GENDER RELATIONS AND THE *NOLI ME TANGERE* SCENE IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

BY

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ABSTRACT

The biblical passage John 20 led to the development of the imagery entitled the *Noli Me Tangere* (do not touch me). This thesis traces the devolution of painted Italian *Noli Me Tangere* images from the fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century, focussing on the changing symbolic meaning of the subject. An examination of the paintings with regard to the portrayed relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene reveals a fundamental reorientation of the message of redemption; it changes from an overtly religious objective, concerned with resurrection, to a more physical and implied social intent. The *Noli Me Tangere* imagery shifts from a descriptive function in the fourteenth century, where it is often included as a part of large narrative cycles illustrating the life of Christ, to a discrete presentation of Christ and Mary Magdalene in the sixteenth century.

Shedding many of the visual props which originally contributed to the overall message of resurrection, the resulting placement of Christ and the Magdalene in a garden setting invites comparisons with images of the *Fall of Man*. By the sixteenth century, the imagery concentrates on the physical, psychological and symbolic relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene, with the title of the scene, *Noli*

Me Tangere playing a significant role in the visual interpretation of the scene.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In her study of visual imagery and Christianity, *Image as Insight*, Margaret Miles concluded that: ''Religion is first and foremost a way of managing this world....''[1] Indeed, religions seek to order the mind. The articulation of religious images, then, is closely related to the dominant attitude of the people who create and worship them. The messages delivered and received by religious art provide a rich and complex indication of the social values of a given society. Doctrinal representations include implicit political, didactic, as well as religious significance.

Clearly, the manipulation of religious images by producers and patrons of art reflects the relationship between power, language and image. Michel Foucault's study of the use of power challenged many traditional notions of power. He concluded that the goal of power remains the control of behaviour:

> Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress...If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because...it produces effects at the level of desire--and also at the level of knowledge.[2]

These notions of power apply to the imagery produced in the ambience of the Italian Medieval and Renaissance Church. A

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[1] Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight*, (Boston 1985), 1.

[2] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon, ed. and trans., (New York 1972), 59.

well-developed lexicon of religious art presented to and prescribed for the Renaissance viewer a spectrum of behaviour. The iconography of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene exemplifies the manipulation of visual messages within Christian imagery.

Presentations of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene derive from the New Testament passage in the Gospel of John, chapter 20, which chronicles Mary Magdalene's recognition of the newly risen Christ on Easter morning when he commands the Magdalene, ''*noli me tangere*'' (do not touch me). The scene shifts from a wholly didactic and religious intent in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to an emphasis upon the physical relationship between Christ and the Magdalene in the sixteenth century. Little in the sacred scripture suggests the sexual interpretations that become commonplace in portrayals of the pair in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italy.

This present study of *Noli Me Tangere* imagery has been limited to painted images created in Italy from the fourteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. However, in this study greatest emphasis and importance is placed on the transformed sixteenth-century examples, especially those which depart from convention. Symbolic linkages to the *Fall* and an exaggerated physical bond between Christ and the Magdalene, in addition to an inherent power structure manifested in the gestural composition of standing

man/kneeling woman coalesce in many of the sixteenth-century presentations.

Modifications in the iconography provide insights not only into society's understanding of the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene, but also into the nascent Renaissance psyche. A symbolic shift in the focus of the iconography from an expression of the redemption of mankind to the redemption of man documents a changing relationship between man and woman during the Renaissance. In short, the religious impetus validates a secular message.

Antecedents for the evolving *Noli Me Tangere* imagery derive from disparate sources. First, textual evidence indicates that popular theological writings and sermons during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries increasingly accentuated the human relationship between Christ and the Magdalene, thus creating a fertile environment for a more emotionally-charged interaction of the two subjects. The sensual coupling of Christ and the Magdalene had already found its way into popular legend during the late Medieval period. Second, the theme and, indeed, the title of the scene lend themselves to symbolic associations with a ''new Eden'' in which man at length overcomes the temptation of woman. Moreover, comparisons between Mary Magdalene and Eve found in Patristic treatises conjoin the two women as sexual temptresses.

Finally, the persuasive force of this imagery in which Christ commands Mary Magdalene, ''*noli me tangere*'', firmly places man in a position of power. Christ controls Mary Magdalene as man controls, or would like to control, woman. The elemental gesture of standing man and supplicating woman confirms this message. The imagery reinforces the gender roles that men, particularly late Renaissance patrician men, wished to assert within the social fabric of sixteenth-century Italy.

Modern scholarly study of the iconography of the *Noli Me Tangere* remains minimal. Still, references to the *Noli Me Tangere* scene can be found in many studies of Mary Magdalene because the Magdalene's relationship to Christ in large part defined her own saintly role. Their coupling constitutes an important aspect of her character. For example, Helen Meredith Garth's seminal 1950 text, *St. Mary Magdalen in Medieval Literature*, devoted an entire chapter to their portrayed relationship. Garth charted the development of the roots of their embellished friendship through evidence found in popular treatises and plays.[3] Victor Saxer's monumental study of Mary Magdalene from 1959, *Le Culte de Marie-Madeleine en Occident des origins à la fin du moyen-âge*, noted an important heraldic role played by the

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[3] Helen Meredith Garth, *St. Mary Magdalene in Medieval Literature*, (Baltimore 1950).

Magdalene during the Middle Ages. Her position as herald originated in Christ's announcement to her at the tomb recorded in John 20.[4] However, like Garth, Saxer did not directly address visual examples of the *Noli Me Tangere*.

In 1975 Marjorie Malvern introduced the notion that Mary Magdalene emerged as a popular Christian figure because of an ''illicit union'' between Judaism and Hellenism. In *Venus in Sackcloth, The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphosis* Malvern employed images of the *Noli Me Tangere* to argue that Mary Magdalene represents both a common whore and a spiritual Venus in Christianity.[5] Malvern also explored the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene through Medieval literary sources.

Sister Magdalen LaRow's 1982 PhD. dissertation examined the iconography of Mary Magdalene up to the fourteenth century. Utilizing a thirteenth century panel of Mary Magdalene by the 'Magdalen Master' as a point of reference, LaRow presented valuable background material on the development of the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery--one of the panel's eight vignettes. In this context, LaRow considered the *Noli Me Tangere* to be a representation of the rewards of contemplation.[6]

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[4] Victor Saxer, *Le Culte de Marie-Madeleine en Occident des origins à la fin du moyen-âge*, (Paris 1959).

[5] Marjorie Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth, The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphosis*, (Carbondale 1975), 169.

The 1986 exhibition *La Maddalena tra sacro e profano* (Florence, Palazzo Pitti, May 24 to September 17) displayed art of the Magdalene within its social and cultural context. The exhibition devoted one portion to images of the *Noli Me Tangere* and included in its catalogue a noteworthy essay on the subject by Marilena Mosco. Mosco emphasized the strong associations between the *Fall* and the *Noli Me Tangere*. She suggested that in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries Christ's depiction as a gardener symbolized his role as the new Adam, and Mary Magdalene, by her sensual pose, symbolized the new Eve in the garden of Eden.[7] I consider that this type of visual linkage between the *Fall* and the *Noli Me Tangere*, however, was utilized as early as the eleventh century.

The *Tra sacro e profano* exhibition gave rise to William Wallace's 1988 article in *Arte Cristiana* which addressed two sixteenth-century versions of the *Noli Me Tangere* included in the show. In addition to challenging the attribution of the two examples painted from Michelangelo's cartoon (one by Pontormo and one by Bronzino), Wallace discussed the unusual presentation of the subject. Michelangelo's radical version shows Christ reaching for the Magdalene rather than refusing

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[6] Magdalen LaRow, ''The Iconography of Mary Magdalen. The Evolution of a Western Tradition until 1300.'' unpublished PhD. New York University, 1982, 40.

[7] Marilena Mosco, ed. *La Maddalena tra sacro e profano*, (Florence 1986), 138.

her touch. Wallace contended that Christ in fact touches Mary Magdalene and cited Lucas van Leyden's 1519 etching of the same subject as a precedent; this part of his argument lacks substance, though.[8] Rather, the importance of Wallace's article lies in its recognition of Michelangelo's creative interpretation of the scene and Michelangelo's deviation from Italian convention. Like Mosco, Wallace left his line of argument unresolved and provided little substantive analysis of this unique subject.

This thesis will address the ramifications of the changing painted Italian *Noli Me Tangere* imagery created from the fourteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century. Chapter I examines the identity of Mary Magdalene in written primary and secondary sources in order to fully understand her role in the changing *Noli Me Tangere* scene. Chapter II employs selected visual examples of the scene from the fourteenth through the fifteenth century to illustrate the evolving significance of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene. Chapter III deals with the transformations which occur in sixteenth-century examples of the scene. Finally, in Chapter IV, by considering certain social developments in Renaissance Italy, a relationship between the religious imagery of the

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[8] William E. Wallace, ''Il *Noli Me Tangere* di Michelangelo: tra sacro e profano,'' *Arte Cristiana* 729 (Nov/Dec 1988), 448.

Noli Me Tangere and the social conditions of Renaissance Italy will be suggested.

CHAPTER I

Mary Magdalene and the *Noli Me Tangere* Scene--Written Sources

In order to understand fully the changing *Noli Me Tangere* imagery, a discussion of the identity of Mary Magdalene in literary and theological writings is essential. The remarkable malleability of her character through the Medieval and Renaissance periods impinges upon the essence of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene. As writers refashioned Mary Magdalene's personality and her relationship to Christ, discussions concerning the events of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene also underwent alterations.

No simple description does justice to Mary Magdalene. She remains a complex, passionate character. Her identity, over time, has taken on many personae: prostitute, hermit, anointer of Christ, sister of Martha and Lazarus, penitent, ''apostle to the apostles,'' and lover of Christ. The Magdalene's emotionalism, especially towards Christ, and her corresponding representation with long flowing hair, set her apart from other religious figures. She receives uneven treatment in the New Testament, which provides little more than the basic ingredients of her character; her personae developed largely during the Middle Ages through legend.

Mary Magdalene's role in the New Testament[1] remains problematical. First of all, the New Testament refers to few women by name, and the majority of those mentioned are called Mary. In addition to Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, the list includes: Mary wife of Cleophas; Mary mother of James the Less and Joseph (Mark 15, 40); Mary sister of Martha and Lazarus also known as Mary of Bethany (John 11, 1-44); Mary mother of John (Acts 12, 12); and Mary mentioned by St. Paul (Epistle to Romans 16, 6).

Deciding what biblical events involve Mary Magdalene only serves to complicate the issue. All four gospels present Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection; Matthew, Mark and Luke note other women accompanying her to the tomb (Matthew 28, 1; Mark 16, 9-12; Luke 24, 1-11). John describes the intimate encounter between Christ and Mary Magdalene from which the *Noli Me Tangere* scene derives (John 20, 1-18). Luke specifically names her as the disciple from whom Christ exorcises seven demons (Luke 8, 1-2), though none of the other evangelists mention this. The woman taken in adultery (John 8, 3-11), whom Christ forgives, is never directly named as Mary Magdalene; however, she is typically considered to be this woman.[2]

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[1] Unless otherwise noted all biblical references and passages are taken from: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., (New York 1977).

Further complications arise when deciding whether the woman at the crucifixion called Mary Magdalene (John 19, 25-27; Matthew 27, 56; Mark 15, 40) should be identified as the same woman who, in Bethany, anointed Christ with tears shed for her own sins. This anointing, shortly before Christ's death, recorded by Matthew, Mark and John (Matthew 26, 6-13; Mark 14, 3-9; John 12, 1-11), took place at the house of Simon the Leper (according to Matthew and Mark) where ''a woman'' (Matthew and Mark), identified by John as Mary, sister to Martha and Lazarus, anointed Christ's head (Matthew and Mark) or feet (John). Luke records a much earlier anointment incident. He notes that it occurred in Galilee at the house of a pharisee, called Simon (Luke 7, 36-50). Luke identifies the female anointer simply as ''a sinner''.

Both Luke and John (Luke 10, 38-40; John 11) explain that when Christ visited Bethany, Martha's sister Mary sat at Christ's feet enraptured by his teachings. Christ then praised her for listening to his message rather than helping her sister Martha with dinner. In John, Mary, named as the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointed Christ's feet and wiped them with her hair as she listened to him. All of these incidents involve a woman supplicating at the feet of

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[2] According to LaRow controversy surrounding Christ's friendship with a public sinner led to the suppression of this passage in several ancient manuscripts. LaRow, 6; also see note 7.53-8.11 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1298.

Christ, a pose similarly struck by Mary Magdalene at the crucifixion and before Christ the morning of the Resurrection in Christian art.

A literal reading of the New Testament challenged early Church Fathers to decide whether the woman who anointed Christ should be identified as one person or as three separate women: the sister of Martha and Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and the sinner. Early ecclesiastical writers tended to favour a composite character of one Mary. St. Augustine (354-430), for example, one of the Church's most influential theologians, assumed the sinful woman of Luke 7 to be Mary of Bethany, who may or may not be Mary Magdalene. In his treatise on St John, written about 416, Augustine stated:

> Now the sister of Lazarus (if perchance it was she who anointed the feet of the Lord...and wiped his feet with her hair) was raised from the dead more truly than her brother; she was freed from the weight of her bad habits. She was indeed a celebrated sinful woman. It is of her that has been said: 'Many sins have been forgiven her because she has loved much'.[3]

Opinion in the Early Church remained divided concerning the identity of Mary Magdalene. The Eastern Church followed John Chrysostom's (347-407) view; he preferred the delineation of at least two persons.[4] In the seventh

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[3] Augustine, *Patrologia Latina*, (Migne) (hereafter cited as *PL*) 38, col. 618. Cited in LaRow, 4.

century the Western Church, in contrast, adhered to the conviction of Pope Gregory I (590-604) who supported a conflation of the Marys. Gregory wrote, ''This woman, whom Luke calls a sinner, John names Mary. I believe that she is the same Mary of whom Mark says that seven demons had been cast out of.''[5] St. Ambrose, in an effort to reconcile the differing accounts of the Resurrection, suggested that there may have been several Mary Magdalenes.[6] Most medieval writers, though, including Odo of Cluny, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Peter Damian, adopted Gregory's reasoning.[7]

In the Middle Ages writers tended to combine all possible identities into the single person of Mary Magdalene.[8] By the end of the thirteenth century, many of the women named Mary in the New Testament, including the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7, 36-60), the woman taken in adultery (John 8, 3-11), and the woman of Samaria (John 4, 7-30) provided different aspects of Mary Magdalene's character. Even the identity of Mary of Egypt, a fourth-century saint and hermit, became confused with her, and thus

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[4] Greek Church fathers distinguished at least two, and at times three different women. This remains the view of the Eastern Church. LaRow, 6.

[5] Gregory I, Homily 33, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Dom David Hurst, trans., (Kalamazoo, Michigan 1990), 269.

[6] Garth, 26.

[7] LaRow, 9.

[8] Victor Saxer's seminal text thoroughly treated the Western cult of the Magdalene. See also: Garth, 18-59.

legendary accounts of Mary Magdalene's later life describe her as a hermit. According to Meyer Schapiro the story of Mary of Egypt was ''grafted on to the Magdalene's.''[9]

In addition to her colourful and eclectic personality, Mary Magdalene's real and imagined relationship with Christ has historically received generous treatment by writers. For example, all four New Testament gospels record Mary Magdalene's role in the Passion (Matthew 27, 55-61; Mark 15, 47-16; Luke 24, 10; John 19, 25; 20, 1-18).[10] The John 20 passage, from which the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography derives, explicitly documents that Christ presented Mary Magdalene with the news of his resurrection first and commanded her to announce it to his apostles.[11]

According to John 20, when the Magdalene arrived at Christ's tomb Easter morning to anoint his body she found the tomb empty except for two angels:

> 12 And she saw the two angels in white,
> sitting where the body of Jesus had
> lain, one at the head and one at the
> feet. 13 They said to her, ''Woman, why
> are you weeping?'' She said to them,
> ''Because they have taken away my Lord
> and I do not know where they have laid
> him.'' 14 Saying this she turned round
> and saw Jesus standing, but she did not

[9] Meyer Schapiro, ''The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross,'' *The Art Bulletin*, 26 (1944), 238.
[10] Marina Warner explicated the confusing and contradictory biblical versions of the Marys who attend the Crucifixion in her book: Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Appendix B: A Muddle of Marys, (London 1976), 344-345.
[11] For a discussion of Mary Magdalene's role as the herald of Christ's resurrection: See Saxer, 328-334.

know it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, ''Woman why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?'' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus said to her, ''Mary.'' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ''Rabbo'ni!'' (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, ''*Do not hold me*, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'' 18 Mary Magdalene went and said to the disciples, ''I have seen the Lord''; and she told them that he had said these things to her.[12]

The relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene presented in the New Testament engendered a proliferation of literary and visual accounts by writers and artists.

As early as the second century Gnostic circles concerned themselves with their intimacy.[13] Mary Magdalene

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[12] The Vulgate reads: 12 et vidit duos angelos in albis, sedentes, unum ad caput, et unum ad pedes, ubi positum fuerat corpus Iesu. 13 Dicunt ei illi: Mulier, quid ploras? Dicit eis: Quia tulerunt Dominum meum: et nescio ubi posuerunt eum. 14 Haec cum dixisset, conversa est retrorsum, et vidit Iesum stantem. et non sciebat quia Iesus est. 15 Dicit ei Iesus: Mulier, quid ploras? quem quaeris? Illa existimans quia hortulanus esset, dicit ei: Domine, si tu sustulisti eum, dicito mihi ubi posuisti eum; et ego eum tollam. 16 Dicit ei Iesus: Maria. Conversa illa, dicit ei: Rabboni (quod dicitur Magister). 17 Dicit ei Iesus: Noli me tangere, nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum: vade autem ad fratres meos, et dic eis: Ascendo ad Patrem meum, et Patrem vestrum, Deum meum, et Deum vestrum. 18 Venit Maria Magdalene annuntians discipulis: Quia vidi Dominum, et haec dixit mihi. *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam clementinam*, A. Colunga, and L. Turado, ed., (Madrid 1965).

[13] Gnosticism comes from the Greek 'gnosis' or knowledge and describes this second century philosophy which mixed elements of Jewish, pagan and Christian thought. What distinguished Gnostics, in the eyes of their enemies, was

played a more prominent role in the Gnostic Gospels than in the New Testament The former presented a more detailed relationship between Christ and the Magdalene. Because the Gnostics believed that the flesh need neither be feared nor loved they willingly accepted physical intimacy between Christ and Mary Magdalene.[14] The Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* described Mary Magdalene as ''the one who was called His companion.''[15] The Gnostics embraced Mary Magdalene and gave her a separate gospel, the *Gospel of Mary*. In it, the apostle Peter confided to her, ''We know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women.''[16]

Like more orthodox Christians, the Gnostics ascribed importance to the notion that Christ chose the Magdalene to announce his resurrection to the apostles. The *Pistis Sophia*, a third-century apocryphal gospel, one of the Gnostic's most important texts, recorded a dialogue between Christ, his apostles, and Mary Magdalene.[17] The Magdalene

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their use of myth as a chosen vehicle of religious instruction. The Gnostics considered themselves possessors of'Gnosis,' true knowledge: they felt they knew more than other Christians about the teachings that Jesus had first intimated to the innermost circle of his disciples. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society. Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York 1988), 105.

[14] Brown, 118.

[15] *The Gospel of Philip*, (II,3) *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, James M. Robinson, ed., (San Francisco 1988), 145.

