

ANDREA DEL CASTAGNO'S *LAST SUPPER*

by

Eva Maria Lundin

Under the Direction of Shelley Zuraw

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes Andrea del Castagno's fresco of the *Last Supper* in the refectory of Sant'Apollonia, Florence. This study investigates the details of the commission, Castagno's fresco in the iconographic tradition of representations of the Last Supper, the aspects which separate this Last Supper from previous examples in Florentine refectories, the fresco's purpose in relation to its conventual setting, and also the artist's use of both classicizing and contemporary elements and techniques. The central focus of my work is the significance of this fresco in terms of both the imagery Castagno employs and his possible sources. The purpose of this thesis is to recognize the innovative aspects of the fresco, as well as the role that Castagno played in the development of Florentine Renaissance art.

INDEX WORDS: Andrea del Castagno, Castagno, Last Supper, Sant'Apollonia, Florentine refectories, Italian Renaissance painting, Fresco, Fictive marble

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

Biography leading up to work at Sant' Apollonia

Born as early as 1417 and no later than 1419, Andrea del Castagno was a native of the small village near Monte Falterone whose name he bears.¹ The story of his arrival in Florence was initially reported by Antonio Billi in 1516-30 and expanded by the Anonimo Gaddiano in 1542-48.² In Vasari's *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Castagno was discovered drawing in the countryside of the Mugello, by the Florentine nobleman, Bernardetto de' Medici, who brought Castagno to Florence to become a painter.³

Castagno earned the name "Andreino degli Impiccati" (Little Andrew of the hanged men) from his first major work, a fresco depicting the Albizzi and their supporters as hanged men on

¹ Frederick Hartt in collaboration with Gino Corti, "Andrea del Castagno: Three Disputed Dates," *The Art Bulletin* 48 (1966), 229.

² C. de Fabriczy, ed., "Il libro di Antonio Billi (1516-30)," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. V, Vol. VII (1891), 299 and C. de Fabriczy, ed. *Il codice dell'Anonimo Gaddiano – cod. Magliabechiano XVII, 17 – nella biblioteca nazionale di Firenze* (1542-48), *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. V, Vol. XII, (1893), 275-344. These accounts report that a Florentine gentleman found Castagno, as a small boy, drawing on a slab of stone while guarding cattle or sheep, and then took him to Florence.

³ Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, newly translated by Gaston du C. de Vere, vol. 3, 10 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1976 [reprint of the 1912 ed., London: Philip Lee Warner, Publisher to the Medici Society, Limited]), 97-98. This story appears in both the 1550 and 1568 editions of Vasari's *Lives*; for the first edition, see Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori scritte da Giorgio Vasari, pittore aretino con nuove annotazione e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi*, vol. 2, 9 vols. (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, Editore, 1906), 667-689. It is clear that Vasari adapted his story from those of Antonio Billi and the Anonimo Gaddiano. The story of Castagno as a young boy drawing in the countryside can be seen as a parallel to Giotto. Vasari used the same topos in his account of Giotto's discovery, possibly connecting the two artists' interest in nature and depicting true life.

Frederick Hartt, "The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno," *The Art Bulletin*, 41 (1959), 161 quotes Vasari's story and states that the connection with Bernardetto de' Medici could not be proven at the time. Herbert P. Horne, "Andrea del Castagno," *Burlington Magazine* 7 (1905), 69 explains that Bernardetto, born in 1395, was from an older branch of the Medici family than Cosimo Vecchio. They both were descended in the fourth degree from Averardo di Chiarissimo. In 1436 Bernardetto was a *Priore*, in 1438 he was a *Commissario* in Lombardy, in 1447 he was *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia* and was elected again in 1455. His will was dated 1465. The majority of Bernardetto's estates were in the Mugello, except for a small property in Florence. Therefore, according to Hartt, if Bernardetto was Castagno's patron, he could have brought Castagno to Florence sometime before 1438.

the façade of the Palazzo del Podestà (the Bargello) done in 1440.⁴ He then left Florence and is documented in Venice in 1442.⁵ Castagno's signature, along with that of Francesco da Faenza, on the vault frescoes of the Evangelists with God the Father and Saints John the Baptist and Zacharias in the chapel of San Tarasio in San Zaccaria indicate his presence in Venice at this time (Fig. 1).⁶ It is not until 1444 that Castagno returned to Florence where he submitted a window design for the drum of the Cathedral of Florence and was later admitted into the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali*.⁷ Between the years 1444 and early 1447, Castagno completed various commissions in Florence which are now lost, including the *Portrait of Leonardo Bruni* for the Guild of Giudici e Notai, for which he was paid on April 30, 1445; paintings of two *Spiritelli* and a lily on the casing for the new organ for the Cathedral of Florence, paid for on February 28, 1446; a painting of *Agnus Dei* and the gilding of capitals of the organ, paid for on December 12, 1446; and a painting of the *Three Virtues* for the main meeting room of the Guild of Giudici e

⁴ The fresco of *The Impiccati* had disappeared by the time Vasari first visited Florence in the sixteenth century. Since the exiled Albizzi joined Niccolò Piccinino, the condottiere of the duke of Milan, at the Battle of Anghiari against Florence on June 29, 1440 they were condemned as rebels on July 13, 1440. The Podestà was ordered to have the figures painted as dead, hanging by their heels on the façade of the Bargello; John R. Spencer, *Andrea del Castagno and His Patrons* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), 7.

⁵ Spencer, 7 also claims that Castagno possibly painted his early *Crucifixion* for Santa Maria degli Angeli before leaving for Venice between late 1440 - early 1442, as Hartt initially stated in "The Earliest Works," 162-7; however, Hartt dates it as early as the 1430s.

⁶ Marita Horster, *Andrea del Castagno* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1980), 12; Hartt, "The Earliest Works," 167-168. Gary M. Radke, "Nuns and Their Art: The Case of San Zaccaria in Renaissance Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, 2 (Summer, 2001), 441 notes that Castagno may have received this commission due to connections with the Medici family. The abbess' brother, Doge Francesco Foscari, was supposedly on "extremely good terms" with the Medici circle, and Castagno, as noted above, was linked to Bernardetto de' Medici. Bernardetto was in Venice in January 1441, and may have suggested Castagno as an up and coming Florentine artist available for work. Castagno also designed the *Dormition of the Virgin* mosaic on the vault of the Mascoli Chapel in San Marco, Venice some time between 1442 and the end of 1443; Hartt, "The Earliest Works of Andrea del Castagno: Part Two," *The Art Bulletin* 41 (1959), 225-236. Horster, 19-20 states that Castagno possibly received the Mascoli Chapel commission with the aid of the abbess of San Zaccaria, Elena Foscari, and that Michele Giambono was the mosaicist who executed Castagno's design (which included the triumphal arch setting with the Virgin, God the Father and two apostles on the left) and added the group of apostles on the right. Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice & Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 106-108 discusses Castagno's influence on Jacopo Bellini's *Visitation* mosaic on the same side of the vault. Giulia Rossi Scarpa, "I mosaici della Cappella dei Mascoli," in *San Marco. La Basilica d'Oro*, ed. Guido Polacco, (Milan: Berenice, 1991), 287-303 named Jacopo Bellini as the artist of the three apostles on the far left of the right-hand group.

⁷ Castagno was paid for the *Lamentation* oculus design on February 26, 1444 and was admitted to the Painters' Guild, the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali*, on May 30, 1444. Horster, 12; Spencer, 8-9.

Notai, paid for on March 30, 1447.⁸ Castagno's work for the Cathedral organ was a highly visible project, since at the time the old and new organs were placed in the Cantorie by Donatello and Luca della Robbia.⁹ The documentation for these lost works is evidence for Castagno's activity in Florence in the mid 1440s. His next commission was for the frescoes at the convent of Sant' Apollonia. The assignment of Castagno to this large project shows the respect and admiration he had attained by this date, despite only having executed small-scale commissions in Florence.

The Commission at Sant' Apollonia

The Benedictine church and convent of Sant' Apollonia was founded in Florence in 1339, with its original buildings for the church and cloister completed in 1345.¹⁰ A century later under the protection of Pope Eugene IV, who promoted Observant orders, the convent of Sant' Apollonia increased in size – both in the number of residents and through building activities.¹¹ The refectory was part of this mid-quattrocento construction campaign which took

⁸ Spencer, 9-10 lists these commissions. Not mentioned above are “various things” for the monastery, San Benedetto fuori della Porta a Pinti, c. 1444. *Spiritelli* is the term used in the description of Castagno's work in the Cathedral's payment documents for the new organ. *Spiritelli* was the vernacular term in the fifteenth century for the figures now known as *putto*. The interpretation of *spiritelli*, or sprites derived from the representations of infant *Bacchoi* on second-century Roman sarcophagi. The ornamental use of the *putto-spiritello* is considered to have been “invented” by Donatello; see Charles Dempsey, *Inventing the Renaissance Putto* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), xii-xii.

⁹ Spencer, 86-87. The first organ of the Cathedral by Fra Domenico da Siena, dating from 1388, was reconditioned by Matteo di Paolo da Prato in 1422-23 (and again in 1436 at the time of the consecration of the Cathedral). In 1426 the Operai of the Cathedral decided that a new organ would be built, and that both organs would be placed in the choir. Six years later the order was confirmed in March 1432. The casings for both the old and new organs were made by Giovanni di Domenico da Gaiole. The old organ was reinstalled in Donatello's Cantoria, and the new organ was placed in Luca della Robbia's Cantoria; John Pope-Hennessy, “The Cantoria,” in *Luca della Robbia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 20, 229.

