and the Humanist Patronage at the Courts of Verona and Padua 1360-90," (Unpub. Ph.D. thesis Univ. of Glasgow, 1989), 5, 7-8.

²³¹ Richards, 19.

²³² Both the Carrara palace in Padua and the Scaligeri Palace in Verona include humanist portrait cycles of famous men including their own dynasty and frescos based more on chivalric romance or legend.

power during the redecoration of the Sala, had been the *podestà* at Padua in 1337 and again in 1355 where he may well have seen Guariento's work for the Carrara and suggested him for the execution of the Venetian programme.²³³

In light of the changing intellectual atmosphere of the mid century and increasing Venetian interest in the mainland it is no surprise that Venice began to look to its nearest neighbour for new artists who were accustomed to working with the goals and needs of a more courtly system in mind, not to mention working in a fresco tradition for which there is little surviving evidence of a tradition in the lagoon.²³⁴ Guariento had already established himself in Padua where his known works included Coronation of the Virgin images. In 1344 he executed an elaborate Coronation of the Virgin polyptych, now in Pasadena, for a the church of S. Martino in Piove di Sacco; in 1350-51 he was called upon to decorate the tomb of Jacopo da Carrara in the church of S. Agostino with a fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin; and shortly after this he received another courtly commission for the decoration of the Carrara chapel in the Reggia with an Old Testament narrative and possibly a Coronation of the Virgin altarpiece.²³⁵ By 1361 Guariento's fame had already spread to Venice where he was called c.1361 to fresco the tomb of Doge Giovanni Dolfin in the *cappella maggiore* of the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in a manner reminiscent of

²³³ A. Fitzgerald, "Guariento d'Arpo," 187. It has also been suggested by Fritz Saxl that it may have been Petrarch who suggested Guariento to the *procuratori* of S. Marco while he was living in Venice 1362-67. See "Petrarch in Venice," 53.

²³⁴ There may well have been a tradition of fresco in Venice previous to 1365, however, beyond mural traces in S. Marco and the cathedral on Torcello there is little surviving evidence of it today. On the other hand, Padua and surrounding area had an extensive tradition of monumental narrative fresco painting which still survives. See R. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 104.

²³⁵ A. Spiazzi, "Padova," in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento*, ed. M. Lucco, (Milano: Electa, 1992), 115-17;

D'Arcais, *Guariento*, 74-5.

mainland Carrara tomb decoration.²³⁶ Although little of the original fresco survives there is still a sense of Guariento's use of a Gothic architectural structure that would be characteristic of the later '*Paradiso*' in the Palazzo Ducale. Also, the equal prominence given to the Virgin and Christ enthroned above one another in the original tomb design indicates the growing Venetian interest in their "double patronage" which would find ultimate civic expression in the Sala del Gran Consiglio a few years later.²³⁷ The commission of Guariento's '*Paradiso*' reflects Venetian ambitions to appropriate iconographical aspects of mainland culture for their own local uses.²³⁸ It was Guariento's first major, recorded project for the republic and it expressed the Venetian ideal, that had been percolating through the first half of the century, of a divinely ordained empire working toward its destined purpose. Guariento's fantastical architectural structure filled the east wall of the Sala with a semi-illusory space that was undoubtedly meant to implicate the viewer, and by extension Venice, in the court of heaven.²³⁹ The strategic choice of Guariento, the Carrara court painter, for this most important of Venetian civic projects reflects the level of cultural competition between Padua and Venice which was growing into a more open animosity.²⁴⁰ Venice sought to appropriate the artistic and social life of its mainland neighbour and with it assert their cultural supremacy over the lagoon. Its interests

²³⁶ Pincus, *Tombs*, 151-54. Pincus points out that the unusual choice of the church's most sacred area for Doge Dolfin's tomb has royal precedents in the tombs of Henry VII in the choir of Pisa cathedral, 1315 and the tomb of Robert of Anjou in S. Chiara in Naples. This must indicate a more princely view of the doge in the late trecento. See also D'Arcais, *Guariento*, 74., for the attribution to Guariento.

²³⁷ Pincus, *Tombs*, 152.

²³⁸ M. Muraro, "Petrarca, Paolo Veneziano a la Cultura Artistica alla Corte del Doge Andrea Dandolo," *Petrarca, Venezia e il Veneto*, ed. G. Padoan, (Venice: San Giorgio Maggiore, 1976), 168.

²³⁹ Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 117. See also chapter 2 above, for the sense of inclusion that is encouraged on Cathedral facades of Orvieto and Siena.