[16] *The Gospel of Mary*, (BG 8502,1) *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 525.

dominated the questioning of Christ to facilitate the dissemination of his teachings. She was one of the few to share Christ's *gnosis* or privileged knowledge. LaRow argued that the Gnostics' predilection for Mary Magdalene may have discouraged early orthodox writers and preachers from discussing her character more fully.[18]

In a scenario in *The Gospel of Mary* and in *The Gospel of Thomas* tensions concerning Mary's position vis-a-vis Christ and, more generally, the role of women are revealed. *Thomas* related:

> Simon Peter said to them, ''Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.'' Jesus said, ''I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.''[19]

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[17] George Horner, trans., *Pistis Sophia*, (London 1924), 58-59. Marjorie Malvern saw the *Pistis Sophia* as an attempt to simultaneously reinstate and dematerialize the goddess of Wisdom, Ishtar, or Athene dethroned by patriarchal monotheism. Malvern, 42.

[18] LaRow noted that this thesis was developed by R.L. Bruckberger. See: LaRow, 6.

[19] *The Gospel of Thomas*, (114) *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 138. A similar passage regarding Simon Peter's reluctance to allow the woman who sinned into his home can be found in all four gospels (Luke 7, 36-50; Matt. 26, 6-13; Mark 14, 3-9; and John 12, 1-8), though in the biblical stories the woman is nameless. Additionally, the gnostic belief that women must resemble men in spirit to enter heaven is left out of gospel passages. Additionally, Pope Gregory I focussed on the subject of the sinful woman in one of his homilies. He described the sinful woman in terms of her complete emotional devotion to Christ. And he embellished her role in the bible to provide a context for Christ's relationship with her. See: Gregory I, ''Homily III The Sinful Woman,''

Analyses of the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene by Christian theologians tended to center on the issue of correctly interpreting John 20 and the meaning of Christ's warning to Mary Magdalene, not to touch him (''*noli me tangere*''). For example, John Chrysostom, known for his treatise *On Virginity* in which he preached that marriage served to control sexual drives and ''To bring down the high temperature'' of women's sexual needs, penned a commentary on John 20.[20] Chrysostom commenced Homily LXXXVI on John 20 with the caveat, ''Full of feeling somehow is the female sex, and more inclined to pity...hers was a feeble nature.''[21] He explained that Christ's appearance in the guise of a gardener was a form Christ took so as not to terrify Mary Magdalene upon their meeting. Chrysostom wrote that this disguise and, indeed, the entire scene from the inquiring angels onward, were necessary, ''to lead one of so lowly a mind to higher matters, not all at once, but gently.''[22]

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in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., Second Series, Vol.xiii (Grand Rapids 1956), 340.

[20] John Chrysostom, *On Virginity*, 19, 1-2. Cited in Brown, 308.

[21] John Chrysostom. *Homily LXXXVI on the Gospel of St. John XX*. English translation in *Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 14. P. Schaff, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1979), 323.

[22] John Chrysostom, Homily on St. John, 323.

Having thus explained the character of Mary Magdalene, and women in general, Chrysostom proceeded to the issue at hand: what did Christ mean by his command, ''*noli me tangere*,'' to the Magdalene? ''Methinks that she wished still to converse with Him as before, and that in her joy she perceived nothing great in Him, although He had become far more in the Flesh.''[23] Clearly, Chrysostom perceived the pre-resurrection relationship between Christ and Magdalene to have been very familiar and casual. Chrysostom concluded that Christ's warning signalled an effort to explain that ''she should give more reverent heed to Him.''[24]

Augustine commented on the meaning of the words of Christ to Mary Magdalene in John 20 several times. He rejected the notion that the words, ''*noli me tangere*,'' expressed Christ's aversion for contact with woman. Instead, he believed that Christ sought a spiritual bond rather than the physical relationship Mary Magdalene desired. Inasmuch as any bodily contact between the Magdalene and Christ would have been purified by the force of his divinity, Augustine utilized Christ's warning to illustrate his own belief that spiritual union by faith

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[23] John Chrysostom, Homily on St. John, 324.

[24] John Chrysostom, Homily on St. John, 324.

eclipsed the importance of any physical contact between man and woman.[25]

Unlike Chrysostom who did not object to a married couple having sexual intercourse, Augustine, by contrast, argued that it served only one purpose, as a guilt-ridden reminder of original sin.[26] Augustine's notion of the *concupiscentia carnis* and his understanding that concupiscence remained a permanent symptom of Adam's fall elucidated the reasoning behind his interpretation of the ''*noli me tangere*'' command.

Augustine's later writings provided yet another interpretation of John 20. He metaphorically compared the Magdalene with the Church of the Gentiles, who would come to the faith only after Christ's Ascension, and who, therefore, could not touch Christ before his reunion with God.[27] Moreover, Augustine considered the John 20 event significant by stressing the literal sense of Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb as 'ocular proof' of the Resurrection.[28]

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[25] Augustine, Tract. John in Parth II, 2 *PL* 35, 1998. Sermon 244,2 *PL* 38, 1148; 242,2 *PL* 36, 1152; 246,4 col. 1155. cf. *De Trinitate* IV, 3,6. cc.50 p.168. Cited in Kari Elisabeth Børrensen, *Subordination and Equivalence. The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas*, Charles Talbot, trans. (Washington, D.C. 1981), 78.

[26] Brown, 422.

[27] Augustine, Tract on John 121,3, in *Iohannis Evangelium Tractus* cc. 36, 1954 p.666, 31. Cited in Borrensen, 78.

[28] Augustine, *Commentary on John*, *PL* 35, 1955-1959. Cited in LaRow, 32.

Pope Gregory I wrote a homily on the gospel passage of John 20. Homily 25 explains his interpretation of the holy writ. Gregory described Mary Magdalene thus: ''She burned with desire for him who she believed had been taken away.''[29] He explained that Mary Magdalene did not recognize Christ because ''Her love revealed Him to her, and her doubt prevented her from knowing Him.''[30] 'Do not touch me,' Gregory interpreted as evidence that Mary wished to touch his feet, not that Christ refused the touch of women *per se* after his resurrection.[31]

In the thirteenth century St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) also interpreted Christ's meaning in the command, ''*noli me tangere.*'' In his *Scripta super libros sententiarum* Aquinas utilized John 20 to reassert tautologically a proscription against women giving public witness. According to Aquinas, if the Magdalene had touched Christ she necessarily would have become a public witness preaching her news, which would have violated the proscription. As evidence for this reasoning Aquinas explained that, unlike Mary Magdalene, the apostle Thomas was allowed to touch Christ's wounds because,

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[29] Gregory I, Homily 25, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 188.

[30] Gregory I, Homily 25, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 192.

[31] He cited Matthew 28, 9 as evidence that Christ allowed two women to touch his feet. Gregory I, Homily 25, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 193.

as a man, Thomas could become a witness to the people, and no suspicion of doubt would hamper his preaching.[32]

Later, Aquinas analyzed the phrase ''*noli me tangere*'' with reference to comments by Augustine Here Aquinas concurred with Augustine's interpretation that Christ forbade Mary Magdalene to touch him because he believed faith should be wholly spiritual, purified from all human attachment.[33] Unlike Chrysostom, neither Aquinas nor Augustine distinguished Christ's non-physical relationship with the Magdalene in John 20 as being different from Christ's pre-resurrection behaviour.

In addition to analyzing the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene, patristic writers created a symbolic role for the Magdalene in the resurrection narrative. In so doing they often confirmed woman's inferior position by paralleling Eve and Mary Magdalene. The patristic writings not only accentuated the message of redemption evoked in the narrative, but they also successfully linked Eve's concupiscence with Mary Magdalene, and implied that woman remained a lustful and corrupting force.

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[32] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Scripta super libros Sententiarum*, III, d.21,2,4, sol.3, ad.3. Cited in Børrensen, 246.

[33] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Scripta super libros Sententiarum*, III, 55,6, ad. 3 cf. Ev. John 20, lect.3. Cited in Børrensen, 246.

Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan (339-397), wrote of congruencies between Mary Magdalene and Eve, which Victor Saxer argued became a classic juxtaposition between Eve, the female who caused the spiritual death of humanity, and Mary Magdalene, the female who announced Christ's redemption of humanity.[34] Augustine also compared Eve and Magdalene. In his opinion, the woman who ''pronounced death,'' and the woman who announced Christ's triumph over death both well represented the female sex.[35] The fact that the Magdalene came to the tomb first, even before the apostles, recalls Eve's initiative in the fall. Augustine explained that Mary Magdalene found Christ first because, belonging to the weaker sex, she sought more ardently, having more ''affectivity to the stronger sex.''[36]

Gregory I conceived that Mary Magdalene was Eve before Christ, in a state of grace.[37] ''It is as if the Lord was telling the human race, not by words but by actions, 'Receive the draught of life from the hand of the one who offered you the drink of death.'''[38] Later Odo, Abbot of Cluny (c.879-942) reasserted the notion of Mary Magdalene as

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[34] Saxer, 342.

[35] Børrensen, 77

[36] Børrensen, 77.

[37] Gregory I, Homily 25, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 195.

[38] Gregory I, Homily 25, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 195.

the counterpart of Eve. By announcing the resurrection of Christ, Mary Magdalene redeemed the shame of the female sex caused by Eve.[39]

The patristic writings of Augustine and Chrysostom, as well as later writers such as Aquinas strongly influenced Medieval homilies, which commented on the text of the Gospel and Epistle in an unstructured manner. Popular Renaissance commentators were also dependent on patristic texts.[40] The overtly misogynist viewpoint of many of the early Church Fathers also found its way into the commentaries of Renaissance theologians. As in earlier tracts, notions of woman as concupiscent and feeble surface in descriptions of Mary Magdalene in Renaissance commentaries on John 20.[41]

Vernacular texts contain an abundance of accounts concerning Mary Magdalene. For example, numerous hymns were written to the Magdalene, including one by Petrarch, who was

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[39] Saxer, 343.

[40] Barry Collett noted that sermons used between 1480-1520 by Benedictine monks at the Paduan Abbey of Santa Giustina relied heavily on Pauline theology and patristic commentaries, especially those of John Chrysostom. Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation. The Congregation of Padua*, (Oxford 1985), 38. Additionally Rev. L. Rohr noted that the Franciscan monk, St. Anthony of Padua drew on Augustine, Gregory I and St. Bernard of Clairvaux for his popular sermons. Rev. Louis F. Rohr, *The Use of Sacred Scripture in the Sermons of St. Anthony of Padua*, (Washington, D.C. 1948).

[41] From the thirteenth to at least the end of the fifteenth century the continuity of content in mainstream preaching is noteworthy. D.L. d'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*, (Oxford 1985), 255.

devoted to her, to demonstrate her popularity in the late Middle Ages. Medieval writers produced a wealth of treatises, sermons, poems and plays about Mary Magdalene [42] In England, interest in the Magdalene can be charted in the large quantity of music-dramas written about her. Numerous plays, such as the *Mystery of Mary Magdalene* in which Mary Magdalene plays a prominent role, were performed by various guilds of different towns.[43] The Digby Mysteries, originating in the last half of the fifteenth century, contain several plays which feature the Magdalene, notably *Mary Magdalen*, a play which includes fifty-one scenes.[44]

In France, Spain, and Germany literature and plays from the late Middle Ages confirm her popularity in these countries as well.[45] Increasingly, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century Mary Magdalene's part in the plays expanded. And with the enhancement of her role in Resurrection and Passion plays came an attempt to isolate the Magdalene as the woman closest to Christ.[46]

In the Middle Ages commentators often embellished Christ and Mary Magdalene's limited biblical interaction.

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[42] See Garth's thorough study of Mary Magdalene in medieval literature.

[43] Garth, 13.

[44] Garth, 13.

[45] Garth, 14-15.

[46] Malvern, 101.

The English Digby Mystery Play *Christ's Resurrection* described a much more intimate account of Magdalene's greeting to Christ than the simple and platonic ''Rabboni'' of the gospel account. Mary Magdalene answers:

'' O myn harte! wher hast thou bee?
Com hom agayn, & leve with mee!''[47]

In addition to this and other equally descriptive passages in English literature, noteworthy descriptions of Mary Magdalene's relationship to Christ survive from Italy.

Though the Dominicans, who emphasized her penitent and contemplative aspects, proclaimed Mary Magdalene the patroness of their Order in 1295, Dominican treatises on Christ and the Magdalene remain obscure.[48] However, the Franciscans helped popularize the cult of Mary Magdalene with their plethora of writings about her. Mary Magdalene's role in the Resurrection found renewed interest among the Franciscans because devotion to the Passion and death of Christ served as a central element of their doctrine.

The popular *Meditations on the Life of Christ* written by a thirteenth-century Franciscan monk in Tuscany enjoyed wide circulation as Friars translated and disseminated the text.[49] Stressing the humanity of Christ, the author

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[47] Garth, 69.

[48] LaRow noted that no study has been done of the early writings of the Dominican Order. LaRow, 145.

included several passages concerning Mary Magdalene and he argued that the former prostitute's conversion to Christianity resulted from her love of Christ:

> The Magdalene, who perhaps had heard Him preach a few times and loved Him ardently, although she had not yet revealed it...was touched to the heart with pain at her sins and inflamed by the fire of her love for Him.[50]

In an embellished account of John 20 the *Meditations* described an emotional meeting between Christ and Mary Magdalene. After Christ's warning, ''*noli me tangere*'' the author added:

> Although it seemed at first that the Lord held back from her, I can hardly believe that she did not touch Him familiarly before He departed, kissing His feet and His hands.[51]

Still, the author concluded that Mary Magdalene did obey his command. In order to clarify Christ's intent for his readers, the monk explained that Christ spoke the words ''*noli me tangere*'' firmly though not in an obstinate manner

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[49] LaRow found that the Franciscan Friars circulated the *Meditations* in the form of hundreds of manuscripts, 200 of which still exist. LaRow, 169.

[50] The *Meditations* were, until the eighteenth century, incorrectly attributed to Bonaventura and have often continued to be included in his writings under the name ''Pseudo''. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, trans., *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, (Paris 1977), 170.

[51] *Meditations*, 363.

''for the most benign Lord is not pertinacious or harsh, especially not to those who love Him.''[52]

The *Golden Legend*, written in the late thirteenth century by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Genoa, assembled legends of saints into an accessible book providing the first complete, albeit embellished, account of what helped to formulate the Renaissance's notion of Mary Magdalene.[53] The *Golden Legend* concentrated wholly on the mythic events in the Magdalene's life in Provence after the Ascension of Christ and included little of the kind of emotional commentary in the *Meditations* concerning John 20. Nevertheless, in the widely read *Golden Legend* Jacobus assumed a physical bond between Christ and Mary Magdalene. Jacobus chronicled, ''there was no grace that He refused her, nor any mark of affection that He withheld from her.''[54] He related that Christ, ''drove seven devils out of her, admitted her to His friendship, condescended to dwell in her house, and was pleased to defend her whenever

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[52] *Meditations*, 363.

[53] Dictated by popular piety, the *Golden Legend* account of Mary Magdalene's life focuses on events which occurred after the Ascension of Christ. See: Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, eds. and trans., *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*, (New York 1969) 355-363.

[54] Jacobus de Voragine, 356.

occasion arose.''[55] The risen Christ appeared to her first, Jacobus noted, making her an ''apostle to the apostles''.

The opening paragraph of his ''Legend of Mary Magdalene'' introduced symbolic etymologies of her name, a device used throughout the text. In the case of the Magdalene, the author suggested that the name Magdalene meant ''*manens rea*, remaining in guilt...or unconquered, or magnificent, and by these we understand what she was before her conversion, in her conversion, and after conversion.''[56] In another *Golden Legend* account, ''The Resurrection of our Lord,'' Jacobus contended that Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene in order to show that he died for sinners.[57]

An unknown fourteenth-century Italian writer, thought also to be a Franciscan monk, wrote his own fictitious *Life of Saint Mary Magdalene*.[58] Unlike the *Golden Legend* account, he dedicated this text entirely to the life of Mary Magdalene. The author assumed that Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Lazarus lived together as a family in one of two castles of which the Magdalene was mistress in Bethany. His account centered on the events beginning with the Magdalene's conversion until shortly before Christ's Resurrection. He

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[55] Jacobus de Voragine, 356.

[56] Jacobus de Voragine, 355.

[57] Jabobus de Voragine, 221.

[58] Valentina Hawtrey, trans., *The Life of Saint Mary Magdalen*, (London 1944), vii.

described her thus. ''And as the Magdalen was beautiful, so she was of great intellect, though we must admit she was marred by evil desires.''[59] To further complicate her identity, the author, like St. Jerome, considered Mary Magdalene to have been the wife of St. John the Evangelist, who left her to follow Christ.[60] Throughout the text, filled with emotional descriptions of Mary Magdalene's grief at Christ's suffering, Mary Magdalene drew ever nearer to Christ. At the Crucifixion, the writer explained:

> And the Magdalen arose, and leaning against the Cross she stretched up her arms to try and touch those holy feet at which she had received such mercy. I think that not being able to reach them, she said: 'Alas! my Lord! why did I not touch Thee more often when I could? Ah, unhappy that I am, that so late did I perceive my need!''[61]

The author related, in minute detail, the events leading up to Mary Magdalene's return to the tomb on Easter morning. He described her distraught state the night before her visit to the tomb and wrote, for the second time in the book, that Mary Magdalene inflicted pain on her own body:

> And thus she took vengeance on her body inasmuch as she was able, and that which she did seemed as nothing compared with her greater longing to suffer pain when she thought of her Master's suffering.[62]

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[59] Hawtrey, 1.

[60] In the *Golden Legend* account Jacobus recorded that ''some'' say that the Magdalene was married to St. John the Evangelist. Jacobus de Voragine, 87-88.

[61] Hawtrey, 200.

[62] Hawtrey, 278.

However, rather than include an account of events which occurred Easter morning, the author ended the narrative at this point and imaginatively added a meditation on how he believed Christ might have appeared to the Virgin Mary.

Another Franciscan who commented on the relationship of Christ and Mary Magdalene was Saint Bernardino. Bernardino of Siena, whose sermons typically dealt with practical rather than dogmatic issues, was one of the most influential popular preachers of fifteenth-century Italy. For example, he won the hearts of the Venetians with his sermons on trade, a subject close to their hearts. As a result, Doge Tommaso Mocenigo granted Bernardino any wish, fulfilling the friar's desires for gifts to the plague-stricken of Venice.[63]

His commentaries on the subject of the Passion and Redemption of Christ provide evidence of his perceived relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. In one sermon that expands the recorded scene in John 20, Bernardino freely questioned both Christ and Mary Magdalene's behaviour at the sepulchre. He eloquently spoke of Mary Magdalene's decision to return to the sepulchre alone Easter morning and examined Mary Magdalene's conduct:

> Oh Mary, what was the hope, what was the intent and courage that sufficed to detain you thus alone at the grave?...He

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[63] Iris Origo, *The World of San Bernardino*, (London 1964), 32.