¹⁰ The history of Sant' Apollonia is discussed by Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine – divise ne' fuoi quartieri, tomo ottavo, del quartiere di S. Giovanni* (Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1989) [Dell'edizione originale, composta da 10 volumi, Firenze, 1754-1762], 297-316, and Walter and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz, ein kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, vol. 1, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1952-55), 211-225.

¹¹ Spencer, 103-108 explains the pope's interest in Sant' Apollonia and the details of the convent's finances, expansion, leadership and membership. For more information on the expanding Florentine convents, see Gene Adam Brucker, “Monasteries, Friaries, and Nunneries in Quattrocento Florence,” in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson

place from 1445-49 or 1450.¹² Andrea del Castagno's fresco along the north wall of the refectory, the *Last Supper* with the three Passion scenes of the *Crucifixion*, *Entombment*, and *Resurrection* above, was completed between July and early December of 1447 (Figs. 2, 3).¹³ According to the existing documents, Cecilia di Pazzino Donati was abbess from as early as 1429 until at least June 16, 1445.¹⁴ Although she has been identified as the abbess in charge when Castagno would have been hired, there are no known records specifying that she was responsible for the commission by the Benedictine order.¹⁵ Analysis of Sant'Apollonia's history and the date of Castagno's commission, along with the archival documents of the convent,

(Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 41-62 and Richard Trexler, "Celibacy in the Renaissance: the Nuns of Florence," in *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 3. On the building projects of Sant'Apollonia, see Giuseppina Bacarelli, "Per l'Architettura Fiorentina del Quattrocento: Il Chiostro di Sant'Apollonia," *Rivista d'Arte* 37 (1984), 133-163.

¹² Pope Eugene IV authorized the construction in a letter to the abbess Cecilia di Pazzino Donati, dated July 16, 1445; Giovanni Poggi, "Della data di nascita di Andrea del Castagno," *Rivista d'Arte* 11 (1929), 59.

¹³ This date was set forth by Hartt and Corti, 231-232 and Alberto M. Fortuna, "Altre note su Andrea del Castagno," *L'arte* 26 (1961), 170. Since Hartt counted fifty-seven *giornate*, he asserted that the fresco was probably finished earlier rather than later.

J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavascale. *A History of Painting in Italy – Umbria, Florence and Siena from the Second to Sixteenth Centuries*, Langdon Douglas, ed., vol. 4, 6 vols. (New York: Schribner's Sons, 1911 [reprint 1972]), 137 notes that in the first (1864) edition, Castagno's frescoes at Sant'Apollonia had not been discovered. The German translation, *Geschichte der italienischen Malerei*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1870), 41 does attribute the work to Castagno, stating that it had previously been thought to be by Paolo Uccello. The upper scenes were discovered beneath whitewash in 1890; Milliard Meiss, "Andrea del Castagno, Resurrection," in *The Great Age of Fresco: Discoveries, Recoveries and Survivals* (New York: George Braziller in association with The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), 151.

¹⁴ Spencer, 106, n. 84 cites documents in the Archivio di Stato in Florence (ASF), Conventi soppressi 82, no. 10, I r for the beginning date of 1429 and n. 86: ASF, Conv. soppr. 82, no. I, fol. 332 v as the last documentation for Cecilia di Pazzino Donati as abbess on June 16, 1445.

¹⁵ Fortuna, "Altre note," 167-170 named Cecilia di Pazzino Donati abbess from 1438 and during the building projects that began in 1445, which he (Fortuna) associated with Castagno's commission. Cecilia di Pazzino Donati is known to have played a part in the contract for the grand cloister from March 14, 1441/2, which has led Kate Lowe to note that this serves as an example of the abbess' own supervision of commissions; "Nuns and choice: artistic decision-making in Medicean Florence," in *With and Without the Medici: Studies in Tuscan Art and Patronage 1434-1530*, ed. Eckart Marchand and Alison Wright (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1998), 135-6. In her recent article, "A Renaissance Audience Considered: The Nuns at S. Apollonia and Castagno's *Last Supper*," *The Art Bulletin* 88 (2006), 243-266, Andr e Hayum agrees that it was most likely Cecilia di Pazzino Donati who initiated the commission for Castagno, since she was in charge of the expansion of the convent.

Hayum's article discusses Castagno's *Last Supper* in relation to its patrons and viewing audience – the nuns at Sant'Apollonia. Her article, which was published as I was writing this thesis, touches on similar ideas and draws on several of the same sources I consulted. While serving as an additional source and offering an innovative view on Castagno's fresco, Hayum's article focuses on the female religious audience and what they would ascertain from the painted scenes. In this thesis I intend to analyze Castagno's *Last Supper* in all aspects, considering the patronage of the convent, within the context of the representation of the Last Supper, the Florentine tradition of Last Suppers in refectories, and the iconography and imagery Castagno uses in his depiction.

indicate that Apollonia di Piero di Giovanni Firenze succeeded Cecilia di Pazzino Donati, and served as abbess during Castagno's work at the convent in the second half of 1447.¹⁶

It is not really clear how much freedom the abbesses and nuns of any foundation were given concerning decisions about the decoration or artistic commissions involved with their convent.¹⁷ In some cases the abbess of a Florentine convent may have nominated *operai* who assigned the painting of altarpieces, frescoes or other decorative projects.¹⁸ In this situation, it is hard to determine whether these decisions reflected the preferences of the nuns or those of the *operai*.¹⁹ Some convents, especially those that were supported by royal patronesses, may have allowed the order to exhibit more freedom.²⁰ Although such instances occurred more frequently in Naples, it is possible that the nuns who were members of powerful families within Florentine

¹⁶ The research of Walter and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, 211-25; Fortuna, "Altre note," 165-174; and Hartt and Corti, "Three Disputed Dates," 228-234 has established the general history of Sant'Apollonia and Castagno's time there; Spencer, 106, n. 88 notes that Apollonia di Piero di Giovanni Firenze's first documentation as abbess was on February 6, 1447 (1446 old style) with ASF, Conv. soppr. 82, no. I, fol. 335 r.

¹⁷ Lowe's article, "Nuns and choice" offers several examples of Florentine convents' commissions and discusses the possible means they came to fruition. Another source relating to nuns and their preferences is Julian Gardner, "Nuns and Altarpieces: Agendas for Research," in *Römische Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* (München: Hirmer Verlag, 1995), 25-57. For further discussion on convents in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Italy, see Kate Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), especially in this case, "Convents and art," 318-394.

¹⁸ One such example is documented in 1398 at Santa Felicita, for a polyptych by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Lorenzo di Niccolò (1401) and the painting of the choir chapel; see Giovanni Poggi, "La tavola d'altare dell'altare maggiore di S. Felicita, ora nell'Accademia no. 129," *Rivista d'Arte*, 3 (1905), 126-128. Poggi, 127 cites ASF Conv. soppr. S. Felicita, LXXXIII, vol. 112, Memoriale 1357-1405, c. 83 r: In March 1399 Giovanni di Bartolo Biliotti, Barduccio Chiericini and Jacopo di Rinieri Sassolini "...come operai chiamati da madonna la badessa dierono a dipignere la detta tavola a Nicholò di Piero e a Spinello d'Arezzo e a Lorenzo di Niccholò dipintori per fiori[ni] cento d'oro e cosi pagammo f. C d'Oro." On the painting of the choir chapel, see Poggi, 128: "Anchora spendemmo nel detto anno (1399) per fare trarre le funi delle campane della detta cappella perchè non *noiassono il dipignere la cappella...*". The frescoes were by Neri d'Antonio.

¹⁹ Gardner, 45 states this problem and refers in n. 73 to Dom Jean Leclercq's notion that "nunnery legislation was conceived and enacted by men for the control of women" in "Il monachesimo femminile nei secoli XII e XIII," *Movimento Religioso Femminile e Francescanesimo nel secolo XIII*, Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale, Assisi 11-13 Ottobre, 1979 (Assisi, 1980), 61-99, 87.

²⁰ The royal foundations of Sant'Alvise in Venice, Santa Maria Donna Regina and Santa Chiara in Naples each had a raised gallery or choir for the nuns. According to Gardner, 52 this placement may assert a level of distinction that was fairly uncommon. Here, too, it may be hard to distinguish whether this reflected the convent as a whole or the individual royal patroness. For further information on Queen Maria of Hungary's patronage of Santa Maria di Donna Regina, see Samantha Kelly, "Religious patronage and royal propaganda in Angevin Naples: Santa Maria Donna Regina in context," 27-43 and Matthew J. Clear, "Maria of Hungary as queen, patron and exemplar," 45-60 in *The Church of Santa Maria Donna Regina: Art, Iconography and Patronage in Fourteenth-Century Naples*, ed. Janis Elliott and Cordelia Warr (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

convents could be a type of “royal” patroness.²¹ They may have been an influential force behind the decisions made at specific foundations, such as Sant’ Apollonia.²²

In his research on Castagno and his patrons, John Spencer has concluded that several of the major families of Florence had daughters in the convent of Sant’ Apollonia. These families included the Portinari, the Pucci, and the da Rabatta, all of whom were patrons or otherwise connected to major churches and foundations, such as Santissima Annunziata and the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova, where Castagno would later work.²³ As his first major work upon his return to Florence, the frescoes of Sant’ Apollonia were of great importance and possibly served as an example of the work Castagno was capable of doing. It is through this work that Castagno may have received other commissions in Florence.²⁴

²¹ In *Nuns’ Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy*, Lowe analyzes the culture of three convents in Renaissance Italy based on documents written by nuns. The Florentine example of Le Murate (the Benedictine convent of Santa Maria Annunziata) was, like Sant’ Apollonia, made up of a variety of social classes, yet included members of significant Florentine families. In this book, Lowe, 132, n. 144 explains that although most of the nuns at Le Murate slept in large rooms, there were separate sets of rooms for privileged nuns, including the daughters of wealthy patrons. This area was known as the Benci *cella* in the chronicle of Le Murate by Suora Giustina Niccolini, in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale centrale, II II 509, 27 r, n. 42 and also as the “camera de’ Benci” in Archivio Capponi delle Rovinate, filza VII (Manelli e Benci). Giovanni Benci financed the rebuilding of the church at Le Murate, which occurred between 1439 and 1443, and he commissioned Fra Filippo Lippi to do the altarpiece for the main altar, dedicated to the Annunciation, and two additional altars for St. Bernard and the Crucifixion. Benci’s daughter, Caterina was placed in the convent in the mid-1440s, although she was only a boarder; she eventually left and married; Megan Holmes, “Representing *Le Suore*: Altarpieces for Two Florentine Benedictine Nunnery Churches,” in *Fra Filippo Lippi: The Carmelite Painter* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 215, 219. Although Caterina left the convent, it is clear that the Benci rooms could have been created for her stay and they continued to be used by members of upper class Florentine families.

