

MISZELLEN

Avraham Ronen: A DETAIL OR A WHOLE?

A Reconsideration of the two so-called Lorenzetti Landscapes in the Pinacoteca of Siena *

The two small landscapes in the Pinacoteca of Siena (Nrs. 70 and 71, fig. 1 and 2) generally attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti, have frequently aroused the interest of art-historians, mainly for two reasons: first their attribution to Ambrogio has been questioned more than once, and secondly their precocious iconography has puzzled many scholars. In fact, they are considered by most students of Sieneese Trecento to be the first autonomous landscape-pieces not only in late-Gothic painting of Siena, but also in the whole history of European painting.

The attribution of the two paintings which, after their arrival at the Pinacoteca¹ were considered to be the work of a single master was not generally accepted.² Eventually the attribution to Ambrogio Lorenzetti was almost universally adopted following the detailed analysis of these works by Cesare Brandi in his descriptive catalogue *La Regia Pinacoteca di Siena* (Rome, 1933). The psychological basis of this attribution can be easily explained. Since the vast representation of landscape in Ambrogio's frescoes of the Sala della Pace in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena confirmed him in the eyes of scholars as the landscape painter *par excellence* of the Sieneese Trecento, it is only natural that landscape paintings which bear superficial resemblance to some details of his work should be attributed to him.

Besides, a traditional feature in Italian art-criticism is the reluctance to accept a prominent work of art as anonymous. Once a work of art has been raised to fame, it immediately acquires an attribution. Changes in fashion have sometimes brought changes in the great names attached to famous works, but they have rarely been admitted simply as works whose creators are unknown. The greater the name attached to a work of art by art historians, the more entrenched is the attribution in people's minds.

Although the attribution of these works is a problem of secondary importance in this study, it should here be stressed that if we possessed a definite and well documented attribution, we could not only understand more easily some of the peculiarities of their style, but we could also solve more easily our chief problem: the underlying reasons for their unique iconography.

Among the less accepted attributions we should mention Emilio Cecchi's in the first edition of his *Trecentisti Senesi* (Rome, 1928, p. 99). Cecchi attributes both pictures — though a little vaguely — to Giovanni di Paolo or to an artist of his circle, finding "the crystalline structures and the cool pearly colour-scheme" of our two landscapes typical of the style of Giovanni di Paolo.³

In a recent study, George Rowley⁴ revives Cecchi's rejected attribution to a 15th century artist. Surprisingly enough, Rowley is the first scholar to base his opinion in this respect on a more or less methodical analysis of the stylistic conventions of Sieneese Trecento and Quattrocento landscape painting. He attributes both landscapes to a 15th century follower of the tradition of Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

The fact that the landscapes were attributed both to Ambrogio and Giovanni di Paolo, in spite of the great chronological difference of 100 years between the two masters, can be explained if we take into

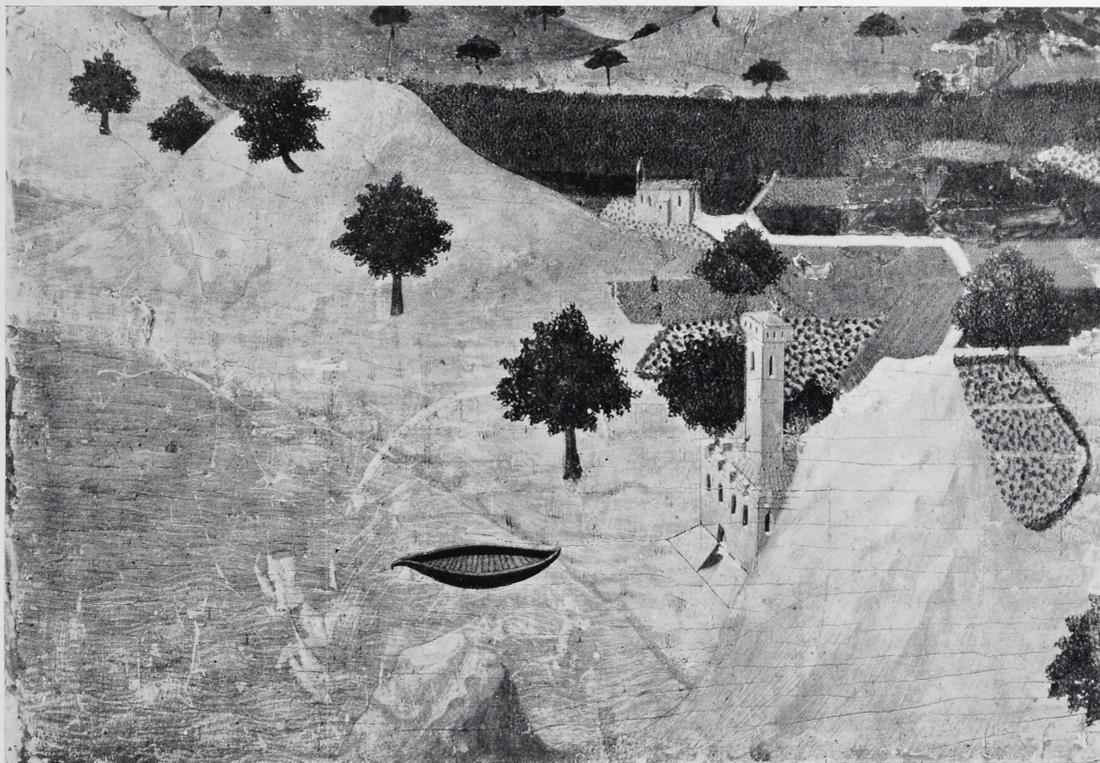
* This essay is dedicated to Professor Dr. Ulrich Middeldorf, Director of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, without whose kind help it could not have been written.