> whom you seek seems, indeed, to pay no heed to your distress, not to see your tears nor to mind them. You call, and He hearkens not;... You follow after Him and He flies at your approach Alas! what is the matter? *Alas! what is the cause of so great a change?*[64]

Bernardino clearly implied that their pre-resurrection relationship was an intimate one. The friar continued, listing the various ways in which Christ formerly cherished Mary Magdalene. He concluded, ''Since Jesus holds aloof from you, perchance His love for you is no more.''[65] Then Bernardino queried Christ, reminding him how he had formerly loved the Magdalene:

> Thine eyes grew moist at the sight of her tears, so that in loving Thee much she did but return Thy love....What wound has she inflicted on Thy tender soul, in order to merit this *withdrawal* on Thy part?[66]

When Bernardino described the moment of Christ's appearance in the guise of a gardener, from John 20, the preacher exclaimed:

> Jesus, Thou it was who, by the irresistible power of Thy work, as well as by Thy beauty of soul, didst *lovingly lead this woman towards Thee.*''[67]

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[64] Italics mine. S. Bernardino. *opera sancti Bernardini senensis*, vol.I, p. 307ff. Re-printed in Paul Thureau-Dangin, *The Life of S. Bernardino of Siena*, G.von Hugel, trans. (London 1911), 163-164.

[65] S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 164.

[66] Italics mine. S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 164.

[67] Italics mine. S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 165-66.

He continued passionately to articulate for his audience the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene, chiding Christ for his conduct:

> By Thy works and actions Thou didst set her heart aglow with love,...and has not shunned the kisses of her lips. Thou hast expelled all perishable love from her heart, in order that she might walk with Thee in the way of peace. And now Thou dost actually inquire whom she is seeking!''[68]

Amazed by Mary Magdalene's comment to Christ, whom she mistook for the gardener, Bernardino declared:

> Oh great grief, oh wonderful love!... She is so devoured by love that her dimmed eyes behold without recognition...*Though a woman*, you resort to no restrictions, you place no limit to the extent of your devotion, you speak without fear and promise without hesitation...Love, indeed, considers itself master of the impossible....[69]

Imploring Christ not to punish the Magdalene so, Bernardino wondered how Christ could remain silent before a woman in such grievous pain. Then, as a climax to his oration, Bernardino revealed to his audience Christ's true feelings for the Magdalene:

> 'Mary.'...In this utterance of her name, moreover, she tasted of the divine goodness and thus recognized her lord in Him who so addressed her....This is truth, truth unclouded by doubt, for Thou lovest them that love Thee, nor

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[68] S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 166.

[69] Italics mine. S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 167-68.

> dost Thou ever abandon such as hope in Thee.[70]

The explicitness of Bernardino's comments articulated popular religious views which emphasized the human, sexual relationship between Christ and the Magdalene.

The role ascribed to Mary Magdalene by the commentators of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries reveals a departure from the authoritative patristic views which developed an inferior and negative role for her. The Franciscans, especially, developed the Magdalene's position, making her a positive and important figure. As part of a general trend towards increased devotion to female saints, many twelfth and thirteenth-century churches were dedicated to Mary Magdalene, patron of repentant sinners and hermits.[71] Her love for Christ was venerated, not suppressed. The noted Franciscan writers adopted a familiar and loving tone when describing the Magdalene and her ties to Christ.

This heightened emotionalism may, indeed, have been part of a later Medieval devotional tradition characterized by an increasing preference for analogies taken from human relationships, and a more accepting reaction to all natural things, including the physical human body stressed by the

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[70] S. Bernardino, in Thureau-Dangin, 169.

[71] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus As Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley 1982), 137.

Franciscans.[72] Two points underlay the affective piety of the late Middle Ages, according to Caroline Bynum: first, humankind's creation in the image of God, and second, the humanity of Christ as a guarantee that we are joined with divinity.[73]

During the sixteenth century, Mary Magdalene as the penitent prostitute became associated with philanthropic concerns. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century a number of convents opened in Florence, Rome and other Italian cities to house and aid converted prostitutes. These convents were dedicated to their patron saint Mary Magdalene, a natural visual symbol already associated with prostitutes [74] Known as the Convertites, the convents wielded substantial power and the figure of Mary Magdalene found a wider audience and greater reception.

A prose account of the Life of Christ by the Venetian writer Pietro Aretino confirms the continued literary interest in her character and relationship to Christ in the sixteenth century. ''*L'Umanita Del Figliuol Di Dio*,'' written in 1533-34 contains numerous references to Mary

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[72] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 130-131.

[73] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 130.

[74] Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*, (Oxford 1971), 372-422. Venetian prostitutes claimed the attention of many private philanthropies in the years 1520-40. The establishment of the nunnery of the Convertite in Venice in 1530 exemplifies this notion.

Magdalene. He included an account of her conversion, in addition to the Raising of Lazarus, her role in the Crucifixion and in the Deposition.[75] Most notably, Aretino described the *Noli Me Tangere* scene. He recorded that a distraught Magdalene returned to the empty tomb ''and laments so strongly, so lovingly, that she could have moved the grass and plants to tears....''[76] For the most part, however, his literary description resisted the emotionalism of early popular treatises although it did stress the close friendship between the two subjects.

Notably, modifications in the character of Mary Magdalene arose as interest in her personality and relationship to Christ increased through the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Over time, writers refashioned Mary Magdalene's personality to suit the changing interests of their audience. A similar transformation occurred in visual imagery portraying the Magdalene. For example, fourteenth and fifteenth-century visual *Noli Me Tangere* examples appear somewhat restrained when compared to literary and popular accounts from the same time period. However, sixteenth-century visual *Noli Me Tangere* images reveal an increased

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[75] Pietro Aretino, *Prose Sacre*, (Lanciano 1914).

[76] ...faceva un lamento si duro e si tenero, che avria potuto movere a piangere le erbe e le piante... Aretino, 96.

experimentation and manipulation of the iconographic elements.

CHAPTER II

Mary Magdalene and Early *Noli Me Tangere* Examples

The iconography of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene developed gradually during the Late Middle Ages, and although similar imagery served for both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the cyclical orientation of the scene shifted. In the fourteenth century the scene typically functioned as an important event in Christ's life, portraying the Resurrection; hence it frequently appeared as one of several components in altarpieces and fresco cycles featuring episodes from the Life and/or Passion of Christ.

In contrast, fifteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* images increasingly focused on Mary Magdalene as the central figure. Narrative cycles depicting the Life of Mary Magdalene became much more common in the fifteenth century; in this context the *Noli Me Tangere* scene sanctioned the Magdalene's important role as Christ's chosen herald. This change did not occur in a vacuum but corresponded to the growing popularity of Mary Magdalene.

In addition to the altered focus of the subject, a symbolic element was introduced early to the iconography. References to the *Fall* began to surface in the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery. This sort of reference had, for centuries, been a component of the iconography, but was not stressed

except in very early examples. In the eleventh century, a clear example of the comparative utilization of the *Fall* and the *Noli Me Tangere* scene appeared in *Exultet* rolls from Southern Italy. A page from one set of rolls, which included large illustrations to be viewed by the congregation while the preacher read the text, contains an illustration of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene between images of the *Descent into Hell* and the *Fall*.[1] Victor Haines interpreted this juxtaposition as evidence of the medieval notion of the *felix culpa*, or the fortunate fall.[2] References to the concept of the *felix culpa* became outmoded, according to Haines, with the emergence of the Renaissance and its changing world view.[3] However, visual links between the *Noli Me Tangere* scene and the *Fall* continued through the sixteenth century.

Associations with the *Fall* and the *Noli Me Tangere* scene were more typically cultivated by subtle references. From the late fourteenth century on, emphasis on the *Noli Me Tangere* scene's paradisic garden setting facilitated this allusion. Often a tree provided symbolic links to the tree of knowledge. Further, the increased instances of the portrayal of Christ as the gardener in the fifteenth century

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[1] Victor Y. Haines, "The Iconography of the *felix culpa*," *Florilegium*, I (1979), 169.

[2] Haines, 169,

[3] Haines, 177.

revealed an even more fundamental relationship to the *Fall*--Christ became the second or new Adam.

George Williams linked the notion of Christ as the second Adam and the symbolic return to Paradise to the writings of Ambrose of Milan in the late fourth century.[4] Christ's return to Paradise (the garden of Gethsemane) confirmed Ambrose's belief that in order for mankind to be saved he must be returned to his ''original Garden state of grace ''[5] The garden setting, in addition to Christ's guise as the gardener and Christ's verbal command to the beseeching Magdalene, reinforced the Paradise iconography in the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery. As a result, Christ appeared as the new Adam commanding Mary Magdalene (by association the new Eve) not to touch him. Christ, then, achieved for man what Adam found elusive--controlling woman.

Mary Magdalene served as the prototypical repentant sinner, the patron saint of all sinners. Like Eve, her visual image was continually shaped by her sinfulness and linked to seduction. Indeed, Mary Magdalene's physical attributes reveal a less than saintly presentation. As the new Eve, Mary Magdalene evoked a similarly disparaging, lustful view of woman. Writers during the Medieval and Renaissance periods tended to contrast Eve and Mary

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[4] George H. Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought*, (New York 1962), 44.

[5] Williams, 44.

Magdalene rather than equate them--Eve pronouncing death for mankind and Mary Magdalene announcing redemption. However, it was the Virgin Mary who served as the antithesis of Eve, not Mary Magdalene.[6] Like Eve, Mary Magdalene represented a dualistic extreme with regard to the Virgin Mother. Both chaste and mother, the Virgin Mary remains the paragon woman in the eyes of Christian doctrine. Conversely, neither virgin nor mother, Mary Magdalene serves as a flawed model. Warner concluded that Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary together typify Christian attitudes on sex and of women: ''Both female figures are perceived in sexual terms: Mary as a virgin and Mary Magdalene as a whore--until her repentance.''[7] Thus, visual allusions to Eve in the portrayal of Mary Magdalene provide an unmistakable reminder of woman's negative place in the Christian Church and Christian society.

Traditional emphasis on Mary Magdalene's hair in the visual arts exemplifies a dissonance between biblical accounts of Christ's forgiveness of her sins and her continually negative presentation in the arts.[8] Saxer

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[6] See: Warner, 50-78. Her chapter ''Second Eve'' discusses the evolution of mariology and its antithesis to the notions of Eve.

[7] Warner, 225.

[8] Margaret Miles noted a similar discord between the verbal and visual messages associated with the Virgin Mary and actual women. While the Virgin Mary was considered to be a role model for women, the boundaries of her conduct were

contended that while Mary Magdalene is known by her religious attribute of the anointment jar, her long, unkempt hair is an equally defining feature, especially in Renaissance art.[9] With her long hair she dried Christ's feet, and in legendary stories of her later years as a hermit she was clothed only by her hair. Gregory I concluded that the Magdalene's hair, ''superfluous to the body'' symbolized ''overflowing earthly possessions.''[10] Whereas other women seldom wore their hair loose or uncovered in Late Medieval and Renaissance art, Mary Magdalene was rarely shown with her hair tied up. To that end, in the New Testament St. Paul explained that a woman who worships with her head uncovered dishonours her husband and Christ.[11]

The colour of the Magdalene's hair, typically red during the Renaissance, was also a negative attribute.[12] Michel Pastoureau's study *Couleurs, Images, Symboles* noted

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unreachable. Margaret Miles, ''The Virgin's One Bare Breast. Female Nudity and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture,'' in *The Female Body in Western Culture. Contemporary Perspectives*, Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed., (Cambridge 1986), 205. See also: Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex.*

[9] Saxer, 191.

[10] Gregory I, Homily 33, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, 273.

[11] 1 Corinthians 11, 2-16.

[12] In the Middle Ages Mary Magdalene is most often shown with golden hair, rather than the red locks common to the Renaissance. Garth, 62.

the unfavourable connotations of red hair during the Medieval and Renaissance periods.[13] He explained that not only was Judas portrayed as a redhead, but red hair was also associated with prostitutes and felons in those cultures.[14] By continually emphasizing her long, red hair, Mary Magdalene's former life as a prostitute remained a prominent aspect of her character.

The Magdalene's desire for physical touch, most obviously portrayed in images of the *Noli Me Tangere*, records yet another of her discrediting features. Presented as an emotionally distraught woman rather than a holy disciple, Mary Magdalene served as a lustful reminder of woman's sin. In *Noli Me Tangere* scenes her attempts to touch Christ are frustrated, however, by his command.

While the Magdalene represented the embodiment of Augustine's *concupiscentia carnis*, Christ's role in the *Noli Me Tangere* scene constituted one of the most significant of Christian occasions. The event reveals, through the interaction of Mary Magdalene and Christ, Christ's *raison d'etre*. First, by its faithful depiction of the story, it

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[13] Pastoureau cautioned that problems arise when one tries to assign specific traits to specific colours. All colours could connotate good or bad depending on the application. For example a 'bad' red would be juxtaposed with its opposite white to clearly illustrate associations with evil. Michel Pastoureau, *Couleurs, Images, Symboles: Etudes d'histoire et d'anthropologie*, (Paris n.d.), 75

[14] Pastoureau, 70.

heralds Christ's redemption for humankind. And second, by its compositional formulation which places the standing Christ in a dominant position over the kneeling Mary Magdalene, it implies Christ's achievement and powerful position of authority.

The definitive motif of the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography--a kneeling, pleading woman before a standing man at once withdrawing, yet attracted to her--may have been derived, according to Erwin Panofsky, from sarcophagi depicting Achilles leaving the daughters of Lycomedes.[15] Moshe Barasch suggested that another compositional source may be found in Roman political imagery depicted on coins, particularly the image of Emperor Galba with the kneeling figure of Roma.[16] However, neither the theme of the sarcophagi nor of the coins bears any resemblance to the meaning of the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography; only the gestural pose unites the images. Regardless of the religious significance of the *Noli Me Tangere* event, the structural formulation of the motif--man standing, woman kneeling--imposes man's favoured position over woman.[17]

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[15] Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, (Cambridge 1953), 22.

[16] Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture*, (Cambridge 1987), 170.

[17] It should be noted that the motif of Mary Magdalene supplicating at the feet of Christ is not unique to the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography. She maintains a similar stance in other portrayals of the two of them, for example, the

While the *Noli Me Tangere* image depicts such a significant encounter, few examples of the scene existed before the ninth century when the image appeared in the Drogo Sacramentary.[18] However, by the thirteenth century an increased emphasis on the specific event found in John 20 appeared in resurrection imagery. In the Psalter of St. Elizabeth,[19] for example, the artist depicts the phrase recorded in John 20 where Mary Magdalene mistakes Christ for a gardener and thus represents him holding a spade.[20]

LaRow noted that before the eleventh century resurrection images illustrating two or three standardized female witnesses before Christ documenting accounts by Matthew and Luke were more typically represented (Matthew 28, 9-11; Luke 24, 10-13); the *Noli Me Tangere* scene only gained acceptance during the eleventh century.[21] LaRow attributed this increase to a ''renewed enthusiasm for the

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Raising of Lazarus or in scenes of the Anointment where Mary kneels before Christ.

[18] LaRow included a thorough catalogue of early images of the *Noli Me Tangere* in Appendix II. LaRow, 215-226. *Drogo Sacramentary* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9428, fol. 63v.), c.830-840, cited in Schiller, III, 277. LaRow, fig. 49.

[19] *Psalter of St. Elizabeth*, (Cividale, Museo Archeologico) fol. 170r. thirteenth century, cited in Alfred O'Rahilly, *The Family At Bethany*, (Cork 1949), fig.63. LaRow, fig. 38.

[20] Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ''Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.''

[21] LaRow, 40.

contemplative life.''[22] However, a less doctrinal interpretation suggests that the proliferation of images may be attributable to the popularity of Mary Magdalene's character during the Middle Ages and, indeed, to interest in the notion of the humanity of Christ.[23]

Most often connected with larger narrative cycles, the painted portrayals of the *Noli Me Tangere* in the fourteenth century began as small, impersonal, and overtly didactic scenes.[24] Interest in the image focused on the Resurrection of Christ and the symbolic message of redemption rather than on the specific events chronicled in John 20 or the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene.

A typical representation of an early *Noli Me Tangere* scene can be seen in Giotto's fresco cycle of the Life of Christ in the Arena Chapel in Padua (fig.1).[25] Executed

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[22] LaRow, 40. For symbolism of Mary Magdalene in the medieval period, see: Garth, 75-97.

[23] Garth documented the popularity of Mary Magdalene throughout her study of medieval literature concerning the Magdalene. Her first chapter includes a discussion of increased humanness of Christ Garth, 1-29.

[24] Examples of fourteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* include: Duccio, (Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo) c.1310; Style of Giotto, (Assisi, Magdalen Chapel) c.1315; Guariento, scene from polyptych, (Vienna, Collection of Rudolf Czernin) 1344; Style of Orcagna, pinnacle from an altarpiece, (London, National Gallery) c.1346; Master of Verucchio, scene from altarpiece (Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland) 14th c.

[25] Giotto's name is often linked to the decoration of the Magdalene Chapel in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi which also includes a *Noli Me Tangere* scene. Thought to follow the Arena Chapel in terms of chronology, the *Noli Me*

shortly after 1305, Giotto's *Noli Me Tangere* scene sequentially follows the *Crucifixion* and the *Lamentation* and precedes the *Ascension* in the narrative cycle. He expresses the time flow of the events by his use of composition. In addition to the progression from vignette to vignette, he also demonstrates the passage of time within the *Noli Me Tangere* scene. For example, the angels seated on the open sarcophagus and the soldiers asleep in the left foreground announce Christ's resurrection. The right portion of the vignette focuses upon the Magdalene's recognition of Christ on Easter morning.

Giotto positions Christ's body along the edge of the picture plane, leaving no space between his body and the decorative frame of the mural. With this device he successfully underscores Christ's determination to leave the Magdalene and fulfill his mission. In contrast, Mary Magdalene kneels with her arms outstretched before Christ, unsuccessfully inviting him to stay with her.

Highlighting the dissonance in his subjects' actions, Giotto formally juxtaposes Christ with Mary Magdalene: Christ stands, while Mary Magdalene kneels; she wears a dark mantle, whereas Christ dons a white robe; and Mary Magdalene's posture is receptive, while Christ's is evasive.

Tangere scenes are closely related, differing only in slight detail. For further discussion, See· Mary Evan MacLachlan, ''Patron of Sinners and Kings: St. Mary Magdalen in Four Italian Cycles 1285-1365,'' Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1990. 33-65.

Despite the contradictions in their portrayals, the two subjects remain compositionally united, however. The diagonal line of Christ's commanding hand draws the viewer's eye toward the Magdalene to join the two together.

That Giotto positioned the *Noli Me Tangere* scene directly below his *Raising of Lazarus* is noteworthy. The story of the *Raising of Lazarus* (John 11, 1-44) in which Christ raises Lazarus from the dead serves as a symbolic anticipation of Christ's own resurrection and Giotto succeeds in compositionally uniting the two related scenes. More importantly, the similarity between the supplicating pose of the sister of Lazarus (Mary of Bethany) and Mary Magdalene in the *Noli Me Tangere* scene visually illustrates Giotto's acknowledged conflation of the two Marys.[26]

As noted, the development of the identity of Mary Magdalene differed in the East and the West. Pictorial representations of the *Noli Me Tangere* in Medieval art illustrate a parallel dichotomy. The *Noli Me Tangere* scene was not represented in Byzantine art.[27] While the West concentrated on John's version of the resurrection story, the Byzantine East focused on Matthew's version of Christ's

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[26] LaRow found examples of the supplicating pose motif utilized in the Raising of Lazarus as early as the fifth century in an ivory diptych. She suggested that the similarity of this form to the one given to Mary Magdalene might have been a visual indication of the desire to identify the sister of Lazarus as Mary Magdalene. LaRow, 45.