²² Mary-Ann Winkelmes, “Taking Part: Benedictine Nuns as Patrons of Art and Architecture” in *Picturing Women In Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. by Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Matthews Grieco (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 92-94 states that the Benedictine convents of S. Zaccaria in Venice (where Castagno previously worked), S. Paolo in Parma and S. Maurizio in Milan included members of the upper classes, and were active patrons of architectural and church decoration projects; she notes that because of their close relationship with the ruling doge of Venice, S. Zaccaria was the least cloistered and most independent of this group. Radke, “Nuns and Their Art” supports this idea; see n. 6 above.

²³ Spencer, 108. During the summer and fall of 1455 Castagno painted several frescoes at Santissima Annunziata: *Saint Julian and the Savior* for Piero da Gagliano, *Saint Jerome and the Holy Women* for Girolamo Corboli, and *Saints Mary Magdalene, Martha and Lazarus* for Orlando de’ Medici, which is now lost. The frescoes Castagno completed at the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, 1456-57, are lost as well. Vasari lists a *Saint Andrew* in the Chostro delle Ossa, an *Annunciation* for an altar, and the *Last Supper* and scenes from the *Life of the Virgin* for the chapel of Sant’ Egidio; Spencer 11-12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

How Castagno received the commission for Sant' Apollonia remains unknown because no specific documents record the transaction.²⁵ It is only an assumption that either abbess Cecilia di Pazzino Donati or Apollonia di Piero di Giovanni Firenze was responsible for commissioning the frescoes in the refectory of Sant' Apollonia. However, what is known in relation to Sant' Apollonia's building and artistic commissions reveals that abbess Cecilia di Pazzino Donati did exhibit some authority over decisions, and this may translate into an overall trend for the convent. Kate Lowe also suggests that Benedictine nuns (not being a mendicant order) could have had more flexibility in their artistic choices than other orders.²⁶ Another possible reason that Castagno was selected for this commission is the relationship between the Benedictine nuns at San Zaccaria in Venice and Sant' Apollonia.²⁷ The knowledge of Castagno's earlier work for the San Tarasio chapel could have been circulated by the Benedictines.

Connections could also be made through the other organizations for which Castagno worked. Castagno's oculus design for the Cathedral of Florence in 1444 placed him among the most noted Florentine artists at the time; Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti and Paolo Uccello had also submitted window designs.²⁸ With this commission and his subsequent entry into the guild of the *Arte e Medici Speziali*, Castagno became a recognized entity within Florence's circle of artists and was practically guaranteed future work.²⁹

²⁵ The lack of documentation is not necessarily uncommon. Lowe, "Nuns and choice," 133 states that documentation for convent commissions was often "uneven in its level of information, and in its survival rate, so that reconstruction of events and detail can at best be only partial."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁷ Horster, 18; Lowe, "Nuns and choice," 136; and Spencer, 114 acknowledge this relationship.

²⁸ Spencer, 85; it is also noted that Castagno received the same payment as the more established artists, an honor for the younger artist.

²⁹ As previously mentioned, Castagno worked for the Cathedral again in 1446, when he decorated the organ.

By working for the Giudici e Notai in 1445 and 1447, Castagno was associated with one of the major guilds of Florence, one that was strongly involved with the affairs of the city.³⁰

This alliance surely opened up many doors for Castagno as a new painter in Florence.

According to Spencer, two important members of the Notai also served as procurators for the nuns of Sant'Apollonia; these two figures may be the source of Castagno's appointment at the convent.³¹ Knowing Castagno's work for the Notai, these men could have easily recommended Castagno for the commission at Sant'Apollonia.³² Whether through a direct link created by a specific individual or simply because of his reputation, Castagno's assignment to decorate the refectory of Sant'Apollonia was a significant step in the artist's career.

Since the specifics of the Sant'Apollonia frescoes are unknown, it is impossible to determine whether the subject matter of the frescoes was the choice of Castagno, the convent, or outside patrons, although it was quite rare for an artist in fifteenth-century Florence to have this opportunity. It may be that the nuns at Sant'Apollonia personally chose the theme of the Last

³⁰ Spencer, 79-80; 83 states that the notaries were "ubiquitous; they were involved in the government of the city; they served as factors for religious and lay organizations; and they were, of course, absolutely essential for drawing up the contracts that seem to order and control Florentine social and economic relations."

³¹ Spencer, 83 identifies these two men as Bartolommeo di Bambo Ciai and Giovanni **Spinelli**; 108 mentions that Bartolommeo would have "certainly known Castagno's work from the guild of notaries and judges." Fortuna, "Altre note," 167, n. 16 states that Bartolommeo di Bambo Ciai witnessed the contract for the restoration of the convent initiated by Cecilia di Pazzino Donati on November 18, 1438 (ASF Conv. soppr. 81, n. 1, c. 314 r). However, it seems that Spencer may have misinterpreted the name of the second procurator; according to Fortuna, 168-169, Giovanni **Spinellini** was "*il proposto del Duomo*" (ASF, Conv. soppr. 82, n. 1, c. 332 v) who served as a witness to documents and a go-between "*per tutto l'orrorrente per il Monastero*" (ASF, Conv. soppr. 82, n. 1 c. 333 r). Lowe, "Nuns and choice," 135 also recognizes Giovanni **Spinellini** as *proposto* or deacon of the cathedral canons (noted for writing official contracts, such as the one for the building of the grand cloister, dated March 14, 1441/2 which gave the abbess, Cecilia di Pazzino Donati a significant amount of authority, including power of arbitration over any disputes. She also mentions Spinellini's work as a go-between for the Augustinian convent of S. Monaca and for Neri di Bicci's commission to paint a *Crucifixion* for the church of S. Sisto in Viterbo in June 1457; 138. Salvino Salvini, *Catalogo cronologico de' canonici della chiesa metropolitana fiorentina* (Florence, 1782), 40, 171, and 345 names the different positions Giovanni di Tommaso di Marco Spinellini held, including *Primo degli Arcidiaconi Fiorentini* in 1461, and shows that he was provost of Santa Maria del Fiore from 1436 until his death in 1466. Marica S. Tacconi, *Cathedral and Civic ritual in Late Medieval and Renaissance Florence: The Service Books of Santa Maria del Fiore* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23, 31, 38 also discuss Giovanni Spinellini's work for the Cathedral.

³² Lowe, "Nuns and choice," 149 also believes that men who served as agents for convents, including those in a religious order (naming Spinellini as an example), were likely to have passed on information about artists.

Supper and Passion scenes. The inclusion of the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* with the *Crucifixion* and *Last Supper* was unprecedented and their composition is unique to this location; the ingenuity of this composition is fitting for a convent that displayed a unique sense of independence.³³

The image of the Last Supper was a common theme for refectories, especially in Florence.³⁴ Besides the obvious connection to dining, the Last Supper often appeared within refectories to advocate meditation and prayer.³⁵ To determine how Castagno's *Last Supper* fits within the Florentine tradition of painted refectories, a discussion of the iconography and history of the representation of the Last Supper in the following chapter will provide a basis to understand the development of this tradition.

³³ Winkelmes, 91, 93 notes that Benedictine nun-patrons had a surprising degree of autonomy and made self-serving final decisions in the decoration of their churches. Lowe, "Nuns and Choice," 136, 148 considers the contract by Cecilia di Pazzino Donati of March 14, 1441/2 proof that the nuns at Sant'Apollonia were likely to have commissioned Castagno themselves; therefore, they seem to have a tradition of independent commissioning. See Catherine King, "Women as patrons: nuns, widows and rulers," in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion, 1280-1400*, edited by Diana Norman, vol. 2, 2 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 243-266 for an overall view of ways women were able to control some of the images and buildings that were created at this time, and more specifically, for the nuns at Sant'Apollonia, see Hayum, 260-261. Eve Borsook, "Andrea del Castagno," in *The Mural Painters of Tuscany from Cimabue to Andrea del Sarto*, Second edition, revised and enlarged (Oxford University Press, 1980), 87 notes that the addition of the *Entombment* and *Resurrection* was new to refectory themes.

³⁴ Borsook, 87; Kate Lowe, "Nuns and choice," 131. For further information on the Florentine tradition, see Cristina Acidini Luchinat and Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, ed. *La tradizione fiorentina dei cenacoli* (Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, 1997). Luisa Vertova, *I cenacoli fiorentini* (Torino, Italy: Edizioni Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1965) discusses the Last Supper and other dining scenes depicted in Florentine refectories. R. Scott Walker, *Florentine painted refectories, 1350-1500*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979) provides a list which includes not only Last Suppers, both extant and lost, but also other images in painted refectories (such as a Madonna and Child, a single Crucifixion, images of specific saints, the Entry into Jerusalem, or the Agony in the Garden).

