PONTORMO IN THE CAPPONI CHAPEL IN SANTA FELICITA IN FLORENCE

by Jack Wasserman

On the 22nd of May, 1525, Ludovico di Gino di Ludovico Capponi, a Florentine banker and merchant, purchased what is known as the Capponi Chapel in the church of Santa Felicita in Florence. The chapel had been designed by Filippo Brunelleschi in about 1422 for the Barbadori family and bore the dedication to the Annunciation.[1] Capponi had the chapel partially rebuilt, changed its dedication to the Pietà, and commissioned Jacopo Carucci, called Pontormo, to decorate it.[2] The artist proceeded to create a comprehensive scheme that was entirely exceptional in Florence. He painted a fresco in a spherical dome and the illusion of a heaven populated with figures featuring God the Father. (The fresco and dome were destroyed in the eighteenth century.) The round panels in the four pendentives representing the Evangelists followed and broke with the custom of placing such notable figures in the four compartments of cross vaults. The altarpiece (fig. 1) is particularly arresting. Pontormo gave it a compact composition by compressing the monumental figures toward the picture plane. Yet he preserved an impression of depth with illumination between the figures; giving the figures ample volume; arranging groups of figures in a sequence of parallel planes; and reducing the dimensions of the woman and her neighboring male in the upper zone of the altarpiece. The last painting Pontormo completed, the damaged *Annunciation* fresco, is a striking example of a graceful and ballet-like interaction between the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin. The composition included a vase with lilies centered between the two figures (the area is now occupied by the seventeenth-century marble reliquary dedicated to San Carlo Borromeo).[3] My principal concern in this paper is with the lost dome fresco and with the altarpiece, both of which have been the subject of several studies. I will evaluate each study and offer my own assessment of the two compositions and their iconographies and their interrelationship with each other and with the other components of the chapel decoration.

The Dome Fresco

As Giorgio Vasari writes in "Le vite" of 1568, "Nel cielo della volta [Pontormo] fece un Dio Padre che ha intorno Quattro Patriarchi molto belli."[4] But his description is so vague as to rule out consensus on the destroyed fresco's compositional structure. There is also a set of eight drawings that are generally believed to be preparatory studies for God the Father and the individual patriarchs. But the authenticity of some of the drawings has been questioned and, in any case, they need to be carefully examined for their relevance to the dome composition, because the fresco no longer exists. Janet Cox Rearick, in an article of 1956, identified three of the drawings as "explicitly clear" projects for God the Father from initial conception to final state. In one drawing the figure is naked, in another it is dressed (figs. 2 and 3, respectively). In the third drawing the figure is also dressed, and because it appears on the verso of figure 2, it should be considered chronologically intermediary between the other two.[5] Cox Rearick collected them in the first edition of her comprehensive catalogue of Pontormo's drawings of 1964 together with six other sketches she classifies as representing patriarchs.[6] Five drawings of the patriarchs are illustrated here in figures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 (figures 6 and 7 are Cox Rearick's own attributions).[7]

Aided by these drawings and Vasari's text, Cox Rearick attempted a hypothetical reconstruction of the dome fresco in her 1964 catalogue. She conjectured that God the Father had been situated "in the center of the vault with the four patriarchs sitting below looking up at him".[8] John Shear-

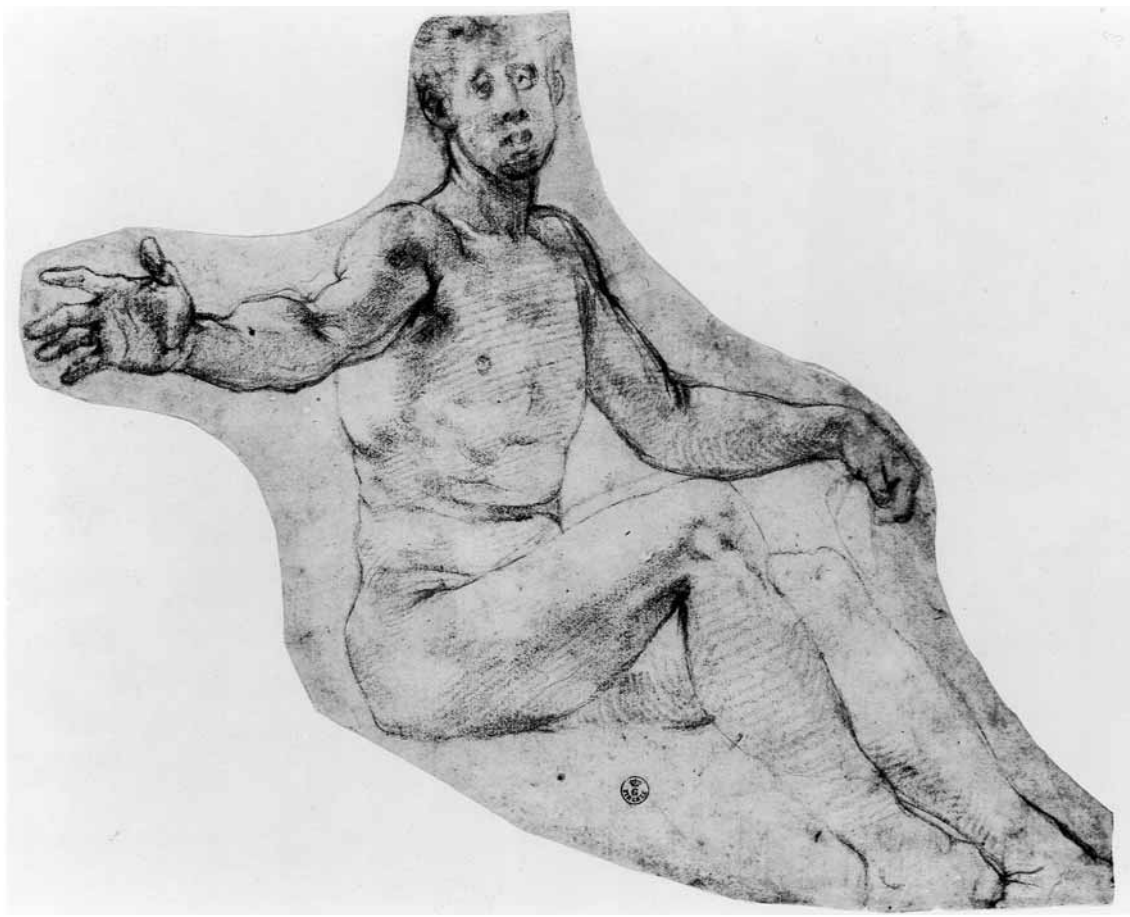
man refuted her conjecture in 1971. He argued that the angle at which God the Father is depicted in the three drawings, "from a little below the knees", is identical to the angle of vision in the drawings of the patriarchs. He concluded that the God the Father and the patriarchs should all be seated together "on a parapet or attic, notionally erected on the ring of the dome".[9] He placed God the Father above the northern entrance arch of the chapel facing the altarpiece, principally because the light that illuminates the figure in the drawing would appear to be an extension of the light that enters the window of the chapel.[10] At the summit of the dome Shearman inserted the Dove of the Holy Spirit (which Vasari does not mention) to form a Trinity in a zigzag pattern with Christ in the altarpiece and God the Father opposite him at the rim of the dome.[11]

Cox Rearick acceded to Shearman's counter interpretation of the dome fresco in 1981.[12] Leo Steinberg also agreed with Shearman's logic in 1973, but with two provisos.[13] One proviso is that God the Father be seated somewhat above the patriarchs, since He would not have "consorted with the four patriarchs on the same parapet".[14] Steinberg's other proviso is that God the Father be combined with two patriarchs in a close-knit triangular composition, because both look up at where Steinberg would situate the Divinity.[15] Philippe Costamagna accepts Steinberg's tripartite assemblage of God the Father and two patriarchs, but he transfers the group to the area above the altarpiece to form a closer knit Trinity than Shearman contemplated, with God the Father now inserted between Christ below and the Dove of the Holy Spirit above.[16] The tripartite grouping of God the Father and two patriarchs over an arch of the chapel creates a problem, which neither Steinberg nor Costamagna raise: there is no place for the other two patriarchs to be located (over arches or over pendentives?) without compromising the compositional symmetry typical of Renaissance vault decorations in which four figures of equal status are represented.

Cox Rearick could not have known that her identification of God the Father would be the single factor that would refute her conception of the dome fresco. Nor do her critics realize that the identification also provides grounds for unraveling their counter proposals. If Shearman is right that God the Father (as we know him from the drawings) must have been seated on the same level as the patriarchs, and if Steinberg is right that a God the Father would not have consorted with patriarchs, may not, then, the figure itself be a patriarch? I would point out that the dimensions of the presumed God the Father, as the drawings depict them, are hierarchically indistinguishable from those of the patriarchs. Furthermore, the drawings portray Him indecorously.[17] Do we ever encounter the Deity in Renaissance art with his ankles crossed (as, on the other hand, we find in holy men of lesser rank — think of Michelangelo's Jeremiah in the Sistine Ceiling)? And would we expect him to wear a turban-like headdress (visible at the proper right side of his head)? Significantly, the head of another patriarch is similarly dressed (compare figs. 3 and 5).[18]

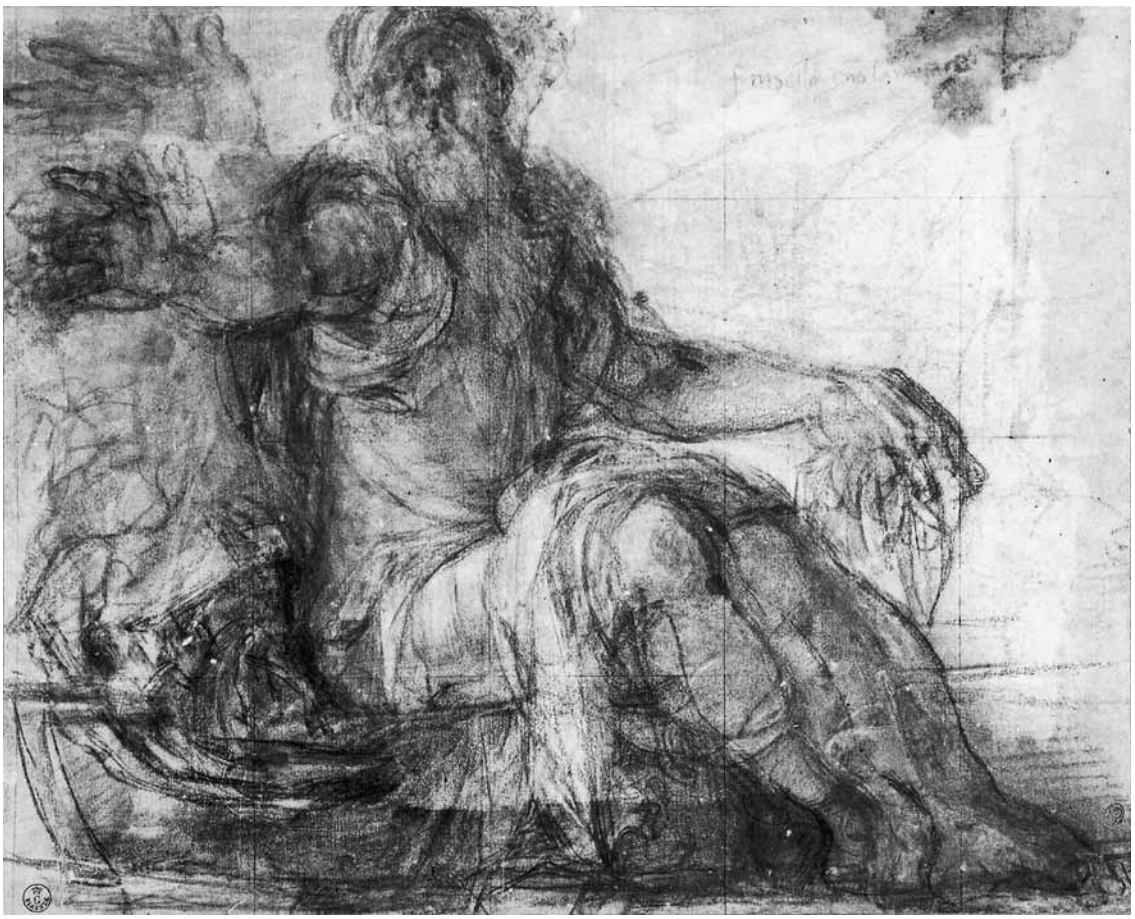
We can conclude, then, that Pontormo's God the Father had, indeed, occupied the center of the dome. Here God the Father would be arranged in a target-like relationship with the four patriarchs seated lower down, each one above a pendentive (not ring-like, as is implied in the reconstructions of Shearman and Steinberg). That, I think, is how Vasari characterized the composition when he wrote that God the Father "ha intorno" four patriarchs. A clear precedent for such a disposition of figures is Pontormo's earlier decoration on the barrel vault of the Chapel of Leo X in the former convent of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (fig. 9). God the Father is positioned in the exact center of the vault and four putti on a lower level are arranged around him.[19] However, placing God the Father in the center of the dome in the Capponi Chapel is likely only if his image was different from the one Cox Rearick proposed. The model for this figure may have been the one Pontormo had painted in the Chapel of Leo X. He kneels in a roundel with his lowered left hand placed on an open book and his right hand raised in blessing.[20] In the Capponi Chapel, as in the Chapel of Leo X, God the Father most likely would have faced the entrance (his back to the altarpiece) to bless the members of the Capponi family as they entered to participate in the Mass for the dead.

1 Jacopo Pontormo, Pietà. Florence, Santa Felicita, Capponi Chapel.



2 Pontormo, Nude study for a Moses (formerly identified as God the Father). Florence, GDSU, inv. 6686 F r.

If the so-called God the Father was indeed a patriarch, he would most likely have been situated above the pendentive formed by the two arches that converge on the free-standing pier of the chapel. Here the figure would be illuminated from the direction of the window, as is required by the drawing in which we observe him.[21] Moreover, the five patriarchs Cox Rearick includes in her catalogue of Pontormo drawings would be increased to six. But Vasari saw only four patriarchs in the dome. Cox Rearick and Shearman made no effort to select the four. Steinberg did, nominating those I illustrate as figures 4, 6, 7, and 8.[22] Of the four, I would accept only figure 4 as a certain sketch for the dome composition, because the verso of the sheet contains sketches for the youth on the left carrying Christ in the chapel altarpiece.[23] I find acceptable also the former God the Father (fig. 3) and the nude male in figure 5. They relate stylistically to figure 4 and share with it two fundamental characteristics: the same viewpoint from below, and a sitting posture with both feet resting squarely on a base.[24] (The fourth patriarch I am unable to single out from among Pontormo's drawings.) So matched, the three figures have a consistency of composition such as we traditionally find in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century vault decorations in Florence and elsewhere in Italy.[25] They may, consequently, serve as a control group with which to judge the legitimacy of the three remaining drawings (figs. 6, 7, and 8).