[27] Barasch, 171.

announcement to 'Mary Magdalene and the other Mary'. Byzantine artists, therefore, represented Christ encountering two Marys. The Byzantine illuminated manuscript, the *Paris Gregory*, c.880, depicts a symmetrical composition of a towering Christ with images of a kneeling Mary on either side (fig. 2) A similar hieratic representation exists in one of San Marco's decorative mosaics in Venice. Executed in Byzantine style, a monumental Christ is flanked by two miniature Marys who kneel on either side of his feet. This hieratic motif stresses the omnipotence of the risen Christ and does not limit him to a specific narrative context.

Strong Venetian ties to the East influenced the style of art in that city well into the fourteenth century. Not only were the refined pictorial techniques of the Byzantine East preserved, but many Eastern cult images and Old Testament prophets, that were repudiated by Iconoclasm, also found refuge in Venice.[28] Consequently, early Renaissance Venetian painted *Noli Me Tangere* examples are rare.

Although far fewer examples exist from Venice than other parts of the Italian Peninsula, those which were produced resemble their Southern Italian counterparts and mark Venice's shift towards Western artistic styles. Fourteenth-century Venetian *Noli Me Tangere* images are

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[28] Muraro, 92.

typically presented as minor scenes, included as part of large altarpieces, fresco cycles, or smaller devotional panels. As such, the focus of the image is not on the details of the scene *per se*, but rather on the larger religious narration.

In the 1350's the Franciscan Convent of St. Clare in Venice commissioned Paolo da Venezia to paint an altarpiece, his *Polyptych with St. Clare* (fig.3). The decorative elements in Paolo's work conform to fixed rules; an iconographic tradition dictated the entire creation. For example, the gold background, the choice of colours, the gestures, and the positions of figures corresponded to traditional requirements.[29]

The *Polyptych with St. Clare* survives as one of the most complete fourteenth-century Venetian polyptychs and includes a *Noli Me Tangere* scene (fig.4).[30] The central panel of the polyptych shows the Coronation of the Virgin surrounded by eight episodes from the Life of Christ.[31] Paolo displays the *Noli Me Tangere* scene as a continuous narrative contained in a vignette with the *Resurrection*. Employed as a religious didactic device, the *Noli Me Tangere*

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[29] Muraro, 91.

[30] Only the Crucifixion which crowned the ensemble is missing.

[31] The work also presents the Life of St. Francis, illustrated in six scenes, paralleling events in the Life of Christ. Muraro, 128.

image strengthens the larger narrative of resurrection and redemption of the cycle and thus fulfills its task.

Christ's staff and triumphal banner bisect the enframed vignette. This bifurcation isolates Mary Magdalene from the tomb. The setting is a garden, in which a symbolic tree above the head of Mary Magdalene arches its trunk toward Christ and unites the two figures in a triangular composition. These devices emphasize commonalities between images of the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *Fall*.

As in Giotto's Paduan composition, Paolo's figure of Christ twists back toward Mary Magdalene as he steps away from her. She kneels behind Christ with her arms outstretched toward him. Christ's pose reveals a certain tentativeness; however, Mary Magdalene's aim (to touch Christ) remains clear. The placement of Christ, his head level with the other figure of Christ in the resurrection portion of the vignette, orients the viewer to the scene's overriding message of resurrection.

The focal point of the altarpiece is the large main panel. The importance of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, therefore, derives not from the visual impact of the scene itself, but rather from the importance of the event in Christ's life. In short, while its role at the end of the passion story delivers an integral religious message the *Noli me Tangere* image plays only a minor role in the overall composition of the altarpiece.

A later fourteenth-century Venetian panel depicting the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, painted as part of a triptych by an unknown artist, also conformed to conventional iconography (fig.5). The artist continued to utilize Byzantine stylistic devices such as gold background and striated drapery lines. However, few other similarities exist between this and the previous examples. Here, two discrete images of the *Noli Me Tangere* are included within the enframed scene. This unique feature draws attention to the sequence of events recorded in John 20 rather than focussing exclusively on the larger resurrection message. The left side of the panel shows Mary Magdalene meeting Christ, the gardener, while the right portion portrays the two subjects after Mary Magdalene recognizes the gardener as Christ.

This panel is noteworthy in several respects. Firstly, it follows a literal depiction of the details of the biblical passage in John 20, from which the *Noli Me Tangere* scene derives. Therefore, this panel reflects a growing attention to the *Noli Me Tangere* passage. Secondly, in addition to illustrating the narrative sequence of events, the artist presents Christ as the gardener. Thirdly, and more significantly, the scene has been expanded to focus on the specific details of the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. The placement of the scene in a garden, devoid of any other overt religious significance (for example, the tomb), diverts attention from the standard

didactic message of resurrection to an interest in the interaction between Mary Magdalene and Christ. The iconographic elements of this scene have become more clearly defined. Symbolic links to the imagery of the *Fall* figure prominently. For example, Christ holds a hoe, rather than a banner, and dons a gardener's hat to complete the visual impression that Mary Magdalene mistakes him for the gardener. Further, the inclusion of several trees that promote the garden setting decorate the otherwise gold horizon. Finally, the reduction of the image to include only the two central figures reinforces associations with the *Fall*.

These three examples of fourteenth-century paintings demonstrate a linear progression towards a more humanistic depiction of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene. In the latest image the interaction between Christ and Mary Magdalene commands more attention than the message of resurrection stressed in earlier depictions. The emphasis (though still squarely focusing on a broader religious message of redemption) shifts toward a more faithful rendering of the events of John 20, and garden imagery becomes an integral part of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene.

During the fifteenth century a reshaping of the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery occurred throughout the Italian Peninsula. Images became more naturalistic and further stressed a

garden setting.[32] Christ adopted characteristic human attributes such as his gardener's guise and, more significantly, his closer relationship to Mary Magdalene. Perhaps the most fundamental alteration was the *Noli Me Tangere* scene's becoming identified with narrative cycles of the Life of Mary Magdalene. Fifteenth-century representations of the episode typically appeared with the iconography of Mary Magdalene, didactically illustrating the theological importance of the scene from her perspective rather than from Christ's.

A unique mid-thirteenth century work by the 'Magdalen Master' depicts, for the first time, the *Noli Me Tangere* as a scene in the iconography of Mary Magdalene (fig.6).[33] The artist assembled eight chronologically arranged narrative scenes from her life and legend around a central devotional image which displays Mary Magdalene clothed only in her long hair. No antecedents have been found which illustrate the

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[32] Examples of this fifteenth century trend include: Fra Angelico, *Noli Me Tangere* (Florence, San Marco Monastery) 1438-1445, fresco; Imitator of Mantegna, *Noli Me Tangere* (London, National Gallery) c. 1460, panel from a series; Fungai, *Communion of Mary Magdalene with Noli Me Tangere in the Background* predella, (Siena, S. Domenico) c.1460-1500, panel; Jacopo del Sellaio (Shop of?), *Noli Me Tangere* predella, (New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery) c.1480, tempera on panel; Sandro Botticelli, *Noli Me Tangere* predella, (Philadelphia, Johnson and Johnson Collection) 1491, panel.

[33] For a historiographic discussion of the Magdalene Master panel, See: MacLachlan, 9-32.

Life of the Magdalene prior to this pivotal example [34] The cyclical representations may be related to the renown of Passion Plays in the late Middle Ages.[35] Moreover, this example documents the beginning of a growing trend.

The growing emphasis on the Life of Mary Magdalene is well illustrated by a painting of *St. Mary of Egypt between St. Peter Martyr and St. Catherine of Siena* by Florentine artist Gherardo del Fora from the end of the fifteenth century (fig.7). Although the painting's title acknowledges St. Mary of Egypt as the subject, I consider the image of Mary to be that of Mary Magdalene portrayed as the hermit. Interpreted thus, the panel emphatically links Mary Magdalene to three of her iconographic roles: in the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, in crucifixion scenes, and as a hermit. The artist illustrates these roles by utilizing symbolic props: the crucifix on the altar behind Mary Magdalene, the painting of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene above her head, and her portrayal as a hermit clothed only in her hair illustrated by the central image.

Gherardo places a framed *Noli Me Tangere* depiction as a decorative element in the background of a painting of the three saints. In exquisite miniaturist detail Gherardo paints Christ and Mary Magdalene in a lush garden outside

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[34] LaRow, xxi.

[35] Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, (London 1971), V.2, 16.

the tomb. Christ dynamically motions for the Magdalene not to touch him. The image functions most notably as a scene in her life and documents her unique relationship with Christ.

Other typical presentations of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene in the fifteenth century often existed in predella panels and in side panels. Filippino Lippi painted a pair of such side panels about 1485. One panel depicts the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, while its mate depicts *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* (fig.8). Because of the narrowness of the side panels, Filippino Lippi paints only a foreshortened representation of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene which expresses little symbolic detail. Christ, though, holds a hoe, by now a commonly included accoutrement.

Venetian artist Bartolommeo Montagna also chose a foreshortened view of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene in his *The Risen Christ with Saints* (fig.9). This late fifteenth-century example is part of a triptych. It is similar to Filippino Lippi's panel in that it occupies a narrow, foreshortened space. Originally located in the Church of San Lorenzo in Vicenza, the painting served as the altarpiece in a chapel dedicated to Mary Magdalene.[36] Montagna, however, offers even less detail than Filippino Lippi. He does not give Christ a hoe and provides little

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[36] Linda Parshall, *Picture Gallery. Berlin Catalogue of Paintings 13-18th Centuries*, (Berlin 1978), 44.

detail of Mary Magdalene. He crops her body just below her hair. Still, this limited view does not detract from easy recognition of the couple and the scene. Interestingly, the Magdalene, with her loose flowing hair and supplicating gesture, functions almost as an attribute of Christ.

Bartolommeo's example vividly demonstrates the devolution of the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography: by this time few details were necessary to evoke the essence of the image. In the fourteenth century the image was typically presented in sequential order with other events from Christ's life. However, the popularization of the cult of Mary Magdalene created a renewed interest in *Noli Me Tangere* imagery during the fifteenth century. No longer commissioned simply as an element in the iconography of Christ, the *Noli Me Tangere* scene announced the Magdalene's importance as a theological and devotional figure. By her close relationship to Christ, and by her depiction as the first person to whom Christ announced his resurrection, Mary Magdalene received an elevated position among saints. In addition to these positive aspects accorded Mary Magdalene, however, negative connotations also remained. Mary Magdalene's emotionally-charged portrayal before a controlled Christ reinforced patristic accounts of woman as overly emotional. Additionally, her beseeching pose and determination to touch Christ confirmed Mary Magdalene's (woman's) interest in the physical body of Christ (man).

These elements encouraged the fusion of Mary Magdalene's image with that of Eve.

The noted changes in the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography during the fifteenth century were more limited in Venetian art. There are far fewer Venetian examples than Florentine from this period, illustrating, perhaps, that patrons found little interest in the scene or that the Byzantine influence lingered. Florentine patrons continued to find the scene more appealing, judging from the disparity in numbers of images produced between the two cities. It remained for sixteenth-century Venetian artists such as Titian to develop the *Noli Me Tangere* iconography and in turn to influence the direction of the scene throughout Italy.

CHAPTER III

Noli Me Tangere Examples From Basaiti to Titian

Changes in fourteenth and fifteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* imagery, though substantive, seem minor in comparison to the transformation which occurred in the sixteenth-century. The typical sixteenth century form resembled earlier examples only in its requisite elements, emerging as a radically new presentation. In the early part of the century the *Noli Me Tangere* scene began to appear throughout Italy in an independent altarpiece format for the first time. The scene no longer served as a component of larger narrative cycles but became a prominent discursive unit in its own right.

The functional alteration precipitated numerous differences in the presentation of the image. Most notably, with the image's shift from a supportive role to a more discrete format, the size of the scene increased. Furthermore, greater emphasis on the physical relationship between Christ and the Magdalene, the temporal setting, and the focused utilization of gesture transformed the imagery. The theological basis and biblical tradition of the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery still underscored the newly emerging contextual themes, however.

Increasingly during the sixteenth century, patrons commissioned *Noli Me Tangere* scenes as distinct, large-scale images; and a wide variety of the interpretations of the scene exist from the first fifty years of this century in Italy [1] Not surprisingly, the manipulation of symbolic elements tailored the image to the sixteenth-century audience. For example, the inclusion of modern dress for Christ and Mary Magdalene and the placement of urban settings in the background facilitated a movement towards contemporaneity.

Another theme common to sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* versions was the increased emphasis on the sensual and physical nature of the relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. Stripped of its standard religious props (the tomb, the soldiers, and the angels) the composition focused directly upon the interaction between the two

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[1] Some sixteenth-century examples of the *Noli Me Tangere* include: Fra Bartolommeo, (Paris, Louvre) 1506, 57X48cm; Marco Basaiti, (Milan, Brera) c.1500; Titian, (London, National Gallery) c.1512, 109X91cm; Andrea Del Sarto, (Florence, Uffizi) 1510, 176X155cm; Fra Bartolommeo, (Le Caldine, Convent of the Magdalene) 1517, fresco lunette; Timoteo Viti, (Cagli, Oratorio of Sant'Angelo Minore) 1518-19; Correggio, (Madrid, Prado) c.1534, 130X103cm; Pordenone, (Venice, Santo Stefano) 1534; Pontormo, (Milan, private collection) 1531-32, 124X95cm; Bronzino, (Florence, Casa Buonarroti) c.1532, 175X134cm; Pordenone, (Cividale, Museo Archeologico) 1538, 265X200 cm; Girolamo Galizzi da Santa Croce, (Vercelli, Museum of Borgogna) c.1530; Girolamo da Santa Croce, (Worcester, private collection) c.1540; Girolamo di Tommaso da Treviso, (Bologna, S.Giovanni in Monte) c.1540; Lelio Orsi, (Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum) c.1555, 92X75cm; Titian, Head Only (Madrid, Prado) 1553, see Sánchez Coello's copy, (Madrid, Escorial) before 1574, 231X224cm.

subjects. Furthermore, the image's enlarged and thus more forceful presentation heightened the sensual display.

This physicality, which emerged first and most apparently in Venice, paralleled the more suggestive depictions of the penitent Mary Magdalene by sixteenth-century Venetian artists. For example, Titian painted several representations of Mary Magdalene, and like the erotically-charged[2] mythological ''poems'' he created, his half-length images of the *Penitent Magdalene* appear to be equally provocative (fig.10). Modern scholars have found these images of the *Penitent Magdalene* puzzling. Interpretations of the motivation for such depictions range from the intensely spiritual to the simply erotic, shrouded by a religious facade.[3] Most scholars, such as Monika Ingenhoff-Danhauser, consider Titian's and other artist's half-length Magdalenes from this period to be courtesan portraits with the sitter in the guise of the saint.[4] The

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[2] The term ''erotic'' refers here to paintings which include prominent naked or partially naked female figures.

[3] See Charles Hope, ''Problems of Interpretation in Titian's Erotic Paintings.'' in *Tiziano e Venezia: Convegno internazionale di studi, Venezia 1976*, (Vicenza 1980), 111-124; Henri Zerner, ''L'Estampe Érotique au Temps de Titien.'' in *Tiziano e Venezia: Convegno internazionale di studi, Venezia 1976*, (Vicenza 1980), 85-90.

[4] Monika Ingenhoff-Danhauser, *Maria Magadalena, Heilige und Sunderin in der Italienischen Renaissance: Studien zur Ikonographie der Heiligen von Leonardo bis Tizian*, (Tubingen 1984), 59-70. Cited in Mary Pardo, ''The Subject of Savoldo's Magdalene,'' *The Art Bulletin*, 71,1 (March 1989), 67-91. Pardo considers Salvoldo's half-length images of Mary

sixteenth-century Venetian tradition of executing overtly erotic paintings, including half-length portraits of courtesans, may have contributed to more ardent depictions of the Magdalene.[5]

Marco Basaiti painted the first of several sixteenth-century Venetian *Noli Me Tangere* scenes which displayed these directional changes in the iconography (fig.11). His independent format signals an adoption of the Western style of using one Mary in Venice.[6] By filling the foreground of

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Magdalene to be an iconographic variant of the *Noli Me Tangere* examples. According to her, Savoldo executed them in the style of Antonello da Messina's *Virgin Annunciate*. Therefore, the viewer adopts the positioning of Christ looking at Mary Magdalene outside the tomb. However, because of this radically different orientation and the lack of compositional comparison with the other noted *Noli Me Tangere* images, I have chosen not to include these in my discussion.

[5] For a discussion of Courtesans in art, See: Hope, ''Problems,'' 124; See also Lynne Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans*, (New York 1987). Anne Christine Junkerman, *Half-Length Portraits: Bellissima Donna*, PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley, 1990. Carol M. Schuler, ''The Courtesan in Art: Historical Fact or Modern Fantasy?'' *Women's Studies. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 19,2 (1991), 209-222. Hope has argued that Titian's pictures with erotic themes were simple and straightforward while Lawner has documented the wealth of images on the courtesan. It must be noted, however, that Lawner has over-zealously identified courtesans in most every image of women in Venice. Junkerman's study of half-length Venetian images more reasonably assesses courtesan images and issues. Carol Schuler has considered that the real value of these erotic paintings is the myths of male fantasy which they project. Like Junkerman, she has helped re-direct the discussion of these images to the social milieu.

[6] Little information is available on Basaiti's *Noli Me Tangere* scene As with many of his paintings, attribution remains in question. Although Berenson recognized this scene as being done by Basaiti, Van Marle, who disputed

his painting with the figures of Christ and the Magdalene, he placed the emphasis of the picture clearly on the relationship between the two subjects. Though neither dynamic nor overtly passionate, the portrayed relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene expresses their physical closeness. Unlike many earlier examples, Christ shifts his weight towards Mary Magdalene, instead of turning from her. Basaiti successfully conveys a re-orientation of the *Noli Me Tangere* message with the change in scale and re-positioning of Christ. Though in John 20 Christ verbally commands Mary Magdalene not to touch him, Christ's actions here reveal a less than emphatic gesture.

Basaiti further distorts the traditional iconography by transporting the religious event into the Renaissance period He achieves this sense of modernity by utilizing several conventions, dress being the most obvious. Though Basaiti visually ''quotes'' John 20 by depicting Christ as a gardener, Christ's garb atypically represents that of a contemporary gardener. The short pleated tunic clearly exemplifies the fashion of this time period.[7] Mary Magdalene also dons a contemporary, though non-descript gown. Basaiti's inclusion of a cityscape on the horizon

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several of Berenson's conclusions concerning Basaiti, did not mention a *Noli Me Tangere* scene in Basaiti's *oeuvre*. Raimond Van Marle, *Renaissance Painters of Venice*, vol. XIX, (Hague 1935), 514-515.

[7] Stella Mary Newton, *The Dress of the Venetians 1495-1525*, (Aldershot 1988), 54-55.

signals an important Renaissance development--urban migration. By the fifteenth century Italian culture radiated from the cities, with urban society wielding both the economic and the social power.[8] That Christ and Mary Magdalene interact within view of an Italian city further emphasizes the contemporary significance of the scene.

Titian painted a *Noli Me Tangere* scene about 1510 (fig.12). Like Basaiti, Titian contemporized the scene. However, as the first of two versions (the second was painted in 1553), this depiction, executed early in his career, illustrates an extreme and innovative treatment of a typically standardized formula. Titian creatively manipulates the standard iconography to convey a non-religious message while remaining faithful to the religious impetus.

Though the painting was catalogued as part of the Muselli collection of Verona in 1662, details concerning the patron and the commission unfortunately remain obscure.[9] Because this *Noli Me Tangere* scene clearly represents a freedom of expression proscribed in public commissions

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[8] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427 confirms this migration pattern. A comparable measure of urbanization developed in Venice. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families. A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427*, (New Haven 1985), 46-57, esp. 54-55.