³⁵ Creighton E. Gilbert, "Last Suppers and Their Refectories," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Papers from The University of Michigan Conference, edited by Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 372-373 states that the relationship between a refectory and the image of the Last Supper is "supported not only by the frequency of Last Supper images in refectories and their infrequency everywhere else, but by other kinds of data, including writings giving directions about what art ought to do," hence the idea of meditating and praying in front of a painting which served as a "mirror" – where the monks reflect the apostles, or vice versa. Warman Welliver, "Symbolic Meaning in Leonardo's and Raphael's Painted Architecture," *The Art Quarterly*, Winter, 2 (1979), 50 reiterates the notion that a Last Supper painting in a refectory was intended to be an extension of the actual monks who sat in the same space, dining at similar table settings.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LAST SUPPER

The Theological Symbolism of the Last Supper

The Last Supper is a familiar image and concept which can have several interpretations. The history and iconography of the depiction of the Last Supper stem from various influences, including textual sources, such as the Bible, and cultural traditions of the pagan, Jewish, and early Christian communities. The iconography of the visual representation of the Last Supper often derives from the context in which it is used; therefore, the theological significance of the theme may vary. The scene of the Last Supper may signify the actual narrative of the event, depicting Christ's meal with the apostles and the announcement of the betrayal, while other versions illustrate the Institution of the Eucharist, focusing on the establishment of the sacrament, or the Communion of the Apostles, where Christ is shown administering the bread and wine. These three interpretations have been used in the portrayal of the same event; for that reason, any understanding of the Last Supper depends upon the historical context, textual sources and visual iconography of the image.

The origin of the composition used in depicting the Last Supper has a strong connection to early sepulchral art and catacomb paintings which show the traditional Christian symbols of the bread and fish.³⁶ The central event of the Last Supper – a communal banquet – has a

³⁶ Klaus Wessel, *The Last Supper*, translated by Giovanni Rossetti and Marguerite Buchloh. Pictorial Library of Eastern Church Art, vol. 6 (Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers Publisher, distributed by Taplinger Publishing Company [New York, 1964], 6 states that in the third century sepulchral art began to hint at the mystery of the Eucharist through scenes that had nothing to do with the Last Supper, but simply related to a miraculous sustenance. He explains the representation of a fish over a bread basket or Jesus blessing the fish and/or bread as referring to the miracle of the multiplication, and therefore connects this miracle to the sacrament of spiritual sustenance, the Eucharist.

precedent in ancient Greek and Roman customs. From texts, such as Plato's *Symposium*, it is known that these cultures practiced communal dining, and it was also represented in their art.³⁷

A painting from the second-century hypogaeum of Crispia Salvia in Lilybaeum shows a scene of communal dining (Fig. 3).³⁸ The reclining men, feasting at a sigma table, illustrate the use of celebratory dining imagery in Roman art, and serves as a model for later representations of the Last Supper. The *Totenmahl* motif, a single banqueter reclining on a couch, was used in a funerary context to symbolize the "deceased during life, enjoying the worldly pleasures of the banquet, or in an eschatological sense, as a representation of the banquet in which they wish to participate in the next world."³⁹ The reference to an eternal banquet can also be associated with Christian beliefs. Not only do Christians celebrate through dining during their lifetime, but they also hope to gain salvation in order to participate in the feast which God promises in his new kingdom.⁴⁰ The focus of dining in ancient cultures carried on into Early Christian traditions; celebratory eating made up an important part of the church's ritual.⁴¹ Therefore, generally, the Last Supper can be seen as a continuation of traditional customs.

The Bible contains accounts of communal dining and sacrificial meals in pagan, Jewish and Christian faiths.⁴² In the New Testament, the four gospels describe the historical story

³⁷ See Plato, *Symposium*, translated with an introduction and notes by Christopher Gill. Penguin Classics series (London; New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1999).

³⁸ Lilybaeum is modern-day Marsala in Sicily; Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 130.

³⁹ Definition of *Totenmahl* from Dunbabin, 2; quote from 108.

⁴⁰ Jesus refers to the feasting to come at the Last Supper, see Matthew 26: 29, Mark 14: 25, and Luke 22: 14; Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 104-105.

⁴¹ Nerita Newbiggin, "Cene and Cenacoli in the Ascension and Pentecost Companies of Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *Crossing the Boundaries: Christian Piety and the Arts in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Confraternities*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler, 90-107. Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series, 15 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1991), 90 makes this statement in reference to the sacrifice of the Lord's supper, yet in this instance it can also describe the importance placed on other churches' or religions' dining rituals.

⁴² Jeremiah 7:17-19 and 44:15-19 recount the abuses in worship followed by the people in Judah. These passages, along with Paul's answer in 1 Corinthians 8: 10 to the question whether a Christian might sit at the table in an idol's

related to the Last Supper. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each verify the occurrence of this event. Although timing, details and the phrasing of these accounts vary, the gospels present a reliable explanation of the final meal of Jesus Christ.⁴³

In the Bible, the Last Supper is considered a renewal of the initial covenant established by God with Moses and the Israelites in Exodus 24: 4-8.⁴⁴ The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, through his crucifixion and death, completes God's promise of the Messiah sent to redeem mankind. When viewed as the Institution of the Eucharist, the Last Supper symbolizes Christ's sacrifice through the bread and wine.

The early iconography of the Last Supper either separates the various interpretations of the theme by distinguishing the moment illustrated, or it may merge the ideas to present a combined version of the event. The theological considerations of the Last Supper are, therefore, connected to the different interpretations. In depicting the narrative aspect of the theme, an image of the Last Supper shows an episode in the life of Christ (Fig. 4).⁴⁵ In its interpretation as the Institution of the Eucharist or the Communion of the Apostles, the Last Supper refers to the transubstantiation within the Mass.⁴⁶ The table of the Lord is related to the altar table in the

temple, are evidence for pagan communities dining at sacrificial meals. Ezekiel 45: 18-24 explains the procedure for the Jewish Passover. This celebration praised God for redeeming the people of Israel from Egypt and was a time to reflect on God's future redemption through the Messiah; I. Howard Marshall *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 19, 23, 28.

⁴³ The gospel accounts of the Last Supper will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III.

⁴⁴ See 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25, Matthew 26: 28, Mark 14: 24, and Luke 22: 20.

⁴⁵ Early images of the Last Supper represent the narrative aspect of the theme by depicting the announcement of the betrayal. Two examples are from the sixth century are a mosaic at S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (Fig. 4) and an illumination from the Rossano Gospels. Both show Christ reclining at a semi-circular table with the twelve apostles. In the mosaic, Jesus raises his right hand to reveal the traitor, Judas, who is across from him. The depiction from the Rossano Gospels shows Judas reaching into the central dish, demonstrating Matthew 26: 23, "...He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me." This phrase is also mentioned in Mark 14: 20. Gabriel Millet, "La Cène," in *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV^e, XV^e, et XVI^e siècles*, Deuxième édition (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1960), 286 identifies the gestures of Jesus and Judas in these two images as exemplifying the verse from Matthew which designates the traitor.

⁴⁶ Following the illumination of the Last Supper in the Rossano Gospels is an example of the Communion of the Apostles. This variation is based on the gospels, for example, Matthew 26: 26, "...Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" (Mark 14: 22 and Luke 22: 19 also refer to this part of the Last Supper.) However, this portrayal of the incident, where Jesus distributes the bread

Mass. The conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ symbolizes his sacrifice and evokes Christ's own actions at the Last Supper with the apostles, the moment which begins the Eucharistic tradition in the Christian church.⁴⁷

The differentiation between the Communion of the Apostles and the Institution of the Eucharist is defined by the composition of these depictions. The image of the Communion of the Apostles portrays Christ standing (often behind a table or altar) and administering the gifts of the meal (Fig. 5).⁴⁸ In contrast, the Institution of the Eucharist is noted by the presence of the apostles sitting at the table of the Last Supper, with Christ holding the bread or wafer, and the inclusion of the chalice (Fig. 6).⁴⁹ In both of these representations the focus is placed on the sacrament, rather than the announcement of the betrayal. The combination of the narrative event of the Last Supper with the foundation of the sacrament of the Eucharist exemplifies the multiple meanings given to the representation of this sacred meal, and becomes a frequent means of depicting this occasion.

to the apostles, who stand in line, is an imaginative construct. This image recalls the procession to receive the Eucharist in the Mass; it emphasizes the Institution of the Eucharist that occurred during the Last Supper. This iconography is found in several other instances, such as a silver paten from the reign of Justin II (565-578), found in Syria. The plate shows Christ twice, behind an altar, giving out the bread and wine to the apostles. Although there are two separate events depicted in the Rossano Gospels, the paten shows the Last Supper as the Communion of the Apostles. Fifteenth-century examples of the Communion of the Apostles include two works by Fra Angelico, a fresco (1438/42) (Fig. 5) and a panel painting (c. 1450), now at the Museo di San Marco in Florence. They depict Christ distributing the Eucharist to the apostles who kneel or stand before him.

⁴⁷ St. Paul recalls Christ's instruction, "Do this in remembrance of me," in 1 Corinthians 11: 23. By reflecting this tradition, the image of the Last Supper acts as both a narrative and a reminder of the sacred event.

⁴⁸ As seen in the Rossano Gospels, the silver paten and Fra Angelico's paintings in n. 46 above.