¹ They arrived at the Pinacoteca between 1852 and 1895 — the year when they were first registered in the catalogue of the Pinacoteca, and are of unknown origin. See C. Brandi *La Regia Pinacoteca di Siena*, Rome, 1933, p. 127-129. All my other quotations of Brandi's opinions and statements refer to this passage.

² B. Berenson, *Central Italian Painters*, 1908, p. 189, attributed them to Pietro Lorenzetti *Van Marle*, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, The Hague, 1924, Vol. I, p. 360 — same attribution. Afterwards the trend turned in favor of Ambrogio. For a detailed account of the history of the early attributions, see C. Brandi.

³ Cf. Giovanni di Paolo's predella N. 198 in the Pinacoteca of Siena (Fig. 4).

⁴ *George Rowley*, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti*, Princeton University Press, 1958, Vol. I, pp. 93-95. All my other quotations from this author refer to these pages.



1 *The Castle on the Beach*, here attributed to a master of the circle of Giovanni di Paolo. Siena, Pinacoteca.

account that in Siena, more than in Florence, original creation went hand in hand with traditionalism and imitation. In the Pinacoteca of Siena, one can find, for example, a whole series of free copies of the *Lamentation* from the Santa Petronilla altar-piece, all of them done within a period of about sixty years.⁵ Giovanni di Paolo, despite his plastic inventiveness and his originality, was also an archaist and one of the most prolific copyists in all of Siennese art. While the Florentine painters of his time and their successors used to borrow from their contemporaries, Giovanni frequently copied also from Siennese Trecento masters. He did not hesitate to use an entire composition by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (Uffizi) for his own two versions of the *Presentation in the Temple* (Siena, Pinacoteca), and, what is more pertinent to our subject, he probably made use also of a detail — that of the threshing scene — from the wonderful country-landscape in the Buon Governo frescoes by Ambrogio, for the block of huts in the center of his *Flight into Egypt* (Siena, Pinacoteca). The famous landscapes of the Buon Governo frescoes could therefore serve as a model not only to Ambrogio Lorenzetti himself (C. Brandi assumes that the two little landscapes in the Pinacoteca of Siena were painted by Ambrogio *after* the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico), but could also inspire Giovanni di Paolo or his contemporaries a hundred years later. In the chapters dealing with each of the panels the reader will find further arguments in favour of the attribution to a master of the circle of Giovanni di Paolo.