[9] Cecil Gould, *The Sixteenth-Century Venetian School*, (London 1959), 111.

however, a private setting is suggested. The size, too, indicates a private circumstance (109 X 91 cm. is not monumental) The requisite elements of any private work of art, in most cases, differed from a commission for public viewing.

Carlo Ginzburg argued that in sixteenth-century Italy ''two iconic circuits'' existed in religious artistic expression.[10] While he cautiously proposed such a simple bifurcation, especially in light of the dissemination of printed images at that time, the classifications facilitate an understanding of the motivations for the commissioning of a panel such as Titian's. The first circuit, public and socially undifferentiated, was exhibited in churches and public places. The second circuit, to which Titian's *Noli Me Tangere* scene belongs, consisted of private and socially-elevated works. The private works often contained intentionally erotic images and could be found in great numbers in the private domains of elite society.[11] By capitalizing on the popularized intimate relationship between Christ and the Magdalene, Titian infused an uncommon Venetian subject, traditionally portrayed in a didactic and narrative manner, with sexual innuendo.

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[10] Carlo Ginzburg, ''Titian, Ovid, and Erotic Illustration,'' in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, (Baltimore and London 1989), 79.

[11] Ginzburg, 80.

Titian, of course, would have been well aware of the numerous literary descriptions of the close relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene.[12] As has already been discussed, the writer Pietro Aretino, a close friend of Titian's, incorporated episodes of Mary Magdalene's life into his prose account of the Life of Christ. Like Titian's painted panel, Aretino's visually descriptive style resists a religious doctrinal exposition; it instead focuses on its intended subject, as the title suggests, the humanness of Christ [13]

In Aretino's account of the *Noli Me Tangere* incident, when Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb to find Christ's body missing she lamented: ''My eyes, may you favour the passions that run through me; and one of you cry my sin and the other my Lord.''[14] Aretino reminds the reader of the very human friendship between the two subjects. He then describes Christ as a ''uomo agreste'', (an unkempt rural

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[12] For a discussion of the exclusively vernacular sources Titian utilized for his mythological paintings, See: Ginzburg, 82-91.

[13] Jaynie Anderson's essay on the sacred imagery in Aretino's prose discusses his inspirations. She has suggested Aretino's visual descriptions were not only derivative of works by his contemporaries, but also presented a model for future religious imagery. See: Jaynie Anderson, ''Pietro Aretino and Sacred Imagery,'' in *Interpretazioni Veneziane*, (Venice 1984), 275-290.

[14] Occhi miei, favorite le passioni che mi accorano; e un di voi pianga il mio peccato e l'altro il mio Signore. Aretino, 96

farmer) and notes how completely Christ assumes the role of the gardener before Mary Magdalene.[15] When Christ espies Mary Magdalene, according to Aretino:

> He, seeing the woman, who was wearing herself out crying, stopped the head of the plow in the middle of a green bush and turned the handle to his breast, resting his hands on top with almost all his weight.[16]

Aretino's description of Christ's stance leaning on his hoe recalls Titian's placement of Christ in his early *Noli Me Tangere* version.

Compositionally, Titian departs from earlier fourteenth and fifteenth-century examples in several ways. For example, by situating Christ on the left side of the canvas and Mary Magdalene on the right side he reverses a traditional iconographic convention. However, when Titian began this painting he originally placed Christ striding away from Mary Magdalene, a formula which conformed compositionally to more orthodox representations. He then changed this positioning to depict Christ facing Mary Magdalene, precariously balancing his weight on his hoe, as in Aretino's later prose account.[17] Titian's compositional re-orientation

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[15] Aretino, 96.

[16] Ed ella, accettando l'ammonizione, mosse i passi altrove. E mentre il pie lento stampava le sue orme in terra, ecco Christo, tutto simile al cultor di quello orto. Egli aveva in mano lo istrumento, con cui si sterpano i prati dei semi che non sanno fiorire. Aretino, 96.

[17] Gould noted that an X-ray of the painting shows that Christ's legs turned away from Mary Magdalene. However, the

fundamentally alters the relationship between the two figures.

Similarly, the artist's significant re-positioning of the Magdalene's hand and arm--now reaching toward the knotted sheet at Christ's loin--visually expresses Titian's sensual message.[18] That Titian amended his original placement of Christ, and of Mary's arm and hand, suggests a conscious effort to create an image fraught with sexual connotations. Christ's tenuous and unstable stance denies the strong verbal message of John 20. A struggle between the physical and spiritual dimensions of a human Son of God is played out before the tempting and traditionally concupiscent Mary Magdalene.

Titian fashions a psychologically and physically ambiguous tension between Christ and Mary Magdalene by situating the body of Christ so that it curves around the outreaching arm of the Magdalene. He thereby evokes a strong sense of unity between the two subjects. At the same time, Christ also turns his torso away from Mary Magdalene's outstretched hand. He shields his mid-section from her by pulling a sheet up in front of himself. Titian's Christ

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original position of his body is not clear. The tree, originally bent to the right, and the original diagonal of the compositional was the opposite of its final form. Gould, ''A Famous Titian,'' 44.

[18] Gould did not comment on where the X-ray photographs showed Mary Magdalene's hand and arm had originally been placed. Gould, ''A Famous Titian,'' 47.

casts a knowing gaze at Mary Magdalene, but rather than reciprocating, which could imply a spiritual union between them, Mary Magdalene instead focuses her eyes directly on Christ's body, confirming her physical motivations.

The juxtaposition of the biblical label *noli me tangere*--''touch me not''--and Titian's compositionally magnetic relationship between a man and a woman undermines the title and punctuates the sexual tension already inherent in his depiction of the scene. Clearly, the verbal and the visual statements reveal more than a simple devotional subject. Titian heightens his message with Christ's form of dress. He portrays Christ as nearly nude (though supposedly looking like a gardener). Clad in little more than the sheets from the tomb, a knot of fabric barely covers his mid-section. The viewer's eye is drawn by the converging lines of the gathered fabric at his groin and Mary's outreaching arm to the knot which serves as an obvious focal point. By placing the beseeching Mary Magdalene in a state of *deshabillé*, prostrate before Christ, Titian completes the provocative message.

Rather than the non-descript robe worn in Marco Basaiti's example, Titian's Magdalene dons an only partially closed dress. A flowing white undergarment with billowy sleeves called a *camicia* is worn prominently displayed under her dress. It was a typical item of dress at that time.[19]

Significantly, many of the provocative half-length images of women painted in Venice at this time flaunt the sexual associations of the *camicia*.[20] Titian clearly exploits the social connotations accorded dress in Venice. To that end, Stella Newton contends that the Magdalene's attire, with its voluminous sleeves and flowing train, defied sumptuary legislation from that period, and the fact that prostitutes were exempt from those regulations would not have been lost on contemporary viewers.[21] Her hair hanging loosely about her shoulders illustrates yet another similarity to the popular half-length images. Mary Magdalene's state of undress and, indeed, style of dress heighten the sensual nature of Mary as the temptress and prostitute, expressing

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[19] Elizabeth Birbari, *Dress in Italian Painting 1460-1500*, (London 1975), 41.

[20] Titian's *Salome* (Rome, Galleria Doria-Pamphilj) c.1515, is portrayed in a similar undergarment with a red mantle. First painted in the 1530's, Titian's several *Penitent Magdalene's* are also shown in similar states of undress. See: Titian, *Penitent Magdalene* (Florence, Uffizi) 1530's; *Penitent Magdalene* (Naples, Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte) 1560; *Penitent Magdalene* (St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum) 1561.

[21] Newton, 75. Newton has found that Titian indicates the time of day--early morning--by the fact that Mary Magdalene has not yet tied her over-sleeves into the armholes of her dress, as was the fashion. Newton also concluded that the original shape of the Magdalene's dress, painted over in the early eighteenth century, demonstrates a fashion that used stiff hoops, a temporary style in Venice. She noted the fashion aroused such severe remonstration by the public that it was quickly abandoned.

her social and sexual freedom.[22] In short, Titian portrays the Magdalene as a modern Venetian courtesan.

Equating Mary Magdalene to Eve, the other sexual temptress, Titian conforms to a now standard convention by placing his subjects in a garden setting. Titian's obvious inclusion of the tree in this *Noli Me Tangere* scene strengthens symbolic ties to the Garden of Eden. This reference--to the Tree of Knowledge from which Eve took the apple that corrupted Adam--figures prominently. The ubiquitous Medieval legends about the wood of the cross being from the Tree of Knowledge only serve to underscore these associations.[23]

Compositionally, Titian utilizes the symbolic tree to conjoin Christ and Mary Magdalene. The tree passes directly behind Mary Magdalene's head and curves behind the head of Christ. It serves as the apex in a pyramidal composition which visually unites the three elements: Christ, Mary Magdalene, and the tree. In the guise of a gardener,

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[22] Sometime between the date of painting and the year 1742, the Magdalene's dress was altered. A layer of overpaint was applied to her dress to change its style (see Newton's reasoning, note 23) and colour to a brownish colour. This alteration was detected at the time of cleaning in 1957. Subsequent removal of the paint revealed the original dress painted striking red, a colour often associated with Mary Magdalene. Gould, ''A Famous Titian,'' 47.

[23] Haines, 158-159.

Christ, the new Adam, struggles with the temptation of Mary, the new Eve, under the shade of the Tree of Knowledge.[24]

However, at the same time Titian infuses the message with a sense of tension. Though Christ indeed performs his redemptive task, his human maleness wavers in the face of Mary Magdalene's sexual advances. Christ's ambiguous effort to discourage the Magdalene's touch, by shielding his body with his makeshift robe, rather than using his arm to halt her, enhances the uniqueness of Titian's conception. The scene remains filled with innuendo and indecision; Christ's next action is not apparent.

Titian's first *Noli Me Tangere* scene elucidates a perceptive appreciation of his male audience in departing from more traditional interpretations of the imagery. Though Titian was not a member of his patrons' patrician class, he responded to their demands for more sensual art. While this notion is best illustrated by the countless examples of his erotic mythological scenes, this *Noli Me Tangere* representation provides evidence of a similar impetus in religious subject matter.[25]

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[24] Marilena Mosco argues that in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Christ's depiction as a gardener symbolizes his role as the new Adam, and Mary Magdalene, by her sensual pose symbolizes the new Eve in the Garden of Eden. I consider this link to have been made much earlier. Mosco, 138.

[25] For a discussion of Titian's erotic paintings, See: Ginzburg, 77-94; Hope, ''Problems,''111-124; Junkerman, 348-365; Henri Zerner, 85-90.

In the 1530's another notable *Noli Me Tangere* example was conceived; Michelangelo designed an equally suggestive *Noli Me Tangere* scene in 1531 which Jacopo Pontormo subsequently painted (fig.13). Afforded complete artistic freedom in a commission for Giovan Battista Figiovanni of Florence, Michelangelo chose the subject of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene to fulfill the contract.[26] That Michelangelo independently selected the *Noli Me Tangere* subject provides an even greater interest in his interpretation of the scene in that it articulates his own notions concerning the iconography. The Venetian sensibility has permeated this conception; the sensual ambiguity of the image recalls Titian's version, painted twenty-some years earlier. While no direct link can be forged between the two paintings, several features demonstrate a commonality between the two images; these include the use of composition, dress, and setting.

This version marks a departure for Florentine *Noli Me Tangere* scenes, for earlier sixteenth-century Florentine examples had remained highly traditional. Andrea Del Sarto's image, for example, painted in Florence about the same time as Titian's, exhibits the medieval orthodox treatment of the scene (fig. 14).[27] In his depiction of

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[26] Wallace, 443.

[27] S.J. Freedberg credited Fra Bartolommeo's 1506 *Noli Me Tangere* scene as having inspired the Florentine Andrea del

Christ and the Magdalene, Andrea offers little of that sensuality which resonates in images by his Venetian counterparts.

Like Titian's painting, Michelangelo's design unconventionally projects a sense of sexual curiosity in Christ. In Michelangelo's heterodox version, however, few biblical references exist. For example, rather than attempt to evade the Magdalene's touch, Christ reaches out to touch her breast.[28] Not surprisingly then, no effort is made by Christ to discourage Mary Magdalene's advances. Undermining the traditional gestural composition of *Noli Me Tangere* iconography and further separating it from more traditional conceptions, Mary Magdalene reaches out to Christ from a standing rather than a kneeling position. Nonchalantly leaning back, away from the Magdalene, Christ focuses his attention on his own actions, disregarding Mary Magdalene's

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Sarto, to paint his own 1510 version. Charles Hope has forged a link between Fra Bartolommeo's and Titian's examples. However, if these two scholars are correct in their arguments, Andrea del Sarto's and Titian's versions illustrate two very different interpretations of the same antecedent. See: S J. Freedberg, *Andrea del Sarto*, (Cambridge, Mass. 1963) 21; Charles Hope, *Titian*, (London 1980) 20.

[28] Wallace has argued that Michelangelo's Christ does indeed touch Mary Magdalene's breast. He has noted a Northern tradition for this convention. However, to support his example he cites an etching by Lucas van Leyden (1519) in which, in a highly religious gesture, radically different from Michelangelo's design, Christ touches the Magdalene's head. Wallace, 448.

efforts. It remains uncertain whether Mary Magdalene does indeed touch Christ as she thrusts her arm behind him.

The figures' dress, again, plays a role in the symbolic message of this presentation. However, unlike the sensual *camicia* worn by Titian's Mary Magdalene, the garment worn by this version's Mary Magdalene is more utilitarian and less revealing. Still, her chest, though concealed by the bodice of the dress, provocatively thrusts forward. Similarly, the long line of her leg is defined by a drapery fold. Pontormo includes neither Mary Magdalene's anointment jar nor her flowing hair (both of which Titian provides), making her almost unrecognizable without her typical attributes. Instead, Pontormo relies on the viewer's familiarity with the scene.

Unlike Titian's setting which stresses garden elements, especially the symbolic tree, in this version the artist provides no indication of a garden. A cityscape on the horizon of the tilted picture plane provides the setting. Once again, by including an urban centre in the distance the interaction between Christ and the Magdalene is further divorced from the biblical past, situated instead in its Renaissance milieu. The two large-scale figures fill the picture plane, emphasizing the intended theme of the painting. Pontormo painted the scene roughly the same size as Titian's conception.

Bronzino also created a *Noli Me Tangere* scene based on Michelangelo's cartoon in about 1532 (fig.15).[29] Bronzino's version differs little from Pontormo's example except that he further increased the scale of the painting, creating an overwhelming display of physical interaction between the two subjects.

To appreciate the extreme treatment the scene received by both Titian and Pontormo, one need only peruse examples of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene by other artists in Italy at this time. For example, in about 1534, in Parma, Correggio also painted a *Noli Me Tangere* scene (fig.16). Unlike Michelangelo, Correggio retains much of the conventional religious significance in his image. Christ, for example, points heavenward to indicate to Mary Magdalene why she should not touch him. Also, a hoe leans next to Christ as a casual reminder of Christ's mistaken identity in the John 20 story.

Correggio nonetheless infuses the work with dynamic and powerful visual symbols by other means. The Magdalene, dressed not as a saint but as a courtesan in an opulent brocade gown, swoons before Christ. She longingly stares up

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[29] Bronzino, *Noli Me Tangere* (Florence, Casa Buonarroti) c.1532. canvas, 175X134cm. Bronzino's version of this scene differs little from Pontormo's painting except that he increased the scale of the picture. Franco Battista also painted a version of this design. His representation, though somewhat faithful to the original design, lacks the artistic quality of the other two images.

into his eyes while her hair falls loosely down her back. Christ turns his bare chest away from her as he looks back at the Magdalene. Correggio ignores religious props such as the tomb or angels, as in other sixteenth-century examples. He situates the subjects in a rugged outdoor setting.

In the early 1530's Correggio strongly influenced the Venetian artist Giovanni Antonio Pordenone. Pordenone, considered to be Titian's only serious rival in Venice, painted two *Noli Me Tangere* versions over the course of his career. Pordenone competed with Titian for several commissions in the late 1530's.[30]

Between 1532 and 1534 Pordenone executed fresco decorations in the cloisters of Santo Stefano in Venice. Here he painted his first *Noli Me Tangere* scene; it survives in poor condition (fig.17). Rather than resembling Titian's conception, this work follows more closely the dramatic *Noli Me Tangere* scene by Correggio of about 1534.[31] Pordenone adopted Correggio's device of Christ pointing toward heaven, visually announcing his resurrection. This promotes a more

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[30] Ch. E. Cohen, ''Pordenone, Not Giorgione,'' *Burlington Magazine*, 122 (1980), 930.

[31] It is unclear whether Pordenone would have seen Correggio's conception of the *Noli Me Tangere* although given the similarities between the two images it seems likely that Pordenone was aware of it. Correggio's version has not been firmly dated except for the knowledge that he painted it at the end of his career. Friedlaender noted that the Santo Stefano frescoes reflect this stylistic influence. Walter Friedlaender, ''Titian and Pordenone,'' *The Art Bulletin*, 47 (1965), 119.

religious interpretation of the scene than did Titian's version.[32]

The Santo Stefano commission consists of twelve scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Pordenone arranged the twelve scenes by pairing an Old Testament scene with a corresponding New Testament one. The *Noli Me Tangere* image, for example, corresponds with *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve*.[33] Pordenone thus re-introduces the juxtaposition of the two scenes which had commonly occurred in the Middle Ages in *Exultet* rolls.[34] The utilization of this convention during the sixteenth century demonstrates a continued (or perhaps a renewed) theological association between Adam and Eve, and Christ and Mary Magdalene. While symbolic elements of paradisic iconography pervade Titian's version, no overt associations are forged.

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[32] In 1539, the year of his untimely death, Pordenone painted a second *Noli Me Tangere* scene, this time for the Cividale Cathedral. This version appears to have been even more strictly dictated by the requirements of the commission. The inclusion of the donor, Andrea Damiani, in the left corner of the canvas confirms this notion. While the basic design echoes the earlier Santo Stefano version, this scene remains a much more traditional depiction of the scene. Caterina Furlan, *Il Pordenone*, (Milan 1984), 125.

[33] The remaining paired scenes of the cycle are: David and Goliath, Christ and the Adultress; Cain and Able, The Stoning of Stephen; The Drunkenness of Noah, The Conversion of Paul; The Judgement of Solomon, Christ and the Women of Sumaria; Sacrifice of Isaac, The Deposition of Christ; Friedlaender, 118.

[34] Haines, 169.

Juxtaposed directly with the *Fall*, the garden symbolism invites a sexual interpretation of the scene. The intended meaning of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene becomes all to clear, Eve's temptation of Adam corresponds to Mary Magdalene's physical response to reach out for Christ. Christ's action, to deny Mary Magdalene (''*noli me tangere*'') represents his control over her. By association, man controls woman. Christ rejects Mary Magdalene, a response Adam found elusive.

Pordenone's *Noli Me Tangere* scene differs both stylistically as well as symbolically from Titian's earlier example. Differences between the two versions necessarily present themselves because Pordenone designed this commission for the cloisters of a church and the medium was fresco rather than canvas. Although Pordenone adopted Titian's compositional placement of Christ and the Magdalene (with Christ on the left and Mary on the right), his version is a much less overtly provocative depiction. He relies, instead, on biblical symbolism and reverts to a more traditional iconography largely dictated by the location and function of this work. He nonetheless symbolically achieved a message of gender relations which transcends the religious meaning.