⁴⁹ Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, "The Altar of Corpus Domini in Urbino: Paolo Uccello, Joos Van Ghent, Piero della Francesca," *The Art Bulletin* 49 (1976), 1, n. 4 makes the distinction between these images. Gilbert, 389 discusses the idea that in most cases, Last Suppers that were depicted on altarpieces or painted in chapels displayed the Eucharistic elements, while those in refectories did not. Dominique Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur, l'Eucharistie chez les primitifs italiens (1250-1497)* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1989), 59, 75 also recognizes the difference between the image of the Last Supper and, in her terms, the Communion of the Apostles as being the appearance of the chalice. She notes that the raising of the chalice within the liturgy did not occur until the end of the thirteenth century.

An example of the image of the Institution of the Eucharist is a panel by Sassetta in the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (1423) (Fig. 6). Cosimo Rosselli's *Last Supper* in the Sistine Chapel in Rome is a later example, circa 1480, which emphasizes the Institution of the Eucharist as a liturgical practice passed down from Christ to St. Peter, the Pope, and the clergy of the church. The placement of the *Last Supper* between Perugino's *Giving of the Keys to St. Peter* and the image of the Ascension on the west entrance wall gives significance to Christ's sacrifice and the central beliefs of the Latin Church.

The Visual Tradition and Iconography of Last Supper Images

The tradition of Last Supper paintings in the Western Church began with the placement of the Last Supper within Christological cycles, either as mural paintings or altarpieces which decorated church interiors. Events from the Old and New Testament were usually arranged in a chronological sequence. The image of the Last Supper was frequently depicted as a part of the Passion scenes within the life of Christ.⁵⁰

The decoration of early Western churches tends to follow a narrative program. The main basilicas in Rome, Old Saint Peter's, San Paolo fuori le Mura, San Giovanni in Laterano, and others, may have initiated the trend for narrative cycles, as seen in Santa Maria Antiqua in the Roman Forum, dating from the beginning of the eighth century.⁵¹ Several scenes in the Life of Christ at Santa Maria Antiqua are lost, but it is believed to have begun with childhood episodes in the upper left, since images of Christ's early life survive, such as *The Presentation in the Temple* and the *Flight into Egypt*.⁵² *The Last Supper* also remains and is followed by the *Betrayal of Christ* and *Christ Carrying the Cross*. These scenes are adjacent to the apse, where

⁵⁰ Christopher Walter notes that not all representations of Passion scenes included the Last Supper, some church programs move from the Miracles of Christ to the Betrayal, Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection; *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London: Variorum Publications Ltd., 1982), 185. An early example of the Last Supper in a Christological cycle is at S. Apollinare Nuovo, in Ravenna (Fig. 4). This sixth-century mosaic, with its significant placement near the apse, is surrounded by scenes of the Passion on the south wall. Along the opposite wall, the miracles of Christ are shown. A connection between the scene opposite the *Last Supper*, the *Wedding at Cana*, is evident. These two meals indicate the first and last of Christ's miraculous works to provide for his people. The mosaics of S. Apollinare clearly emphasize the sacrament of the Eucharist which occurs at the altar through these feast images. The liturgical focus of this narrative cycle sets a precedent which later Eastern churches follow. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will not discuss the tradition that developed within Eastern churches. The most common development in their decoration was the use of the Communion of the Apostles in the apse of the church. The Iconoclastic Controversy (726-842) apparently stifled the decorative programs in Eastern churches; the image of the Last Supper does not appear in church interiors until around the eleventh century. Its reappearance is seen though its interpretation as the Communion of the Apostles where its reflection of the liturgy was strongly emphasized by the addition of church leaders, bishops and priests; see Walter, 185, 193, 197 and Sharon E. J. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle, Washington: College Art Association in association with University of Washington Press, 1999), 48, 50.

⁵¹ Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431-1600* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 21. According to Lavin, 23 the three main Roman churches were probably decorated in the fifth century and redone around the early eighth and ninth centuries.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 21.

an oversized *Crucifixion* is shown, continuing the progress of the narrative. The larger image of the *Crucifixion* (in relation to the surrounding scenes of a cycle) is derived from the example at Old St. Peter's (Fig. 7).⁵³ This concept is repeated in later Western churches which imitate this type of narrative decorative program.⁵⁴

An enlarged image of the *Crucifixion* within a Christological cycle is also used on the back of Duccio's *Maestà* altarpiece (1308-11) for the Cathedral of Siena (Fig. 8). Reflecting the narrative tradition of the Western church, Duccio's *Maestà* includes scenes from the Passion of Christ which incorporate the *Last Supper* (Fig. 9).⁵⁵ Although cycles depicting the Life of Christ continued to be used for mural decoration, a change is seen in Giotto's frescoes at the Arena Chapel in Padua (1305); emphasis is no longer placed on the *Crucifixion*. Three concentric tiers wrap around the chapel beginning with a Marian cycle and ending with Christ's life, death and

⁵³ William Tronzo, "The Prestige of Saint Peter's - Observations on the Function of Monumental Narrative Cycles in Italy," in *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Marianna Shreve Simpson, 93-112. *Studies in the History of Art, Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, Symposium Series IV*, vol. 16 (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1985), 94.

⁵⁴ Three examples of Italian churches which incorporate the Western narrative program are Sant'Angelo in Formis (1072-87), the Cathedral of Monreale (1176-84) in Palermo, and San Marco in Venice (late twelfth-century). Each of these churches' mural decoration follows the example of the Roman basilicas by depicting Old and New Testament narratives. Lavin, *The Place of Narrative*, 27 uses the term "wraparound" to describe a narrative that reads continuously in one direction, left to right, wrapping several times around the walls of the nave, as seen at both Sant'Angelo in Formis and Monreale. Included in the last tier of the cycle at Sant'Angelo in Formis is an oversized *Crucifixion*, which is clearly borrowed from Old St. Peter's. The placement of the *Last Supper* for these three churches occurs within the context of the Passion scenes, resulting in the Christ's Ascension. At Sant'Angelo in Formis the *Last Supper* appears on the bottom tier of the southern wall, between the scenes of the *Entry into Jerusalem* and the last episode on the wall, the *Washing of the Feet*. The narrative continues on the third tier of the north wall, beginning with *Gethsemane*, and ending with the *Ascension*, adjacent to the eastern apse. At Monreale, it is placed on the west wall of the transepts, shown with the *Entry into Jerusalem*. In San Marco, the mosaic of the *Last Supper* is in the south vault of the central dome, which depicts the *Ascension*. Three other Christological scenes occur in this vault: the *Last Temptation of Christ*, the *Entry into Jerusalem*, and the *Washing of the Feet*.

⁵⁵ A fourteenth-century example of this tradition is seen in the Church of the Collegiata in San Gimignano. Old and New Testament cycles are in typological opposition on the walls of the side aisles, starting at the entrance and moving toward the apse. (Initially attributed to Barna da Siena, the north wall depicting the New Testament is now thought to be by Lippo Memmi and his shop, sometime between 1333 and 1350; Lavin, *The Place of Narrative*, 74.) Christ's infancy is shown in the lunette level of the cycle, while the main portion of the wall depicts his later life, showing the *Last Supper* within the Passion narrative. The inclusion of the large-sized *Crucifixion* recalls the arrangement originated in Old St Peter's and the layout of Duccio's *Maestà*.

resurrection (Fig. 10).⁵⁶ Giotto's *Last Supper* is represented in the Passion cycle of this narrative program (Fig. 11).⁵⁷

The Sieneese painter Pietro Lorenzetti included a depiction of the Last Supper within the Passion scenes in the Lower Church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi (1310-15).⁵⁸ The *Last Supper* occurs within a hexagonal room, adjacent to a small kitchen off to the left (Fig. 12). The separation of space by a wall emphasizes the enclosed upper room which is often described in the Last Supper narrative. The interior of Pietro's room contains contemporary, everyday elements that enrich the decorative aspect of the fresco, such as a small dog, servants, and shelves with various utensils and vessels. The incorporation of these types of details was a frequent practice within Renaissance painting, and is often considered a method to help the contemporary viewer associate with the event.⁵⁹ A distinctive aspect of Pietro's fresco is the representation of the entire architectural structure where the scene takes place. As seen in the Last Suppers of Duccio and Giotto, the meal is depicted within an enclosed space; however, Pietro's fresco does not just show the room, but also space surrounding the building, exposing the night sky, filled with stars and a crescent moon.⁶⁰

The various depictions of the Last Supper contain characteristics that were specific to their location and time. A semi-circular table, reflecting the ancient Greek and Roman

⁵⁶ Lavin, *The Place of Narrative*, 48. For a recent and thorough discussion of Giotto's Arena Chapel, see Andrew Ladis, ed. *The Arena Chapel and the Genius of Giotto: Padua*, vol. 2, *Giotto and the World of Early Italian Art* series, 4 vols. (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

⁵⁷ Giotto's *Last Supper* is the first scene in the lowest row on the southern wall. It is followed by *The Washing of the Feet*, the *Kiss of Judas*, *Christ before Caiaphas*, the *Scourging of Christ*, and the *Bearing of the Cross*.

⁵⁸ The scene appears in the left transept, which is dedicated to the Passion of Christ and includes the *Entry into Jerusalem*, the *Last Supper*, the *Washing of the Feet*, *Capture of Christ*, *Flagellation*, and the *Way to Calvary* (the right transept depicts *Stories from Christ's Childhood* and *The Miracles of St. Francis*); Luciano Bellosi, *Pietro Lorenzetti at Assisi* (Assisi: DACA Publication, 1988), 1.

⁵⁹ An example of this practice is Masaccio and Masolino's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel at Santa Maria del Carmine (1426-28), where the artists depict men in contemporary costume among Christ and his disciples.