²⁴⁰ See Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 117., where he suggests that the exporting of Guariento to Venice represents a statement on the part of the Carrara about their 'expansive power' in the area. I tend to think that it was the other way around. The commission represents a strategic move on the part of Venice to co-opt mainland culture to suit the republic's civic needs.

were anchored to the preservation of independence while adapting mainland ideas to its unique situation, because while Venice may have been behaving in a more courtly way for all intents and purposes it was still a republic. The challenge that was represented in the decorative programme of the Sala del Gran Consiglio was how to merge these two interests.

The Chivalric Influence

Chivalric influences in the northern Italian culture of the trecento are well documented. The popularity of the '*chanson de geste*' and later Arthurian romances ushered in an era of heightened interest in French chivalric life, especially in aristocratic circles where speaking French was a mark of refinement and the courtly manners of the romance were emulated.²⁴¹ These interests seemed to coexist with the popularity of Latin humanism in northern Italy without conflict. In fact, many trecento humanist writings were explicitly sympathetic to the development of chivalric romances as noble subject matter that perpetuated similar Humanist ideals of virtue, glory, and justice. In trecento Venice, French chivalric traditions had infiltrated the dugento writings of historians like Martin da Canale, who not only wrote his thirteenth-century *Estoires de Venise* in French but also injected something of the heroic '*chansons de geste*' into his version of Venetian history. Likewise, Marco Polo's account of his travels to the east, also written in French, has something of the heroic, adventure flavour made popular by the '*chansons de geste*' and the troubadours who recounted the tales of Charlemagne and Roland.²⁴² The development of Venetian manuscript scriptoria and specialized illuminators who produced Franco-

²⁴¹ G. Folena, "La Cultura Volgare e L'Umanesimo Cavalleresco' nel Veneto." *Umanesimo Europeo e Umanesimo Veneziano*, ed. V. Branca, (Venice: Sansoni, 1963), 150-51; A. Limentani, "Martin da Canal e 'Les Estoires de Venise,'" *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, vol. 1. ed. G. Folena, (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1976), 590-601.

²⁴² Folena, "La Cultura Volgare," 141-42.

Veneto epics, as well as the transalpine style of Venetian ivories, indicate a demand not only for foreign goods but also an interest in incorporating foreign cultures into the Venetian one. Politically, with the development of an institutionalized oligarchy, Venice at the beginning of the trecento was becoming more hierarchical and in keeping with the French courtly culture that it consumed. But was French courtly influence a driving force behind the conception of the 1366 programme of decoration in the Sala del Gran Consiglio? With the encouragement and support of Doge Andrea Dandolo mid fourteenth-century Venice was established as an intellectual crossroads. This climate of humanist intellectual inquiry in Venice, like that on the mainland, was sympathetic to the heroic aspect of chivalric history with its behavioural exemplar of courtesy, prowess, loyalty, and liberality. The programme of decoration in the Sala del Gran Consiglio was clearly influenced by the trends of the humanist mainland courts in its use of portrait cycles and historic narrative frescos and, like the mainland, these humanist interests intermingled with courtly ones: one such example was the Carrara chapel in the Paduan Reggia painted by Guariento, which reportedly drew on the Gothic courtly style of manuscript miniatures.²⁴³ The development of the Franco-Veneto epic is a prime example of this influence in which the documentary realism of historical narratives like the *Entrées d'Espagne* and the Guido da Columnis' *Historia destructionis Troiae* were tempered by an ideal heroic past and a chivalric preoccupation with refined and elevated motives and behaviour.²⁴⁴ This is one of the prime movers of the Sala del Gran Consiglio decorative programme which sought to emphasize the heroic and princely nature of the doge.²⁴⁵ The academic nature of Andrea Dandolo's

²⁴³ Spiazzi, *Il Trecento*, 117.

²⁴⁴ Folena, "La Cultura Volgare," 146-7. See also Hugo Buchthal, *Historia Troiana*; A. Limentani, "L'Epica in 'Lengue de France. L'Entree d'Espagne' e Niccolò da Verona," *Storia della Cultura Veneta*, vol. 2. (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 1976), 338-68.

²⁴⁵ The Venetians may have also had the decoration of the Imperial palace in Byzantium in mind which apparently had a programme of historical scenes illustrating the official biographies of the emperors.

Chronica Extensa encouraged a specific conceptualization of the historical destiny of the Venetian republic and the role of the doge in realizing it.²⁴⁶ Dandolo's writings cited documentary proof for certain Venetian traditions like the Annunciation foundation date for the city. As a result the story became a concrete part of the city's mythology and further proof of its predestined greatness, and public commissions were carried out for prominent Annunciation imagery throughout the city. As Patricia Fortini Brown notes in her book, Venice and Antiquity, through these kinds of civic projects the text and the image deliberately became "mutually confirming".²⁴⁷ This reciprocity is demonstrated in the *Discordia* narrative of the Sala where all previous literary accounts of the 'Peace of Venice,' including Dandolo's, took shape in state art for the greater glory of the city emphasizing "...great men, great deeds and great times..." in a way that, as Andrew Martindale has pointed out, implicates the influence of the French '*chanson de geste*' in a manner similar to the Bayeux tapestry.²⁴⁸ The formula for Venetian history thus became more epic and glorious than heretofore, and in keeping with contemporaneous literary and cultural fashions.²⁴⁹ The *Discordia* narrative also underscores the princely nature of the doge by visually legitimizing the *trionfi* or ducal accoutrements that were said to have been granted by Pope Alexander III. The narrative as reconstructed by Martindale emphasizes the imperial attentions due to the doge as the locus of elaborate ceremonial traditions.²⁵⁰ In the narrative, the favours granted by the Pope declare the doge as equal in status and regal