In 1553 Titian painted a second *Noli Me Tangere* scene (fig.18). Records show he created this version for Mary of

Hungary.[35] Though only a fragment of Christ's head remains, the composition was recorded by the Spanish artist Sanchez Coello sometime before 1574 (fig.19). This version also exhibits an intimate physical tension between Christ and Mary Magdalene. Titian significantly altered the psychological implications of the union between the two subjects in this later representation, however. It is as if Titian reconciled the ambiguity and indecision infused in the earlier version. Titian's Christ exhibits a fundamental transformation.

Here, for example, Titian's Christ appears much more assured and confident in his command to the Magdalene. In this later version Christ thrusts out his arm to halt the Magdalene, leaving little doubt of his conviction, whereas in the earlier version Christ's wavering pose suggested uncertainty concerning his relationship to Mary Magdalene. Christ's footing, firmly planted with his weight shifting away from the Magdalene, adds to the air of dominance and confidence suggested by his body. Gesturally, the composition illustrates the resolution of a power struggle; Christ has indeed taken control over Mary Magdalene.

Though it remains difficult to assess the accuracy with which Coello recorded the subtleties of Titian's second *Noli*

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[35] A letter by a Spanish ambassador describes the fact that he saw the painting in Titian's studio in 1553. Harold Wethey, *The Paintings of Titian*, (London 1969-75), 119.

Me Tangere scene, Mary Magdalene remains steadfast in her physical attraction to Christ. That is, her prostrated body arches resolutely toward him. Instead of reaching her arm towards Christ, as she so suggestively does in the earlier representation, her arms reach behind her, thrusting her breast forward. Her wanting gaze and open, dynamic gestures connote sensual motivations.

Other apparent alterations exhibit Titian's re-interpretation of the scene. Christ's garb, for example, serves a different purpose. The scanty sheath of Titian's early Christ which accentuated the sexual intensity of the image is replaced by a short tunic, reminiscent of that worn by Pordenone's Christ. This dress, combined with the inclusion of a garden hoe, presents Christ in the guise of a gardener more convincingly than did his provocative appearance in the earlier version. Here, Christ more closely resembles the rural farmer that Pietro Aretino describes in ''L'Umanita del Figliuol di Dio.''[36] Whether or not Titian considered Aretino's interpretation of the *Noli Me Tangere* story when he painted his second version for Mary of Hungary remains unclear. However, based on the evidence presented by Anderson concerning Aretino's influence over Titian when the artist painted his *Trinity*, the connection seems plausible.[37]

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[36] Aretino, 96.

Few changes appear in Mary Magdalene's attire. Her *camicia* remains prominent. With her back to the viewer, and her arms wide open, the hidden frontal view, for Christ's eyes only, adds to the provocativeness of her stance. Her long, unkempt hair confirms the sustained sense of abandon. Religious overtones pervade this example with the addition of the glowing tomb and of Christ's halo. It remains unclear whether these doctrinal elements reflect the wishes of his patron, Mary of Hungary, or a changing religious climate in Venice associated with the Counter-Reformation.

The juxtaposition of Titian's early and late versions clearly demonstrates a fundamental shift in perception. Titian no longer portrays Christ as tempted and wavering before the concupiscent Magdalene. As in Pordenone's representation, no ambiguity exists in the message promoted by this scene. Christ here triumphs in the face of the still dangerous and provocative Magdalene. The New Adam redeems man's place in a transformed society in which the threat of the New Eve has been subdued, relegating her to inconsequential, private spheres.

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[37] Anderson, 285.

CHAPTER IV

Gender Relations in Renaissance Italy

The substantial iconographic changes manifested in the noted *Noli Me Tangere* examples did not occur independent of the changing Renaissance society. By examining the social fabric of sixteenth-century Italy the meaning of modifications in the imagery becomes clearer. That is, inasmuch as the appearance of the sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* scene reflects the society which created it, its altered focus, its increased popularity, and its correspondingly enlarged, singular format occurred as indicators of societal change.

The gestural composition of the iconography--man standing, woman supplicating before man--is central to a contextual understanding of the scene. Patrician males manipulated signs and symbols in order to promote and sustain their favoured societal voice. One must consider the male assertion of power over females throughout Italy during the Renaissance in order to appreciate fully the patriarchal imperatives in the scene. Moreover, changing cultural, economic, and social demands precipitated fundamental alterations in Italian society during this period. One result of the consequent re-ordering was that woman's role became limited to private societal spheres.

Efforts by men to facilitate a process of female marginalization were pervasive. Because men dominated public spheres and denied women entry, women's place in Renaissance society, then, devolved to that of a largely private existence. Utilizing legal and social avenues, patrician males not only thwarted female advancements but actually reduced economic, educational, and social opportunities. A good example of the process of female marginalization is the emergent theme of female as ornament. As a decorative element woman was objectified and rigidly cast, stripped of her humanity. Consequently, male-imposed ideas and images shaped women's lives during this period.

To begin with, under feudalism women had been land owners, land managers and apparent heads of families.[1] Especially during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the system had permitted both the inheritance and administration of feudal property by women. Military and geographic expansion had raised women's status during the early Middle Ages. For example, when men went off to fight in the Crusades, women remained in charge at home. Yet while feudalism flourished during the Medieval period, it had no counterpart in Renaissance Italy. During the Renaissance

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[1] David Herlihy, ''Women in Continental Europe 701-1200,'' *Women in Medieval Society*, Susan Mosher Stuart, ed. (Philadelphia 1976), 30.

the economic migration of money and power to urban centres eliminated many opportunities for women.[2]

Proto-enlightenment economic structures created aggressive male competition in jobs traditionally designated for women. Natalie Davis noted that the process of the disenfranchisement of women, which continued over centuries, eventually affected not only upper-class women but also (through changing marriage laws and the disappearance of female guilds) lower-class women.[3] Similarly, Merry Weisner found that by the mid-fifteenth century nearly every craft began to restrict female participation.[4] Even wet nurses, for example, experienced a deterioration in their status at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[5]

According to Klapisch-Zuber the growing imbalance in the ratio of men to women in the Florentine work-place indicates a shrinking demand for women's labour.[6] For

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[2] Joan Kelly Gadol, ''Did Women Have A Renaissance?'' *Women, History and Theory*, (Chicago 1984), 148-150.

[3] Natalie Zemon Davis, ''City Women and Religious Change,'' in her *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, (Stanford 1965), 94.

[4] Weisner's research has centered on Northern European models. Merry E. Weisner, ''Women's Defense of Their Public Role'' in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, M.B. Rose, ed. (Syracuse 1986), 7.

[5] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Lydia Cochrane, trans. (Chicago and London 1985), 163.

[6] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual*, 177.

example, domestic service typically employed unmarried or widowed women during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. However, after 1490 male servants increasingly entered the ranks.[7] As a result, female domestic servants were forced to compete with males for jobs women had traditionally held. Consequently, their job opportunities in that field were reduced.

Tied to the issue of economic disenfranchisement, changes in educational organization also affected Renaissance women. Literate women, apart from nuns, were found primarily among the upper classes (though even among aristocratic women literacy was not assured). Debate on the subject of whether girls should be taught to read occurred in the sixteenth century. Traditionalists argued that reading only excited the imaginations and fancy of women which led directly to unacceptable immoral thoughts.[8]

While Renaissance humanism represented an advance for some upper-class women by introducing Latin literacy and classical learning to daughters of the nobility, at the same time it placed students under male authority.[9] This meant

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[7] Klapisch-Zuber has noted that data gathered from 1370-1510 shows a substantive increase in male servants over female in the last period (1480-1500). Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual*, 177.

[8] Lauro Martines, ''A Way of Looking at Women in Renaissance Florence,'' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 4 (1974), 18.

that learned women were required to study topics of interest to and dictated by men. And because ''learning and chastity were indissolubly linked,'' marriage and scholarship were deemed incompatible.[10] This forced learned women to choose between a socially-acceptable or unacceptable lifestyle.

One educated fifteenth-century noblewoman, Isotta Nogarola, endured an alienated existence, welcomed in neither male nor female realms.[11] A male mentor advised Isotta to do the impossible, to ''become a man'' in order to achieve her literary goals.[12] Another scholar, Lauro Querini lauded her: ''you have...overcome your own nature. For that true virtue, which is essentially male, you have sought with singular zest.''[13] It was as if Isotta and other learned women belonged to a third sex.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries conduct and courtesy literature, which codified and externalized

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[9] Gadol, 150. For a discussion of women and humanistic scholarship See: Margaret King, ''Book-Lined Cells: Women and Humanism in the Early Italian Renaissance,'' in *Beyond Their Sex. Learned Women of the European Past*, Patricia H. Labalme, ed. (New York 1980), 66-89; King, ''Thwarted Ambitions: Six Learned Women of the Italian Renaissance,'' *Soundings*, 59,3 (1976): 280-304.

[10] King, Book-lined Cells, 78.

[11] King, Book-Lined Cells, 75.

[12] King, ''The Religious Retreat of Isotta Nogarola (1418-1466): Sexism and Its Consequences in the Fifteenth Century,'' *Signs*, (Summer 1978), 808.

[13] King, Book-Lined Cells, 76.

behaviours for females, flourished.[14] Venetian humanist Francesco Barbaro, for example, wrote a treatise on marriage, the *De re uxoria*, in 1415-16 advising noblewomen on appropriate wifely behaviour. Barbaro suggested three elements aid a wife in achieving a harmonious marriage: ''love for her husband, modesty of life, and diligent and complete care in domestic matters.''[15] He also detailed appropriate wifely demeanor: ''I earnestly beg that wives observe the precept of avoiding immoderate laughter. This is a habit that is indecent in all persons, but it is especially hateful in a woman.''[16] Baldassare Castiglione's *Courtier*, written in 1528 as a reference for the conduct of the aristocrat, considered the courtier's most important avocation that of protector, while charm remained the primary task for the lady. Castiglione asserted, ''a certain pleasing affability is becoming above all else, whereby she will be able to entertain graciously every kind of man.''[17]

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[14] Gadol, 150.

[15] Francesco Barbaro, ''On Wifely Duties,'' in *The Earthly Republic. Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt, eds. (Philadelphia 1978) 192.

[16] Barbaro, On Wifely Duties, 202.

[17] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, reprinted in Gadol, 150

Kathleen Ashley identifies similar codifications of behaviour addressed to non-aristocratic women, which in turn influenced French and English cycle plays.[18] The late fifteenth-century French *Passion* play by Jean Michel, for example, included a scene where Christ comes to dinner in Bethany at the home of Martha and her sister Mary Magdalene. The code of conduct presented for women in this drama contradicts earlier theological exegesis and illustrates an apparent manipulation of women's roles. In the biblical passage Luke 10, 38-42, Christ praises Mary Magdalene for listening attentively to his teachings instead of helping Martha prepare and serve dinner. In the drama, however, Martha's role as the server is expanded and championed.[19] Ashley noted similar departures from the doctrinal roles of Mary and Martha in English drama cycles.[20]

Conduct literature dictated women's deportment in their primary and most important role, that of wife/mother. During the Renaissance the family constituted a corporate unit which lay at the core of the social structure. Kinship bonds in fifteenth-century Florence were primary, Lauro

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[18] Kathleen M. Ashley, ''Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct,'' in *The Ideology of Conduct. Essays of literature and the history of sexuality*, Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, eds. (New York 1987), 38.

[19] Ashley, 32.

[20] Ashley, 32.

Martines concluded, because ''the family stands between the individual and society.''[21] As a result, the father, as head of the household, wielded much power. Daughters, as instruments of family strategies pursued by fathers, exhibited little control over their own lives, even decisions concerning their ''approved'' gender roles as wife or nun seem to have been made by the father.[22] Though her husband assumed the legal right to demand obedience and service from his wife, a father's rights (*patria potestas*) over a married daughter could remain considerable. In essence, the father acted as the autocratic ruler of his household.

In Renaissance Florence the business of running the household, traditionally the female's domain, did not escape male control. Children born into a marriage belonged to the father's paternal family line, and thus the father took responsibility to assure the development of his progeny.[23] For example, choosing a wet nurse for his children became a

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[21] Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1340-1460*, (Princeton 1963), 50.

[22] Chojnacki stressed, for the first time in his many seminal articles on Venice, the subordinate, private role of women in Renaissance Venice. See: Chojnacki, '''The Most Serious Duty' Culture in Renaissance Venice,'' in *Refiguring Woman. Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari, eds. (Ithaca and London 1991), 143-44.

[23] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual*,162.

man's prerogative in Florence.[24] Contracts were usually established between the natural father and the wet nurse alone; the mother was seldom mentioned in such agreements.[25] Even within the household, then, women's influence was minimized. In short, by exaggerating their own necessary role in private matters, men gained control over even women's traditional spheres of influence.

Marriage politics also affected the rights of women throughout Italy during the Renaissance. Men typically wed at a much later age than women in Renaissance Italy; this holds especially true for the upper class. Age gaps at the time of marriage were as high as ten to fifteen years in western Tuscany in the fifteenth century.[26] The growing association between dowry and chastity during the Medieval period may be one reason why aristocratic Italian fathers often married their daughters off at puberty.[27] Whatever the reason, the early marriage age for girls only strengthened male authority within the household.

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[24] However, in Venice, according to Francesco Barbaro, wives were in charge of wet nurses and in his treatise ''On Wifely Duties'' he implored women to breast-feed their own children. Barbaro, 223.

[25] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual*, 143.

[26] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 211. The Florentine Catasto of 1427 demonstrates that the marriage age for males rose markedly with urban population growth though the female marriage age remained constant.

[27] Diana Owen Hughes, ''Urban Growth and Family Structures in Medieval Genoa,'' *Past & Present*, 66 (1975), 27.

A fundamental change in marriage politics shifting from a ''bridesprice'' or ''indirect dowry'' to a dowry system, affected most of Western Europe, including Italy, between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.[28] The introduction of the dowry regime into Mediterranean marriages drew attention away from the bond between husband and wife to focus instead on the wife's family.[29] The bridesprice was a payment from the husband to the bride, whereas the dowry, provided by the bride's family, alleviated the husband's economic burden during marriage. The father of the bride gave his daughter a suitable amount of money to attract a spouse who would then elevate the status of her family.

The dowry system swiftly became the accepted method of monetary exchange surrounding marriage. For example, it suffused all social strata in Florence when in 1430 the Florentine Commune instituted a kind of dowry insurance to stimulate an increase in the number of marriages and to guarantee respect for young brides.[30] If a father deposited money in the *Monte delle Doti* when his daughter was a child, the account's maturity ensured a respectable sum by the time she planned to marry.[31] According to Hughes, a dowry

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[28] Diana Owen Hughes, ''From Bridesprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe,'' *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1978), 262-96.

[29] Hughes, ''From Bridesprice,'' 284.

[30] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual*, 214.

ensured ''daughters would live all their lives in the light of their father's generosity or in the shadow of its absence.''[32]

During the Renaissance, patrician fathers excluded their daughters from their patrimony, or estate, to ensure that lands and houses remained part of the male lineage.[33] Instead, a daughter received a dowry and trousseau, both to attract a husband, as well as to maintain her status should she become a widow. Remaining the property of the wife in the marriage, dowries ensured some measure of independence and power for women within the family structure. Still, larger dowries also assured that fathers intervened in the lives of their daughters all the more. The more money involved, the more interest the father took in finding a suitable husband for his daughter. While an increasingly male-oriented and dominated society conceded some measure of power to women within the private domain of the family, Renaissance patrician women found their spheres of control inexorably more limited.

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[31] See: Julius Kirshner, *Pursuing Honor While Avoiding Sin The Monte delle Doti in Florence*, (Milan 1978).

[32] Hughes, ''From Bridesprice,'' 284.

[33] Unlike the original Roman practice where the main purpose of the dowry was to help the groom bear the burden of matrimony, in its medieval Italian form, the dowry came to be regarded as the girl's share of the patrimony. Chojnacki, ''Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice,'' reprinted in *Women in Medieval History and Historiography*, Susan Mosher Stuart, ed. (Philadelphia 1976), 175.

The transformation in marriage politics led to increasingly complex economic exchanges. Marriage alliances dictated social mobility. Barbaro, for example, observed that the nobleman's aim was to ensure his family's future nobility by choosing an appropriate wife.[34] Stronger emphasis on pedigree gave rise to larger and more attractive dowries in spite of government interventions in the fifteenth century to restrict such increases.[35] Although the dowry remained the woman's property, she could neither invest nor otherwise use the money without her husband's consent.[36] According to Thomas Kuehn, marriage consisted of a dual process of separation and transferral of control over a woman and her property from her father to her husband.[37]

Venice provides a good example of woman's role as pawn in the politics of marriage. In 1298 a political re-organization of Venice's patrician class (the *Serrata*)

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[34] King, ''Caldiera and the Barbaros on Marriage and the Family: Humanist Reflections of Venetian Realities.'' *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 6 (1976), 32.

[35] A law in 1420 established a ceiling for dowries between 1,600 ducats and 2,000 ducats. In the early 1500's the permitted sum had doubled but actual dowries reached much higher levels. By the middle of the sixteenth century some dowries amounted to 25,000 ducats. Patricia H. Labalme, ''Women's Roles in Early Modern Venice: An Exceptional Case,'' in *Beyond Their Sex*, Patricia H. Labalme, ed. (New York 1980), 131.

[36] Chojnacki, ''Patrician Women in Early Renaissance Venice,'' *Studies in the Renaissance*, XXI (1974), 191.

[37] Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family & Women. Towards a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago 1991), 198.

effectively closed the patriciate to all but members of those families already represented in government.[38] In an effort to preserve the ruling class as a discrete socio-political entity, the issue of marriage politics became central to power politics in fourteenth-century Venice.[39] Creating a barrier between the patriciate and the populace, pedigree cultivated through marriage deepened class exclusivism.[40] Larger dowries allowed prospective brides, through negotiations by their fathers, to attract husbands from older and more prestigious houses.[41] Thus, the dowry became an important political tool for patrician males in Renaissance Venice. However, while her natal family benefitted from the resultant marriage alliance, a bride's dowry ultimately denied her a voice in society.

The development of a complex legal system in the eleventh and twelfth centuries together with much subsequent

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[38] Chojnacki, ''Patrician Women,'' 179. For a description of the political implications of the Serrata, See: Guido Ruggerio, ''Modernization and the Mythic State in Early Renaissance Venice: The Serrata Revisited.'' *Viator*, 10 (1979), 247.

[39] Chojnacki, ''Marriage Legislation and Patrician Society in Fifteenth-Century Venice.'' in *Law, Custom, and the Social Fabric*, Bachrach and Nicholas, eds. 173.

[40] On marriage and the patriciate see, Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice*, (New Brunswick, N.J. 1980), esp. pp 81-96.

[41] Chojnacki sifted through the complex political, economic and social implications concerning the increasing sums of dowries in the fifteenth century. Chojnacki, ''Marriage Legislation,'' 175.

legislation, further contributed to the disenfranchisement of women. Foucault contended that ''In Western societies since the Middle Ages, the exercise of power has always been formulated in terms of law.''[42] Gender distinctions and legalistic controls over women demonstrate the power gap between man and woman in society. Bernard of Parma (d. 1266), writing on the *Liber Extra*, explained woman's position in terms of the law·

> A woman...should not have [jurisdictional] power. .because she is not made in the image of God: rather man is the image and glory of God and woman ought to be subject to man and, as it were, like his servant, since man is the head of the woman and not the other way around.[43]

Such juridical notions derived largely from the pervasive control of a misogynist Church which, from the second century onward, had shaped society. Although perhaps hyperbolic, Tertullian's (160-220) perspective on woman represented one of many currents of Christian thought which helped formulate the Church's position on women and sexuality. Unleashing his fury against Eve and, by implication, all women, he wrote, ''The curse God pronounced

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[42] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*, vol. 1, Robert Hurley, trans. (New York 1990), 87.