⁶⁰ Millet, 37 claims that depicting the Last Supper within an enclosed space began with Giotto's fresco in the Arena Chapel and Duccio's scene on the back of the *Maestà*. Giotto's fresco does show the exterior of the building, as Pietro's does, including the roof of the structure.

communal meals, was often used in Byzantine and early Italian images.⁶¹ However, the use of a rectangular table reflects the later style of the Western Church.⁶² The images at San Marco and the Arena Chapel depict Christ at the left end of the rectangular table, while the *Maestà* and Pietro Lorenzetti's fresco seat Christ at the center.⁶³ The depiction of the Last Supper, with Christ centrally placed at a rectangular table, becomes the standard for later Renaissance images, especially those in refectories.

The representation of the Last Supper began as part of a larger cycle; the tradition was adopted for Florentine painted refectories in the Trecento and expanded throughout the High Renaissance. The initial Western emphasis of the narrative progression in church cycles gave the Last Supper significance as a moment illustrating the Life of Christ. As a separate image, it came to imply more than a narrative, while also illustrating the sacrament of the Eucharist. The multiple interpretations of the scene allow the Last Supper to convey both the biblical event and doctrinal beliefs. As I will show, Castagno's commission at Sant'Apollonia incorporates these two components of the Last Supper theme and holds an important place within the tradition of painted refectories.

⁶¹ As seen at S. Apollinare Nuovo (Fig. 4), the Rossano Gospels, Sant'Angelo in Formis, and the Cathedral of Monreale.

⁶² Walker, 79, n. 21 makes the distinction that Byzantine and early Italian images used the semi-circular table and gives the examples of the mosaics at S. Apollinare and the Florentine Baptistery (1250-1300), and that the rectangular table was used at San Marco, the Arena Chapel, and the *Maestà*.

⁶³ See n. 54 above for the description of the *Last Supper* mosaic at San Marco, Venice. Duccio's *Last Supper* seats Christ at the center of a rectangular table, with the apostles surrounding all sides, but Pietro places Christ in the center of a circular table.

CHAPTER III

VISUAL AND TEXTUAL SOURCES FOR CASTAGNO'S *LAST SUPPER*Early Last Suppers in Refectories

Due to the themes of communal dining and meditation, the Last Supper rapidly became a popular subject for the refectory walls of convents and monasteries throughout Italy.⁶⁴ In the discussion of painted images of the Last Supper in refectories, the Italian word *cenacolo* (plural: *cenacoli*) has become a widely accepted term. *Cenacolo*, in essence, refers to the representation of a painted dining room.⁶⁵ In some cases, it has been understood as the refectory itself or to denote the room's decoration, that being the Last Supper.⁶⁶ To clarify the definition, Creighton E. Gilbert's explanation is stated here:

To art historians, especially native English speakers, the word "cenacolo" means "Last Supper." It is therefore worth recalling two other equally valid senses. The basic meaning is a dining room. Thus if Vasari says that someone painted the *cenacolo* in Milan, he need by no means refer only to the Last Supper; he also probably is not saying that he painted on a wall of the refectory, but that he produced a painted room, the illusionary space where Christ dines. From this also derives the use of the word to mean other kinds of supper paintings, which we are more likely not to realize. An early use is the document specifying that Pontormo will paint "lo cenaculo de la despensa," which is his *Supper at Emmaus*, J. Rearick, *The Drawings of Pontormo* (1946), 226-27. The reference to the *cenacolo* being in the *despensa*, a room where food is served, shows that *cenacolo* means not the room but the painting.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See n. 34, 35 above for sources which discuss the tradition of painted refectories in Florence and explain the frequency of Last Supper images in this location.

⁶⁵ Rigaux's "Glossary," in *A la table du Seigneur*, defines *cenacolo* as "a word used by painters and Vasari, which does not only signify the room (cenacle or refectory) but the painting (cene)." *Cenacle* has become an accepted English version of the Italian term, *cenacolo*; Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani uses this terminology in the title of her book, *Il Cenacolo di Santa Apollonia: Il primo cenacolo rinascimentale a Firenze (The Cenacle of Santa Apollonia: Florence's First Renaissance Cenacle)* (Livorno: Sillabe, 2002).

⁶⁶ Walker, 33. In his footnote he has cited: "Luogo dove si cena. Oggidì dice principalmente parlando del luogo dove Gesù fece l'ultima cena co'suoi apostolic. ...Dipinto ove sia rappresentata la Santa Cena." From *Vocabulario della lingua italiana* (Scarabelli, ed.), s.v.

⁶⁷ Gilbert, 380, n. 2.

Although it is often interpreted as such, especially when placed within a refectory, a *cenacolo* does not refer only to the image of the Last Supper; it describes a scene of dining. This double meaning for the term, *cenacolo*, is appropriate for a refectory. The placement of *cenacoli* in refectories emphasizes the action of the monks or nuns. By participating in their own meals, the religious group imitates the scene of Christ's Last Supper, the event that is most frequently depicted in a refectory.

There are two painted Last Supper images in Italian refectories which precede the great flowering of the tradition in fourteenth-century Florence. The earliest known example is the fragmentary fresco at the Benedictine monastery of S. Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome, dating from about 1180.⁶⁸ The two remnants of this fresco show a group of five apostles and Christ flanked by two others on the left (his right).⁶⁹ Due to its deterioration, it is difficult to determine the setting of this fresco. The Benedictine Abbey of Pomposa, near Ferrara has a later example from 1316-1320.⁷⁰ The *Last Supper* appears on the left in a group of scenes along the back wall of the

⁶⁸ J. Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten von IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2nd ed., 1917), vol. 2, 847 states that this image of the Last Supper includes a long table; see also vol.4, plate 232-233. Gilbert, 395, n. 4 also mentions the existence of this fresco. Richard Krautheimer, "S. Paolo fuori le mura," in *The Early Christian Basilicas of Rome (IV-IX Centuries)*, vol. 5, 5 vols. (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana Rome, 1977), 93-164 explains the history of the church and monastery, which began as a nunnery dedicated to St. Stephen, as referred to in a letter by Pope Gregory in 604. Pope Leo III first decorated the church with images in 795-816. In 1070 the Abbott of S. Paolo, Hildebrand (later Pope Gregory VII) reformed the monastery and cleaned up the church, which was previously used as a shelter for animals. Sometime between 1193-1226/35 the cloister was initiated by Cardinal Peter of Capua (d. 1214) and was completed by Abbott John Caetani (1212- after 1226 and before 1235). The dating of the *Last Supper* fresco indicates it was completed sometime after the monastery was reformed and before the construction of the cloister.

⁶⁹ The five apostles, with large golden halos, are dressed in red, blue, white or yellow robes and show varying degrees of facial hair, indicating a variety of ages. The fragment with Christ, who appears larger than the other figures, shows him in a red robe and blue mantle, with his right hand extended and his left hand towards the center of his body. St. John rests his head on Christ's right shoulder and reaches toward him, while the second apostle, with a white beard, holds his right hand up in a gesture of surprise.

⁷⁰ Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur*, 195 possibly without knowledge of the fresco at S. Paolo fuori le Mura, claimed that this is the earliest example of a Last Supper in an Italian refectory. Mario Salmi, *The Abbey of Pomposa*. Guidebooks to the Museums, Galleries and Monuments of Italy, No. 62, second edition (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, 1965), 11-12 describes the frescoes of the monastery's refectory, which were completed during the reign of Pope John XXII (1326-44). Once attributed to Giotto, by a seventeenth-century inscription, Salmi sees these frescoes as the finest achievement of the Rimini school in the first half of the thirteenth century.

refectory, depicting Christ and his apostles at a circular table.⁷¹ The rectangular space is divided by fictive colonettes to create the three separate scenes. The central scene is *The Redeemer between the Madonna and John the Baptist with SS. Benedict and Guido*, and the scene on the right is the *Miraculous Supper of the Abbott, S. Guido*.⁷² This grouping, along with scenes on the lateral walls, retains the stylistic characteristics of a Western church cycle; yet since the scenes are individual events and not part of a Christological narrative, these frescoes at Pomposa illustrate a new development in the representation of the Last Supper. Including the image of the Last Supper as part of a series of scenes which encourage meditation became a common practice in refectory decoration.⁷³

Early Florentine representations of this trend usually show the Last Supper with a Crucifixion and other scenes that are connected to patrons or saints affiliated with the church or monastic order.⁷⁴ Taddeo Gaddi's fresco in the refectory of the Franciscan church of Santa Croce is considered the first known example of a *cenacolo* in Florence (Fig. 13).⁷⁵ Dating from 1345-60, Gaddi's fresco depicts the *Last Supper* beneath a large *Crucifixion*, otherwise known as the *Lignum Vitae* for the apparent connection to the book of meditations on the life of Christ once attributed to St. Bonaventura (1221-74) of the same title.⁷⁶ The four scenes adjacent to the

⁷¹ Mario Salmi, *L'abbazia di Pomposa*, ed. Reale Istituto d'Archeologia Estoria dell'Arte. Roma: La Libreria dello Stato, 1936), 202 notes that there is a replica of this image by Pietro da Rimini in the church. The circular table with Christ and the apostles is to the left of a scene depicting Judas receiving the payment for his betrayal.

⁷² At this meal, S. Guido turned water into wine while serving Archbishop Gerbeardo of Ravenna.

⁷³ The lateral walls of refectory of Pomposa contain fragmentary frescoes of *The Oration in the Garden* and a *Scene of Monastic Life*. Salmi, *The Abbey of Pomposa*, 12 considers these scenes, along with the *Last Supper* and *Miraculous Supper of the Abbott, S. Guido*, conducive to meditation, sacrifice and renunciation, and therefore appropriate for the refectory setting.

⁷⁴ Borsook, 87.