The importance of the fact that these pictures might have been the “first pure European landscapes” did not escape the attention of scholars; for if that is true, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, the Italian, or his Siennese

⁵ These copies are by a) Bartolo di Fredi b) a follower of Barna c) Benedetto di Bindo. See *George Rowley*, op. cit., Vol. II, plates 31-34.

contemporary (or 15th century follower) was the pioneer of pure landscape painting and not Albrecht Altdorfer, the German 16th century painter.^{5a}

The idea that Italy might have produced the first and also one of the greatest landscape painters (besides the great pioneers of the new humanistic approach to nature — St. Francis, Petrarca and Boccaccio), tempted many scholars, especially the Italians. According to these scholars, therefore, these pictures are something like a daring voice crying in the wilderness of the Mediaeval approach to landscape; a premature flowering; a false alarm of a new Renaissance; a sudden burst of a solitary genius, which found no worthy successor or, to put it in Enzo Carli's words: „*Un miracolo unico in tutto il Trecento*“ (see note 11). The painters who came after Ambrogio continued, indeed, to paint in the former tradition, which looked on landscape-painting only as a background for a sacred-human subject matter, as if our two landscapes did not exist... But the very uniqueness of these works has also aroused suspicions in some scholars who tended to see in them only mutilated details cut from bigger works, which originally probably contained figures also.⁶ We shall try to prove that this less popular opinion is nearer to the truth than the accepted one.

These doubts were based not only on the historical fact that pure landscape pieces (except these two) are completely absent from European painting till the 16th century, but also on the fact that we find, from the 15th century and, with greater frequency, from the 16th century on, the phenomenon of old pictures being mutilated and cut into several pieces, which were dispersed shortly afterwards in different parts of the world. The reason for these mutilations of works of art in the 16th to 18th centuries, was chiefly the formation of the great art collections in that period. Owners and dealers did not hesitate to cut big pictures into smaller parts, when they liked the part more than the whole, or because these parts could fit more easily into the gaps of their densely arranged galleries, the walls and even ceilings of which were virtually covered, in a tile-like manner, with pictures of every style and epoch. Changes of taste regarding format and frames were also responsible for mutilations of pictures. In the Renaissance, gables of painted altar-pieces (like that of the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Capella Baroncelli, Santa Croce, by the School of Giotto)⁷ were cut off in order to convert the elaborate Gothic frame of the altar into the simpler rectangle favoured by the anti-Gothic taste of the period.

Other mutilations were the work of dealers who, in order to multiply their profits, divided a single work into several ones simply by cutting it to pieces, every one of which could pass as a self-contained work (though not in the time they were painted). A typical example of this sort of dissection is Sassetta's *Adoration of the Magi* which is now divided between the Griggs Collection — the Metropolitan Museum, New York (which possesses the *Voyage of the Magi*) and the Chigi-Saracini Collection, Siena (which possesses the *Adoration*). These mutilated details, the first of which is a typical 15th century background scene, were considered for a long time as two autonomous works, even by modern scholars. This shows that such mutilated and dissected parts, which would seem rather absurd and incomplete both iconographically and formally in the context of their own period's style and conventions, may appear to the modern eye quite complete and self-contained.⁸ Frequently in these cases we find that the more sophisticated and learned observer adds to his remarks about the intrinsic value of the cut detail some enthusiastic notes on its “daring and unconventional iconography” (in very much the same way as was done to our two landscapes).

Why does the modern eye tend to interpret these mutilated parts as complete works? There are several reasons which explain this phenomenon. First, the composition of the old masters included many auto-

^{5a} The priority of the “*Oltramontani*” and especially of Dürer, Altdorfer and the Danubian School, Patinir and other Northerners, to the Italians in landscape painting is demonstrated by E. H. Gombrich in *Renaissance Artistic Theory and the Development of Landscape Painting*, Essays in honor of Hans Tietze (1880-1954), Ed. Gazette des Beaux-Arts 1950-1958. Gombrich also thinks that pure landscape pieces did not appear prior to the XVIth century.

⁶ Among the earlier ones, we should mention again *Emilio Cecchi*, *Trecentisti Senesi*, Rome, 1928, pp. 98-99. It is rather interesting that in the second edition (Milan, 1948) the passage dealing with our two landscapes was omitted without any given reason. This strange retreat in an edition which claims to be “augmented” may indicate that the author preferred silence to combatting the overwhelming majority which was formed against his opinion after 1933.

⁷ Santa Croce, Florence. A part of one gable was recently discovered in the Museum of San Diego, California.

⁸ See *Lionello Venturi*, *Pitture Italiane in America*, Milano, 1931. Plate CXIX, p. 114, and *Emilio Cecchi*, op. cit., p. 117. Both authors mistook the *Voyage of the Magi* in the Griggs Coll., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for a whole and complete work. In a later edition of *Great Paintings in America*, New York, 1948, p. 30 *Venturi* corrects himself, but forgetting again that the *Voyage of the Magi* is only a cut detail, he wrongly interprets the low position of the star, which simply belongs to the upper part of the *Nativity* in the Chigi-Saracini Coll.

nomous details which could easily be observed separately; this fact is due to the wider scope of subject-matter, which was then really universal. From the 16th century on, a double process took place in the development of European painting: the human subject-matter with its complex background gradually gave place to a more restricted one; thus there came into being the autonomous landscape pieces and still-lives which formerly had been only details in the composition.