3 Pontormo, Study for a Moses (formerly identified as God the Father). Florence, GDSU, inv. 8966 S.

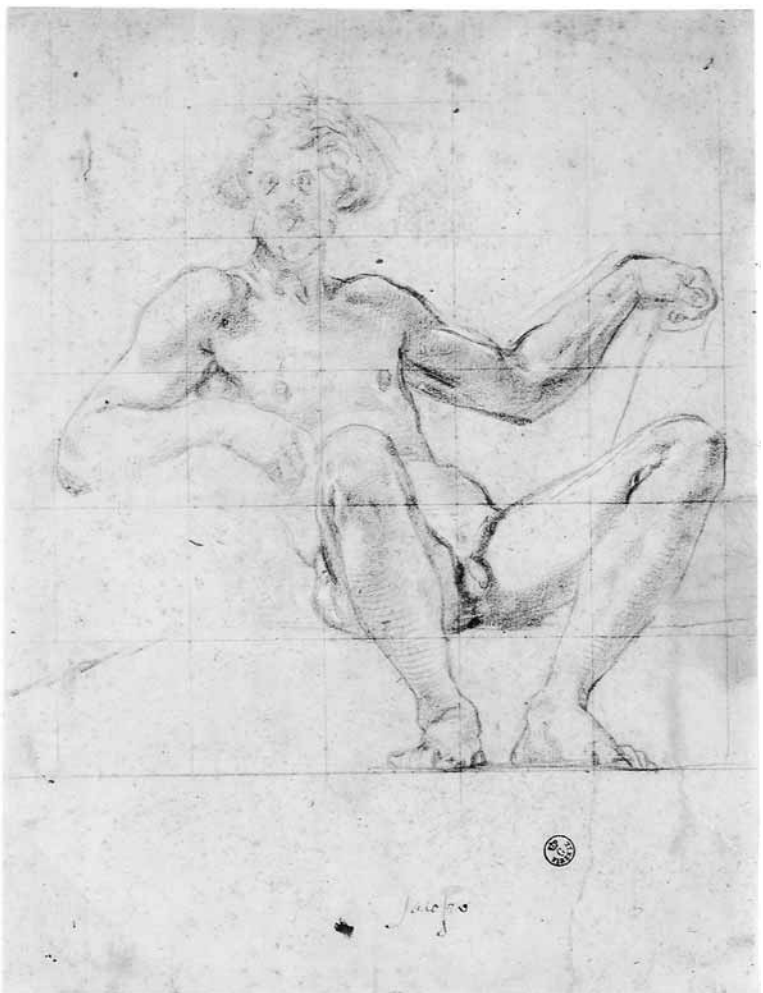
I would eliminate all three from consideration as sketches for the patriarchs, because each in its own way disrupts the general symmetry and positioning of the control-group figures (unless, of course, they were rejected first thoughts, for which I find no justification). For instance, the male in figure 7 dangles his right leg considerably below the left leg. It is an arrangement incompatible with the parallel placement of the feet in the control group. Moreover, he is designed to be seen from slightly above the shoulders, not 'di sotto in su'. Costamagna, without acknowledging these discrepancies, in fact, considers the figure an independent study that Pontormo made for Bronzino's personal use, noting that sketches by this artist appear on the verso of the page.[26] The youthful male in contemporary costume strikes an even more discordant note, not only for his attire but for his reclining posture, presumably on a mound (fig. 6).[27] Finally, the half figure of a male (fig. 8) may, as Luisa Marcucci contends[28], reveal a draftsmanship similar to the sketch in figure 4, but, like figure 7, one looks down at him from above.[29]

If we now approach the drawings from the point of view of iconography, a question comes to mind: are the worthy men in the fresco whom Vasari identifies as patriarchs really patriarchs? Everyone who has written on the chapel agrees that they are, but Shearman alone attempted to name them. He speculated that they are Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob on the model of the

4 Pontormo, Study for a patriarch. Florence, GDSU, inv. 6613 F r.

patriarchs in Filippino Lippi's vault of the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence.[30] It is difficult to accept Shearman's conjecture, if only because the figures in the control group (and even those I have discarded) do not have attributes remotely resembling those in Lippi's vault. There, Adam, holding a hoe, stands beside a tree around which a serpent wraps itself; Noah sits beside an Ark; Abraham carries a knife and sits next to an altar bearing a relief with the sacrifice of Isaac; and Jacob embraces a bowl, an allusion to his having poured oil on the stone pillow on which he slept as he dreamt of the heavenly ladder.[31]

Actually, the three members of the control group do hold objects: a cloth (fig. 3), a book (as Cox Rearick has speculated)[32] (fig. 5), and a scroll that rolls out of the right hand of the figure that is more readily acceptable as a preliminary sketch for the fresco (fig. 4). But do we not generally see scrolls carried by prophets?[33] To be sure, patriarchs also hold scrolls, but only in the company of prophets. One example among several: the scroll-bearing patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob accompany the prophets Enoch, Elijah, and Moses on the wall next to the *scarsella* in the Baptistery of Florence.[34] Thus, we can draw four alternatives, none of them final. One is that the figures in the control group are not projects for the dome composition, though I am reluctant to go that far, since they have the appropriate design credentials — similar sitting postures and common viewpoints from below. A second is that they are patriarchs, as Vasari says, although I am arguing against this identification. Does he not, after all, wrongly identify



5 Pontormo, Nude study for a patriarch. Florence, GDSU, inv. 6590 F.

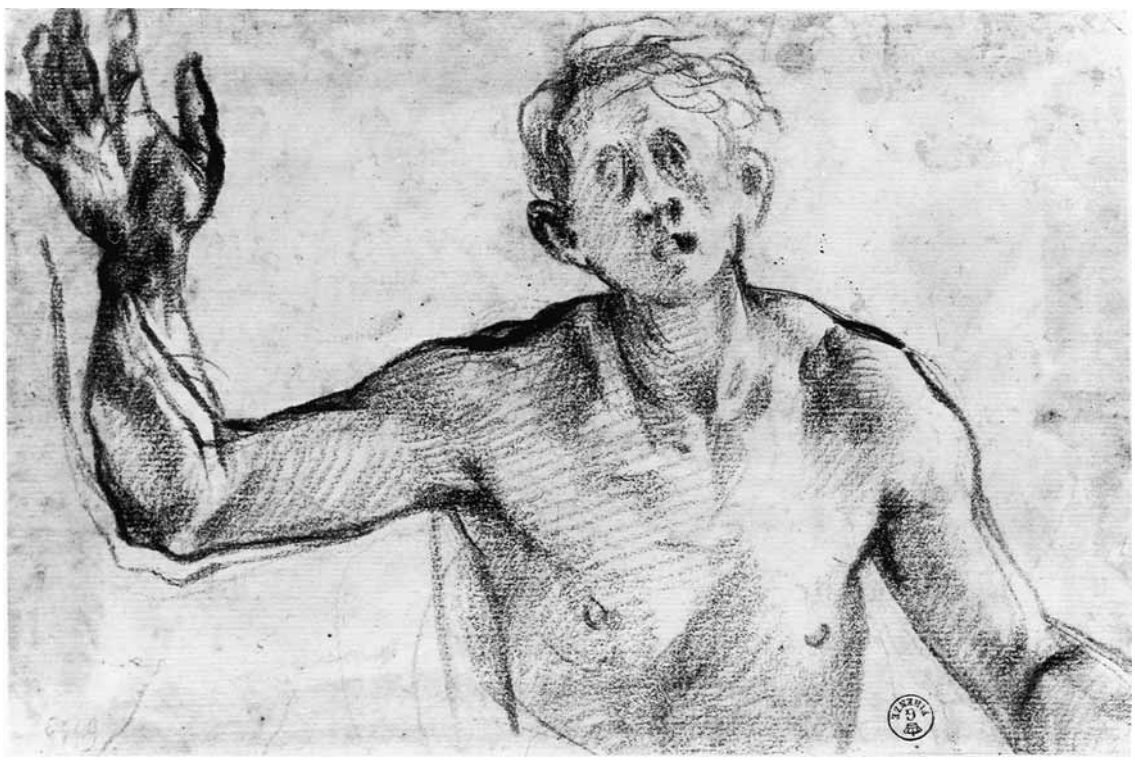
as patriarchs the four scroll-bearing, but nameless, prophets in Bonamico Buffalmacco's vault decoration in the Badia di Settimo.[35] A third is that Vasari was led to assume that all four figures were patriarchs by the presence in the dome of one or two recognizable patriarchs. He so designated the four figures in Alesso Baldovinetti's vault fresco in the Gianfigliazzi Chapel in Santa Trinita, Florence. It includes the patriarchs Noah and Abraham holding respectively the Ark and a knife, David who wears the royal crown, and the prophet Moses with the tablets.[36] Baldovinetti, in fact, had referred to all four as prophets in a notebook he kept to record the costs he had incurred in painting the vault.[37] The contradiction between what Vasari thought he saw and what Baldovinetti knew he had painted feeds into the fourth conclusion: the distinction between patriarchs and prophets was fluid in Pontormo's day. Such fluidity is found already in the Bible, as when David is referred to in the same breath as patriarch and prophet (Acts 2, 29-30). Thus, when scroll-bearing prophets are found in paintings together with patriarchs, they, too, may have been considered to be patriarchs. So, in Pontormo's dome fresco they may have

6 Pontormo, Study of a sitting youth with raised arm. Florence, GDSU, inv. 6632 F r.

7 Pontormo, Nude study of a sitting youth with raised arm. Florence, GDSU, inv. 6513 F r.

been patriarchs, prophets, or both. If patriarchs, they may be "Among those in heaven ready to receive the soul in triumph", as John Sale surmises with reference to the patriarchs in Lippi's Strozzi Chapel vault fresco.[38] And if prophets, it need hardly be documented that their place in the overall chapel iconography would be to prophecy the advent of Christ and his mercy and even, like Moses, to prefigure Christ in several of his miracles.

Turning to the individual identities of the control group, we face the additional obstacle that only one of them has a recognizable attribute, a scroll (fig. 4), which cannot be used to name him. The other two hold objects that have indefinite shapes. Is, for example, the rudimentary rectangular object upon which the man in fig. 5 rests his hand a book, or even a tablet? If a book, it is of little help in identifying its owner, since prophets and patriarchs both at times hold books.[39] If a tablet, the figure would have some resemblance to Michelangelo's *Moses*, except that its general posture is too relaxed in comparison with Michelangelo's statue, and for the prophet who gave the Hebrews and Christians alike the ten basic laws of social and religious behavior. So he, too, is nameless. As it happens, the presumed God the Father also (fig. 3), indeed more closely, resembles Michelangelo's *Moses*. His torso is similarly taught, upright, elongated, and clothed in a sleeveless shirt; his head is oval in shape and his beard long; and a heavy garment courses over his lap. Can he, then, represent Moses, even in the absence of the tablets and horns, his familiar attributes? I would answer yes, if the cloth in the figure's left hand identifies him as the prophet.



8 Pontormo, Half-length study of a nude youth. Florence, GDSU, inv. 6519 F r.

John Shearman and Leo Steinberg, by implication, exclude this possibility in their interpretations of the cloth. For Steinberg, the cloth is no more than the end of the garment draped over the figure's lap. I believe Steinberg misreads the relationship between the cloth and the garment, because in the earliest of the three sketches, the figure, though entirely naked, already holds the cloth in the left hand (fig. 2). For Shearman, the cloth simply complements the napkin in the center of the altarpiece to connect the two paintings visually (fig. 1).[40] Such a pictorial connection between the two cloths is considerably diminished if, as a prophet (or even as a patriarch), the figure has to be relocated from the area opposite the altarpiece to a less prominent place above a corner pendentive (as I will explain below). Can the cloth, then, be a veil and, as such, identify the figure as Moses?

Admittedly, it is highly speculative to give an affirmative answer to this question, because representations of the prophet with a veil occur only in a few transalpine early medieval illuminations.[41] These would have been unknown to sixteenth-century Italian artists. But what they would surely have known is that Moses is dramatically associated with the veil in the Bible. We read in Exodus (34, 29-35) that upon receiving the two tablets of the Law from God, Moses came down from Mount Sinai and "knew not that the skin of his face shone […] and […] all the children of Israel […] were afraid […] And afterward all the children of Israel came close to [Moses]: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And until Moses had done speaking with them, *he put a veil on his face* […] *But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off* [the italics are mine]". Paul (2 Corinthians 3, 12-18) turned the episode into an influential theology. He writes "we [speaking of himself]

act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened […] Indeed, to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed."[42] Paul accuses the Israelites of being blind to Christ's mission to bring humankind a spiritual glory that supersedes the glory of Moses's Commandments, and claims that only by removing the veil from their eyes, that is, by accepting Christ, will they recognize this truth.[43] One would expect Pontormo, or Capponi, or a prelate who may have advised them on the theology of the altarpiece, to have been familiar not only with Paul's text, but also with the writings of the early medieval theologian Origen, which were very popular in the Renaissance.[44] Noteworthy is Origin's homily "On the glorified countenance of Moses and on the veil which he placed on his face".[45]

If the figure is, indeed, Moses, then Pontormo painted in his fresco a rare iconography, in which the prophet, seated in the dome of heaven, has removed the veil from his face in the presence of God the Father. Moreover, having removed the veil also in the presence of Christ in the altarpiece, Moses learns that the glory of the Old Testament Laws he gave to the Israelites is surpassed by a superior glory Christ gave to humankind.[46] Origen writes that Moses "puts aside the veil having turned to the Lord".[47] And Paul states in 2 Corinthians 3, 9: "For if the ministration of condemnation [that is, the Commandments] is glory, much more does the ministration of righteousness [that is, Christ's offer of grace] exceed in glory."

The Altarpiece

Giorgio Vasari, in describing the iconography of the altarpiece as a continuing narrative from Christ's deposition to his burial, depended more on what the Evangelists wrote and on Christian tradition generally than on what Pontormo literally represented (fig. 1). As Vasari writes, "In questa tavola è un Cristo morto deposto di croce, il quale è portato alla sepoltura: evvi la Nostra Donna che si vien meno, e l'altre Marie."[48] One or another of the moments Vasari describes is discounted by historians who have written on the painting. John Shearman, the first to give a comprehensive account of the altarpiece, disregards Vasari's reference to a Deposing of Christ in favor of an Entombment. Briefly summarized, Christ is taken away from the Virgin, who "swoons backward", drops her son's hand, and gestures him a "farewell".[49] Christ is then carried forward, "as if out of the frame"[50], and lowered "down to the altar-tomb", as he receives "the Father's benediction from the cupola" (with my figure 3 in mind).[51] As such, Christ "will be present in the Eucharist at every Mass".[52] Shearman, however, in a book he published in 1992, had second thoughts about Christ's burial site. He reiterates the premise that Christ's body is being removed from the Virgin and carried into the spectator's space.[53] But now he introduces the possibility that Christ is to be buried in Capponi's grave at the foot of the altar, to echo Joseph of Arimathea's offer of his town tomb to Christ.[54] If Christ's tomb is no longer the altar but a secular one, then Shearman's assumption that Christ evokes the Eucharist would not in this instance hold.

Shearman's interpretation of the iconography of the painting has had a mixed reception. Most of its appeal is his concept of a fissuring of Christ and the Virgin.[54] Historians are less favorable to his idea that Christ is about to enter the real space of the beholder and reject entirely his assumption that Christ is to be entombed, on the ground that this event is already present in the stained glass window. The window was designed by Guillaume de Marcillat and installed in 1526, the year Pontormo was engaged in composing the altarpiece.[55] Leo Steinberg is among those attracted to the idea of a fissured *Pietà*, but the destination he proposes for Christ raises problems.[56] His point of departure is Pontormo's preparatory sketch for the altarpiece in Christ Church at Oxford (fig. 10). Steinberg describes the subject of the sketch as a "durational sequence" consisting of a "three-part moment: Deposition – Pietà – Separation". The Deposition is an "antecedent descent from the cross", which Steinberg renders figuratively. In the upper left

corner of the sketch there is a ladder, he writes, "whose diagonal path descends directly upon the Madonna's lap" to form the Pietà.[57] (Actually, the ladder is on an exact axis with the raised arm of the Mary who walks briskly toward the Virgin.) Also the Pietà is an antecedent moment, since it has already fissured into the "Separation". Steinberg's thesis implies that in the drawing Christ's body has no destination after being removed from the Virgin's lap. This seems to suggest — improbably — that Pontormo had trapped himself in an indeterminate iconography. Yet, Steinberg's anti-climactic reading of the drawing has an interesting outcome which he, himself, does not express. If the "Separation" is the concluding moment of a "durational sequence", then Pontormo in the drawing retained Christ within the picture field.

But as Steinberg turns to the painting, he perceives a fundamental shift in the iconography that presages a dissolved picture surface and an actual destination for Christ that is different from the one proposed by Shearman. Echoing Shearman, he abandons Vasari's reference to a Deposing of Christ and contends that a Pietà is the initiating and antecedent moment of a narrative, because a cloud "under a preternatural light" replaces the ladder in the drawing and thus suppresses any "direct reference to the foregoing moment on Calvary".[58] Steinberg further contends that the corpse, already removed from the Virgin's lap, is lifted by two youths (whom he identifies as angels) up and out of the painting into the arms of God the Father in the vault to form "the Trinity, Gnadenstuhl, Throne of Grace".[59] It is curious for Steinberg to believe that Pontormo

9 Pontormo, Vault of Chapel of Leo X. Florence, ex convent of Santa Maria Novella.

had the license to dissent from Catholic orthodoxy and sanction Christ's ascent to heaven prior to his burial and resurrection.