Discussed by C. Walter, "Papal Political Imagery in the Medieval Lateran Palace," Cahiers Archéologiques 20 (1970), 170.

²⁴⁶ Fortini- Brown, Venice and Antiquity, 34.

²⁴⁷ Fortini -Brown, Venice and Antiquity, 38-9.

²⁴⁸ Martindale, "Sala," 104.

²⁴⁹ Martindale, "Sala," 104.

²⁵⁰ Martindale, "Sala," 97-103, fig. 10

dignity to emperors and kings.²⁵¹ Legitimizing these symbols of ducal privilege by every possible means was of prime importance to civic pride which depended on the acknowledgment of the leader of the republic as equal in grandeur, if not superior, to all of the lay princes of Northern Italy.

In the Late Middle Ages it had become increasingly popular for these Northern Italian princes and nobles to decorate their residences with portraits of historical and legendary people from ancient or biblical history, and courtly legend. The *Sala Virorum Illustrium* in the Paduan Reggia fits this tradition as do similar cycles of famous men painted earlier for Robert of Anjou at the court of Naples in 1332, and for the Milanese prince Azzo Visconti, who also commissioned a cycle of illustrious princes which included Charlemagne and himself in 1340. Similarly, in Verona, the Scaligeri palace was decorated, by a follower of Guariento, with an elaborate cycle of medallion portraits of historical men above a historical narrative of the 'Jewish War'.²⁵² The Venetian Sala was decorated in keeping with this aristocratic fashion. However, unlike the mainland, Venice was not interested in depicting ancient Roman history. Instead, local events were elevated to epic importance in an attempt to fashion a new civic identity for the city as it shifted in the trecento towards a patrician state.²⁵³ The cycle of ducal portraits, although not meant to glorify a genealogical dynasty, does suggest, in its long, unbroken lineage, an institutional dynasty with a quasi-princely flavour that was reflected in the courtly behaviour of the Venetian oligarchy. As has been pointed out by Debra Pincus, the same concepts were at work in the Dominican church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo where Venetian doges and aristocrats were often buried with maximum visibility, in a way that suggested the grandeur

²⁵¹ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 115-116.

²⁵² T.E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," *Art Bulletin* 34 (1952), 113.

²⁵³ Fortini- Brown, *Venice and Antiquity*, 33-34.

and longevity of oligarchic power in the city.²⁵⁴ These types of visual expression in the trecento were due to the curtailing of real political power in the office of the doge, a development which found outlet in an increasingly elaborate court life and affected a change in the official imagery of the *dogado* to include more princely attributes. The closing of the Great Council in 1297 to everyone beyond a few powerful families codified the Venetian nobility, which was thereafter defined by membership to it, and marked a social evolution that would have ramifications at all levels.²⁵⁵ The century that followed also saw changes in the perception of the doge as a noble figurehead. By the mid century the increased visibility of the ducal persona took on a monarchical flavour as the most noble of Venetian nobles and the symbolic lightning rod for the divine predestination and radiance of Venice itself.²⁵⁶ The portrait cycle of doges in the Sala programme reflects this change in conceptualizing the doge not as an individual, hereditary prince but as an institutional one at the service of his court.

'Paradiso' and the "Salt of Good Council"

Just as the heroic narrative of the *Discordia* and the princely cycle of the ducal portraits illustrate a courtly theme in the Sala programme, so too does the *'Paradiso'*. As a northern European religious theme which emphasized hierarchy, court life and nobility in the post-apocalyptic heaven the Coronation of the Virgin clearly drew on the ideals of courtly love. The iconography of the motif recalls the ideology of the troubadour lyric and the chivalric romance in its veneration of the highest Lady of a court to whom everyone

²⁵⁴ Pincus, *Tombs*, 149. Also see Julian Gardner, "A Princess among Prelates," for royal and aristocratic tomb placement in churches as expressions of dynastic longevity.

²⁵⁵ Pincus, *Tombs*, 79. fn 22.