On the other hand, the parts of the composition became more interdependent than before, the narrower subject-matter became more compact and demanded a more concentrated formal treatment.

The beautiful landscape details of the *Guidoriccio da Fogliano* fresco by Simone Martini in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, could serve as an excellent example of a self-contained landscape-detail in Sieneese Trecento painting (Fig. 3).

It should not be inferred from what has been said above that the composition of the Sieneese Trecento was a heap of confused details with no logical connection between them. This would be the same as saying that the various "parts" or „*voci*“ in a polyphonic work by Bach have no harmonic relationship because of their relative melodic autonomy. The greater autonomy of Mediaeval and Renaissance detail is also well-known to editors of modern art books. This is proved by the large proportion of detail reproductions in art books which, naturally, are cut so as to form self-contained units. The influence of modern art books on modern artistic judgment should not be overlooked, for they concentrate the reader's attention on details, sometimes even without showing him the entire work at all. The modern reader thus gets into the habit of judging these isolated details as self-contained, without taking into account their original context and the part they play in the whole work, and without studying the principles of their interconnections.

It was, again, George Rowley who was the first to try to solve the problem of the *original format* of our two landscapes through a methodical study of the principles of landscape compositions in Sieneese Trecento and Quattrocento painting. He rightly claims that the incorrect attribution to A. Lorenzetti is due to the fact that "the development of landscape principles in Western Europe has never been adequately studied".

Rowley maintains that the composition of the two panels is "too self contained" to allow any probability of their being mutilated parts of a larger whole. But here he ignores one of the most typical "principles" or features of landscape representation in Sieneese Trecento and Quattrocento painting, i.e. that so many *details* (as shown in fig. 3) look even more "self-contained" than our two landscapes, although our example was cut only by the scissors of an editor.⁹ His proof with the aid of comparative cuts or details is not convincing, since another choice of details and a more scrupulous cutting could easily prove the contrary.¹⁰ It is not their appearance as self-contained pictures to the modern eye that can serve as a legitimate proof of the pictures being still in their original format, but their being self-contained also when judged by the eye of the Trecento and Quattrocento Sieneese artists.

If we carefully examine the two pictures in the light of the principles of Sieneese Trecento and also of Quattrocento landscape painting, we shall find in both of them many "unexplicable areas" which "promise something which is beyond their format" (to use Rowley's expressions). As it will be demonstrated later, all the deviations from the Sieneese conventions of landscape representation in the two panels have a kind of common denominator: They seem to have been created not by the *addition* of original details or by a new treatment of plastic values, but either by elimination or mutilation of many details which were essential for a landscape representation in this period. Since, as we shall further see, all the deviations of this kind occur near the edges of the two paintings, I am inclined to infer that their present format is the result of later mutilations and not of compositional calculations made in the process of creating the work. It will be shown below that not only the landscapes in the two little panels are but details cut from a whole work, but that they were not cut in such a smooth way as was easy to do in the case of Simone's landscape (fig. 3), for the cutter damaged and spoiled also what had to be a complete representation of a landscape, even as a background detail, according to Sieneese Trecento and Quattrocento stylistic and iconographical principles. We shall try to demonstrate that even if there did appear such a prodigy as a "pure landscape piece" in the Sieneese Trecento or Quattrocento, it is very unlikely that its creator would have chosen to represent it in the form it appears today in the two panels in the Pinacoteca in Siena.

Notwithstanding the great difference in composition and subject matter between the two landscapes,

⁹ Our illustration was inspired by the color plate in *G. Paccagnini's* Simone Martini, Milan, 1955.

¹⁰ The two landscapes are cut at a hair's breadth from the objects therein represented, while *Rowley's* trial-cuts leave generous "inexplicable areas" near the edges.

they were generally not only considered works of the same master, but were also claimed by many to have been once parts of the same work.¹¹ The differences between them have been interpreted as originating simply from the different topographic settings and not from stylistic differences.