I will skip forward in my chronological survey of existing hypotheses to the one Antonio Natali introduced in 2000, because, like Shearman and Steinberg (but unlike the intermediary historians I will discuss), he perpetuates the idea of a dissolved picture plane. Natali rejects all previous interpretations of the painting as a Deposition, a Pietà, an Entombment, or a Trinity. He ignores altogether Vasari's text and Pontormo's compositional drawing at Oxford.[60] Instead, he ascribes to the painting an Eucharistic content based on select passages from Saint Augustine's Sermons. He writes, "Il corpo di Cristo, allora, come 'pane del cielo', 'pane degli angeli', 'pane dell'altare': immagini che a me evocano giustappunto quel lento calare del cadavere di Gesù dall'alto della pala pontormesca sulla mensa sottostante."[61] The top of the altarpiece, he conjectures, "non sarebbe nient'altro che un fondale astratto […] se non ci fosse quella sparuta nube a qualificarlo inequivocabilmente come cielo".[62] The ultimate destination of Christ's descent from a cloud-referenced heaven is not the altar table, though he will be placed on it temporarily by the two young men (like Steinberg, he classifies them as angels, and claims that also the male who hovers over the Virgin is an angel). His destination is "sulle braccia dell'officiante, che sarà il tramite per la disponibilità di quel corpo a essere il pane vivo per il popolo cristiano, nutrito nell'anima grazie al sacrificio eucaristico".[63] I think that Natali relies too heavily on extrinsic factors — on his intuition ("a me invocano") and the writings of an early Church Father — to come to grips with the painting's content, instead of a concentrated examination of the precise behaviors of the individual figures in the painting, including the woman with the cloth in her raised hand, the woman who holds Christ's hand, and the woman who embraces his head. Together, the three women foster, with other elements in the painting, an iconography that contradicts the ideas he, Shearman, and Steinberg endorse.

As they do also the observations of Georgia Wright, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, Philippe Costamagna, and Louis A. Waldman writing between 1978 and 2002. The four historians agree that the painting's iconography is more abstract than the drawing's because a cloud substitutes the ladder.[64] According to them, Christ is neither lowered nor raised but suspended in time and displayed as the Eucharist above the chapel altar.[65] Yet Wright, Lebensztejn, and Waldman assume a prior separation of Christ and the Virgin[66], an action that seems to me irrelevant to the devotional painting they envisage. Costamagna appears to agree; he proposes a totally abstract composition in which Christ is neither lowered nor raised nor carried away from nor carried to the Virgin.[67] His interpretation of the altarpiece as action-less has recently (2006) been carried to an extreme by Ilka Braunschweig-Kühl. She rejects entirely the idea that the painting conforms to any traditional iconographic type, whether it be narrative or devotional (i.e. Eucharistic). In her opinion, the painting is a "Visionsdarstellung", which derives from its color and light.[68]

In sum, there are in evidence six divergent interpretations of the painting's iconography. In chronological order they are: a Pietà that has dissolved and is about to become an Entombment; a Pietà that has dissolved and is about to become a Trinity in heaven; a Pietà that has fissured into a Eucharistic devotional image; a Eucharistic devotional image without a prior event; a descent of an adult Christ from heaven and about to settle Eucharistically in the arms of an officiant[69]; and a visionary painting free of narrative and devotional references. I will now introduce a hypothesis that diverges radically from all of them.

It may be difficult to agree on an interpretation for the altarpiece. But surely the actions of the woman who holds Christ's hand and the woman who holds up the napkin suggest that Pontormo had in mind a narrative composition, to which he added a devotional component with the woman who holds Christ's head and other details in the painting. To understand fully Pontormo's singular conception requires careful study of the preparatory drawing at Oxford (fig. 10).[70] At this early stage, Pontormo conceived a narrative in which two youths and several women are in

10 Pontormo, Compositional drawing for the altarpiece of the Capponi Chapel in Santa Felicita. Oxford, Christ Church, inv. 1336.

a procession at midpoint between a descent from Calvary (identified by the ladder at the upper left corner) and the delivery of Christ to the Virgin, before whom the procession has halted. The procession's transition from marching in a downward direction and in a rightward direction is exemplified by the arrangement of the limbs of the youth supporting Christ at the shoulders. The youth's outer, i.e. right foot is slightly oblique to denote simultaneously descent and move-

ment toward the center of the composition, while the inner foot and both his legs are in profile to denote a decisive rightward movement. Indeed, Cox Rearick describes several preparatory sketches for the youth's legs in that exact same position as "walking to the right"[71], but she does not carry her observation into an evaluation of the compositional drawing or of the painting. As for the procession's state of rest, that is announced by the squatting youth in the center over whose shoulder Christ's legs are draped. At this point the Mary on the right detaches herself and hastens to reach the sorrowing mother. Accordingly, the drawing narrates an event that occurs in an ideal space.

Pontormo, I will argue, transferred the Pietà iconography from the drawing into the painting, but he made changes and adjustments intended to strengthen the idea of the procession's descent and ease the discord in the drawing between the persistent forward movement of the youth on the left and the procession having come to a halt.[72] In the compositional drawing, the march down from Calvary is somewhat blurred by the youth's butting his back against the edge of the page, and so is the movement toward the right by the backward turn of his head. In the painting, a 'pentimento', a shadowy area to the right of the youth's right leg, documents Pontormo's transitional plan for easing these dissonances (fig. 11). It shows that he initially re-

11 Pontormo, Pietà (detail). Florence, Santa Felicita, Capponi Chapel.

tained the youth's limbs exactly as in the drawing but at the same time moved him away from the edge of the painting and up from its base line well into the picture space.[73] In the final stage in the painting, Pontormo keeps the youth's left limb in its rightward walking mode but turns the entire right limb — foot and leg — perpendicular to the picture plane. By so modifying the right leg Pontormo converts movement into inertness, as if the youth is suddenly aware that the procession has halted.[74] Moreover, the right leg in its new frontal position assists the arched back to sustain more effectively than in the drawing the heavy weight of the dead body.[75]

It is essential to my interpretation of the painting as a narrative recounting the convergence of Christ and the Virgin that Pontormo added a gray-brown path composed of two boulders joined at the extreme left (fig. 11). In fact, a document in the church archive, which I publish here for the first time, reveals that the path had been deeper, before about 5 centimeters were cut off from the bottom of the panel in 1840 (fig. 12).[76] A horizontal piece of wood was inserted at one point to make the painting fit the frame (fig. 13). Consequently, the enlarged path and shadows cast by the feet of the two males and the woman on the right establish a noticeable volume of space that goes deep into the lower third of the painting and merges with the mound on which the Virgin sits. The visible part of the path (some of it is hidden by the crouching figure) forms a trajectory that flows downward on the left from well behind the Christ-carrying youth. It continues across the foreground of the picture where the second youth squats, and turns upward on the right to be taken by the woman as she advances toward the Virgin.[77] Christ is close behind her, his body arched outward on left and inward on the right to correspond to the arched course of the path.

So, in the context of a Pietà being enacted, it is clear that the Mary intends to deliver to the Virgin the cloth she holds in her raised left hand. How this action relates to my interpretation of the iconography depends on one's perception of what the Virgin will do once she receives the cloth.[78] Some think it is a napkin she will use to dry her tear-filled eyes.[79] Indeed, it is easy to believe that a napkin handed to a sorrowing mother is intended as an offer of solace. As such, it can have no effect on the question of whether the dead Christ approaches or departs from the Virgin; she would cry in either case. But the cloth must have a significance that reaches beyond the ordinary. It cannot be a coincidence that it is so prominently displayed in the near center of the picture and as the near fulcrum of a circular rhythm established by the counter-arched bodies of Christ and the figure (St. John?) hovering over the Virgin.[80] In fact, the cloth fills what Kurt W. Forster and Steinberg characterize as the "vacant center" of the composition. However, to Forster the "vacant center" is occupied by "a cool, shadowy blue" of the Virgin's garment, while to Steinberg, the "vacant center" is occupied by the Virgin's "untenanted lap", since in his opinion, Christ has been removed from it.[81] But the Virgin's garment and lap do not attract much attention, because both are partially hidden by Christ's legs and the raised arm of the woman on the right. The cloth, on the other hand, captures the beholder's eye by its compositional centrality, a circumstance that can, I believe, be explained with a passage from the Pseudo-Bonaventura's fourteenth-century "Meditations on the Life of Christ". The Franciscan monk describes the event of the Pietà in which "John and Nicodemus […] began to shroud the body [of Christ] and prepare it with linen cloths according to the Jewish custom. The Lady always held His head on her lap, because its preparation was reserved for her […] Then she wiped His face and, kissing His mouth and eyes, *wrapped His head in a napkin*, and diligently made Him ready [my italics]."[82] My surmise, based on this text, is that the cloth in the painting is the *sudarium* the Virgin will use to wrap Christ's head in preparation for burial.[83] (I will expand on the grave linen later in this paper.) As the sudarium, the napkin becomes a conduit to an evolving Pietà.[84]

The woman on the left (largely hidden by the Christ-bearer) is another such conduit. She pulls the dead Christ along with her by gripping his wrist firmly with her right hand as she hastens to reach the Virgin. This interpretation differs from Shearman's claim that she takes hold of Christ's hand as the Virgin drops it and joins the two youths who carry him to the grave. It

12 Pontormo, Pietà (photomontage with addition to bottom part of the altarpiece). Florence, Santa Felicita, Capponi Chapel.

is also at variance with Wright's opposing claim that, by taking Christ's hand and looking back at the Virgin, the woman reduces the potential for Christ's movement in any direction.[85] I have three reasons for my perception of the woman's action. First, she turns her head entirely into the depth, so that her profile is almost hidden from view (she may be presumed to look at the Virgin, but seems actually to look at no one and her headpiece covers the entire front of her face).[86] More decisive is the way her pink drapery billows out behind her in the direction of the picture plane, indicating that she is moving in an opposite direction. (The woman's drapery is visible on the sleeve of her left arm, under and between the arms of the woman who cradles Christ's head, and at the shoulder and waist of the young male who carries Christ.) Finally, the

13 Pontormo, Pietà. Florence, Santa Felicita, Capponi Chapel.

woman holds up Christ's hand to present it to the Virgin, in succession to her being given the sudarium.[87] We may assume that, upon receiving the hand, the Virgin will place it against her cheek[88], having first venerated the wound.[89] In the painting the Virgin is not yet so engaged, but looks at Christ's face and extends her right arm sideways[90], a gesture that, far from indicating that she had dropped Christ's hand (as Shearman believes), actually signals and accentuates a grieved state of mind as she prepares to receive her son's crucified body. Note that the Virgin's hand in the drawing is partly hidden behind the head of the Mary and so is entirely unrelated to Christ's hand (fig. 10). In the painting, her hand, though visible, continues to be spatially remote from his, with the sudarium intervening between them. The Virgin swoons (in Vasari's words "si viene

meno"), moreover, but not in the total sense of collapsing, as she often does in representations of the Pietà, the Crucifixion, and the Entombment.[91] Instead, she seems to rise or slip from her seat and lays bare her desperate feelings with half-closed, tear-marked eyes, slightly open mouth, and gesturing right arm.[92]

A Pietà, if I am right, is about to come to fruition.[93] But Pontormo did not invent this iconography. An important predecessor are three drawings by Fra Bartolommeo that represent in clearly marked stages a Deposition that will turn into a Pietà: Christ is brought ever closer to the Virgin by two young men of no particular rank, like the two in Pontormo's altarpiece.[94] In the first two drawings, amidst a crowd of onlookers, Christ is lowered from the cross in consecutive stages while the Virgin, kneeling, reaches out to receive him.[95] In the third drawing, the cross and the crowd have been eliminated and the two young men, now at ground level, walk forward to deliver the dead body to the kneeling mother (fig. 14).[96] Pontormo may well have seen Bartolommeo's drawings, since he was influenced by the older artist on at least one occasion, in his *Virgin and St. Anne* in the Louvre.[97] In his altarpiece Pontormo seems to have produced a variation of Fra Bartolommeo's third drawing. He reintroduced a crowd of mourners and condensed the delivery motive to that critical moment when the relationship between mother and son is about to come full circle, once again to be united as they had been at the Incarnation, frescoed on the window wall.[98]

Pontormo may have had other reasons, besides the example of Fra Bartolommeo, for diverging from the standard type of the Pietà iconography, in which Christ lies on the lap of the Virgin. Perhaps he thought that the drama inherent in an action that has yet to be resolved would intensify a relationship between Christ and the Virgin that is already tense with sorrow and anguish. But by representing Christ and the Virgin separately Pontormo may also have intended to give them equal spiritual ascendancy so that they may more readily attain individual, yet commensurate, symbolic power. The Virgin acquires ascendancy by her dominant presence in the chapel's two major paintings, the altarpiece and the *Annunciation*. Within the altarpiece the Virgin acquires ascendancy by virtue of her larger-than-life dimensions and as the core of an approximate oval formed by the U-shape configuration of the path and foreground figures, together with the inclined male hovering above her. The oval tilts outward as it descends on the left (accompanying the procession down from Calvary), and, as the oval rises on the right, it inclines inward to follow the route the woman with the napkin takes to reach the Virgin. Or else it frames the Virgin, if we factor in the bearded male (Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus) at the extreme right, to whom the extended hand of the figure hovering over the Virgin calls attention.[99] By giving such prominence to the Virgin, Pontormo possibly intended to allude to the view of St. Antoninus, the fifteenth-century archbishop of Florence, who held that she is Christ's helper in humankind's redemption (the "adjustrix redemptionis"). Or else that she is "the co-redemptrix", that is, Christ's partner in humankind's redemption, a doctrine St. Bernardine of Siena annunciated in the early fifteenth century.[100] She would have acquired either one of these empowerments by her compassionate behavior at Christ's death, epitomized in the Pietà iconography. The chapel decoration, therefore, highlights the contrast between the aged Virgin participating in an event that (it is traditionally held) as a young girl she knew would occur when she made the awesome commitment to receive the body of the Savior in her own.[101]

The Sacrificed Christ shares centrality with the Virgin through his own large and dominating presence in the immediate foreground of the picture. Does he, then, evoke the Eucharist, as we read again and again in the literature? Probably, but I think he also epitomizes the paradoxical declaration that the biblical Christ made to his apostles: "who sees me sees the Father" (John 14, 9)[102], engendering thereby the theology of the 'Volto Santo di Cristo' (The Holy Face of Christ).[103] The theology is prefigured in Exodus (33, 18-20), where we read that Moses on Mount Sinai says to God, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." To which God replies, "I will make all

my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And [then he] said thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." God's refusal to comply with Moses' request elicited in the Old Testament urgent yearnings to see his face. In Psalm 27, 8, for example, we read: "Hide not thy face far from me […] leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

Paul converted the Old Testament yearning to see God's face into another influential theological concept (the first such conversion concerned the veil of Moses). He writes (2 Corinthians 4, 6), "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Paul's concept commanded the attention of early Christian theologians, such as Tertullian.[104] But with Origen the concept gained significant traction in the period in which Pontormo worked. Origen

14 Fra Bartolommeo, Studies for carrying Christ to the Virgin. Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, inv. M.158.

wrote: "Our savior is the image of the invisible God: relative to the Father, it is truth; relative to us, to whom he reveals the Father, he is the image through which we know the Father."[105] It became sufficiently ubiquitous to have stimulated Savonarola in Florence to exclaim in a sermon he delivered on Exodus: "O signor mio, qual'è la faccia tua? La tua faccia è il tuo figliuolo: Cristo è la faccia."[106]

Pontormo was surely familiar with these sources, which he demonstrated by representing in the Chapel of Leo X (1515) the kneeling Veronica displaying a napkin imprinted with Christ's face (the relic, which was housed in St. Peters in Rome before it disappeared in 1529, was believed to reveal God's face).[107] Later, in the Certosa del Galluzzo (1522), Pontormo painted the narrative of Veronica ready to wipe Christ's face with a napkin on which it will become imprinted.[108] In the Capponi altarpiece, Pontormo makes manifest the Holy Face theology by drawing sharp attention to Christ's face in two ways. One way is to extend the Virgin's right hand over Christ's head in an oblique, tight-knit axis, with her hand and his head bound together by the head of the woman and the descending curved folds of her headpiece. Then there is a woman who cradles his head from behind with both hands and turns it deliberately away from the Virgin to be fully observed by the beholder. Thus, Christ, in the momentary hiatus before his body is delivered to the Virgin, makes visible with his face the invisible face of God the Father. Christ's face, in fact, is turned slightly upward in the direction of the dome where Moses (as I hope I demonstrated) and the Omnipotent reside, possibly to reveal to the beholder the source of the 'Volto Santo' theology.