²⁵⁶ Pincus, *Tombs*, 149. Pincus traces this development in the ducal persona through the ducal tombs of the trecento which increasingly focus (through epitaphs and effigy figures) on the symbolic, noble characteristics of the doge and his reign.

pledged their allegiance.²⁵⁷ Guariento's *'Paradiso'* reflects these courtly interests in its elaborate and extravagant Gothic throne structure and heavenly court of saints and prophets, details which were to become increasingly characteristic of Marian Coronations in Venice. The inclusion of the Coronation of the Virgin in the most important civic room in the ducal palace represents a turning point in the theme's Venetian popularity. Guariento's previous commissions for the Carraran court clearly demonstrated that the Coronation of the Virgin was already beginning to have political significance for the Paduan Signoria. This was probably in association with the marriage metaphor between ruler and state that was popular among kings, ecclesiastical leaders, and by the end of the thirteenth century, also among secular princes.²⁵⁸ In late trecento Venice the motif also began to carry similar civic meaning as a part of the decorative programme of the Sala del Gran Consiglio which sought to legitimize the privileges of the city and its institutions in a form which was already being put to use by mainland princes. By 1366 it had become somewhat emblematic of Venice and the 'aristocratic' social and cultural heights it wished to attain.²⁵⁹ This message would not have been lost on a visitor to the Sala who saw the oligarchic Senate assembled with the doge at its head beneath this enormous statement of Venetian nobility and hierarchy.²⁶⁰ In it was concentrated the idea that a well ordered terrestrial

²⁵⁷ A. Scaglione, *Knights at Court: Chivalry & Courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 91.

²⁵⁸ Muir, *Civic Ritual*, 126. This connection is reflected in the proliferation of Coronation of the Virgin motifs on the accoutrements of ecclesiastical power such as a bishop's crosier handles and the embroidery motifs on copes. In this context the coronation of the Virgin becomes a symbol of office/power and the bishop's duty to his congregation and to God. Examples of Coronation of the Virgin images on these types of objects can be found at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the National Museum in Munich.

²⁵⁹ Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall*, 54.

²⁶⁰ A juxtaposition between the enthroned head of state and the image under which he was positioned is a well documented tradition in the Middle Ages. A well known example is the Palatine chapel in Sicily where the king's throne was placed directly beneath an image of the enthroned Christ in an unmistakable fashion. Also, accounts of the grandeur of the Imperial throne room in Constantinople (see Liudprand of Cremona, trans. F.A. Wright, 1930, 207-8) underscore the reaction that rulers wanted to affect in foreign visitors through the careful design of administrative and ceremonial halls where the head of state would receive

kingdom under a leader was a mirror of the celestial world populated by a strict hierarchy of angels saints and prophets.²⁶¹ A similar visual message was evident at S. Pietro in Vaticano, Rome where the Papal throne was situated on the vertical axis below a mosaic image of Christ enthroned, and the figures of Innocent III and *Ecclesia Romana*, in a manner reminiscent of the throne room of the Byzantine Imperial palace.²⁶² The increasingly stratified nature of Venetian society and the chivalric attitudes struck by the nobility and the doge are reflected in the '*Paradiso*' which acted as the cumulative image in a programme that emphasized the chivalric aspects of Venice's history and institutions.

By the late trecento Coronations of the Virgin had found pride of place in a number of both monumental and minor contexts within Venice and other major Italian cities. But did its intended meaning change with its location or size? Can a similar intended experience be assumed for the Coronation of the Virgin in any situation? The public and monumental nature of French Gothic cathedral tympana indicates that the motif was able to function in a public context and still have meaning for the medieval French churchgoer who would have meditated on a heaven that resembled the relatively familiar court of noble men and women of their monarch or local aristocracy.²⁶³ In the portable ivory diptychs that were produced in France and Germany of the late Middle Ages this more familiar and approachable imagery was widely disseminated and used as a conduit for personal devotion and

them. In placing the doge and council beneath the *Paradiso* in the Sala, Venice, in the manner of great rulers and communes, makes a statement about itself.

²⁶¹ Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall*, 55.

²⁶² Stroll, "Maria Regina: Papal Symbol," 185. As seen in the drawings of the apse mosaics of Old St. Peter's now in the Vatican library (MS Vat. lat. 5408 fols 29v -30r) Also see above note 69. for description of the splendor of the Imperial Byzantine throne room.