The Castle on the Beach (Fig. 1)

Rowley rightly stresses the more consistent arrangement of space, here seen from a high view-point, and the relatively larger area of flat ground as typical features of the Quattrocento rather than the Trecento. It should be noted, however, that such Quattrocento masters as Sano di Pietro, the Master of the Osservanza and even Sassetta, reverted quite frequently to the former way of depicting distances by a series of overlapping hills or rocks (which existed in Siene painting since Duccio), instead of using gradually receding planes arranged in a single perspective system.

The rather questionable position of the *rocks* in the foreground is also mentioned by Rowley, who rightly puts them in the XVth century. But he wrongly claims that "it would be difficult to picture the two repoussoir rocks as the top of large mountains". If we judge them according to the principles of landscape representation in this period, we shall again notice that they belong to those details that „cannot be explained“, which, contrary to Rowley's opinion, do abound in the two panels.

In the form in which they appear in the panel, these two rocks infringe on an important principle of landscape representation that was constantly kept in both Trecento and Quattrocento in Siena; that is, a rock never appears without a clear indication that it springs from the ground below. When its lower base is cut off, it is caused only by the overlapping rocks or hills in the foreground. Never does a rock float in the air like those appearing here, which do not grow gradually from the earth like Ambrogio's or Sano di Pietro's and Sassetta's, neither do they spring suddenly from a geometric plane like those in the works of Giovanni di Paolo.

A much more subtle point: *the depression between the two rocks*, would also be much too near to the picture's edge for any Siene painter of the period. By almost merging with the horizontal line of the frame, its curve — so typical of Siene landscape painting — loses all its original formal significance.

Now, of all the Siene XVth century artists, Giovanni di Paolo was the only one to create dramatic contrasts so frequently between bare wild rocks and neatly cut, flat "perspective planes". His rocks might spring up in the foreground or rise suddenly from amidst the plain itself. This particular point may support the attribution of this panel not only to a later period than the Trecento (as Rowley rightly asserts), but also may move it towards the circle of Giovanni di Paolo, and the similar rectilinear paths (mentioned also by Cecchi) which are found in his work, might be considered in the same way too.¹²

Rowley is the only one to observe in our two landscapes another important deviation from the principles of landscape representation in Siene Trecento and Quattrocento painting: "Certainly the *suppression of sky* is startling"...

As, of course, he cannot find a parallel to this phenomenon in Siene art of this period, he is obliged to wander to Florence, there to find a rather inadequate example in Paolo Uccello's "Rout of San Romano" (Uffizi, and National Gallery, London). But Uccello's skyless panorama, which reaches the top edge of the picture, is deliberately arranged so as to serve as an unbroken screen for the figures passing in front of it.¹³ In none of Uccello's works do we have the least impression that parts of the landscape were arbitrarily cut or mutilated. His landscape backgrounds are complete units reduced to the clearest form possible.