But how did the idea come to Pontormo to represent the 'Volto Santo' theology with a full-bodied Christ, and in the context of a Pietà? The answer to the first part of the question may involve two icons that were famous in his day — the wooden *Crucifix* of Lucca and the Shroud of Turin. The *Crucifix*, dating to the sixth century, has since at least the eleventh century been referred to as the 'Volto Santo di Cristo'.[109] The Shroud of Turin, a sepulchral linen impressed with an entire human body that is argued to be Christ's[110], is associated with God's face in the "Oratio" of a Mass dedicated to the Shroud (at the time in a chapel in France). The Mass was approved by Pope Julius II on 25 April 1506 (twenty years before Pontormo painted the altarpiece) in the bull entitled "Romanus Pontifex".[111] The pertinent text, reflecting no doubt a long-established devotional tradition, reads: "Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui, in memoriam passionis Unigeniti Filii tui, Sanctam eius Sindonem, cum expressa ipsius effigie, venerandam reliquisti in terris, tribue quesumus nobis, ut per virtutem eiusdem Sancte Sindonis faciem tuam contemplari mereamur in celis."[112] It is likely that Lodovico Capponi, living in Rome at the time the bull was issued and on friendly terms with Julius II, had brought this passage (or the idea it contains) to Pontormo's attention.[113] As to the second part of the question, a *Pietà* by Botticelli in the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan was likely Pontormo's pictorial model (fig. 15). In this painting Christ reclines in the Virgin's lap and a woman from behind embraces his head and turns it to face the beholder, precisely as in the Capponi altarpiece.[114] It is useful to remember that Botticelli was reportedly a follower of Savonarola.[115] Whether or not this is true, he may well have heard the monk's "Genesis" sermon with its correlation of the faces of Christ and God the Father.[116]

The Lucca *Crucifix* demonstrates the relevance of the Crucifixion to the 'Volto Santo' theology. I will try to make the case that Pontormo included Christ's death on Calvary in his painting and rendered it symbolically with the cloud. I am mindful, of course, that most scholars interpret the cloud differently. Shearman maintains that the cloud is a passing cumulus and, by substituting for the ladder in the drawing, purifies the painting of elements of nature into "the timeless mystery of Redemption, of Death and Resurrection".[117] For Steinberg the substitution shifts the opening moment of the narrative from an antecedent deposing of Christ in the drawing to an antecedent Pietà in the painting.[118] For several other historians, the cloud transforms the painting into an abstract image.[119] And for Natali the cloud is there to 'qualify' the upper part of the

painting as heaven.[120] But the question is: why did Pontormo choose specifically a cloud with which to achieve these diverse results? Would not, say, an angel have been more appropriate, since, according to Steinberg, the two Christ-carriers are themselves angels, while Natali adds a third angel in the form of the figure that hovers over the Virgin. Part of the answer may be found in Shearman's notion that the cloud is a 'passing' cumulus, though for him its choice was of no consequence to the narrative. For me, the choice is clear, for two reasons. First, the cloud retains, together with the path below as natural phenomena, a palpable, if less obtrusive, sense of environment, thus of place and time, so that the event of a Pietà enters the range of human experience without diminishing the mystery.

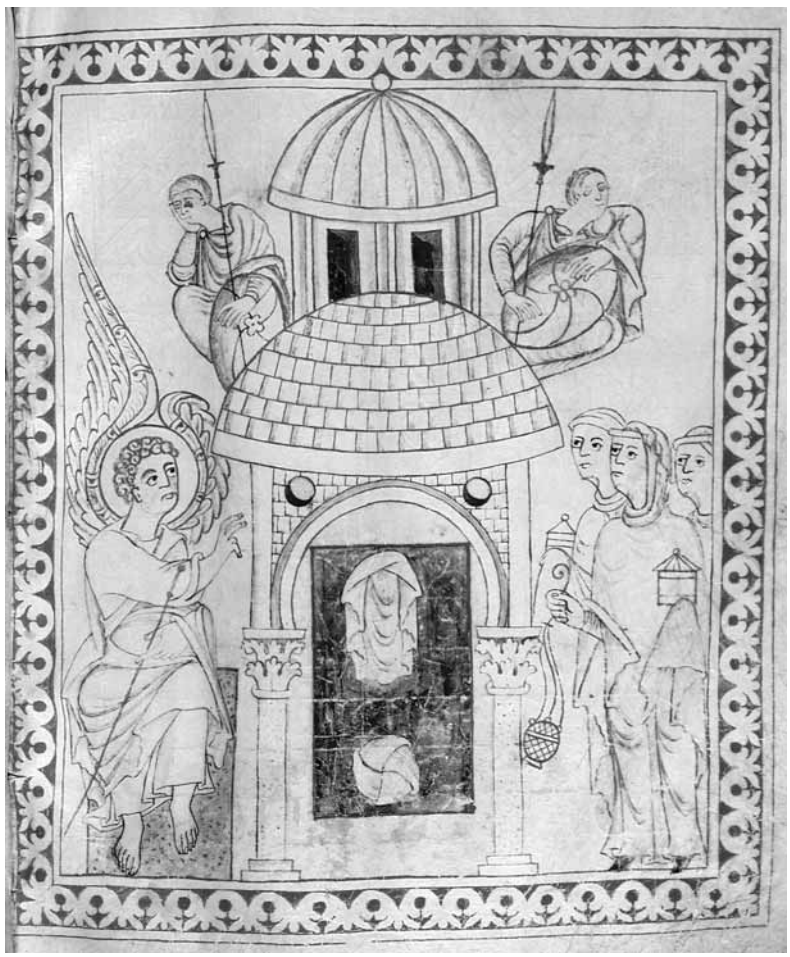
Pontormo's choice of the cloud is also crucial to the iconography of the painting. The cloud is bestowed with multiple and interrelated symbolic meanings promulgated by a light that shines obliquely down on it from above, as from heaven.[121] The light divides the cumulus into two distinct areas, the smaller one brightly lit, the other, underneath, in shadow. The cloud's shadowed underside extends rightward to mingle with the lusterless gray that pervades the upper third of

15 Sandro Botticelli, Pietà. Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoli.

the painting and thus conjures up a nocturnal state. In view of the painting's focus on a deceased Christ in the Pietà iconography, the shadowed area of the cloud would seem to signify the world turned dark at his death, hence to symbolize the crucifixion. As Luke writes (23, 44), "there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour […] And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said, Father, unto thy hands I commend my spirit […] and gave up the ghost". I would point out that a dark cloud, no doubt referring to Christ's death, appears in Dürer's *Lamentation* of 1500 in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.[122] The brightly lit area of the cloud in Pontormo's altarpiece acquires its symbolic power not only by being lit mystically from above, but also because it is conspicuously isolated from the general lighting system of the painting by the shadow that rises on the right side of the cloud. I assume, therefore, that the cloud's illuminated area is a manifestation of the invisible God. To be sure, though an illuminated cloud is a form the Divinity often takes in the Old Testament[123], in the New Testament it occurs only once, in the Transfiguration. We read in Matthew 17, 15 that "While he [Peter] spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you him.'"[124] On the other hand, God appears explicitly, though without a cloud, in a painted *Crucifixion* attributed to Botticelli[125], and also in the Pseudo-Bonaventura's "Meditations", in which God says to Christ at his death, in a variation reminiscent of Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, "come, my most beloved Son, you have done everything well. I do not wish you to be troubled any further. Come, for I will receive you to my breast and embrace you."[126] Therefore, I consider it likely that the illuminated cloud symbolizes God the Father in Pontormo's painting and that he conveys his approval of Christ's mission as his son gives up the Ghost and the world turns dark.[127] It would not be the first example of a painting representing an event from the life of Christ in which God the Father appears without biblical precedence. One such is the *Baptism* by the early-sixteenth century painter Andrea del Brescianino.[128] To be sure, in this painting God the Father is physically present, whereas in Pontormo's altarpiece he is symbolized with a cloud to call attention, I think, to the mystery intrinsic to the painting's iconography.

If the cloud in Pontormo's painting does symbolize the Father's presence at the moment of the Son's death, then, like the ladder in the drawing, it designates the area as Calvary, the starting point of the procession that has carried Christ down into the presence of the Virgin. The timespan of the procession's advance downward from Calvary and forward toward the Virgin has thus been tightened, and it is visually furthered by the woman who embraces Christ's head: her torso is arranged parallel to the cloud and her arms initiate an undulating rhythm that flows through Christ's body, his thighs angled in the direction taken by the woman who hastens to reach the Virgin. Christ in his descent from Calvary has brought with him the brilliant illumination in the foreground of the painting to make manifest, I would conjecture, the hope he grants humankind with his sacrifice on the cross. John has Christ say (12, 45-46), "I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness." Or, as Paul says (2 Corinthians 4, 6; transcribed earlier, but particularly relevant here): "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[129] Paul here associates the Holy Face theology with the transformative power of light, a concept, I believe, Pontormo brought to the painting.

I think that Pontormo was inspired by the Shroud of Turin to symbolize the Resurrection with images of the shroud and the sudarium. The sudarium we already recognized in the napkin is the center of the painting. The shroud I identify as the undulating cloth that is held under the arm of a fourth woman, the one centrally stationed at the level of the arch and looking mournfully down at the dead Christ. White in color, it is distinguishable from the blue of the veil, pink of the blouse, and mauve of the woman's skirt and is thus independent of them. Pontormo had earlier included the two linens in a *Pietà*, in the Certosa del Galluzzo.[130] In this fresco, a woman seated



16 Maries at the Tomb, from the Antiphony of Hartker of St. Gallen. St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, ms. 390-391, fol. 227-33.

on the lower right holds what I take to be the sudarium, and a bearded man standing on the left unquestionably holds the shroud. What distinguishes the two linens in the Capponi altarpiece is their close vertical alignment on the exact central axis of the painting and their being held by two women. The relationship between the funerary linens and their location in the painting suggests that Pontormo intended them to transcend their topical roles as funerary wrappings to symbolize the Resurrection. For this reading, I take as a guide an analogous display of two linens in an illumination from the eleventh-century Hartker Antiphony (fig. 16), realizing, of course, that Pontormo would not have seen it or other examples like it from earlier centuries.[131] The Hartker illumination illustrates the Gospel accounts of the Maries who came to the tomb to anoint the interred Christ and there encountered one or more angels (depending on which Gospel one reads). The angels invite the Maries to see the place where Jesus lay and then affirm that "He is risen."[132] The Maries hasten to inform the apostles of what they had seen and heard. Whereupon, according to Luke (24, 1-12), Peter enters the tomb and observes linens "laid by themselves".

John (20, 1-10) goes a step further and describes the linens as "wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings [sic] but rolled up in a place by itself".[133] The linens Peter saw are the shroud and the sudarium, presumably arranged in a manner consistent with how the corpse was laid out, one along the body, the other at the head. The presence of the linens in an otherwise empty tomb and the angel's remark that Christ "is risen" testify to the resurrection as interpreted by a number of the Church Fathers.[134] This is what the Hartker illumination intends to convey in displaying the linens arranged separately and vertically in an empty tomb surrounded by three Maries, an angel, and two sleeping soldiers (a common feature in paintings of the Resurrection). In fact, there is another illumination, dated around 1175, with the same arrangement of the funerary linens and including a band inscribed with the words "Surrexit non est hic".[135] The striking similarity between these examples and the vertically aligned linens in the altarpiece suggests to me that Pontormo intended also his linens to have a resurrection meaning. Indeed, he sanctified the linens by painting what I interpret as a halo prominently displayed directly above, and in an axis with, the shroud and the sudarium (fig. 17).[136]

The Hartker illumination seems to reflect dramatizations of the Maries at the tomb in churches in Italy and elsewhere in Europe (note that a Mary carries a censer in the illumination). The church dramas were engendered by the "Visitatio Sepulcri", a trope on the gospel accounts incorporated in the Sequentia of the Easter Mass.[137] The trope reads: "Tell us Mary what did you see on the way? I saw the tomb of the living Christ and a heavenly witness surrounded with radiance, and the sudarium and shroud of the resurrected Christ, my hope."[138] The exact origin of the trope is uncertain, but, according to Karl Young, a number of the "Visitatio" texts were in circulation

17 Pontormo, Pietà, detail of halo. Florence, Santa Felicita, Capponi Chapel.

in all countries of Europe from the tenth century forward.[139] The trope would have been made ubiquitous when it appeared in the first printed edition of the Roman Missal in 1474 and in later editions.[140] In a few of the "Visitatio" dramas studied by Karl Young two Maries raise and display the two sepulchral linens to the congregation at the point in the Easter Mass when the celebrant elevates a cross at the altar-tomb to signify Christ's Resurrection.[141] Simultaneously with the raising of the linens the Maries are to declaim: "Behold, here is the shroud and sudarium that wrapped the body that is no longer in the sepulcher." There are also specific references to the Magdalene as the one who raises the sudarium, which possibly identifies the woman who elevates the napkin in the altarpiece.[142] I cannot demonstrate that Pontormo, Capponi, or the prelate who presumably advised them had been familiar with the "Visitatio" literature or the rituals. But it is reasonable to assume that it was in this context that Pontormo chose two Maries to display the linens with their resurrection symbolism. With incredible originality Pontormo incorporated in his painting the two essential mysteries of the Passion, Christ's death and Resurrection, symbolically with the cloud and with the grave linens. They synchronize chronologically with the three other major narrative events of the Passion exhibited in the chapel decoration: the Deposition (window), the Pietà (altarpiece), and the Entombment (window).

An altarpiece is a backdrop to meditation and worship and, as such, complements the liturgy of the Sacrificial Mass. In the chapel, at the five daily Masses Capponi endowed in his will[143], we can imagine the celebrant raising the consecrated Host to reveal the true body of Christ, and for those in attendance to see its image in the altarpiece and its return to the Virgin, to which the crouching figure calls attention with his outwardly gazing eyes, sad and imploring. They see also male and female figures in mourning or in troubled contemplation, especially the old and wizened woman (the mother superior of the convent?) who looks up at the Virgin, her face suffused with suffering, and also with hope, the concomitant of Christian suffering.

The participants at the Mass, moreover, by turning to Christ have removed the veil from their eyes to learn that, as John says (1, 17), "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Moses in the dome, his veil removed in the presence of Christ in the altarpiece, has received the same enlightenment. In Origen's words, "Moses seems to me to rejoice also for this reason: he himself also now, in a sense, puts aside the veil having turned to the Lord when those things which he predicted are clearly fulfilled or when the time arrived that those things which he had concealed might be revealed by the Spirit."[144]

And as the celebrant at the altar in the chapel raises the Host, it is on an exact axis with the grave linens and their message that Christ's resurgence completes "the mystery of our Salvation".[145] In Paul's words (1 Thessalonians 4, 14), "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died." This, I believe, is the devotional message Capponi meant for Pontormo to communicate with the overall decoration. Upon burial in the chapel he would be blessed by God the Father in the heavenly dome and, witnessed by the prophets/patriarchs and the Evangelists, be assured that he, too, will rise up from the dead with Christ.