²⁶³ Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*, 114. Although an average French Medieval citizen probably would have not had the opportunity to see his or her monarch, he or she would have been familiar with the social hierarchy and their place in it. Local aristocrats and their vassals served as magistrates and general overseers in the area and therefore would have been a part of French communities.

meditation in both religious and lay contexts. Its power as a channel for prayer was its inclusivity; the implication inherent in a semi-illusory paradise that the viewer was already included in the redeemed court of post-apocalyptic heaven. It is this aspect of the Coronation of the Virgin that is also put to work in more public and monumental contexts. Like the Coronation images on Florence, Orvieto and Siena cathedrals, the '*Paradiso*' of the Venetian Sala del Gran Consiglio sought to include the audience and the city in its version of the paradise of the redeemed. The Coronation of the Virgin in this civic context was the natural and final extension of the Annunciation legend which had been propagated, by the end of the trecento, for nearly a century, and had over this time grown into a conflated "dual patronage team," for the republic made up of Christ and the Virgin.²⁶⁴ With the Coronation of the Virgin the predestined greatness of the city implied in its connection with the Annunciation finds final legitimate expression and fulfillment. In conjunction with the *Discordia* narrative on the side walls of the Sala del Gran Consiglio the '*Paradiso*' completes the theme of legitimacy. The narrative of the 'Peace of Venice' clearly has at its centre the legitimizing of ducal privileges and accoutrements or *trionfi*. Guariento's Coronation of the Virgin in the Sala functions along the same lines, legitimizing Venice's claim to imperial greatness and political sovereignty.²⁶⁵ This image may be one of the first to conflate images of the Virgin with personifications of Venice and Justice as had been done a few decades before with the medallion of '*Venecia*' on the facade of the ducal palace. In it the long acknowledged patroness and representative of the city receives Christ's crown as Queen of heaven and the paradisaical elect. The semi-illusory depiction of this on the east wall of the council hall not only mirrored the court of Venetian nobles who

²⁶⁴ Pincus, *Tombs*, 152.

²⁶⁵ Verdier, *Le Couronnement de la Vierge*, 161, fn.28bis. Verdier notes the use of Coronation of the Virgin imagery to legitimize claims to the papacy during the Great Schism. He also cites Francoise Baron's article which points out that the motif occurs with frequency on the tombs of cardinals of the schism in Avignon in a statement about legitimate leadership.

gathered beneath it but also included them in it as a new 'chosen people' already living in the heavenly Jerusalem on earth. The effect this image would have had on its audience is recorded by Savonarola, who describes the crowds who gathered to see it on Ascension day.²⁶⁶ In this image is reflected Venice as it saw itself: courtly, powerful, moral, just, in short, a model of redemption for the late Middle Ages. The inclusivity of the Coronation image in the Sala extended to the larger program of the Palazzo Ducale which like the mosaic facades of Roman and central Italian churches created a backdrop for civic and religious rituals in the city. Through the interior and exterior programme of the Palazzo Ducale Venice perpetuated itself as the earthly manifestation of the heavenly Jerusalem. The sculptural figures of the apocalyptic archangels Michael and Raphael on the corners at either end of the Sala facade wall unequivocally pronounce this. Facing out to the official sea entrance or 'gate' to the city, the archangels act as the official guardians of the '*Paradiso*' within the Palazzo Ducale and within Venice itself.²⁶⁷ The Coronation of the Virgin in this context conflates civic, political and religious concerns. The patriciate of the city met every Sunday in the council hall beneath this image, and an atmosphere was created where, according to Patricia Fortini-Brown, "... profane business could be conducted under sacred auspices."²⁶⁸ Likewise, Staale Sinding-Larsen has also referred to the council hall as a "state church" in which Guariento's Coronation of the Virgin acted as the altarpiece.²⁶⁹ To some degree this is very true; however, the Coronation of the Virgin in this context

²⁶⁶ Savonarola, in *De Laudibus Patavii* in "Rer. Ital. Script." XXIV p.XV ed. Città di Castello 1902: 44 (cited by F. D'Arcais in *Il Trecento*, 55, fn. 69.) "...il dì dell'Ascensione, in cui solamente potevasi aver ingresso alla Sala, radunavasi colà sì fatto strabocchevole numero di cittadini per godere ed. ammirare così divina fattura che appena quel luogo era sufficiente a capirli..."

²⁶⁷ Wolters, *La Scultura*, 43. The same sort of idea is at work on the mosaic facades of Central Italian churches which create a glorious backdrop for the city they protect. See Harding, *Facade Mosaics of Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio*.

²⁶⁸ Fortini-Brown, *Venice and Antiquity*, 44.

²⁶⁹ Sinding-Larsen, *Christ in the Council Hall*, 55.

functioned on a number of levels, conflating political aspects and religious ones with ease. In this sense Venetian use of the Coronation of the Virgin is typical of the trecento Italian paradigm manifested in places like Siena, Rome, and Naples.²⁷⁰ What is typically Venetian about the Sala del Gran Consiglio decoration is how it shapes Coronation imagery in the city after 1367, and to what uses it would be put.