[43] Bernard of Parma, Glossa ordinaria to X 1.33.12v. *uirisdictionis*. Reprinted in James A. Brundage, ''Sexual Equality in Medieval Canon Law,'' in *Medieval Women as the Sources of Medieval History*, Joel T. Rosenthal, ed. (Athens and London 1990), 72.

on your sex weighs still on the world. Guilty, you must bear its hardships. You are the devil's gateway....''[44]

Augustine's exegesis, less extreme and more influential than Tertullian's, also validated the rule of man over woman as part of God's original order.[45] In *On Marriage and Concupiscence* Augustine placed sexuality at the centre of the human person, thereby helping to institute the notion of the vulnerability of human flesh to temptation.[46] But although Christian thought permeated all aspects of society, canon law generally left the ordering of domestic affairs to civil law.[47]

In Venice, the criminal justice system served to illustrate the fundamental difference between men and women within Renaissance society. Criminal statutes assigned punishment to men or women according to what best suited the crime of their sex. For example, as a penalty for theft a man might lose an eye and a hand whereas a woman might lose the nose and one lip.[48] Chojnacki noted that punishments

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[44] Tertullian, *de cultu feminarum* in *Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*, Rudolph Arbessman, Sister Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain, trans. (New York 1959), 138.

[45] Brown, 400.

[46] Augustine, ''On Marriage and Concupiscence,'' in Anti-Pelagian Writings, Philip Schaff, ed. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1959).

[47] Kuehn, 216.

[48] Chojnacki, Patrician Women, 186.

deprived men of their means of earning a living, while for women punishment served to strip them of the means to attract a male suitor.[49]

In a more general sense, civil law adopted a paternalistic view of woman. In Florence, for example, the adoption of a civil law (the *mundualdus*) requiring male guardianship over women in the fifteenth century articulated their status.[50] The *mundualdus* was rooted in the idea that men ruled women; the supposed natural inferiority of women justified the inclusion of this Lombard law into the Florentine civil code. A male guardian appointed on behalf of a female interceded whenever she had any public transactions to conduct. Kuehn concluded that this law protected men both from the material losses that they believed would inevitably occur should women enter the male world, and from the loss of honour that would arise if the woman were to act as if she had any public authority.[51]

Further exploiting their public position and control in the area of law-making, patrician males throughout Italy introduced sumptuary legislation proscribing lavish dress. The laws were mostly directed towards females throughout the Renaissance. Despite numerous statutes against such

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[49] Chojnacki, Patrician Women, 187.

[50] Kuehn, 221.

[51] Kuehn, 223.

luxurious display, the fashions persisted, however. In January 1504, for example, the Venetian Senate spoke out against an 'ugly fashion' which included very wide sleeves, and banned their use.[52] Yet in October 1504, the prohibition against the sleeve was repeated with a comment that the sleeves had become even longer and uglier.[53] It would seem, then, that the public act of legislating female deportment sufficiently served patrician male ends because it focused public attention upon female frivolity. Moreover, by emphasizing woman's decorative function, sumptuary laws reinforced accepted female roles.

In addition to the paternalistic view men held concerning woman in the justice system, the notion of woman as object or decoration pervaded other areas of Renaissance society. Patrician women were obliged by a male power structure to serve as a decorative distraction or an indicator of their husband's status. Discourse on the subject of woman as decorative object flourished in written treatises, art, and (of course) law, demonstrating a male fixation with gender roles.[54] For example, Barbaro contended that a wife should serve as an ornament of beauty

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[52] Newton, 55.

[53] Newton, 55.

[54] Foucault describes a similar example in Victorian England. While sex was vigorously repressed, vociferous discourse on the subject reveals that pre-occupation with the subject. Foucault, vol. I, 3-4.

and wealth on behalf of her husband. He affirmed a custom by which women adorned themselves with fine jewelry because ''such adornments are the sign of the wealth of the husband more than a desire to impress wanton eyes.''[55] Gadol noted that Castiglione's *Courtier* also assigned a largely decorative role to the lady.[56] And Chojnacki argued that patrician women, by adopting a splendid and seductive presence, became more visible, in effect claiming a social role assigned to them by male society.[57]

By the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century the sartorial lavishness of Venetian patrician women was well known. In 1494 Pietro Casola noted:

> Those who can and those who cannot are very magnificent in their dresses, and have large and costly jewels and pearl ornaments for the head and neck; they wear many rings on their fingers...I said those who cannot because I was told that many hire these things.[58]

Junkerman has argued that by visibly displaying the wealth of their patrician husbands, women absorbed any potential backlash by the lower classes or *cittadini* for violating

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[55] Barbaro, 208.

[56] Gadol, 151.

[57] Chojnacki, ''Posizione della Donna a Venezia nel Cinquento.'' in *Tiziano e Venezia*, (Vicenza 1980), 68.

[58] Mary Margaret Newett, ''Sumptuary Laws of Venice in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,'' in *Historical Essays by Members of the Owens College*, (Manchester 1902), 251. For a discussion of other contemporary comments on the dress of Venetian women in the sixteenth century, See: Junkerman, 196-261.

idealized notions of the ostensible equality between all citizens of Venice.[59] Venetian women had far fewer independent roles in public ceremonies than men, especially by the late fifteenth century, according to Edward Muir. And on occasions where women did have the opportunity to take part in ceremonial display, they appeared merely as decoration.[60] Thus, patrician women served as an index for their family's fortunes while at the same time demarcating the limits of political challenges from the lower classes.

The proliferation of half-length images of Venetian women in the sixteenth century, sensually and ostentatiously garbed, further promulgated the notions of superficiality and frivolity of women.[61] Patricia Simon noted that in fifteenth-century Tuscan marriage portraits a woman functioned similarly as an object of public display; she was otherwise rarely visible in society.[62] However, images of

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[59] Junkerman, 218. Junkerman also considered the excessive Venetian sumptuary legislation to be evidence for patrician man's attempt to deflect lower class hostility concerning patrician wealth onto their wives. Junkerman, 260-61.

[60] Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, (Princeton 1981), 303.

[61] Junkerman's dissertation examines the plethora of half-length images executed in sixteenth century Venice. Julius Held discusses the image of Flora as Courtesan. See: Julius S. Held, ''Flora, Goddess and Courtesan,'' in *De Artibus Opuscula XL. Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, Millard Meiss, ed. (Princeton 1961) esp. 212-18.

[62] Patricia Simon, ''Women in Frames: the gaze, the eye, the profile in Renaissance portraiture.'' *History Workshop Journal*, 25 (Spring 1988), 9.

Venetian men tended to display them as thoughtful, and they often appeared soberly clad. The somber depictions of Venetian males, in contradistinction to the sensual and ostentatious female images, then, served to co-opt any potential opposition against the male patriciate, again apparently reifying the notion that all (male) citizens were equal.

Klapisch-Zuber described a Florentine practice where women entered their husband's homes 'naked'. The husband subsequently adorned his new bride with riches to symbolically reflect his own station in life.[63] The 'borrowed' clothes and jewels, however, were returned to the husbands' family if the husband died, because they could no longer serve their symbolic purpose.[64] Though a husband used and controlled his wife's dowry, she did not share in the economy of his lineage and therefore the clothing and jewels were not hers to keep.

These examples illustrate that a woman's realm of influence shrank during the Renaissance as aristocratic males increasingly attempted to limit and narrowly define her place in society. Her status further diminished socially and economically with the changing world view during the Renaissance. The symbolic force of the gestural

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[63] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 247-260.

[64] Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 257.

composition and subject of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene reinforced these societal changes, making the image a malleable and receptive vessel for patrons. Transitions in Renaissance society continually manifested themselves in the evolving imagery of Mary Magdalene and indeed, the *Noli Me Tangere* scene.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

Numerous forces operated on the shaping of *Noli Me Tangere* imagery between the fourteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries. Artistic styles, specific commission requirements, as well as a changing religious climate all influenced representations. Of particular interest, however, is the re-ordering of the social structure which, in turn, reflected itself in the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery.

Ultimately, many sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* depictions exemplify a manipulation, probably unconscious, of images and ideas by which men shaped Renaissance women's lives. Certain emphasized aspects of sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* imagery reinforced this devolution. First, emphasis on symbolic associations with the iconography of the *Fall* (usually by subtle reference and/or inference) appeared in the art. Second, an enlarged format accorded the *Noli Me Tangere* scene new importance and wider recognition as a religious subject. Indeed, the sixteenth century saw a marked proliferation of all types of Magdalene imagery. Third, the more focused and discrete presentation of the scene, unattached to larger narrative cycles, forcefully manifested the Renaissance's gender bias by emphasizing the motif of standing man/kneeling woman.

Fourth, efforts to situate Christ and Mary Magdalene within a sixteenth-century sartorial context made the scene more immediately relevant to a sixteenth-century audience. These refinements shaped the imagery and contributed, in an abstract sense, to further the marginalization of woman in Renaissance Italy. In short, the art champions not only Christ's control over Mary Magdalene, but both asserts and reifies man's newly emergent control over woman.

References to the *Fall* validated misogynist ideas promulgated by the increasingly patriarchal power structure of Renaissance culture. Unlike parallels forged between the two scenes in Exultet Rolls from the Late Middle Ages, which fostered the medieval scholastic notion of the *felix culpa*, a modern focus prevailed. Rather than heralding the redemption of mankind, the focus of the sixteenth-century linkage became the redemption of <u>man</u>. Indeed, the very title of the paintings, *Noli Me Tangere*, aids in the recognition of the image as a display of man's favoured status in the Church and Renaissance society. That is, in many sixteenth-century versions Christ, the second or new Adam, forcefully commands Mary Magdalene, the second Eve, not to touch him. Christ thereby triumphed over what Adam had been incapable of resisting, Eve's temptation.

Pordenone's 1535 Santo Stefano *Noli Me Tangere* scene best illustrates the scene's relationship to the *Fall* by directly juxtaposing the two images. It confirms the

scene's continued association with the *Fall*. Pordenone's example definitively proclaims man's desire to achieve hegemony over woman by the powerful way in which Christ towers over Mary Magdalene. The physically and thematically united scenes visually link Christ with Adam and Mary Magdalene with Eve. Titian and Basaiti also utilized paradisiac symbols such as the tree, Christ's guise as gardener, the hoe, Mary Magdalene's seductiveness, and the garden setting to allude to the scene's function as an updated paradise scene.

The manipulation of visual symbols in the *Noli Me Tangere* scene to evoke a message of male domination parallels a similar device employed in drama. In the noted late fifteenth-century play, *The Passion* (discussed in Chapter IV), the passage relating Christ's visit to the home of Martha and Mary was modified. Playwrights reinterpreted the scene to reward the behaviour of Martha, the passive and subservient homemaker, rather than that of Mary Magdalene, who chose to sit and listen to Christ. Such a transmutation of religious dogma reaffirms that Renaissance man's preferred role for woman was an increasingly private and servile one; this outlook closely resembles the visual message projected by the symbolic associations to the *Fall* in many the *Noli Me Tangere* examples.

The proliferation of half-length images of the *Penitent Magdalene*, often sensually depicted as in Titian's versions,

fuelled considerable interest in Mary Magdalene. As the Magdalene's role as patron saint of prostitutes spread throughout Italy, the imagery became focussed on her sexuality. This trend coincided with her overtly sexual depictions in many sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* scenes. Moreover, as the *Noli Me Tangere* theme narrowed over time and increasingly centered on the portrayed relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene (as man and woman), her sexual status received further emphasis. Given the religious climate of the day, Mary Magdalene's sexual persona translated into a negative and inferior model. More generally, then, Mary Magdalene, portrayed as a prostitute and sexual temptress, symbolized woman's negative place in the patriarchal Church and society.

Just as Christ's role as the second Adam reinforced man's favoured place in society, the formal changes in representations of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene achieved a similar end. The dimensions, composition and function of the imagery shifted from a small, religiously didactic, but subordinate, vignette in a larger narrative equation in the fourteenth century to a more dominant status in the fifteenth century. Fifteenth-century presentations often displayed the *Noli Me Tangere* scene as a side or predella panel in an altarpiece dedicated to Mary Magdalene.

By the sixteenth century a subsequent transformation occurred in which an even larger scale and more

individualized format gave the *Noli Me Tangere* scene a greater sense of autonomy as a discrete image. The increased numbers of sixteenth-century Venetian *Noli Me Tangere* paintings also reflect the scene's increased popularity. Notably, the distinct message of the sixteenth-century versions differs from earlier counterparts. The later representations fix upon the relationship between Christ and the Magdalene rather than upon the earlier, more literal reading of the biblical narrative.

The large, discrete sixteenth-century representations accented the motif of standing man/kneeling woman, and thereby emphasized the inherent power structure of the imagery. Overwhelming the depiction of Mary's recognition of Christ on Easter morning, Christ's control over Mary Magdalene (and the corresponding secular view of man's control over woman) dominates the picture plane. Still, the vision remained thoroughly religious in that it confirmed male and female roles set down by the Church.

The scene became further attuned to the *Weltanschauung* of its sixteenth-century viewer with the addition of two modern devices. First, artists transported the religious scene into a Renaissance setting by portraying the subjects in contemporaneous garb. Titian, for example, in his first *Noli Me Tangere* scene, represented Mary Magdalene as a Venetian courtesan by depicting her in an authentic--and seductive--costume. Second, by adding an urban city on the

horizon artists provided a modern setting. Because urban migration signalled the demise of feudalism (a system under which women maintained authoritative positions) the urban setting served an especially important function. Both Titian and Michelangelo situated an Italian city in the background of their representations to complete the modern focus. The definitive shift to urban culture announced the applicability of the visual symbolism in the *Noli Me Tangere* scene to the sixteenth-century viewer.

Many sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* examples documented the changing social milieu in Renaissance Italy by manipulating elements such as symbolic doctrinal references, formal components, and the addition of contemporary developments. These modifications, for the most part, probably operated on an unconscious level. In this sense, the *Noli Me Tangere* images propagated, as well as confirmed, cultural imperatives.

Both Titian and Michelangelo recognized in the iconography a rich and malleable subject, and both produced unorthodox interpretations fraught with sexual innuendo and ambiguity. Titian's early version suggests Christ was inclined to respond favourably to Mary Magdalene's sexual overtures, while at the same time he sought (physically as well as rationally) to overcome them. The image also illustrates man's attempt to gain hegemonic control over

woman. However, it is as if Titian recognized in this conflict man's omnipresent, urgent sexual desires.

Titian's second *Noli Me Tangere* presentation, painted some forty years later, details the resolution of man's struggle. An unwavering Christ now forcefully commands the still-tempting Mary Magdalene not to touch him. But now, in a frustrated attempt to challenge Christ's authority, she merely titillates him. A juxtaposition of Titian's two versions of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene affirms sixteenth-century modifications in social roles. Man now confidently exerts his perceived control over woman.

Michelangelo also manipulated the subject in such a way as to evoke more than a didactic religious message in his *Noli Me Tangere* versions. A modern focus clearly overwhelms the religious intent. Michelangelo's cartoon (together with Pontormo's and Bronzino's subsequent paintings) demonstrates a different artistic interpretation of the scene from that of Titian, however. The boundaries of proximate physical conduct remain ambiguous in Pontormo's version. A very controlled Christ reaches out for Mary Magdalene rather than avoiding her, confident of his dominant position in their relationship. Mary Magdalene rises to hold Christ; she actively seeks to embrace him, blithely unaware of her own marginalized position.

Michelangelo champions man's power and sexual enjoyment of woman. Consequently, woman, though clearly attempting to

exercise her own prerogative, poses little threat to the established male authority. Both Titian and Michelangelo, as well as other sixteenth-century Italian artists such as Pordenone, exploited the social messages in this subject-matter. They revealed for the viewer the manipulation of ideas through the guise of religious art.

A consideration of changes in the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery, from Giotto's 1305 example in the Arena Chapel to Titian's 1553 version, uncovers wide differences in the intended meanings. Eclipsing the original religious story of Mary Magdalene's recognition of Christ on Easter morning, elements concerning the relationship of Christ and Mary Magdalene (as man and woman) dominate the later imagery. Understood as an updated paradise scene where the second Adam resists the second Eve, many sixteenth-century *Noli Me Tangere* scenes confirm and demonstrate a societal reordering in which patrician man attempts (successfully?) to subjugate woman. To that end, the power relationship portrayed by standing man/kneeling woman exemplifies an implicit code of conduct for the sixteenth-century viewer. By propagating that message through the religious imagery of the *Noli Me Tangere* scene, the sought-after cultural transformation becomes all the more effective. Indeed, the *Noli Me Tangere* imagery, in its sixteenth-century form, articulates the symbiotic relationship between image, language, and power in society.

Figure 1. *Noli Me Tangere*. Giotto. c.1305. Fresco. Padua, Arena Chapel. Schiller, *Iconography*, II, fig. 293.

Figure 2. *Christ Appears to the Holy Women.* Paris Gregory. B.N.cod. gr. 510, fol. 30v. IX century. Culter, *Transfigurations of Byzantine Iconography*, fig. 79.

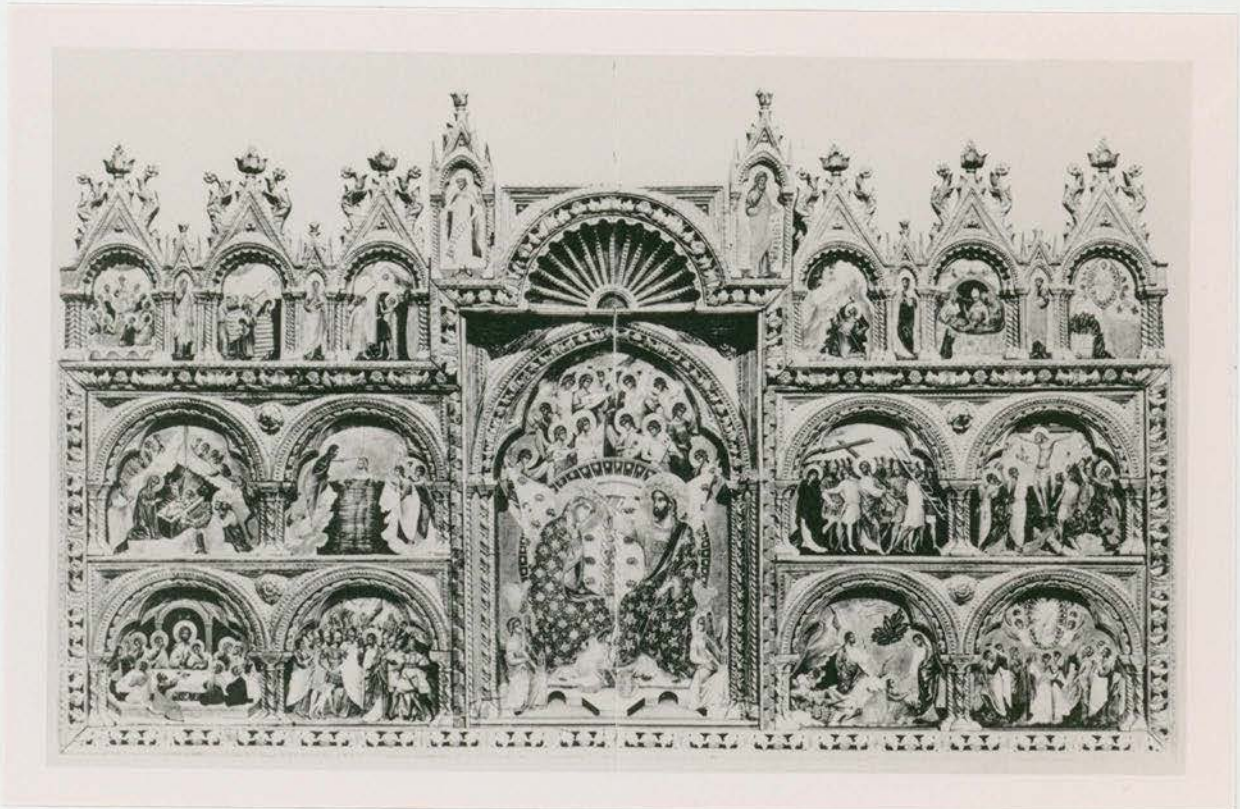

Figure 3. *Polyptych with St. Clare*. Paolo da Venezia. XIV century. Panel. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana del Trecento*, fig. 137.