NOTES

I am grateful to Mons. Don Mino, priore of Sta. Felicita: he allowed me easy and continuous access to the Capponi Chapel; to Cristina François, archivist of the church, who displayed extraordinary generosity in bringing to my attention the unpublished documents I publish here for the first time; to Francesca Fiorelli Malesci, because my article would have been more difficult to research and write without her invaluable book on the church; to Jack Davis and Leonard Boasberg — they made the text of this paper readable; to Mark S. Tucker and Teresa Lignelli, conservators at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, who helped me define more systematically the problem of the halo in the altarpiece; to Frederick Brenk for his translations of the Latin texts; and to Wolfger Bulst for his excellent editing of the manuscript.

I am particularly indebted to Architetto Massimo Caroni for calling my attention to details in the altarpiece that might otherwise have escaped me. He is currently producing a computerized virtual model of the Capponi chapel for an integrated study I am preparing on the architecture of the chapel and the two other buildings with which Brunelleschi's name is associated: the Old Sacristy and the Pazzi Chapel.

[1] For the most recent discussion of the origins of the chapel, see *Howard Saalman*, Filippo Brunelleschi. The buildings, London 1993, pp. 83-90. For the documents relative to the purchase of the chapel and related events, see *Francesca Fiorelli Malesci*, La Chiesa di Santa Felicita a Firenze, Florence 1986, pp. 205-225, and *Louis A. Waldman*, New light on the Capponi Chapel in S. Felicita, in: Art Bull., LXXXIV, 2002, pp. 293-314.

[2] *Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, pp. 270-271. We can add a little more precision to the dating of the decorative campaign than hitherto possible, thanks to a new document discovered by *Waldman* (n. 1), pp. 293-314. The document is an agreement dated 19 September 1525 between Ludovico Capponi and Piero Guicciardini, patron of the church façade, with which Capponi receives permission to bore an opening into the west wall for a window. A window did not exist in the chapel prior to this date, as we learn from an image of the church in Catena's map of the 1470s; cfr. *Fiorelli Malesci* (n. 1), fig. 22. The agreement between Capponi and Guicciardini occurred nearly four months after Capponi purchased the chapel and was part of a larger restructuring of the chapel architecture, which included, I argued elsewhere, replacing the original dome with a new one on a lower level; *Jack Wasserman*, The Barbadori Chapel in Santa Felicita, in: An architectural progress in the Renaissance and Baroque. Essays in architectural history presented to Hellmut Hager on his sixty-sixth birthday, eds. *Henry A. Millon/Susan Scott Munshower*, University Park (Pennsylvania) 1993, pp. 25-43. Surely, Pontormo would have waited for the construction to be completed and the dust to settle before taking up the brush, plausibly not earlier than October or November of 1525. The entire decoration would likely have been terminated in late 1528 or early 1529, if Vasari is right that Pontormo had barricaded the chapel for the three years he worked there (*Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 270). It is, of course, possible that Vasari had been too literal about Pontormo's willful isolation, or else Pontormo had momentarily relaxed his restriction when, sometime before September 11, 1526, the new window opening received a painted glass prepared by Guillaume de Marcillat (for the document upon which this dating for the installation of the window depends, see *Carlo Milanesi*, Ricordo della finestra dipinta per la cappella Capponi, in: Giornale storico degli archivi toscani, III, 1895, p. 154). *Saalman* (n. 1) believes that Brunelleschi's design of the chapel remained undisturbed after Capponi purchased it.

[3] Cfr. *Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi*, Di un ramo di gigli del Pontormo e di molte finissime pietre, in: Flor. Mitt., XLIII, 1999, pp. 61-62. Paolozzi Strozzi (p. 70) contends that Pontormo had painted a frontispiece or antependium (*paliotto*) for the pre-existing altar in the Capponi Chapel. She identifies the work as Pontormo's *Madonna and Child* now in the Palazzo Capponi delle Rovinate, which was originally a circular painting recut into an oval in the eighteenth century. It is true, as Paolozzi Strozzi points out, that Orazio Capponi, Bishop of Carpentras, mentions in a letter he wrote in 1620 to Giorgio Vasari il Giovane that a "palliotto" was part of Pontormo's decoration in the chapel. But there is a negative side to her argument. Giorgio Vasari (*Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 272) wrote in 1568 that Capponi had commissioned Pontormo to paint a "quadro di Nostra Donna per la sua camera", probably his bedroom. Moreover, while it is likely that the painting had been the centerpiece of a rectilinear panel, the panel may have been a square, not a rectangle, as Paolozzi Strozzi assumes and as is necessary to its function as an antependium. Finally, the *Madonna and Child* at 101 ½ cm in diameter (according to her calculation), were it to be placed under the altar table, whose height from the pavement is 102 cm (as she contends and illustrates on page 69, figures 18 and 19), would have none of the buffering above and below that is typical of surviving antependia. (For illustrations of antependia, see *Barbara Markowsky*, Eine Gruppe bemalter Paliotti in Florenz und der Toskana und ihre textilen Vorbilder, in: Flor. Mitt., XVII, 1973, pp. 105-140, figs. 11-16). Had Pontormo designed a painted antependium, he would surely have made it fit its intended site. The antependium the Bishop saw may have been of the woven kind (the church has a large collection of them) and, writing nearly a century after his ancestor had remodelled the chapel, may have thought it a work of Pontormo.

[4] *Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, pp. 271-272.

[5] The drawing is too faded to be reproduced. Janet Cox believes, without discussion, that the drawing is the first of the group. Cfr. *Janet Cox*, Pontormo's drawings for the destroyed vault of the Capponi Chapel, in: Burl. Mag., XCVIII, 1956, pp. 17-18.

[6] *Janet Cox Rearick*, The drawings of Pontormo, Princeton 1964. She also included the drawings in her second edition: The drawings of Pontormo. A catalogue raisonné, New York 1981 (future references to Cox Rearick's catalogue will be to the 1981 edition, unless otherwise indicated). The God the Father drawings are discussed in vol. I, cat. no. 260 (GDSU, inv. 6686 F r; my figure 2); no. 259 (GDSU 6686 F v); and no. 261 (GDSU 8966 S; my figure 3, which is squared for transfer). *Frederick M. Clapp*, Les dessins de Pontormo, Paris 1914, p. 233, doubted the authenticity of my figure 2, but did not mention the other two sketches. A lightly sketched fourth state of God the Father is evident in my figure 3. It appears as faintly drawn upright head, shoulder, arm, and hand holding a napkin. There are on the same sheet two additional versions of the hand and napkin and several versions of the right hand, one of which may belong to the fourth-state figure.

[7] *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, cat. no. 265 (GDSU 6613 F r; my figure 4); no. 266 (GDSU 6590 F; my figure 5); no. 262 (GDSU 6632 F r; my figure 6); no. 264 (GDSU 6513 F r; my figure 7); no. 263 (GDSU 6519 F r; my figure 8). My figures 4 and 5 were identified by *Frederick M. Clapp*, Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo. His life and work, New Haven/London/Oxford 1916, p. 49. My figure 8 was published by *Luisa Marcucci*, Disegni del Pontormo, in: Mostra del Pontormo e del primo manierismo fiorentino, exh. cat., ed. *Umberto Baldini/ Luciano Berti*, Florence 1956, p. 91, cat. no. 121 and pl. 144b. The sixth drawing I disregard, because it was recently shown to be Federico Zuccari's project for the son in the *Resurrection of the son of the widow of Naim* in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto. See *Cristina Acidini Luchinat*, Taddeo e Federico Zuccari fratelli pittori del Cinquecento, Milan/Rome 1998-1999, I, pp. 37-39, and II, figs. 79 and 82. Cox Rearick considered the drawing a copy after an original by Pontormo; cfr. *Cox* (n. 5), p. 18, and *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), II, A217. *Leo Steinberg* (Pontormo's Capponi Chapel, in: Art Bull., LVI, 1974, p. 395, n. 32) assumes the drawing to be a reverse copy after my fig. 8.

[8] *Cox-Rearick* (n. 6), I, p. 253.

[9] *John Shearman*, Pontormo's altarpiece in S. Felicita, Newcastle upon Tyne 1971, p. 18. Shearman uses two additional arguments for removing God the Father from the center of the dome. One is that in this location his gesture of reaching outward with his right arm would be "directed senselessly to the floor of the chapel". Another is that "the figure is seated on a bench or low wall that is unimaginable traversing the apex of a dome". Shearman cites dome decorations in the Marche as possible sources for this compositional scheme. He probably has in mind Melozzo da Forlì's vaults in Loreto and Forlì, or Zaganelli's in Cotignola (illustrated respectively in *Rezio Buscaroli*, Melozzo e il melozzismo, Bologna 1955, pls. 25 and 29, and *idem*, Opere inedite di influsso melozziano in Romagna, in: Melozzo da Forlì. Rassegna d'arte romagnola, 5, ottobre 1938, p. 287, fig. 2). However, a trip by Pontormo to this region is undocumented.

[10] *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 18. Shearman evidently is aware that God the Father requires a hierarchical place of honor apart from the patriarchs.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

[12] *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, cat. no. 261.

[13] *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 391.

[14] Cfr. *ibidem*. Steinberg's model for this two-level arrangement is Pontormo's frescoes at Poggio a Caiano. The Poggio frescos are illustrated in *Luciano Berti*, Pontormo e il suo tempo, Florence 1993, pp. 212-213.

[15] A photograph of the three-figure group is published in *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 392, fig. 11.

[16] *Philippe Costamagna*, Pontormo, Milan 1994 (French edition title: Pontormo: catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint, Paris 1994), p. 184. *Saalman* (n. 1), p. 537, accepts Shearman's theory that God the Father was located above the entrance arch opposite the altarpiece, but assumes that the Divinity's attention was directed toward the *Annunciation* on the window wall (not at the altarpiece, as Shearman would have it), and that with his gesturing right hand he sends the Dove of the Holy Spirit down from the vault to impregnate the Virgin.

[17] God the Father is represented on the same level as the saints in the vault decoration by Nicolò Pizzolo in the Padua Church of the Eremitani (destroyed), but there he is considerably larger than they (the vault is illustrated in *Nicolas Clark*, Melozzo da Forlì, pictor papalis, London 1990, pls. XI and XII).

[18] Note that the prophet Moses in Moretto da Brescia's vault fresco in San Giovanni Evangelista at Brescia wears a similar turban-like headpiece (Moretto's Moses is illustrated in *Venturi*, IX.4, 1932, fig. 137). God the Father normally wears a tiara, as in Dürer's print of the *Throne of Grace* (Holy Trinity) of 1511 — the print is illustrated in *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 390, fig. 6 —, or his head is covered with his own garment (an example of this image is illustrated in *Venturi*, IX.5, fig. 195).

[19] Melozzo da Forlì's mosaic decoration in the vault of the Chapel of St. Helena in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome may have had a composition similar to the present one, which is the result of a 1593 restoration. Christ, right hand raised in blessing and book in left hand, is in the center of the vault with the four Evan-

gelists around him, lower down. If the Santa Croce mosaic does retain Melozzo's original design, then it could well have been Pontormo's source for his Capponi composition, since, as surmised by *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 17, he had travelled to Rome in 1520-1521. Moreover, the general arrangement of Pontormo's decoration of the vault in the chapel of Leo X (my figure 9) is similar to the one in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. The Santa Croce mosaic is illustrated in *Buscaroli* (n. 9), pl. 27. The history of the mosaic is discussed by *Sergio Ortolani*, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, aggiornamenti di *Cecilia Pericoli Ridolfini*, Rome ²1969, p. 74.

20 *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 18, affirms the identification of the figure in "the most complete of the drawings" (my figure 3) as God the Father, adding in a footnote (p. 29, n. 21) that "the type […] is consistent with that of God the Father in Pontormo's drawing for a *Creation of Eve*" (a connection I fail to see). Nevertheless, Shearman has misgivings about the attribution, with a consequence that is interesting from my perspective. He writes: "However, there must remain an element of doubt in this identification […] If it is incorrect, these modifications should be made: the God the Father could have existed, but in an unrecorded form, in the centre of the vault, leaving four Patriarchs around its lower surfaces, and the rôle here assigned to God the Father [above the northern arch] would have been played by one of the Patriarchs, most probably Abraham." Shearman does not repeat this alternative in a book he published in 1992, but it may be what he had in mind when he wrote here that he "would now want to reconstruct the dome-painting differently" (*John Shearman*, Only connect. Art and the spectator in the Italian Renaissance, Washington D.C. 1992, p. 87, note 22).
There is some evidence that Pontormo had reused drawings in modified form. Note the similarity between the drawing of the patriarch with a scroll (my figure 4) and the painted Evangelist Luke in the Capponi Chapel — illustrated in *Berti* (n. 14), p. 248. The similarity was noted by *Elizabeth Pilliod*, Pontormo, Bronzino, Allori. A genealogy of Florentine art, New Haven/London 2001, p. 56, although she attributes the Evangelist Luke to Bronzino. A sixteenth-century copy after the God the Father in the Chapel of Leo X was published by *John Shearman* in his review of *Cox Rearick* (n. 6) in: Art Bull., LIV, 1972, p. 211. See also *Costamagna* (n. 16), p. 119.

21 As for the other patriarchs/prophets, based on the direction of the light in the drawings, the one with the scroll should be located to the right of the window as we face it, and the one with arm resting on a 'book' on the opposite side of the window and in diagonal relationship with Moses.

22 *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 391, figs. 9 and 10; p. 393, figs. 12 and 13.

23 The drawing is illustrated in *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), II, figs. 260-261, and discussed in vol. I, cat. nos. 270 and 273 (Uffizi 6613 F v and 6730 F r).

24 *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 395, n. 32, considers my figure 5 (Uffizi 6590 F) as at best a rejected preliminary sketch for God the Father. *Costamagna* (n. 16), p. 184, directly disputes Steinberg, stating that the drawing must be for a patriarch.

25 The Florentine vault decorations of Lorenzo Monaco, Alesso Baldovinetti, and Filippino Lippi are illustrated respectively in *Marvin Eisenberg*, Lorenzo Monaco, Princeton 1989, pl. 113, *Ruth W. Kennedy*, Alesso Baldovinetti. A critical and historical study, New Haven 1938, figs. 148-150, and *Kathleen B. Neilson*, Filippino Lippi, Cambridge (Mass.) 1988, figs. 76-79.

26 *Costamagna* (n. 16), p. 185.

27 Other historians had associated the figure with the fresco at Poggio a Caiano; cfr. *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, cat. no. 263.

28 *Marcucci* (n. 7), p. 91, cat. no. 121 and pl. 144b.

29 *Clapp* (n. 6), pp. 125-126, identified the drawing as a project for the Virgin in the Capponi altarpiece, or, alternatively, for the figure in the left background of the *Supper at Emmaus* at the Certosa del Galluzzo. In 1986 *Fiorelli Malesci* (n. 1), p. 210, questioned the destination of the figure as being the Capponi dome. *Anna Forlani Tempesti* (Disegni del Pontormo del Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, exh. cat. Milan, ed. by *eadem*, Florence 1970, cat. no. 19), did not initially find the attribution entirely convincing. Only later was she more positive about identifying the figure as a patriarch (Un ripensamento sul Pontormo, in: Labyrinthos, VII/VIII, 1988-1989, 13-16, p. 110, note 11).

30 *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 17. He thought that the so-called God the Father in the drawings might represent Abraham (p. 29, n. 21). Lippi's fresco is illustrated in *Neilson* (n. 25), figs. 76-79. *Antonio Natali*, Il pane degli angeli. Una trama per la cappella Capponi, in: Artista, 2000, p. 11, gets around the problem of identity by alleging that as patriarchs they are nameless. To be sure, Signorelli's thirteen unnamed old and young men on a vault in the Duomo of Orvieto are identified as patriarchs in an inscription that reads NOBILIS PATRIARCHARVM CETVS. Signorelli's vault fresco is illustrated in *Enzo Carli*, Luca Signorelli. Gli affreschi nel duomo di Orvieto, Bergamo 1946, p. 7. The patriarchs may, in fact, represent Jacob and his twelve sons, who are specifically named in Genesis 35, 23-25. Although the term 'patriarch' does not occur in the Old Testament, patriarchs are identified by name in the New Testament: Abraham by Paul (Hebrews 7, 4); Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Maccabees 7, 19 and 16, 25. Noah is never referred to as a patriarch in the Bible.