Afterlife: The Last Decades of the Trecento

The 1370s saw escalating conflicts with neighbouring mainland territories of Trieste and Padua and a resumption of open war with Genoa in Chioggia from 1379-80. After the Venetian defeat of the Genoese, Venice's claim of territory in the Aegean gradually increased with the acquisition of Negroponte in 1383, Argos and Nauplia in 1388, Mykonos and Tinoi in 1390, and from 1394 to 1402 Athens as well as a number of other cities along the coast of Greece, sought Venetian protection from the Turks. Venetian attitudes toward the Italian *terrafirma* were also becoming more autocratic, sparking hostility, especially from Padua. Internally, the city continued to strengthen its hierarchical policy through a strict social order which allowed little mobility. The oligarchy that was formed by the Serrata del Gran Consiglio in 1297 was briefly enlarged in 1381 to include thirty more families who had contributed to the victory in Chioggia, but membership would not be opened again until the seventeenth century. Venetian government came increasingly to embody a certain ambiguity in its mixture of consular republicanism, ducal monarchy and oligarchic aristocracy.²⁷¹ This ambiguity allowed for a useful amount of flexibility in

²⁷⁰ J. Elliott. "Sacral Kingship and the Last Judgement in the 13th Century." 21st Annual Canadian Conference of Medieval Art Historians, McGill University, Montréal. 23 March, 2001. Elliott discusses the connection between images of the Angevin kings as enthroned judges and images of King Solomon, *Iustitia*, and the last Judgement in the context of Angevin papal sympathies. This type connection perpetuated between Angevin rulers and Last Judgement imagery may be put to use in Venice in terms of the Coronation of the Virgin.

²⁷¹ King, *Venetian Humanism*, 208-9.

how the city and its institutions were defined and visually perpetuated. It was within this context, after Guariento's *'Paradiso'* in the Sala del Gran Consiglio that the Coronation of the Virgin motif became even more popular in the city and its surrounding area. In 1365, approximately contemporaneous with the Coronation of the Virgin in the Palazzo Ducale the miniature illustrations of the *capiletture* in the *Graduale pro Missis B. Marie Virginis* by Giustinio di Gherardino, for the Scuola di S. Maria della Carità, today in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (Cod.lat.II.119), included scenes from the life of Mary including her Annunciation and her Coronation. These images were set against architectural backdrops much like the elaborate example in Guariento's fresco and Paolo Veneziano's Coronation of the Virgin now at the Frick (fig.21).²⁷² This Gothicizing trend in Coronations of the Virgin saw further development in the work of Paolo's son Lorenzo who, working in the 1370's and 80's, embraced the elaborate Gothic style that was taking hold of mainland artistic culture.²⁷³ This courtly Gothicism depicted a worldly and aristocratic understanding of religious imagery, especially the Coronation of the Virgin, that was gaining in mainland and lagoon popularity. This influence is clear in Lorenzo Veneziano's work on the mainland at the court of Cangrande II della Scala. His frescoes of the Coronation of the Virgin and Adoration of the Magi placed, significantly, on the triumphal arch of the church of S. Fermo in Verona emphasize the courtly qualities of the scene (fig.28).²⁷⁴ These courtly aspects were recognized and utilized by a number of mainland artists working after Guariento for the region's princely courts. Also working for the Della Scala court in

²⁷² Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 218.

²⁷³ Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 183.

²⁷⁴ The attribution to Lorenzo Veneziano here is controversial. Based on the style and inclusion of a host of musical angels and a draped throne, Pallucchini suggests Paolo Veneziano as the author of the S. Fermo Coronation of the Virgin. Both D'Arcais and Cozzi in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Trecento*, 56, 342, respectively accept the attribution to Lorenzo. In the 1963 restoration notes M.T. Cuppini claims that the author was an inexpert frescoer and as the frescoes were painted, according to Cuppini, as a panel painting would have been, he concludes that the S. Fermo frescoes were executed by a panel painter untrained in fresco, like Paolo or Lorenzo Veneziano. (cited by Cozzi, 342)