⁷⁵ Walker, 4 and Leo Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 63, n. 9. Gilbert, 395, n. 4 states that Gaddi's fresco was previously thought of as the first Last Supper in a refectory in Italy, before the recognition of the eleventh-century fresco at S. Paolo fuori le Mura.

⁷⁶ The date for Gaddi's frescoes in Santa Croce varies. Luchinat and Pisani believe as early as 1345-50, while Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1982) considers the fresco to be later in the artist's career, around 1360. Gilbert, 375 identifies the connection of Gaddi's Tree of Life imagery with the *Meditations*. The attribution of the author, now as a "pseudo-

Crucifixion are: the *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, *St. Louis of Toulouse Feeds the Poor*, *An Angel Ordains the Priest Who Brings Food to St. Benedict in the Desert*, and *The Meal in the House of the Pharisee*.⁷⁷ These scenes emphasize the *Meditations*' association of Christ's *Crucifixion* with a tree, in which Christ's blood and the Eucharist is its fruit.⁷⁸ By painting the *Last Supper* with images depicting Bonaventura's text, Gaddi's *cenacolo* illustrates the meditative use of refectory decoration. Gaddi's *Last Supper* utilizes the long, rectangular table common to the Western tradition, and he places Christ in the center of the composition as seen in Duccio's version on the *Maestà* (see Fig. 9).⁷⁹ What differentiates his image is that all of the figures, excluding Judas, are on one side of the table. This composition serves as the model for Castagno's *Last Supper* and most subsequent depictions of the scene in Florentine refectories.

The refectory of the Augustinian church of Santo Spirito exhibits the same type of decoration as Santa Croce; a large *Crucifixion* is above the *Last Supper* (Fig. 14). This badly damaged fresco is attributed to Andrea and Nardo di Cione, circa 1367-68. Additional images of Sts. Nicolas of Tolentino and Augustine, depicted in fictive niches, are also beneath the *Crucifixion*, to the left and right of the *Last Supper*. Both of the frescos at Santa Croce and Santo Spirito have the *Crucifixion* as the central scene, while the *Last Supper* appears below, as in a *predella*.⁸⁰ This centralized image of the *Crucifixion* is comparable to the trend seen in Western

Bonaventura" is fairly well-known; see the Introduction of *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*. Translated by Isa Ragusa. Completed from the Latin and edited by Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), xxi, n. 2.

⁷⁷ The scene of St. Francis is appropriate for Santa Croce, as a Franciscan church, and the remaining scenes are obviously related because of their theme of eating and aiding in physical and spiritual sustenance.

⁷⁸ Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi*, 66-73 and 171-173 provides an in-depth description and analysis of Gaddi's frescoes in the refectory of Santa Croce.

⁷⁹ Walker, 79, n. 21 notes that Gaddi's arrangement was rarely used prior to his fresco. See Hans Aurenhammer, "Abendmahl," *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie* (Wien: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1959-1967), 11-15 for a history of Last Suppers before this period. Aurenhammer stresses Gaddi's fresco as the innovative one for the type we know, with a long table, the figures behind it, and Christ in the center.

⁸⁰ Gilbert, 375 uses the term *predella* to describe the location of the Last Supper in these refectories. This stems from the idea of the refectory wall being seen as an altarpiece, in which the bottom portion, the *predella*, usually depicts smaller scenes related to the larger image in the main part of the altarpiece.

churches with narrative cycles and altarpieces that distinguish the scene of the Crucifixion by size and placement.

Similarities and Differences at Sant' Apollonia

Castagno's fresco on the north wall of Sant' Apollonia's (c. 1447) refectory measures 920 x 980 cm, and is split into two registers that are nearly the same size, with the *Last Supper* measuring 470 x 980 cm and the upper scenes measuring 450 x 980 cm (see Fig. 2).⁸¹ One of the essential similarities between the trecento frescoes mentioned above and Castagno's is the appearance of additional scenes.⁸² However, the subject matter of these scenes and how they are displayed are significant factors in what distinguishes Castagno's frescoes from its predecessors. In addition to the *Crucifixion*, Castagno includes the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection*.⁸³ Although the choice of these Passion scenes deviates from the earlier additional images which were either associated with the monastic order or specific saints, they succinctly emphasize the meaning of the *Last Supper* and the *Crucifixion*, representing Christ's sacrifice in its entirety.⁸⁴ It is in these upper scenes that Castagno's commission represents the Eucharistic sacrament along with the narrative scene that is depicted in his *Last Supper*.

⁸¹ Horster, 175.

⁸² There is evidence of other painted refectories occurring between those at Santa Croce and Santo Spirito and Castagno's at Sant' Apollonia. Walker, 1-3 lists the Florentine painted refectories, among them are examples that are now lost and locations which depict images other than the Last Supper, such as: SS. Annunziata (Servite) by Taddeo Gaddi depicting the Last Supper and Crucifixion, post 1338 [lost]; S. Maria Novella (Dominican) by a follower of Agnolo Gaddi depicting the Madonna and Child enthroned with Sts. Dominic, Thomas Aquinas, John the Baptist, Peter Martyr, and a donor, c. 1390; S. Domenico, Fiesole (Dominican) by Fra Angelico depicting the Crucifixion, pre-1435; San Marco (Dominican) by Fra Angelico with a Crucifixion, c. 1435-45 [lost].

⁸³ As mentioned earlier, Borsook, 87 notes that Castagno's scenes of the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* are unique. Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur*, 221-222 claims that in Italian paintings at the end of the Middle Ages the relationship between the Last Supper and the Entombment is rare. However, she explains that the Eucharistic symbolism of the deposition is very present in Flemish and Germanic painting, and in religious theatre of the time. She mentions Castagno's fresco as one of three examples depicting the two subjects together, along with a Venetian panel at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond and a Florentine predella by Niccolo di Pietro Gerini at Empoli (c. 1400-05).

⁸⁴ Walker, 41 states that the "theological relationship understood between the Last Supper and the Crucifixion explains their frequency in refectories. At Sant' Apollonia, Castagno expanded the narrative to the theological culmination of the series of events."

The innovative use of the *Entombment* and the *Resurrection* is further emphasized by their placement. Castagno does not represent the three Passion scenes in chronological order; the *Crucifixion* is in the center, with the *Resurrection* to the left and the *Entombment* on the right (Fig. 15). The centralized placement of the *Crucifixion* is fitting in the context of traditional depictions of *cenacoli*.⁸⁵ However, the flanking scenes are shown out of order, when read from left to right.⁸⁶ Eve Borsook sees Castagno's addition of the *Resurrection* as an optimistic conclusion, and believes it is on the left in order to occupy the more liturgically important position on the right hand of the crucified Christ.⁸⁷ The placement of Castagno's upper scenes can be compared to a Last Judgment scene, the visual representation of Christian salvation.⁸⁸ In this image, Christ's left, the viewer's right side, normally depicts the damned, or hell; therefore, Castagno's *Entombment*, which emphasizes Christ's descent into limbo, is appropriate in this location. Using the same argument, the *Resurrection* suggests the side of the saved, those that will enter God's kingdom in heaven. Contradicting their disjointed arrangement, the three scenes are placed within a continuous landscape that resembles the Tuscan countryside of Castagno's

⁸⁵ Pisani, "Sant' Apollonia," in *La tradizione fiorentina dei cenacoli*, 130 acknowledges this idea and notes Castagno's shift of focus from the *Crucifixion* to the *Last Supper*, eliminating the idea of the predella.

⁸⁶ Gilbert, 377 suggests the possibility that Castagno could have intended to place the three scenes in chronological order and was then told to put the *Crucifixion* in the center. His explanation is that the *Entombment*, with its "crowded composition of figures" (which he claims had not been depicted by another artist in this way) would have fit better in the larger central space. The upper portion of the wall in Sant' Apollonia is broken up by two windows that segment the space into three portions, with the center being larger than the two sides. Hayum, 260, n. 84 argues that the windows may not have been part of the original construction. She refers to three sets of ground plans of the convent. The plans from 1741 (ASF, Conv. soppr., 82, m.207, c.1) do not show any windows on the north wall of the refectory, but two later versions from 1824 (Museo di Firenze Com'era, Archivio di Storico del Comune di Firenze, Reali Fabbriche, 2097, inserto 10) do include the windows. These later plans were drawn up after the convent's suppression in 1808, when the Benedictine nuns were reinstalled. Hayum believes the originality of the windows may not have been questioned because they clearly seem to function as a separation for the three scenes. However, she considers the composition broken up by the addition of the windows. Steffi Roettgen, *Italian Frescoes: The Early Renaissance 1400-1470*, principal photography by Antonio Quattrone, translated by Russell Stockman (New York, London, Paris: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996), 258 sees the deviation from chronological order as revelatory – Castagno must have been more "concerned with the appearance of the wall as a whole."

⁸⁷ Borsook, 87. Pisani, "Sant' Apollonia," 130-131 describes the three upper scenes as a "kinetic sequence" and agrees with the optimistic view of the *Resurrection*, which to her has a less dramatic appearance, in respect to the trecento representations dominated by the *Crucifixion*.

⁸⁸ Brigitte Monstadt, "Andrea del Castagno," in *Judas beim Abendmahl. Figurenkonstellation und Bedeutung in Darstellungen von Giotto bis Andrea del Sarto* (Munich, 1995), 156-88 supports this argument.

home.⁸⁹ A tension is created by the unordered scenes. It is possible to view them as a single narrative (although not chronological), due to the open landscape, or as parts of a whole, as in a Last Judgment. In this way, grouping the three individual scenes is similar to a triptych, furthering the comparison of the fresco with an altarpiece.⁹⁰ The six angels spanning the upper surface aid in joining the three scenes to create a whole image.