31 Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob first appear together with their familiar attributes in a fourteenth-century

fresco Jacopo del Casentino painted on a vault in Orsanmichele in Florence (Orsanmichele a Firenze/Orsanmichele Florence, ed. *Diane Finiello Zervas*, Modena 1996, I, pp. 166-170, and II, fig. 555).

[32] *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, p. 256, no. 266.

[33] For examples of scroll-bearing prophets, see Lorenzo Monaco's vault in the Salimbeni Chapel in Santa Trinita, Florence (*Eisenberg* [n. 25], pl. 113), Duccio's *Maestà* in the Cathedral Museum, Siena (*Edi Baccheschi*, L'opera completa di Duccio, Milan 1972, p. 94, nos. 109-119), and Buffalmacco's vault fresco in the Chapel of San Jacopo at the Badia di Settimo (*Luciano Bellosi*, Buffalmacco e il Trionfo della morte, Turin 1974, fig. 120, and *Offner*, Corpus, 1931, section III, vol. I, pl. XXXV, nos. 8-10).

[34] *Annamaria Giusti*, The Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, Florence 2000, p. 110. Other examples: Abraham and the scroll-bearing patriarch Jacob in Duccio's triptych in the National Gallery, London, illustrated in *Baccheschi* (n. 33), pl. VII; Duccio workshop, Siena polyptych (illustrated *ibidem*, p. 94, nos. 104-123); Cimabue's *Maestà* in Florence (illustrated in *Enio Sindona*, L'opera completa di Cimabue, Milan 1975, p. 113 and pl. XXXIII and XXXVI).

[35] *Vasari-Milanesi*, I, p. 505. One of the prophets is illustrated in *Bellosi* (n. 33), fig. 120. Bellosi refers to them as "Quattro Profeti maggiori". For illustrations of three prophets (one of them beardless), see *Offner* (n. 33), pl. XXXV, no. 8 through pl. XXXV, 10. *Osvald Sirén*, The Buffalmaco hypothesis. Some additional remarks, in: Burl. Mag., XXXVII, 1920, p. 176, also identifies the figures as prophets. *Miklós Boskovits*, in: *Offner*, Corpus, Florence 1986, section III, vol. I, p. 46, cites Sirén's article but changes the identity of the figures, without explanation, to Four Church Fathers.

[36] Illustrated in *Kennedy* (n. 25), figs. 148-150. Moses is referred to as a prophet in the Bible (Deuteronomy 18, 15 and 34, 10, Luke 24, 27, Acts 3, 22 and 7, 37). In Renaissance art, Moses, when not seen singly with the tablets, is invariably represented among prophets. He is included with the tablets (together with David holding the harp) among sixteen prophets on Fra Angelico's vault in the San Brizio Chapel in the Cathedral of Orvieto (*John Pope-Hennessy*, Fra Angelico, London 1974, fig. 125). But he holds an inscribed scroll in Moretto da Brescia's dome fresco in San Giovanni Evangelista, Brescia (*Venturi*, IX.4, fig. 137), and in Tura's Allegory of the Eucharist with four prophets, in: L'immagine di Cristo: dall'Acheropita alla mano d'artista, dal tardo medioevo all'età barocca, eds. *Christoph L. Frommel/Gerhard Wolf*, Vatican City 2006, p. 141, fig. 15). For references to Moses included among prophets in the art of the Middle Ages, see *Hanspeter Schlosser*, Moses, in: LCI, III, 1971, cols. 284, 285, and 294. Schlosser (*ibidem*) does not include Moses among the patriarchs, nor refer to him as such. Several modern scholars do, without discussion. Among them are *Janet Cox Rearick*, Bronzino's *Crossing of the Red Sea* and *Moses appointing Joshua*: Prolegomena to the chapel of Eleonora di Toledo, in: Art Bull., LXIX, 1987, p. 46, and *Henri Crouzel*, Introduction, in: Origène. Homelies sur S. Luc, eds. *Henri Crouzel/François Fournier/Pierre Périchon*, Paris 1962, p. 44. *J.P. Eisenstein*, Patriarch, in: Jewish Enclopedia, IX, New York/London 1905, p. 561, describes Moses as one of seven individuals with whom God made covenants (thus presumed to be a patriarch, because the others listed are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, Phinehas, and David); *Neher*, Patriarch, in: Wetzer und Welte's Kirchenlexikon, oder, Encyklopädie der katholischen Theologie und ihrer Hülfswissenschaften, ed. *Heinrich J. Wetzer* et al., IX, Freiburg im Breisgau ^{2}1895, p. 1602, Moses is said to be a link between the patriarchs who came before him and the prophets who came after him.

[37] *Herbert P. Horne*, A newly discovered 'Libro di Ricordi' of Alesso Baldovinetti, in: Burl. Mag., II, 1903, pp. 167-174. *Kennedy* (n. 25), p. 174, writes that Baldovinetti "calls them vaguely 'prophets' instead of patriarchs".

[38] *John Russell Sale*, The Strozzi Chapel by Filippino Lippi in Santa Maria Novella, New York 1979, pp. 176-178, supports the idea by citing the medieval 'Ordo commendationis animae' and passages from Matthew and Luke: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 8, 11). "The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side" (Luke 16, 22-23). There are the three bearded individuals who hold small figures in their laps on the central dome of the Baptistery of Florence (*Giusti* [n. 34], pl. V), and which are said to be Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac by *Michael Viktor Schwarz*, Die Mosaiken des Baptisteriums in Florenz, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 1997, text to colorplate V.

[39] A prophet holding a book is included in Fra Angelico's vault in the Brizio Chapel in the Cathedral of Orvieto. The vault is illustrated in *Pope-Hennessy* (n. 36), p. 125.

[40] *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 393, and *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 20.

[41] Moses appears in this guise in, for example, the eleventh-century Ripoll Bible (BAVR, Cod. Lat. 5729, fol. 6v; illustrated in *Herbert L. Kessler*, "Facies bibliothecae revelata": Carolingian art as spiritual seeing, in: Testo e immagine nell'alto Medioevo, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo (1993), II, Spoleto 1994, pp. 533-584, pl. XX, fig. 22). As noted in note 18 above, Moretto da Brescia's Moses in the vault fresco in San Giovanni Evangelista at Brescia wears a similar turban-like headpiece to the one our Moses-designate figure wears.

[42] For a detailed discussion of the theme of the veiled and unveiled Moses (with references to the early Christian literature), see *ibidem*, esp. pp. 566-584.

[43] A seventeenth-century publication by *William Guild* entitled *Moses unveiled*, London 1623 (facsimile edition: Ann Arbor 1980), sets up a series of parallels between Christ and worthy men from the Old Testament, including, naturally, Moses. Although Guild does not specifically associate Moses with the metaphor of the veil in his listing of parallels, the title of his publication nevertheless refers to the new order that Christ established to supersede his.

[44] See *Carol F. Lewine*, The Sistine Chapel walls and the Roman liturgy, University Park (Pennsylvania) 1993, p. 18, with bibliography, and *Jack Wasserman*, Jacopo Pontormo's Florentine *Visitation*: the iconography, in: Artibus et historiae, XVI, 32, 1995, pp. 39-53.

[45] *Origen*, Homilies on Genesis and Exodus, trans. *Ronald E. Heine*, Washington D. C. 1982, pp. 367-374. I found two additional references in the patristic literature to Moses with the veil, both brief: *Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, *Historia de vitis pontificum romanorum*, in: PL, CXXVIII, col. 293 ("Idcirco, inquit, et divinus Moyses velum ponebat in faciem suam"), and *Petrus Cellensis*, *De panibus*, in: PL, CCII, col. 929 ("Sicut vero firmamentum posuit Deus ut divideret aquas ab aquis, sic Moyses velum interposuit: extra quod vulgus immolaret").

[46] This conclusion is reasonable, I think, in view of the originality of the overall decorative scheme and other iconographic details Pontormo introduced in the altarpiece, which I will discuss below. Indeed, the search for originality was characteristic of the period during which Pontormo practiced his art.

[47] *Origen* (n. 45). The fourth-century author Marius Victorinus writes in his Commentaries, "when the sealed book is opened […] Christ's face is revealed to Moses" (as translated from the Latin by *Kessler* [n. 41], p. 590).

[48] *Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 271: "In this painting there is a dead Christ deposed from the cross, who is carried to the tomb: and there is our Lady who faints, and the other Maries".

[49] *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 14.

[50] *Ibidem*.

[51] *Ibidem*, p. 22. For the origins of the symbolism of the altar as Christ's tomb, see *Karl Young*, The drama of the Medieval church, I, Oxford 1933, p. 219.

[52] *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 22.

[53] *Shearman* (n. 20), p. 93. He writes that "ambiguity remains as to whether the body is to be placed like the Eucharist on the altar or whether we should conceive the burial vault [i.e. Capponi's tomb in the pavement at the foot of the altar] as his [Christ's] destination". We should bear in mind that the inscribed circular tablet in the center of the chapel is fixed, and that the marble cover of the tomb at the foot of the altar is inscribed with the date 1780 (more than two centuries after Ludovico's death) and has no other inscription to identify the deceased buried beneath it.

[54] *Ibidem*. Actually *Kurt W. Forster*, Pontormo, Munich 1966, p. 60, anticipated Shearman in writing that the four figures on the left sink and form a diagonal that carries Christ away from the Virgin. As evidence for his concept of a fissured Pietà, *Shearman* (n. 20), p. 85, fig. 63, introduces a painting by the Master of the Virgo inter Virgines at Liverpool, which he interprets as Christ carried away from the Virgin by two men, one lifting him at the shoulders, the other supporting him at the thighs. It seems to me that the action is sufficiently ambiguous to permit an interpretation as Christ carried toward the Virgin by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. She kneels and is supported by a male figure, possibly St. John, from behind. One man holds Christ's shoulders, steps forward on a line parallel to the Virgin, and gazes at her. The other male holds Christ's legs, arches his right leg forward in the direction of the Virgin, and also faces her. St. John too arches his leg forward in a ballet-like counterpoint with the forward-arched leg of the male who holds Christ's legs. Between the two men who carry Christ and to the far side of Christ stands a woman with hands together in adoration and stares directly at the Virgin. In a sense, she blocks movement away from the Virgin. Note, furthermore, that Golgotha with the cross and ladder is seen in the distance, from whence Christ came, whereas a tomb is nowhere in sight. There is a fifteenth-century print in the Louvre (assumed to be a copy after a lost painting by Rogier van der Weyden) that does show in a relief composition Christ unequivocally being carried away from the Virgin. The composition in which neither a tomb nor Golgotha are present is abstracted from the larger event (illustrated in Rogier van der Weyden, Rogier de la Pasture, peintre officiel de la Ville de Bruxelles, portraitiste de la Cour de Bourgogne, exh. cat. Brussels 1979, pl. 24).

[55] The stained glass window presently in the chapel is a twentieth-century copy. The original is in the small chapel in the Palazzo Capponi delle Rovinate, Florence. For a color illustration of the original window, see *Angelo Tafi*, Il sole racchiuso nei vetri. Guglielmo de Marcillat e le sue vetrate istoriate di Arezzo, Arezzo 1988, pl. XVIII. *Waldman* (n. 1), p. 313, n. 22, suggests that the window may have been made for a different chapel and reused by Capponi in his chapel. In fact, it appears to have been cut down on the left where only a fragment of the head of a Mary is visible, and at the turn of the arch where the upper parts of two figures are

missing. Moreover, the hand gestures of the partially-seen Mary on the left and of the Virgin seated below her are illegible. This brings to mind the accusation Vasari directed at the Gesuati of Florence (*Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 272), to the effect that they had taken the window apart and put it together again badly. He writes that "finalmente la mutarono di quel ch'ella era" (they finally changed it from what it was). I suspect that the Gesuati had obtained the glass in the first place because they had been given the commission to install it and perhaps found the glass and opening incompatible in their dimensions. They were, after all, manufacturers and restorers of stained glass windows (for this see *Megan Holmes*, Fra Filippo Lippi, the Carmelite painter, New Haven/London 1999, p. 86). Moreover, a member of the Gesuati, one Fra Stefano, received payments in 1590 for making a stained glass window for the Cappella Canigiani in the corner opposite the Capponi Chapel; see *Fiorelli Malesci* (n. 1), p. 334, doc. 94. The window no longer exists; possibly, it was destroyed when a bomb exploded outside the church during the second World War. *Tafi*, p. 104, questions the authenticity of the window in the Capponi palace, citing as evidence Vasari on how the Gesuati mishandled it. For additional information on the order of the Gesuati of Florence (suppressed in 1668), see Il convento di S. Giusto alle Mura e i Gesuati. Aggiungonsi i capitoli della loro regola, ed. *Giovanni Battista Uccelli*, Florence 1865; *Paatz*, Kirchen, II, p. 72, III, pp. 526-536, 597, 600, and V, pp. 272-284; *Georg Dufner*, Geschichte der Jesuiten, Rome 1975; *Romana Guarnieri*, Gesuati, in: Dizionario degli istituti di perfezione, eds. *Guerrino Pelliccia/Giancarlo Rocca*, IV, Rome 1977, pp. 1115-1130; and *Paolo Bensi*, I Gesuati di San Giusto alle Mura e la pittura del Rinascimento a Firenze, in: Studi di storia delle arti, III, 1980, pp. 33-47. An earlier copy of the Capponi window was *in situ* in 1940, but it was destroyed by an exploding bomb in 1945 (for an illustration, see *Paolozzi Strozzi* [n. 3], p. 54, fig. 4). In this copy Mary is shown with her hands facing each other in worship and the Virgin as wringing her hands in reaction to Christ's death.

[56] *Steinberg* (n. 7), pp. 385-399.

[57] *Ibidem*, p. 387.

[58] *Ibidem*, pp. 387-388.

[59] *Ibidem*, p. 391. Steinberg considers Dürer's *Holy Trinity* woodcut to have been Pontormo's prototype. *Craig Harbison*, Pontormo, Baldung, and the Early Reformation, in: Art Bull., LXVI, 1984, pp. 324-327, is among the few who accept Steinberg's hypothesis. On the other hand, *Shearman* (n. 20), p. 93, objects to Steinberg's identification of the two young men as angels and also the assumption that they transport Christ to heaven. He writes that "Only by an abstract and half-engaged reading can the two young men be detached from the group action of carrying the body, so that they may be described as angels caught in the act of lifting the body to Heaven: and what would then happen to the body is an insult to Pontormo's intelligence and sense of decorum."

[60] *Natali* (n. 30), pp. 8-21.

[61] *Ibidem*, p. 18. Natali cites Augustine's sermons initially to establish an iconographic relationship between the altarpiece, the *Annunciation*, and the subjects in Marcillat's painted window (Deposition and Carrying Christ to the Tomb).

[62] *Ibidem*, p. 18.

[63] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

[64] *Georgia Wright*, Caravaggio's Entombment considered in situ, in: Art Bull., LX, 1978, p. 35; *Jean-Claude Lebensztejn*, Le Journal de Jacopo Pontormo, Paris 1992, pp. 277-298; *Costamagna* (n. 16), pp. 183-190; and *Waldman* (n. 1). *James Byam Shaw*, Drawings by old masters from Christ Church, Oxford, Oxford 1976, I, p. 65, takes the position that "The whole effect is less realistic, more in the mannerist taste."

[65] With the exception of Steinberg and Shearman in his 1992 book, all the hypotheses I have summarized emphasize the Eucharistic significance of the painting. However, according to *Wright* (n. 64), p. 35, the Eucharistic meaning "is not contingent upon a lowering of the body to the altar, but is implied in the elevation of the body over the altar in the sight of God and before the celebrant". See also *Ignacio L. Moreno*, Pontormo's mysticism and the Carthusians, in: Rutgers Art Review, VI, 1985, p. 59.

[66] *Wright* (n. 64), p. 35, *Lebensztejn* (n. 64), p. 277, and *Waldman* (n. 1), pp. 300-301.

[67] *Costamagna* (n. 16), p. 189.