Verona as well as for the Carrara was the Paduan painter Altichiero who, in 1372, painted a Coronation of the Virgin at the church of the Eremitani, for the tomb of a member of the aristocratic Dotto family (fig.29). The Dotto version, destroyed in 1944, included members of the family dressed as chivalric knights in full armor kneeling in allegiance at the feet of the Holy Couple. The two knights, possibly casualties in the conflict with Venice from 1372 to 1374, make a heroic pledge of courtly allegiance to the rulers of the heavenly court. The similarity to Giusto de Menabuoi's c.1380 Coronation of the Virgin over the tomb of Niccolò and Bolzanello da Vigonza in the chapel of S. Giacomo in the Basilica del Santo (fig.30) is striking. Like the Dotto Coronation, Giusto depicts the two captains kneeling in their armor to pledge allegiance to Christ and the Virgin. Also in Padua, Altichiero executed the 1379 fresco decoration for the oratory chapel of Raimondino Lupi di Soragna at the Basilica del Santo (fig.31). The chapel was dedicated to the patron saints of the Lupi family: Saints Giorgio, Caterina, and Lucia whose lives, along with that of Christ and the Virgin are depicted, and culminate in a Coronation of the Virgin scene on the wall above the altar. The high Gothic courtliness of the decorative cycle is emphasized not only in the choice to depict the lives of these 'courtly' saints but also, more explicitly, in the top register where images of the Lupi knights kneel in their armor to pledge allegiance before the enthroned Virgin and Child. These knights, kneeling in all of their Gothic sartorial splendor against the high Gothic architectural background of a modern trecento city, may make visual reference to the pomp and parade of the Carrara court recalled in the Virgin's Coronation.²⁷⁵ Altichiero's fresco decoration of the Oratory of S. Giorgio in Padua is reminiscent of Guariento's decoration of the Sala del Gran Consiglio with its overtly chivalric theme and its Coronation of the Virgin unfolding, in pride of place, before an elaborate architectural backdrop and a crowded host of angels.²⁷⁶ The two works in Verona

²⁷⁵ Spiazzi, *Il Trecento*, 155-56.

²⁷⁶ Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana*, 147.

attributed to Altichiero are the fresco fragments of the council hall of the Della Scala palace and the votive, narrative fresco in the Cavalli family chapel of S. Anastasia. The chapel of the Cavalli family at Sant' Anastasia bears a resemblance to his work at the oratory of S. Giorgio in its elaborate courtly theme and row of kneeling Cavalli knights in armor pledging their allegiance to an enthroned Virgin and Child, which must have developed out of the Adoration of the Magi iconography as seen at S. Fermo (fig. 28).²⁷⁷ Either way, this type of imagery indicates a chivalric attitude toward the Virgin as 'Our Lady' in the courtly as well as the religious sense and speaks to the degree of which chivalric culture had infiltrated Northern Italy in the trecento.

In Venice, this development was also being put to use. The already strong cult of the Virgin in Venice saw new stylistic and political expression after Guariento's fresco in the Palazzo Ducale. A new form of Coronation of the Virgin was developing as a result which initially included a more developed architectural setting than previously, and an expansion of the crush of heavenly personages representing the court of the heavenly Jerusalem. One example of this is in the small Venetian ivory triptych, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (fig.32). Dating to between 1360 and 70 this devotional piece seems to draw heavily on the particularly Venetian iconography, established by Guariento. The Coronation of the Virgin is situated in a heavenly court peopled with a host of musical angels. On the top gables of the side panels, figures of the Annunciation followed by Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelists in the middle, and St. George and the archangel Michael on the bottom tier, recall the '*Paradiso*' programme of both the interior and exterior walls of the Sala del Gran Consiglio.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Cozzi, *Il Trecento*, 348.

²⁷⁸ Barnet ed. *Images in Ivory*, 213-14, pl.49. Comparisons are drawn between this piece and a number of low relief ivory crosiers associated with Venice in the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Also the form of the triptych with its crocketed gables and patterned border is reminiscent, according to Barnet, of the Holy Sacraments tabernacle in S. Marco

It is difficult to ascertain the degree to which the political significance of Guariento's *Paradiso* can be applied to later Venetian Coronations of the Virgin like this one.²⁷⁹ However, we must allow, to some degree, for the personal identification of these small scale pieces as images of the republic; after all, any Venetian who had seen the Coronation of the Virgin on the wall of the city's council hall was sure to make this visual connection. In more public art forms the significance of Guariento's Coronation in the city can be more easily attested. One such monument is the tomb of Doge Michele Morosini in San Zanipolo, decorated in 1382 using multiple media (fig.33). Above the effigy figure of the doge's actual tomb is a mosaic lunette of the Crucifixion surrounded by a sculptural architectural frame which is in turn surmounted by the outlines of what was once an elaborate frescoed architectural frame, reminiscent of Guariento's work above the tomb of Doge Giovanni Dolfin as well as his *dais* for the Coronation of the Virgin in the council hall. Debra Pincus adds that this fresco acted as a physical reminder of the doge, as he was in life, seated beneath the great '*Paradiso*' of the civic council chamber.²⁸⁰ It is now difficult to make out what type of figures inhabited the architectural framework above Doge Michele Morosini's tomb but it is certainly possible that it once depicted a Coronation of the Virgin.²⁸¹ If this was true, as I believe, the Coronation of the Virgin, by the end of the trecento in Venice had achieved a status as a part of the state's repertory of official imagery, suitable for the decoration of a ducal tomb and reflective of the Venetian association of itself

²⁷⁹ A large number of small scale Coronation of the Virgin images were produced in Venice in the last three decades of the trecento. Most of these were panel paintings like that of Lorenzo Veneziano, and Catarino and Donato and miniatures like the one for the manuscript entitled "Gli Statuti dell'Arte de Scudeleri de piera bocalari ecc." now at the Vienna national library (Cod 2591) However for these types of objects, it is difficult to separate a more general trend from a specific political meaning within the Venetian context.