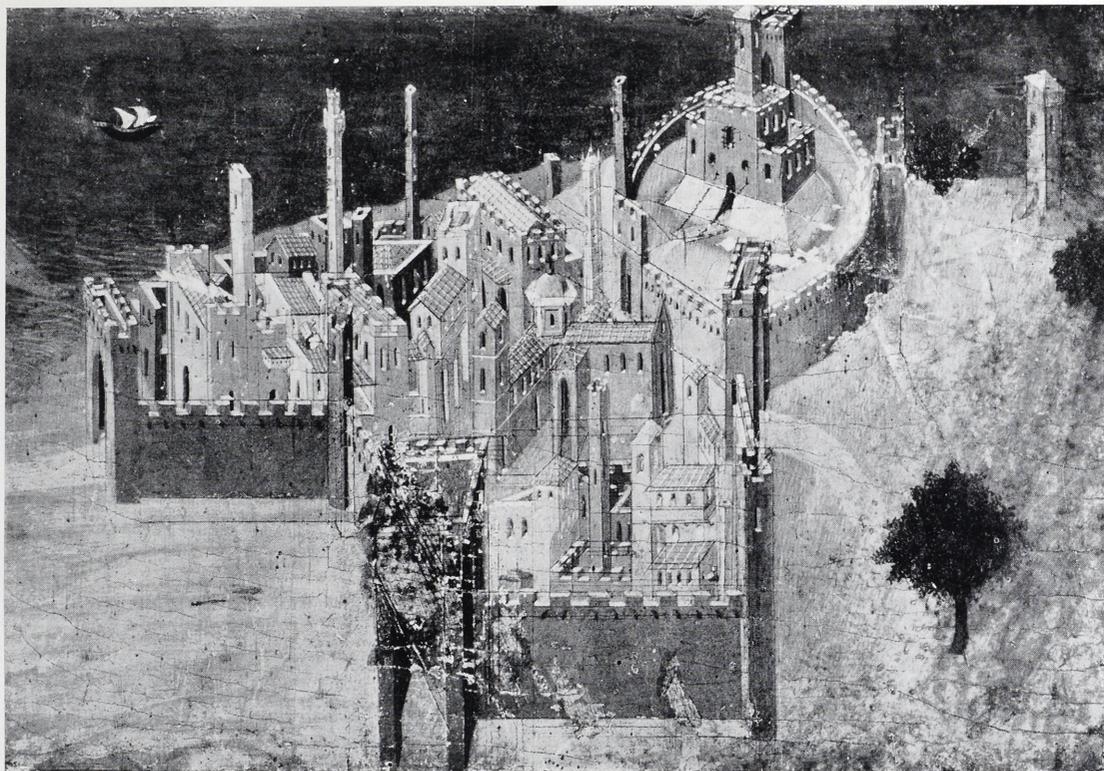
The *sky-line* was always an essential feature in the Siene tradition of landscape representation. It could be rugged or broken, as in the Duecento; rhythmically undulating as in the soft hilly Siene panoramas of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, or could appear in both forms in the Quattrocento. In our picture, where the soft undulating line of the horizon is clearly indicated, it seems rather unlikely that its own creator should arbitrarily spoil its effect by cutting off all the hill tops. No follower, either of Ambrogio or Giovanni di Paolo, would ever have conceived their pictures in such a way.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. Enzo Carli, Guida della Pinacoteca di Siena, Milan, 1958, p. 29. Emilio Cecchi, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

¹² Cf. the scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist in the Art Institute of Chicago and the National Gallery, London.

¹³ The rock and cave in Uccello's *St. George and the Dragon* (Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris) serve exactly the same purpose. An interesting earlier parallel to the screen-like background landscape can be seen in Giovanni del Biondo's predella to the *Madonna and Saints*, Santa Croce, Florence.

¹⁴ In this panel we have two glimpses of what might be overpainted (?) bits of sky seen through the undulating horizon. The first, a little right to the upper centre, and the second near the extreme left. For the suppressed sky, see also Enzo Carli, *La Pittura Senese*, Milan, 1955, p. 138.



2 *A City*, here attributed to a master of the circle of Giovanni di Paolo. Siena, Pinacoteca.

There are frequent cases of *cut trees* in Siennese painting, but the mutilated tree on the right, which has no trunk, appears to be floating in the air absurdly (for the Siennese eye at least), no less than the two rocks, and for the same reasons.

The attempts made by many scholars to discover the actual *topographical settings* of the two panels are quite logical.¹⁵ While a background landscape might easily be an imaginary one, it is very unlikely that our anonymous artist was so revolutionary as to decide to do a landscape piece *per se* as if he were a Rubens or a Salvator Rosa, or were just doing an academic exercise. An imaginary pure landscape piece is out of place in this period, no less than a figure painting that does not represent a definite personality, sacred or secular, real or legendary. In fact Lorenzetti's vast panorama in the *Buongoverno* fresco is a true representation of Siena and its rural territory. Till now, both sites of our panels have not been identified.¹⁶

It is rather improbable that the first "pure" topographic landscape in the history of European painting would appear in such a casual composition, with its only identifiable subject (the castle) half over-

¹⁵ Enzo Carli, *Guida della Pinacoteca di Siena*, Milan, 1958, p. 29. Carli claims that *The City* is a representation of Talamone, on the western border of the Siennese territory, and that *The Castle* represents a part of the eastern border near the Lake of Chiusi or Trasimeno. For earlier attempts to identify the sites represented in the two paintings, see C. Brandi, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Shortly before the publication of this issue, the Editor kindly drew my attention to two interesting contributions to our subject which appeared in the *Critica d'Arte* N. 46, 1961, pp. 37-46: *Ambrogio Lorenzetti e San Miniato*, by Maria Laura Cristiani Testi; and *Mappamundus Volubilis*, by L. C. Raghianti. Cristiani Testi claims: a) that the lower and upper margins of the *tavolette* are intact, and only the side-parts were cut. Implicitly she

lapped and having none of its characteristic or individual features clearly shown. In this case, therefore, C. Brandi's theory according to which it is a fantastic landscape, seems to be more justifiable.¹⁷ (But this theory is more applicable to *my* opinion as to the original format of the two panels than to his own).