[68] *Ilka Braunschweig-Kühl*, Konzepte des Metaphysischen. Pontormos Altartafeln in Santa Felicità [*sic*] in Florenz, in San Michele in Carmignano und die Sant'Anna-Tafel im Louvre, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 62-80.

[69] Frederick Hartt also believes that the painting's iconography alludes to a perpetual adoration of the Eucharist, which became popular with new reform groups such as the Oratorio of the Divino Amore (*Frederick Hartt*, Power and the individual in mannerist art, in: Studies in Western art. Acts of the twentieth international congress of the history of art, Princeton 1963, II, pp. 222-238).

[70] Few scholars, other than Steinberg, have attempted a detailed examination of the drawing in relation to the painting. *Byam Shaw* (n. 64), I, pp. 64-65, cat. no. 119, describes the drawing in terms of technique and calls attention to a few details Pontormo changed in preparing the altarpiece. *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, p. 260,

no. 272, states only that Pontormo had worked out the general scheme of the composition in the drawing. *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26, is minimalist in his approach to the drawing: he points out simply that the rhythmic compositional design initiated in the drawing is greatly refined in the painting and that it has a cloud instead of the ladder. *Forster* (n. 54), p. 58, maintains that the drawing is a copy of a lost original, a rare criticism that is vigorously denied by *Byam Shaw* (n. 64), p. 65.

71 *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, cat. nos. 270 and 271, and II, figs. 260 and 261.

72 Pontormo made other changes, for which I have no explanation. One is that the drawing portrays an aged man on the extreme right, his long, oval face sporting a long beard and his profile facing outward, while in the painting, the man with close-cropped beard turns his head to the front. Another is that the male who hovers over the Virgin in the painting, more so than in the drawing, calls attention to the bearded figure with his extended left hand.

73 Pontormo spread the distance between the legs of the two youths by moving the left, inner leg of the crouching youth forward so that the heel of the foot is placed directly under his buttocks. *Byam Shaw* (n. 64), p. 65, errs when he claims that the youth supporting the legs of Christ is no longer kneeling, but squatting on one heel. Actually, the youth squats on his toes in both the drawing and painting.
I concur with *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26, when he writes that "The preparatory drawing at Christ Church […] shows us how much thought, calculation, and fine adjustment went into the finished work", and he is right that "the artist's aim was clarity, his instrument discipline". I also concur with *Shearman* (n. 20), p. 88, that "Whatever the abstractions of Pontormo's figural style and colour, matters of support, gesture, and interrelation have been thought through with comprehensive logic and great psychological sensitivity."

74 I cannot explain why the youth on the left in the painting wears sandals and his crouching companion does not.

75 I should note that my interpretation of Pontormo's treatment of the youth's right leg is entirely at odds with John Shearman's, for whom it denotes the act of pivoting Christ away from the Virgin (*Shearman* [n. 9], pp. 11-13). To believe this, however, is to believe that simply by altering the position of the youth's right limb Pontormo produced a radical iconographic and aesthetic shift away from an enfolding Pietà and an unyielding picture surface in the drawing to a fissured Pietà and a dissolved picture surface in the painting. *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 389, interprets the youth on the left as "unbowed by his load: his inoperative hands touch a weightless burden, and his buoyant feet take no pressure". To me, Christ's body looks pretty heavy. As regards the other figures, I would point out that Pontormo developed a new balloon-like and weightless figure treatment in the altarpiece, a type he continued to use in the Carmignano *Visitation* (illustrated in *Berti* [n. 14], p. 255). The connection between the altarpiece and the *Visitation* is manifest also in the striking similarity between the color treatment and the Mary with the cloth in the former and Elizabeth in the latter. I agree with Shearman that much of the original color in the altarpiece had been removed by earlier restorations.

76 Archivio Storico Parrocchiale di Santa Felicita (A.S.P.S.F.), Sezione Amministrativa, Ms. 349, Mandati di entrata e uscita dal 1840 al 1841, c. 16r: "15 maggio 1840 tagtiato [*sic*] dabbasso la Pietà de Capponi – dato beveraggio a 4 omini." Ms. 349, Il Patrimonio di Santa Felicita, Dare a Giuseppe Cobi Falegname per gl'appresso lavori fatti dal 11 Maggio al 9 Dicembre 1840, c. 156r: "Nella cappella della nobil casa Capponi smontato la tavola, e suo cornicione dell'altare, e la detta tavola sistemata per restaurarsi dal pittore, ed in seguito riporto, e rimontatura di tutto al posto; e più smontatura e rimontatura delle quattro tavole tonde che sono nelle quattro cantonate della volta in detta cappella, le quali sono state parimente restaurate dal pittore, tal lavoro fatto da nº 12 omini — Lire 66.13.4." The documents were made available to me by Cristina François, archivist of Santa Felicita in Florence, for which act of generosity I am deeply grateful.

77 The path was noted, without comment, only by *Lebensztejn* (n. 64), p. 46. *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26, was unaware of its existence, claiming "that there is not a stone" visible in the painting, intending to demonstrate that the setting in the painting is "purified, or abstracted from the particular towards the general". *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, p. 260, no. 272, also fails to mention the path in her effort to emphasize the painting's abstract character. As she writes, "to remove these forms [such as the ladder] still further from our reality, Pontormo shifted the whole structure of the lower part of the composition so that the composition becomes a precariously inverted pyramid. To this end, the legs of the figure holding Christ's body and the woman with her back turned are pulled back so that only the single foot and the mop of drapery remain to support the entire composition". *Emil Maurer*, Zum Kolorit von Pontormo's 'Deposizione', in: Von Farbe und Farben. Albert Knöpfli zum 70. Geburtstag, Zurich 1980, p. 316, describes the lower foreground as gray-brown, but maintains that there is very little to indicate environment and locale, that there is no concrete here and now. In other words, he does not recognize that the gray-brown foreground is a path.

78 The cloth is not present in the drawing, but the shape of the woman's hand shows that she was intended to hold a cloth.

79 See *Claudia Bertling*, Die Darstellung der Kreuzabnahme und der Beweinung Christi in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts, Hildesheim 1992, p. 128. The motive of the eye-drying Virgin is seen in the Avignon

Pietà in the Louvre (cfr. *Venturi*, VII.4, fig. 749) and in a drawing of Christ lowered into the tomb by Marco Zoppo in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt (cfr. *Shearman* [n. 20], fig. 56). According to *Marina Warner*, Alone of all her sex: the myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary, New York 1983, pp. 222-223, tears are the symbol of life, of the purifying sacrifice on the cross, of cleansing and rebirth.

[80] *Braunschweig-Kühl* (n. 68), p. 77, recognizes the centrality of the cloth, but she identifies it as the Veronica despite the fact that it is bunched up and does not show the face of Christ.

[81] *Forster* (n. 54), pp. 59 and 65, and *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 387.

[82] Meditations on the Life of Christ. An illustrated manuscript of the fourteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. ital. 115, eds. *Isa Ragusa/Rosalie B. Green*, Princeton 1961, pp. 343-344.

[83] Other examples of the Pietà with the sudarium featured in relation to Christ's head are: a thirteenth-century *Pietà* in Pisa (see *van Marle*, I, fig. 147); an anonymous *Entombment* in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, in which Christ's head is wrapped in a sudarium (*ibidem*, V, fig. 251); two *Pietà* by Cosmè Tura and Ercole da Ferrara, both in Liverpool (cfr. L'opera completa di Cosmè Tura e i grandi pittori ferraresi del suo tempo: Franceso Cossa e Ercole de' Roberti, ed. *Rosemarie Molajoli*, Milan 1974, pls. 45, and 65, respectively); and in a *Mourning of Christ* by Carpaccio in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, in which Christ lies stretched out on an altar-like structure with his head resting on a sudarium (cfr. *Guido Perocco*, L'opera completa del Carpaccio, Milan 1967, pl. 50). For the representations of napkins placed at Christ's head in Entombments, see Ugolino di Redice's apron painting on his *Crucifix* in Pisa in *van Marle*, I, fig. 147, and an anonymous thirteenth-century painting in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence (*ibidem*, V, fig. 251). See for this iconography *Gertrud Simon*, Ikonographie der Grablegung Christi, Rostock i. M. 1926, p. 39.

[84] I use the term 'Pietà' to encompass also Lamentations, which have attendant figures.

[85] *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 14, and *Wright* (n. 64), p. 35.

[86] I think there is a technical explanation for the fact that the front of the woman's face is covered by the blue veil: it blocks out some of the red of the older woman's garment to keep it from being obtrusive in the center of the painting. Note that some red bleeds through the blue of the veil. For a color illustration of the woman's head, see *Berti* (n. 14), p. 247.

[87] *Lebensztejn* (n. 64), p. 265, notes, without explanation, that the woman grips Christ's wrist as she holds his hand.

[88] The Pseudo-Bonaventura writes that just prior to mourning Christ's body and wrapping his head with the sudarium, "the Lady reverently receives the hanging right hand [of Christ] and places it against her cheek". See *Ragusa/Green* (n. 82), pp. 340-343. For illustrations of the Virgin placing Christ's hand against her cheek, see *Gertrud Schiller*, Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst, II: Die Passion Jesu Christi, Gütersloh 1968, figs. 593, 595-600, 602-605.

[89] The Virgin venerates Christ's wound in, for example, Andrea del Sarto's *Pietà* in the Palazzo Pitti of 1523; see *Shearman* (n. 20), fig. 70. The motive of the Virgin venerating Christ's wound is a frequent one in representations of the Entombment; see *Schiller* (n. 88), figs. 578, 579, 581. I thank Wolfger Bulst for this insight. For an illustration of a *Deposition* in which the Virgin kisses Christ's hand, see *ibidem*, fig. 550.

[90] Abraham in Filippino Lippi's vault decoration in the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence extends his arm in a similar manner (illustrated in *Neilson* [n. 25], fig. 79). The gesture is seen in other sixteenth-century paintings, such as Andrea del Sarto's Panciatichi *Assumption of the Virgin* in Palazzo Pitti, Florence, of about 1522 (illustrated in *Louis A. Waldman*, A document for Andrea del Sarto's 'Panciatichi Assumption', in: Burl. Mag., CXXXIX, 1997, p. 469, fig. 31).

[91] *Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 271. *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 14, agrees that the Virgin swoons, *Steinberg* (n. 7), pp. 385-387, does not. Steinberg cites what he considers an official objection to her doing so (conveyed in an epistle Cardinal Cajetan wrote in 1506 and which was republished in 1520). Steinberg concludes that "in the light of the Cardinal's ruling [*sic*], the Santa Felicita altarpiece is both modern and orthodox in that the Madonna shows no signs of fainting". Yet, Steinberg notes that artists of the sixteenth century "from Raphael to Carracci" persisted in depicting the Virgin as swooning.

[92] *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 14, and *idem* (n. 20), p. 93, it will be recalled, asserts that the Virgin's raised hand is a farewell gesture. He justifies his interpretation by citing as its source a relief of the transport of the dead Meleager to the tomb on an ancient sarcophagus in the Villa Doria Pamphilj, Rome (*ibidem*, p. 14 and fig. 8). According to him, the man directly above the dead Meleager is the deceased's father raising his hand to wave his son farewell. That is not at all what he is doing. His gesture is more accurately understood with an illustration of the entire relief, not the detail Shearman reproduces (the entire work is illustrated in *Guntram Koch*, Die mythologischen Sarkophage, Berlin 1975, p. 89, no. 84). The sarcophagus is divided into three parts: the battle at which Meleager was killed on the left, mourners who accompany Meleager to his burial in the center, and, on the right, Meleager carried feet first to his burial. The father, centered over the dead body, raises his hand directly above the deceased's head and points with his index finger in the direction of the mourners, towards whom he also looks. *Shearman* (n. 9), fig. 7, reproduces a detail of a second Meleager relief in the Museo

Archeologico, Perugia (the entire relief is illustrated in *Koch*, pl. 89, no. 83). The relief is badly mutilated and difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in this relief the father this time situates himself directly above his son's head and looks away from him toward the mourners. The father's gesture expresses agitation, according to *Giovanni Becatti*, Un sarcofago di Perugia e l'officina del maestro delle imprese di Marco Aurelio, in: Essays in memory of Karl Lehmann, ed. *Lucy Freeman Sandler*, New York 1964, p. 31. According to *Lebensztejn* (n. 64), p. 298, the Virgin's raised hand is a sign of abandon.

93 What might Pontormo have envisioned the relationship between Christ and the Virgin would be at closure? The leaning inward of the corpse and the slanting legs of the Virgin suggest that they are slipping to the ground together. *Harvey E. Hamburgh*, Aspects of the Descent from the Cross from Lippi to Cigoli (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1978), Ann Arbor 1980, p. 206, writes that "the highlighted slant of the Virgin's lap is much the same" as the slant of the Virgin's lap as she sinks to the ground in Raphael's *Transporting Christ to the Tomb* of 1507. In the Certosa *Pietà* of 1522 Pontormo represents Christ lying at the feet of the seated Virgin (illustrated in *Berti* [n. 14], p. 233).

94 Fra Bartolommeo's drawings are published in *Chris Fischer*, Fra Bartolomeo, master draughtsman of the High Renaissance: a selection from the Rotterdam albums and landscape drawings from various collections, Rotterdam 1990, cat. nos. 28-30. There is a category of the Deposition in which Christ is brought down from the instrument of his martyrdom toward, and even into, the outstretched arms of the Virgin. A case in point is Duccio's fourteenth-century *Deposition* from the *Maestà* in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Siena; see *Baccheschi* (n. 33), pl. XLI.

95 The first drawing in the series is in the GDSU, Florence, inv. 1262 E. The second is in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich, inv. 2164. For illustrations, see *Fischer* (n. 94), figs. 56 and 57.

96 Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, inv. M. 158. On this sheet, turned upside down, is a partial sketch of the Deposition motive, which is intermediate between the penultimate and final stages.

97 The painting is illustrated in *Jack Wasserman*, La Vergine e Cristo con Sant'Anna del Pontormo, in: Kunst des Cinquecento in der Toskana, ed. *Monika Cämmerer*, Munich 1992, p. 148, fig. 1. For an illustration of Fra Bartolommeo's *Virgin and St. Anne*, see *idem* (n. 44), p. 44, fig. 5. Pontormo, moreover, was a pupil of Albertinello (*Vasari-Milanesi*, VI, p. 246), who was an intimate friend of Fra Bartolommeo (*ibidem*, IV, p. 217).

98 The Pietà perceived as a process in the medieval painting and in Pontormo's altarpiece reaches forward in time to Michelangelo's Florence *Pietà*, of about 1550. For this, see *Jack Wasserman*, Michelangelo: the Florence Pietà, Princeton 2003, p. 35 (and the Italian edition: La *Pietà* di Michelangelo a Firenze, Florence 2006, pp. 37-38).

99 *Forster* (n. 54), pp. 59-60, introduced the idea of the composition as oval, with the left side descending and the right side ascending. A word about the bearded figure on the right, who is pushed back into a remote relationship with the event he seems to be contemplating. The figure is normally identified as Pontormo's self portrait. This is most fervently argued by *Luciano Berti*, Sembianze del Pontormo, Florence 1956, p. 12. The comparative portraits, which includes the one Vasari uses in his "Vite", are illustrated in *idem*, L'opera completa del Pontormo, Milan 1973, p. 84, figs. 1-18. I do not believe that the figure in the altarpiece even remotely resembles Pontormo in these illustrations: the face is round, the features shallow, and the beard short-cropped and shaped to follow the contours of the circular head. In the Vasari portrait of Pontormo (and in those others that most closely resemble this one) the face is elongated, almost triangular, the eyes are deep-set, and the beard long and cleaved. *Clapp* (n. 7), p. 121, thought the figure in the altarpiece might be a portrait of Ludovico Capponi.

100 See *Otto G. von Simson*, Compassio and co-redemptio in Roger van der Weyden's Descent from the Cross, in: Art Bull., XXXV, 1953, pp. 9-16. See also *Yrjö Hirn*, The sacred shrine. A study of the poetry and art of the Catholic church, London 1912, pp. 392-393, and *Moreno* (n. 65), pp. 66-67. *Louis Réau*, Iconographie de l'art chrétien, II.2, Paris 1957, p. 519, attributes the same meaning to Rosso Fiorentino's *Lamentation* in the Louvre, this time communicated by the Virgin extending her arms "into a living cross".