²⁸⁰ Pincus, *Tombs*, 159-60.

²⁸¹ Although Pincus does not venture to make this claim Palluchinni in *La Pittura Veneziana*, 215., and D'Arcais, in *Il Trecento*, 77., have suggested that a Coronation of the Virgin may have been at the centre of the fresco. D'Arcais also cites the possibility of the same image for Doge Giovanni Dolfin's tomb as well.

with the idyllic post-apocalyptic paradise and predestined recipient of the coveted moniker - the 'chosen people.'

The growing significance of the Coronation of the Virgin to trecento Venice may be detected in the *Salone* of the Paduan Palazzo della Ragione. After the 1420 fire in the Palazzo many of the cosmological frescoes were damaged and a rebuilding project, funded by Venice, which by this time had established political control over the city, added a prominent Coronation of the Virgin to the new fresco decoration in the *Salone* along with an image of St. Mark enthroned and distributing alms.²⁸² Clearly, by this time the Coronation of the Virgin along with St. Mark had become emblematic of Venice and representative of its administrative presence in Padua, a development that must have had some of its roots in the Paradiso of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. By this time Venice's cultural appropriation of Padua was complete, a fact represented by the return of the familiar Paduan Coronation motif, once a popular signifier of the Carrara court, which by the fifteenth century had returned to Padua as a visual conveyor of Venetian dominion over it.

²⁸² C.G. Mor, C. Semenzato and L. Grossato Il Palazzo della Ragione di Padova, Venice, 1963: 47, 63.

POSTSCRIPT

The aim of this project has been to provide insight into the development of monumental Coronation of the Virgin images in trecento Venice, and the uses to which the motif was put in expressing a continuation of local civic mythology and the Venetian agenda of cultural appropriation. This has been established through comparisons with other monumental Coronation of the Virgin images in the urban centres of central Italy. In Rome, the Coronation of the Virgin had specific resonance for its Papal patrons as a means of establishing the position of the church not only as a mediator between Christ and his congregation but also as the partner and divinely authorized co-keeper of humanity's redeemed souls. In Tuscany and Umbria, monumental Coronations of the Virgin made use of this convenient image of divine leadership to express local communal concerns of civitàs. In this context the choice of location was of prime importance, since the image needed to be seen and adequately understood by a large group of people to be an effective conveyor of meaning. As such, cathedral facades and retrofacades provided the most prominent means of conveying messages to an entire city. In Venice, site specificity would also be of prime importance to monumental Coronation of the Virgin imagery. In the first years of the fourteenth century, Venice, under the ducal leadership of Doges Francesco and Andrea Dandolo, sought to embellish its civic mythology of predestined greatness by adding to it the dual patronage of Christ and the Virgin. This found expression in ducal tombs, written texts, and public art which disseminated the Annunciation feast day foundation legend, underscoring the connection between the future glory of Christ's reign and that of the republic itself. The natural extension of this new form of conflated religious and civic veneration was in the Coronation of the Virgin which expressed the predestined glory in Venice's past, present, and future. This intention was made clear with the addition of the Coronation of the Virgin to the decorative programme of the most important council room in the republic. The Coronation of the Virgin in this context also conveniently

provided a mirror for the ducal court which increasingly sought to emulate the chivalric culture of mainland princely courts. This agenda of cultural warfare was waged primarily on Carraran Padua which had developed an atmosphere of chivalric humanism in which the best of republican and aristocratic culture were fused. In its civic and princely palaces and in its churches, Padua had established a courtly culture that made extensive use of the Coronation of the Virgin motif to designate the tombs and chapels of local aristocrats and members of the Carraran circle. Venice attempted to co-opt these new Paduan developments in its civic commissions. The subsequent use of Coronations of the Virgin on ducal tombs underscored this cultural agenda and in certain contexts the motif eventually became emblematic of Venice itself, even outside of the city's precincts. A great deal of work still needs to be done on how far this message was intended to extend to smaller scale images of the Coronation of the Virgin produced in the city; did the location of the motif alone designate its meaning? Or could a portable diptych meant for personal devotion project the same civic message to its viewer? With this project I sought to develop a general understanding of how the Coronation of the Virgin functioned for Venetian civic identity, and to shift the paradigm of how Venice's relationship with Padua is understood. I believe, that in the trecento, Venice was not a passive imitator of mainland developments, but rather an aggressive colonizer of modern images and ideas.

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22 June 2001

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From: John Osborne, History in Art
Re: M.A. thesis of Angela Roberts

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Author


Angela Marisol Roberts

June 19, 2001