This landscape, with its suppressed sky-line and mutilated rocks and trees, has a composition which is more appropriate as a clever snapshot or as a Degas than a work of a Siense artist of either the Trecento or the Quattrocento, who would have chosen a more complete and stately composition and what might seem to him, a fuller and less ambiguous manner of representation.

Before passing to the second panel, I should like to add another note on attribution: it is interesting that all the particular elements of *The Castle on the Beach* are typical of Giovanni di Paolo's work. In the *Communion of the Magdalen* (Predella N. 198 in the Pinacoteca of Siena, fig. 4), we find the rock-and-plain element, the body of water and the same cool color scheme. The undulating sky-line, however, appears in other works of his, or of his circle's, in a similar setting.¹⁸

The City (Fig. 2)

A bird's-eye view of a city is rather uncommon even in the Siense Quattrocento. Such Quattrocento masters as Sano di Pietro, Sassetta, and the Master of the Osservanza reverted frequently to the side-view of buildings and castles seen on hill tops. Again, the bird's-eye view is more frequent in Giovanni's works (the *Madonnas* in the Pinacoteca of Siena and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the *Stories of Saint John* in the Art Institute of Chicago and National Gallery, London) than in the works of any other Siense master.

In the *City*, as in the former panel, we also find details which are rather inexplicable in the context of the period's style; for example the piece of land emerging from the sea on the left. It is in fact one of those areas which "promise something beyond the format" that Rowley does not admit to exist here.

Another suspicious element is in fact the only human figure in the picture, which in the way it appears here, seems to be foreign not only to the composition's plastic system but also to its scale. In the lower right corner there is a nude boy painted in translucent brown. He seems to sit on the edge of a dull green area which hardly differs from its yellowish gray surrounding. His back is obliquely turned towards the spectator, and his head, drawn in profile, looks down on the greenish area which might have indicated water (although there is no clear shore-line). On his left there are some unidentifiable blue and red spots — perhaps his garments.

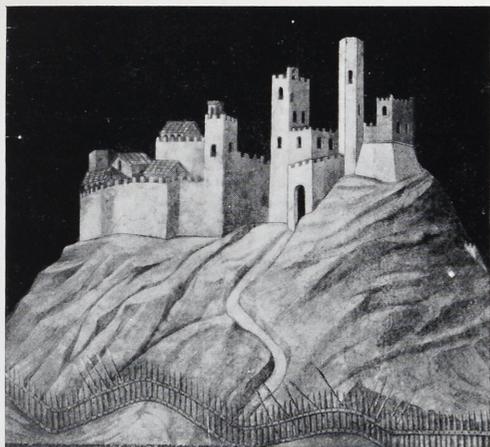
Rowley compares this detail with a similar one appearing on a *cassone* painting of 1450¹⁹, but in the *cassone* painting the boy is within the regular context of a human subject matter, while this solitary figure is clearly cut from its original surroundings and therefore has no compositional relationship to the landscape and looks rather meaningless (in a picture painted in a period when every single human figure was charged with meaning!).

admits that *they are details from a larger whole; b) that they are non ordinary landscapes but parts from the lost Mappamondo painted 1344 by Lorenzetti for the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, and c) that The City is a pictorial representation of San Miniato al Tedesco (The Castle on The Beach remains as yet unidentified). However, despite the ample and interesting material brought forth in these essays, I think we are yet far from having the final solution to the problem of the sites of our landscapes: a) Cristiani Testi admits that the city is not a faithful rendering of San Miniato, b) the upper and lower parts of *The Castle On The Beach*, the general and unidentifiable way of its whole representation, and the little boy in *The City* still remain problematic details. More evidence is also needed, in order to prove Ragghianti's hypothesis, that Ambrogio represented in his "Map Of The World" real, and not stereotyped descriptions of towns (as, in fact was quite usual in his age and afterwards); that our landscapes were parts of Lorenzetti's *Mappamondo* as such; and finally — that *The City* represents San Miniato and not a generalized type of a fortified medieval Tuscan town.*

¹⁷ See Cesare Brandi, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ Cf. a *cassone* painting attributed to him, Baltimore, Walters Collection.