101 *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 28, n. 8, believes that the Virgin in the *Annunciation* looks across the chapel space at Christ in the altarpiece. The angle of her gaze is difficult to gauge. Traditionally, she modestly avoids looking at the angel.

102 John 12, 45 has Christ also say, "who sees me sees he who sent me".

103 For discussions of the theology, see The Holy Face and the paradox of representation, eds. *Herbert L. Kessler/Gerhard Wolf*, Bologna 1997, and Il volto di Cristo, exh. cat., eds. *Giovanni Morello/Gerhard Wolf*, Milan 2000. A congress devoted to the 'Volto Santo' takes place annually in Rome under the auspices of the Istituto Internazionale di Ricerca sul Volto di Cristo. The proceedings of each year's congress are published in volumes entitled "Il volto dei volti: Cristo", edited by the Istituto and published by Editrice Velar, Gorle (BG). I wish to thank the Istituto for permitting me to consult the volumes in their library.

104 For the theology of the Holy Face of Christ and its source in Moses' encounter with God in Tertullian, see *Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Adversus Praxeam* (PL, II, paragraphs 170-172). For a discussion of the

analogy between the face of Christ and the face of God, see *Ignazio M. Calabuig Adán*, Il Volto di Cristo nella liturgia, in: Il volto dei volti: Cristo, Gorle 2000, I, pp. 24-30. This theological concept finds expression among certain Greek Fathers of the Church. For this, see *Thomáš Špidlík*, Il volto di Cristo nella spiritualità dei Padri Greci (*ibidem*), pp. 56-64. Špidlík quotes the theologian Maximus the Confessor: "in Cristo, il volto umano è veramente capace di riflettere e di rendere presente lo Spirito di Dio".

105 Origen's text is cited by *Henri Crouzel*, Théologie de l'image de Dieu chez Origène, Paris 1956, p. 78.

106 *Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, *Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, ed. *Pier Giorgio Ricci*, I, Rome 1955, p. 81, sermon 3.

107 For an illustration, see *Berti* (n. 14), p. 128. The Veronica appears on the entrance wall of the chapel.

108 For an illustration, see *ibidem*, p. 232. In this painting, it may be significant to note that Christ, as he collapses under the burden of the cross, turns his head to face the beholder. There are paintings by other artists of the Veronica subject in which Christ turns his head to face the beholder at the same time that Veronica holds up the icon with an imprint of his face. This double portrait of Christ, as himself and in an imprint on a napkin, is seen in an enigmatic painting by Sebastiano del Piombo, the so-called Úbeda *Pietà* of 1547, now in the Prado Museum, Madrid. In this painting, the Virgin holds the napkin with Christ's face on it. The napkin in Sebastiano's painting is referred to as the 'Veronica' by *Michael Hirst*, Sebastiano del Piombo, Oxford 1981, pl. 163. The tendency to replicate the Veronica icon evolved in the fifteenth century into a new iconography in which Christ's face is represented without the napkin. It occurs in the works of Jan van Eyck, Fra Angelico, Benozzo Gozzoli, and Mantegna. For this, see *Gerhard Wolf*, "Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?" Sguardi alla 'vera icona' e alle sue copie artistiche, in: *Morello/Wolf* (n. 103), pp. 116-165.

109 For a discussion of the Lucca relic, see *Michele Camillo Ferrari*, Il Volto Santo di Lucca, *ibidem*, pp. 265-269. For the earliest reference to the statue as the 'Volto Santo', see *Almerico Guerra*, Storia del Volto Santo di Lucca, ed. *Pietro Guidi*, Sora 1926, p. 24, who publishes an inventory of relics dating from 1158 that mentions the 'Vultus Sanctus de Luca'.

110 Several years before the issuance of the Papal bull, Sixtus IV, in a treatise on the 'Precious Blood', states that in the shroud "men may look upon the true blood and the portrait of Jesus Christ himself"; *Herbert Thurston*, Shroud, in: The Catholic Encyclopedia, XIII, New York 1912, pp. 762-763.

111 The text is found in *Pietro Savio*, Ricerche storiche sulla Santa Sindone, Turin 1957, pp. 132-245. At the time Pontormo was decorating the Capponi Chapel the Holy Shroud was the property of the dukes of Savoy (since 1453) and was housed at Chambéry. The shroud was transported to the Cathedral of Turin in 1578. For a convenient history of the Holy Shroud, see *Thurston* (n. 110).

112 *Savio* (n. 111), p. 235: "Almighty and eternal God, who, in memory of the passion of your only begotten Son, left this Holy Shroud, bearing the impression of His image, to be venerated on earth; grant, we beseech, that by virtue of the same Holy Shroud we may contemplate your own face in heaven."

113 On the fact that Lodovico Capponi was on friendly terms with Julius II, see *Ferdinando Massai*, Notizia del ritratto di Francesca di Ludovico Capponi dipinto da Jacopo da Pontormo, Florence 1924, p. 15, and *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 3.

114 *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 24, and *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 389, note the similarity between Pontormo's and Botticelli's paintings, but neither refers to the 'Volto Santo' theology.

115 For Botticelli's possible relationship with Savonarola, see *Stanley Meltzoff*, Botticelli, Signorelli and Savonarola: 'theologia poetica' and painting from Boccaccio to Poliziano, Florence 1987, pp. 226-227.

116 *Costamagna* (n. 16), p. 189 (like Shearman and Steinberg), associates Pontormo's altarpiece with Botticelli's *Pietà* in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli in Milan, but he seems to extend Botticelli's influence on Pontormo's painting to include an "indiscusso carattere savonaroliano", an idea on which he does not elaborate.

117 *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26.

118 *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 387.

119 *Waldman* (n. 1), p. 300, refers to the elimination of the ladder as reinforcing the timeless character of the painting. *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26, writes that replacing the ladder with a cloud is one factor in the painting that "makes a very direct statement freed from 'accidents' of place, time or characterization […] And so it is logical that the forms and their setting should be purified, or abstracted from the particular towards the general, to the extent that there is not a stone, not even a blade of grass on the ground, there is no longer the ladder of the cross in the preparatory drawing but no more than a passing cloud to describe an environment". *Cox Rearick* (n. 6), I, p. 260, states that the removal of the ladder and other changes Pontormo made in conceiving the painting "were all toward one end — that of taking the action out of a definite time and space context and turning all the forms inward".

120 *Natali* (n. 30), p. 18.

121 *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 387, refers to the illumination of the cloud as "preternatural", because, according to him, it is coming from the left side. *Natali* (n. 30), p. 18, claims that the cloud is "lit supernaturally from the direction of the nave".

122 Dürer's *Lamentation* is illustrated in *Peter Streider*, Albrecht Dürer, New York 1982, p. 224. A dark cloud

appears also in *Crucifixions* by Lucas Cranach the Elder in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, and Hans Memling in the Sankt-Annen-Museum, Lübeck. The paintings are illustrated respectively in *Hanne Kolind Poulsen*, Cranach, Copenhagen 2002, p. 11, fig. 1, and *Dirk E. de Vos*, Hans Memling. The complete works, Antwerp et al. 1994, pl. 90.

123 Ezekial (10, 14) writes: "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory."

124 See also Mark 9, 7 and Luke 9, 34.

125 The painting is in the Fogg Art Museum and datable to 1497; illustrated in *Gabriele Mandel*, L'opera completa del Botticelli, Milan 1967, p. 109, no. 150.

126 *Ragusa/Green* (n. 82), p. 337.

127 Eric Darragon, citing Matthew's reference in 17, 5 to the Transfiguration, had earlier recognized God's presence in the illuminated cloud in the altarpiece, but he concludes that it alludes to his presence at Christ's entombment to offer the promise of resurrection (*Eric Darragon*, Pontormo à Florence, in: Revue de l'art, LI, 1981, p. 51). *Braunschweig-Kühl* (n. 68), p. 62, interprets the cloud as transcendental, which is a consequence of the light on its upper left. The illuminated cloud is thereby linked to the biblical Transfiguration in which a light is a manifestation of the invisible God. She concludes, not as I do that the cloud has a narrative function, but that Pontormo extracted the visionary aspect of the biblical text to reinforce the visionary character of his panel.

128 For an illustration of Brescianino's painting, see *Venturi*, IX.5, fig. 195.

129 *Moreno* (n. 65), pp. 59-60, points out that Pontormo used light and color to transform the moment depicted in the altarpiece from a historical event into a mystical devotional image. For detailed studies of Pontormo's color, see *Maurer* (n. 77), and *Jean-Claude Lebensztejn*, I chiari colori del lutto: malinconia e stranezza del Pontormo, in: FMR, IX, 78, 1990, pp. 33-64. On occasion, in the altarpiece Pontormo used light and color for strictly artistic purposes. Though the light in the painting overall comes predominantly from the right, in two instances (apart from the cloud) it comes from the left, onto the back of the crouching youth and the advanced leg of the youth on the left, possibly to give volume to the forms.

130 The painting is dated to 1522. For an illustration, see *Berti* (n. 14), p. 233.

131 For an illustration of another illumination and of an ivory plaque in the South Kensington Museum, London, with the same arrangement of the linens in an empty tomb, see *Neil C. Brooks*, The Sepulchre of Christ in art and liturgy, with special reference to the liturgic drama, Urbana 1921, figs. 13 and 14, respectively. A more accessible illustration of the ivory relief is found in *Schiller* (n. 88), III, fig. 14, who gives the ivory a south German provenance. Cfr. *ibidem*, III, figs. 13-54, for other representations of the Maries at the tomb.

132 Matthew (28, 6) has an angel tell the Maries to "come see the place where he lay", Mark (16, 6) has the angel say, "Look, there is the place they laid him", and Luke (24, 4) writes that "The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen'"; finally, according to John 20, 12 Mary Magdalene alone encounters "two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet". For representations of the Maries at the tomb, see *ibidem*, figs. 28 and 58.

133 For representations of Peter and John at the tomb, see *ibidem*, III, figs. 54-59. For a representation of two linens in a coffin seen from above, see *ibidem*, figs. 28 and 58.

134 References to the relevant Church Fathers are published by *P. Tito Robertella*, I panni sepolcrali di Gesù, in: I Vangeli nella critica moderna, ed. *Osvaldo Marini* et al., Turin 1960, pp. 157-178.

135 See *Schiller* (n. 88), II, fig. 571.

136 I should point out that the halo is absent in the drawing, but that Pontormo made room for the halo in the painting by moving the head of the male figure back toward the right, away from the central axis of the composition (fig. 10). The halo is not readily visible to an observer looking up at ground level. One reason may be the loss of paint in that area, through aging or conscious removal during one of several restorations. For example, *Giuseppe Balocchi*, Illustrazione dell'I. e R. chiesa parrocchiale di S. Felicita che può servire di guida all'osservatori, Florence 1828, p. 41, writes that the altarpiece was restored in 1722-1723 and that "through the incompetence of the restorer it lost the brilliance of the finest colors". The translation of Balocchi's text is by *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 26, who refers to the painting's "disastrous restoration of 1722". Another possible reason for the indistinctness of the halo is that it did not make it to the final stage of the painting, that what we see is a pentimento. I should point out, however, that a small segment of the halo is visible beneath the hair of the male figure, which might support my first alternative. But even if the halo is a pentimento, the fact that Pontormo considered the motif in the first place is proof that he meant for the grave linens to have a symbolic significance such as I suggest in the text.

The use of a halo in this circumstance is unusual. It may be a ribbon that holds together two parts of the woman's veil, one part represented by the purple triangle on the left, the other part hidden behind the head

of the male figure on the right. I am skeptical of this alternative, because the purple triangle is independent of the blue veil, not just in color, but also because the passage of the eye from one to another is abrupt. A more serious objection is that the presumed ribbon is not fastened to the purple triangle, but is covered over by the latter's irregularly shaped apex. A final comment: we are not likely to find in Renaissance painting a ribbon that is formed like the one in the altarpiece and that lies across a woman's exposed chest. Possibly, the purple triangle is a later addition by another hand.

137 For a discussion of the origins of the 'Visitatio Sepulcri' and its connection with church liturgy, see *Young* (n. 51), chapters 6 and 7, and *Timothy Verdon*, Vedere il mistero. Il genio artistico della liturgia cattolica, Milan 2003, chapter 7.

138 *Young* (n. 51), p. 278.

139 *Ibidem*, p. 239.

140 Cfr. *Herbert Thurston*, Missal, in: Catholic Encyclopedia, X, New York 1911, pp. 355-357. For the text of the "Visitatio" in the Roman Missal of 1474, see Missale Romanorum Mediolani, ed. *Robert Lippe*, 1474, I, London 1899, p. 212.

141 *Young* (n. 51), pp. 239 and 267-268, notes that a great number of "Visitatio" texts were in circulation in Italy. Though a large number of manuscripts of the "Visitatio" survive, none are from Florence. However, Young recognizes that his list is incomplete; therefore, we cannot exclude the possibility that also Forentine examples of "Visitatio" texts exist. According to *Brooks* (n. 131), p. 49, "the ceremony of the Visitatio passed out of use largely in the latter half of the sixteenth century". He cites those in the Monastery of San Gallo and the Cathedral of Padua in the thirteenth century, and, in the fifteenth century, in Cividale and Padua.

142 There are other reasons for identifying this Mary as the Magdalene. John states (20, 11-12) that the Magdalene alone visited Christ's tomb and announced to the apostles Christ's resurrection. In an illumination of the Easter trope from the Gospel Book of Henry the Lion Mary Magdalene alone is represented and recorded in scrolls as announcing Christ's resurrection to the apostles, who ask her "Tell us Mary, what did you see on the way?" She answers, "I saw the sepulcher of the living Christ and the glory of the risen one." For this, see *Katherine L. Jansen*, The making of the Magdalen, Princeton 2000, pp. 265-266. Several modern scholars believe that the Mary in the altarpiece is the Magdalene: *Forster* (n. 54), p. 60, *Shearman* (n. 9), p. 16, *Steinberg* (n. 7), p. 387, and *Bertling* (n. 79), p. 127.

143 For Capponi's will, see *Waldman* (n. 1), p. 307, doc. 5.

144 *Origen* (n. 45), p. 371.

145 The quote is from *A. J. Mass*, The Resurrection, in: Catholic Enclycopedia, XII, New York 1911, p. 792.

RIASSUNTO

Il presente articolo concerne la pala d'altare del Pontormo nella cappella Capponi e gli affreschi che decoravano un tempo la cupola, poi distrutta. Vi sono confutate tutte le ricostruzioni degli affreschi, inserendo Dio padre al culmine della cupola; identificando gli accoliti del Padre come profeti, non come patriarchi; e identificando Mosè nel personaggio che regge un panno. È nuova, inoltre, l'interpretazione della pala come una Pietà *in fieri*, in cui Pontormo ha introdotto simboli ad arricchire l'evento mistico. Uno di questi è la nube nell'angolo in alto a sinistra: una luce dall'alto colpisce il cumulo per illuminare un'area simboleggiante la presenza di Dio al momento in cui il mondo si oscura alla morte di Cristo, ciò che è reso manifesto dall'ombra che sommerge la parte inferiore della nube. Pure simbolico è il panno che la Maria sulla destra consegna alla Vergine; è il sudario con cui la Vergine, seguendo la descrizione dell'evento dello Pseudo-Bonaventura, avvolgerà la testa di Cristo in preparazione della sepoltura. Il panno/sudario è rigorosamente allineato con il velo retto dalla Maria al culmine del dipinto. Abbandonati da Cristo quando risorse dal sepolcro, i lini simboleggiano la Resurrezione. Infine, il volto di Cristo, deliberatamente rivolto ai fedeli, trasmette la teologia del Volto Santo di Cristo. "Chi vede me vede il Padre" dice Cristo agli apostoli. Paolo interpreta la frase in questo modo: "Perché Dio […] rifulse nei nostri cuori, per far risplendere la conoscenza della gloria divina che rifulge sul volto di Cristo."

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