Figure 4. *Noli Me Tangere*. Paolo da Venezia. Detail of *Polyptych with St. Clare*. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana del Trecento*, fig. 147.

Figure 5. *Noli Me Tangere*. Venetian School. Second quarter XIV century. Lugano, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection. Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art*, fig. 911.

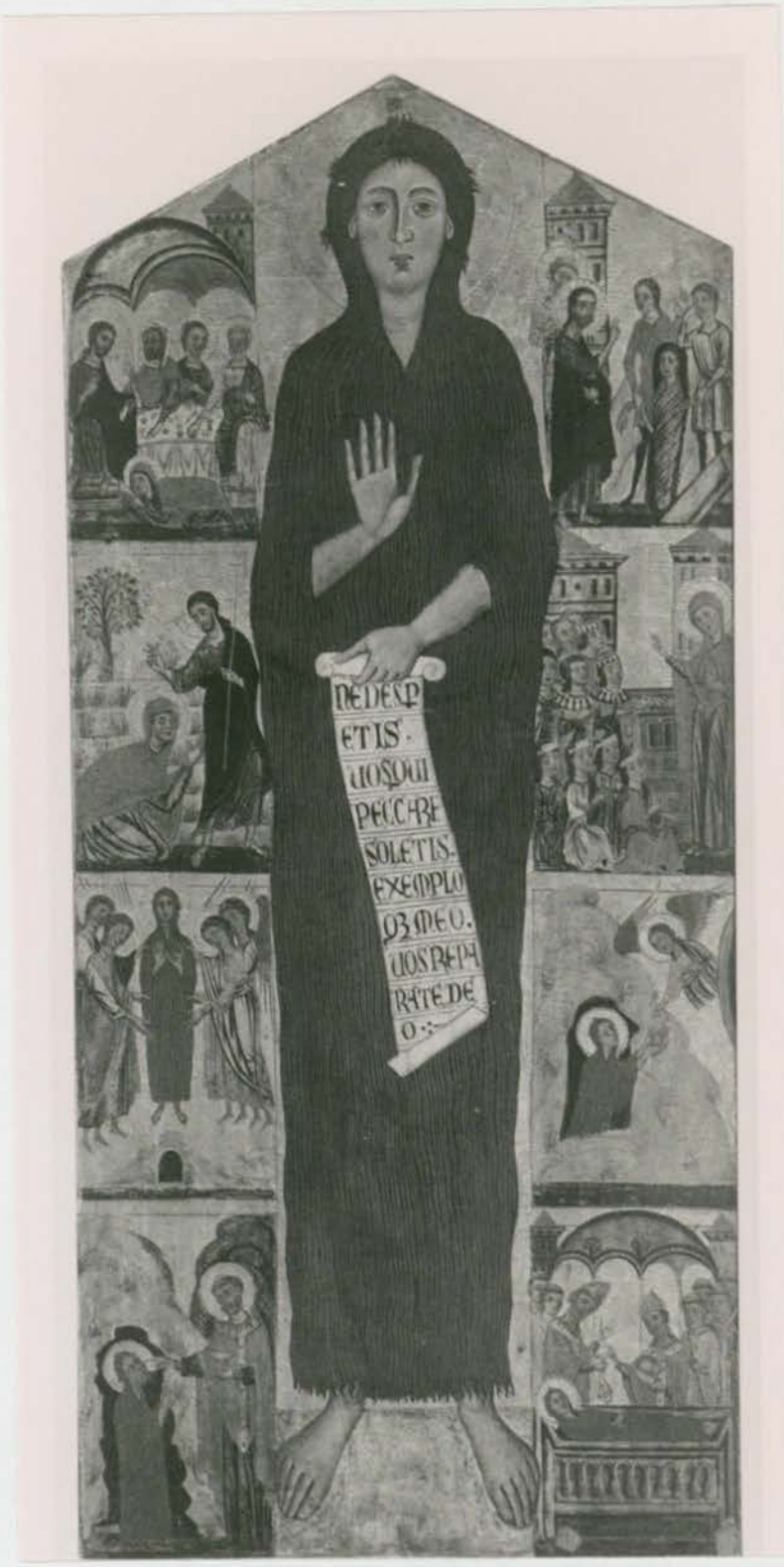

Figure 6. *Mary Magdalene*. Magdalen Master. c.1270-85. Panel. 180X90cm. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Mosco, *Tra Sacro e Profano*, p. 43.

Figure 7. *St. Mary of Egypt Between St. Peter Martyr and St. Catherine of Siena*. Gherardo el Fora. Late XV century. Brunswick, Me., Kress Art Museum. Shapley, *Kress Collection*, fig. 366.

Figure 8. *Christ and the Woman of Samaria/ Noli Me Tangere.* Filippino Lippi. c.1485. Venice, Raccolte del Seminario. Valcanover, *Museums and Galleries of Venice*, p. 340.

Figure 9. *The Risen Christ with Saints.* Bartolommeo Montagna. c.1492. Canvas. 160X172cm. Berlin, Berlin Museum. Parshall, *Berlin Museum*, cat no. 44b.

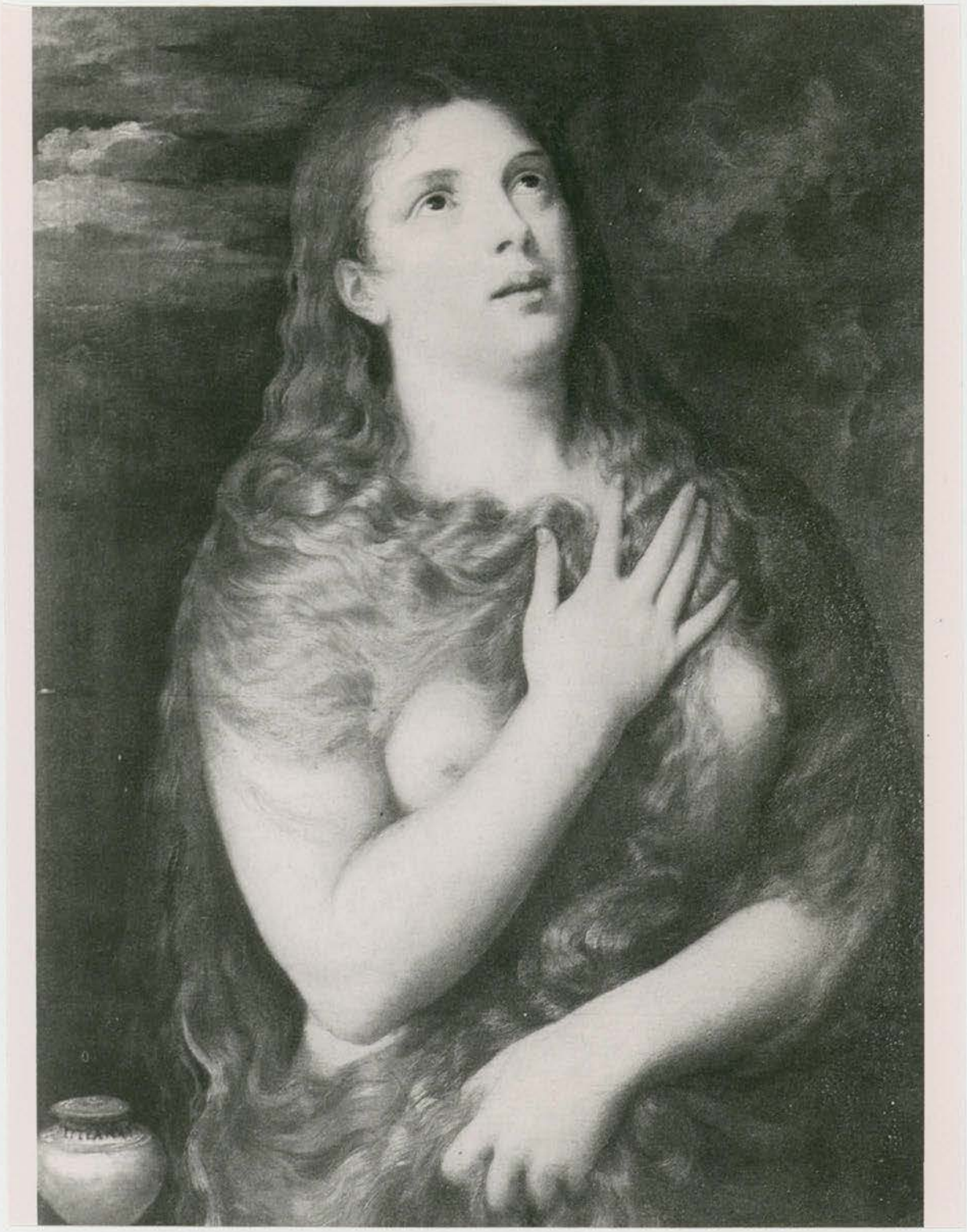

Figure 10. *Mary Magdalene in Penitence*. Titian. c.1530-35. Panel. 84X69cn. Florence, Pitti Gallery. Wethey, *Titian*, v.I, fig. 182.

Figure 11. *Noli Me Tangere*. Marco Basaiti. Early XVI century. Milan, Brera Museum. Berenson, *Venetian Pictures of the Italian Renaissance*, fig. 595.

Figure 12. *Noli Me Tangere*. Titian. c.1512. Canvas, 109X91cm. London, National Gallery. Gould, *The Sixteenth Century Venetian School*, fig. 167.

Figure 13. *Noli Me Tangere*. Pontormo. On Michelangelo's cartoon, 1531. Canvas. 124X95cm. Milan, Private Collection. Mosco, *Tra Sacro e Profano*, fig. 50.

Figure 14. *Noli Me Tangere*. Andrea del Sarto. 1512. Panel. 175X155cm. Florence, Uffizi. S.Freedberg, *Andrea del Sarto*, fig. 21.

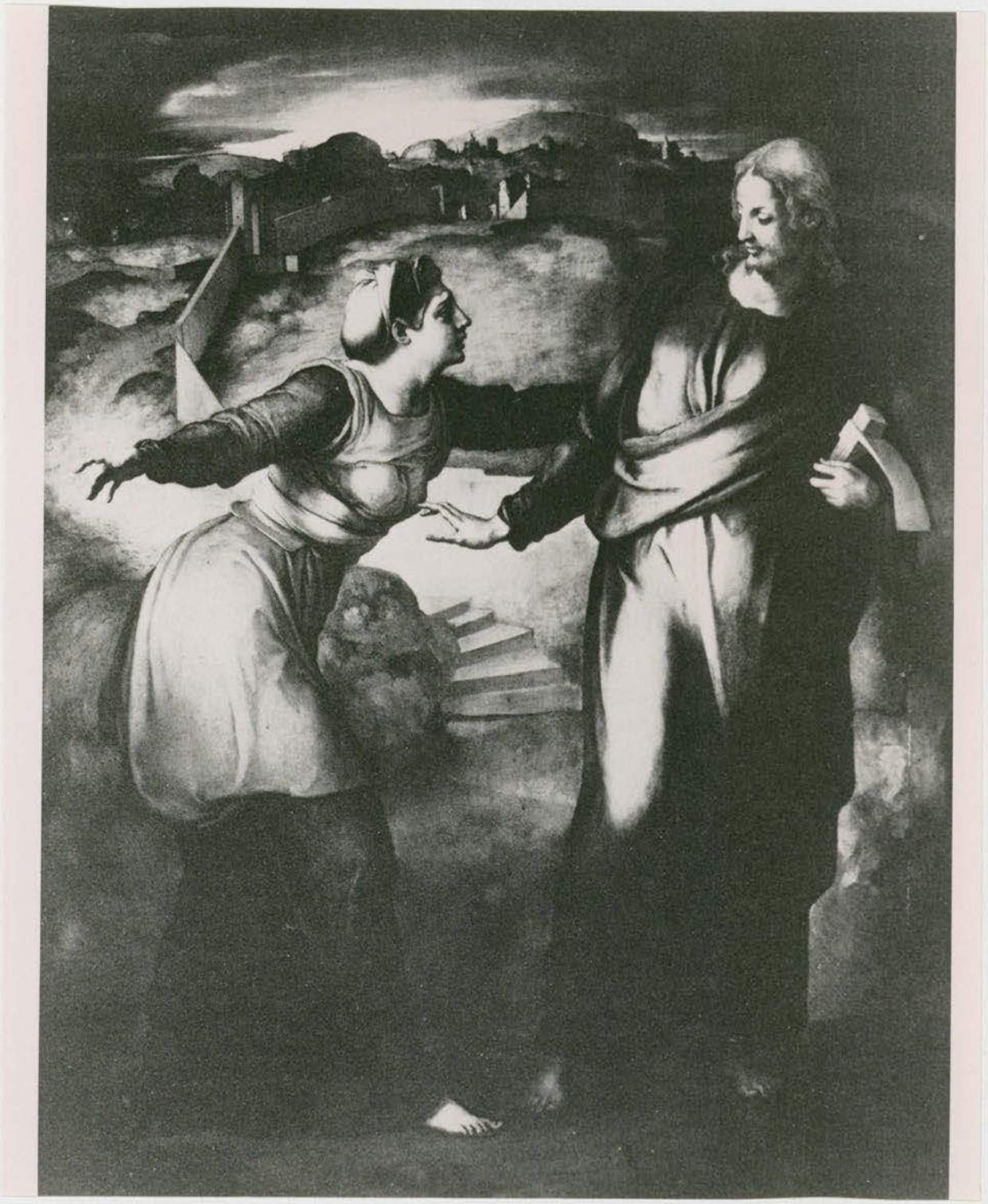

Figure 15. *Noli Me Tangere*. Bronzino. c.1532. Canvas. 175X134cm. Florence, Casa Buonarroti. Mosco, *Tra Sacro e Profano*, fig. 51.

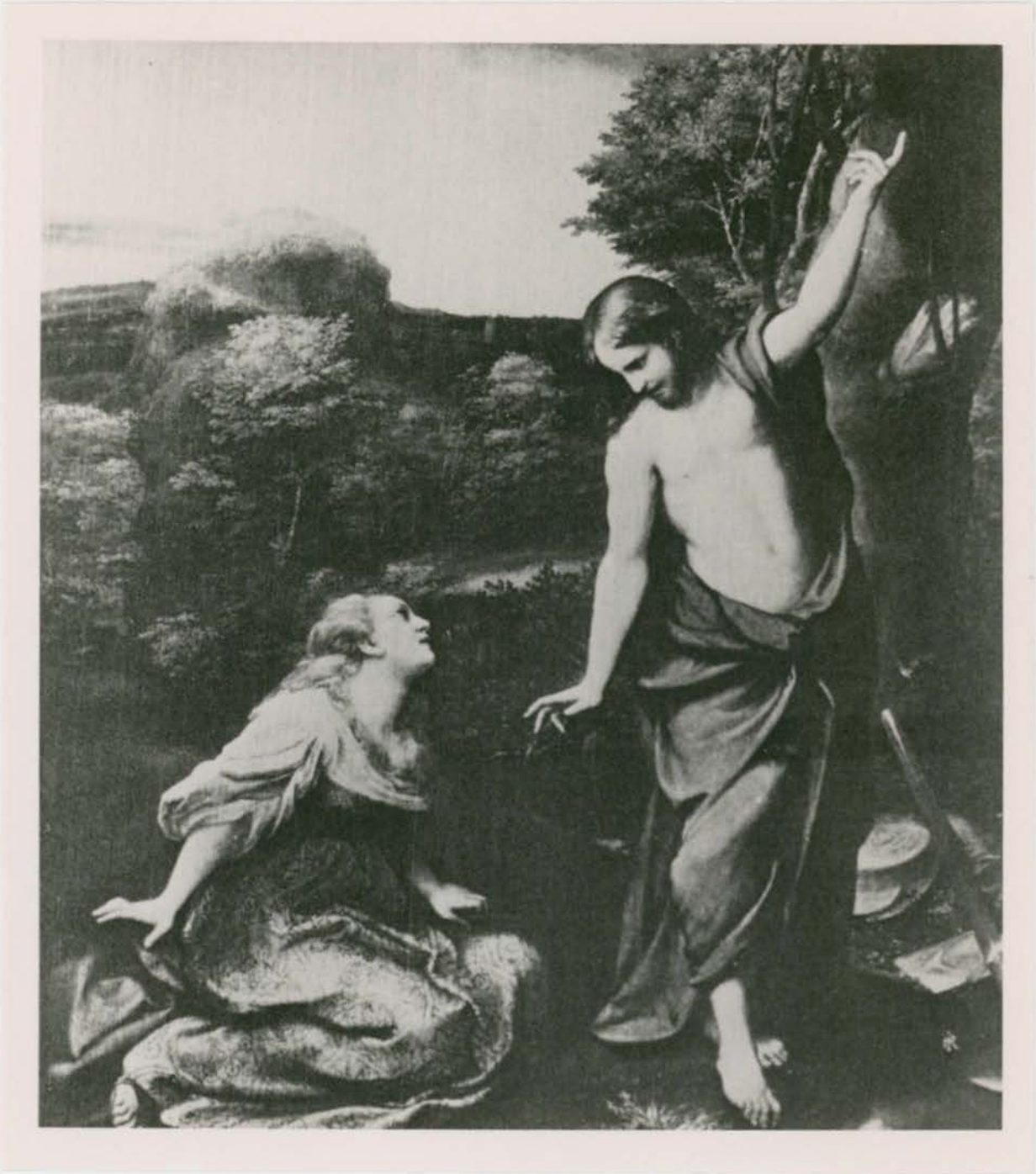

Figure 16. *Noli Me Tangere*. Correggio. c.1534. Canvas. 130X103cm. Madrid, Prado Museum. Mosco, *Tra Sacro e Profano*, fig. 2.

Figure 17. *Noli Me Tangere/The Fall*. Pordenone. 1534. Fresco. Santo Stefano Cloisters. Fiocco, *Il Pordenone*, fig. 174.

Figure 18. *Noli Me Tangere* (fragment). Titian. 1553. Canvas. 68X62cm. Madrid, Prado Museum. Wethey, *Titian*, v.I, fig. 103.

Figure 19. *Noli Me Tangere* (copy of 1553 Titian by Sánchez Coello before 1574.) Canvas. 231X224cm. Madrid, Escorial, Upper Cloister. Wethey, *Titian*, v.I, fig. 230.

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