¹⁹ See Schubring, Cassoni, Berlin, 1915. Cat. N. 427. This boy may be compared in style and technique to some figures in Giovanni di Paolo's *Flight into Egypt*, Pinacoteca, Siena. We may fairly assume that he was not added later. The path going down from the right gate of the city is also a typical feature of Giovanni's work. Cf. his *Jesus on the Mount of Olives*, Pinacoteca Vaticana.



3 Simone Martini, *Guidoriccio da Fogliano* (Fresco, detail). Siena, Palazzo Pubblico.



4 Giovanni di Paolo, *The Communion of the Magdalen*. Siena, Pinacoteca.

*The physical condition of the works*²⁰

Some peculiarities in the physical condition of the two panels may support our doubts as to the completeness of their format. Both panels are not in their original frames, which makes the suspicion of mutilation more justifiable. The edges of the two pictures are clumsily cut; thus their measurements vary on each side, and the marginal parts being damaged, they scarcely fit their frames.

The relatively small dimensions of the panels²¹ which are nearly of the same size, may also support the theory of their being mutilated details.

Considerable areas, especially in *The Castle* are restored and overpainted. A careful laboratory examination is worthwhile in order to discover whether some adjustments to their new format have been made by way of covering some incongruous details and adding others.

Conclusion

The two panels discussed above are, according to the author's opinion :

a) The work of an unknown Sienese painter who imitated the style of Ambrogio Lorenzetti; either in the 14th or in the 15th century. (If in the 15th century, then he probably was of the circle of Giovanni di Paolo).²²

b) All the deviations from the stylistic conventions of Sienese Trecento and Quattrocento landscape representations which take place in these two panels are in fact *omissions* of certain details. These omissions, judged in the light of Sienese Trecento and Quattrocento conventions, are inexplicable and meaningless. They could by no means be the creative innovations of an artist of that period, be it the most original and daring one. It should be borne in mind that the scope, even of the most audacious discoveries and innovations of a pioneer genius, is limited by some of the artistic conventions of his age.

²⁰ For a detailed description, see *Cesare Brandi*, op. cit. We bring up here only those points pertaining to our subject.

²¹ Each one measures roughly: 22 × 33 cm.

²² In a recent review on *Rowley's* book which appeared in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Oct. 1960 (pp. 235-38), *R. Offner* objects to *Rowley's* arguments in favour of dating our panels to the 15th century, claiming that the "principle of continuity" of space arrangement was not invented in the 15th century, and is found already in Lorenzetti's *Buon Governo* frescoes.

However, his arguments do not exclude the possibility of an imitation of such and even earlier stylistic features in the 15th century, and especially by Giovanni di Paolo and his circle. Nor do they contradict our own arguments in favour of a Giovanni di Paolo attribution.



1 Carl Andreas Ruthart, *Tiergruppe in einer Berglandschaft*. Florenz, Galleria Pitti, Kat. Nr. 418.

c) Therefore we conclude that both panels are cut details, and probably background views.

d) Both panels represent ideal landscapes and have nothing to do with real topography.

It is very likely that each of the above arguments cannot prove decisively the author's opinion. But it seems to him that the sum total of his doubts carry enough weight to justify at least a serious reconsideration of this interesting problem.

RIASSUNTO

Due piccoli paesaggi della Pinacoteca di Siena furono attribuiti nelle ultime tre decadi quasi all'unanimità ad Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Essi furono inoltre considerati i primi paesaggi "puri" della pittura europea post-Romana. Queste due ipotesi, specialmente la seconda, sono messe in dubbio dall'autore, il quale considera questi pannelli di data più tarda (cioè il Quattrocento) e li ritiene dettagli tagliati da dipinti più grandi, che probabilmente contenevano anche figure.

Dapprima egli analizza le ragioni per le quali molti storici d'arte moderni li accettano come composizioni complete e per se stanti. Egli esamina alcune delle caratteristiche iconografiche, compositive e stilistiche dei paesaggi senesi del Trecento e Quattrocento e scopre molte mancanze e difetti di dettagli in entrambi i paesaggi (significativo che tutti appaiono ai margini del dipinto) incompatibili con queste caratteristiche. Inoltre il saggio, stilisticamente favorisce l'attribuzione ad un pittore del XV secolo, il quale si ispirò ad Ambrogio, ma fu probabilmente della cerchia di Giovanni di Paolo.