Another unusual feature in Castagno's frescoes is the apparent "reversed aging" of the figure of Christ. Shown bearded in the *Last Supper*, Christ's age seems appropriate for that moment in his life. However, in the Passion scenes he is beardless, and appears significantly younger in the *Resurrection*. The interpretation of this iconography, as noted by Luisa Vertova, is the distinction between Christ's two natures. Bearded in the *Last Supper*, he is human, the Son of Man; but, as the beardless figure in the Passion scenes, Christ is divine, the Son of God.⁹¹ This particular imagery fits with the emergent theme in quattrocento religious art which emphasized the "humanization" of the Lord.⁹² At this time, it was a common trend for images of Christ to focus more on his mysterious double nature, being both human and divine. This

⁸⁹ Hartt, "Three Disputed Dates," 232 describes the upper scenes as "a continuous narration before a vast, open landscape..." Hayum, 266, n. 84 notes Hartt's statement and likens Castagno's Passion scenes to Masaccio's *Tribute Money* in the Brancacci Chapel at Santa Maria del Carmine, "where successive moments of the story coexist within one coherent space." See Andrew Ladis, *The Brancacci Chapel, Florence* (New York: George Brazillier, 1993) for a discussion of Masaccio and Masolino's frescoes.

⁹⁰ See n. 80 for Gilbert's notion of the refectory wall as an altarpiece.

⁹¹ Vertova, 35-6. Lavin, *The Place of Narrative*, 146 acknowledges that the image of the youthful Christ makes the *Resurrection* a metaphor for rebirth. Pisani, "Sant' Apollonia," 131 and Dominique Rigaux, *Un banquet pour l'éternité: La Cène d'Andrea del Castagno*. Photographs by Giovanni Dagli Orti (Belgium: Mame, 1997), 64, 66 note that this iconography is not new; the origin of the beardless Christ is Western, recalling the Good Shepherd or Apollo, while the bearded Christ is Eastern, as shown on images of philosophers or God the Father.

⁹² Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 208. Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 119-121 and 131-139 discuss the work of the church leaders to emphasize the humanity and divinity of Christ and why the art of the time frequently depicted Christ nude, as a child and adult; and as a child, participating in very human actions, such as being breast-fed by the Virgin Mary.

resulted in a proliferation of images of the Incarnation and Crucifixion, depicting the moments which illustrate the Lord's humanity – his birth and death.⁹³

Castagno's use of an independent architectural setting is a characteristic aspect of his *Last Supper*.⁹⁴ This can be seen as a variation on the representations at Santa Croce and Santo Spirito, where the scene is shown within its own framework (see Figs. 13, 14). Both of these frescoes are surrounded by borders which separate the Last Supper image from adjacent scenes.⁹⁵ By employing these precedents, increasing the size of the *Last Supper*, and allowing it to project forward into the viewer's space, Castagno's *cenacolo* continues the traditional iconography while creating a new model to follow. Although the upper and lower registers of the refectory wall are nearly equal in size, there is a clear shift in visual emphasis. Castagno's *Crucifixion* dominates the wall surface, by a higher position, but the *Last Supper* becomes the central image. Whereas some scholars contend that Castagno's fresco initiates this shift in emphasis, others argue that the *cenacoli* of Santa Croce and Santo Spirito are the innovators, stating that the figures in these Last Suppers are larger than those in the Crucifixions, and closer to the viewer.⁹⁶ Despite this debate in the literature, it still seems clear that Castagno's *cenacolo*

⁹³ Images which focused on Christ's Incarnation typically fall into the categories of either an Annunciation, a Madonna and Child, or an Adoration of the Child.

⁹⁴ Like the Last Suppers by Duccio, Giotto, and Pietro Lorenzetti (Figs. 9, 11, and 12), Castagno illustrates the event within an enclosed space.

⁹⁵ Walker, 68. Gilbert, 378 finds that many writers have claimed Gaddi's fresco as a precursor for Castagno, yet fail to mention their similar internal composition. He sees them both as setting the Supper "in front of the wall plane, while the upper scenes are set at that plane and behind it. The only change from Gaddi in Castagno is the modern Brunelleschian perspective." Gaddi's placement in front of the wall plane is evident in the apostles who overlap the framing elements in the scene (the third figure from the left and the third figure from the right).

⁹⁶ Gilbert, 377 believes Castagno's shift is seen by making the *Last Supper* larger. However, Clifton C. Olds, "Queries on 'Last Suppers and their Refectories'," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Papers from The University of Michigan Conference, ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 404 questions this and believes it is the frescoes of S. Croce and S. Spirito that illustrate this change. David Wilkins "Intervention on Creighton Gilbert's 'Last Suppers and Their Refectories'," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, Papers from The University of Michigan Conference, ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 406 agrees that the shift is seen S. Croce and S. Spirito because the Last Suppers are closer to the viewer, whereas the Crucifixions are above the normal sight lines of the viewer and require an upward glance.

was a turning point in the refectory tradition. His *Last Supper* encompasses more space on the refectory wall than the images at Santa Croce and Santo Spirito (see Figs. 13, 14, 16). The majority of the wall in the earlier two refectories is filled by their respective Crucifixions. Castagno's work at Sant'Apollonia splits the wall into two distinct levels, but places the *Last Supper* closest to the viewer. As I will discuss further, subsequent refectory paintings will focus more on the Last Supper rather than the additional scenes.

In support of the idea that Castagno's *Last Supper* is a transitional work in the history of Florentine *cenacoli*, it is significant to realize that Florentine refectories which depict the Last Supper after Castagno's fresco focus increasingly on the Last Supper, eventually eliminating the additional scenes altogether. Due to the strict *clausura* that the convent of Sant'Apollonia was under, there is no way of knowing whether or not contemporary or later artists were able to see Castagno's frescoes at Sant'Apollonia.⁹⁷ However, it is believed that his now lost *Last Supper* at the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova (c. 1457) was similar to his work at Sant'Apollonia, and that other artists saw and imitated Castagno's composition.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ This type of seclusion, or enclosurement, was not uncommon at the time. Trexler, 345 notes that around 1336 several orders in Florence began to lead a more sedentary life, where the nuns were cloistered within stable establishments. Castagno's *Last Supper* is considered to have been inaccessible and unknown until Sant'Apollonia's suppression in 1808, it was then secularized in 1860; as noted by Paatz, 221-222, n. 25; Vertova, 32; Borsook, 87, n. 8; Walker, 10, 137. Now known as the *Cenacolo* of Andrea del Castagno, the former refectory of Sant'Apollonia became a museum dedicated to Andrea del Castagno following the suppression of the convent (see Fig. 16). On November 22, 1890 some of the cloister's rooms were acquired by the Curators of the Royal Galleries to establish the first monothematic museum that had previously been a *cenacolo* (earlier examples of *cenacoli* becoming museums are: San Salvi and Sant'Onofrio delle Contesse, called "di Fuligno"); Pisani, *Il Cenacolo di Santa Apollonia*, 8.

⁹⁸ Mario Salmi, *Andrea del Castagno* (Novara: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 1961), 56 says that this fresco was first recorded by Antonio Billi. Vasari's 1568 edition discusses the *Last Supper* at Santa Maria Nuova; it was apparently still visible in 1677, according to F. Bocchi and G. Cinelli, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze* (Florence, 1677), 401, but it was not included in later descriptive literature. Salmi notes that Vasari praises the work of Andrea Mantegna for its low-viewing point and perspective, which Vasari claims is similar to Castagno's use of such practices in the *Last Supper* at Santa Maria Nuova; this assertion makes it seem that other artists would have seen and imitated this work by Castagno.

In the research that has cataloged the painted refectories of Florence, Castagno's *cenacolo* is the last example of the *Last Supper* with significantly-sized additional scenes.⁹⁹ The extant *cenacoli* immediately following Sant'Apollonia include Stefano di Antonio Vanni's *Last Supper* at Sant'Andrea a Cercina (c. 1450) and at the Hospital of San Matteo (1466). Both of these *cenacoli* have secondary scenes on the opposing wall, a *Judgment of Solomon* at Sant'Andrea and a traditional *Crucifixion* at San Matteo. Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Last Supper* at the Badia a Passignano (1476-77) is surmounted by two decoratively framed lunettes depicting the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve* and the *Murder of Abel* (Fig. 17). In these examples the image of the *Last Supper* comprises the main part of the refectory wall, in a long rectangular format, similar to Castagno's.¹⁰⁰ The secondary scenes are reduced in size and, in most cases, are not part of the same wall surface. By the late fifteenth century, Florentine *cenacoli* focus solely on the scene of the Last Supper.¹⁰¹ With this view of the progression of the *cenacoli* in Florence, Castagno's frescoes mark the end of one, and the beginning of another tradition.

Castagno's *Last Supper* in relation to the Gospel Accounts

All four Gospels of the New Testament recount the story of the Last Supper.¹⁰² It is from this textual source that the visual representation of the event is established. The Synoptic

⁹⁹ Lucinat and Pisani, Vertova, and Walker are three sources, used throughout this thesis, that catalog the painted refectories of Florence.

¹⁰⁰ Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 48, 202-203 considers Ghirlandaio's *Last Supper* at Passignano "Castagnesque" in inspiration, noting that it is unknown whether Ghirlandaio saw either of Castagno's Last Suppers, but that the relationship between Ghirlandaio and Castagno's works is "undeniable." The differences she observes are that Ghirlandaio's room has a higher viewpoint and recedes rather than the projection of space seen in Castagno's fresco. Ghirlandaio's *Last Supper* also varies thematically by illustrating the pre-history of the Passion (original sin and the first murder), instead of Castagno's representation of its climax.

¹⁰¹ With this statement I am referring to the image of the Last Supper that is shown alone on a single wall surface. Although Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* is accompanied by a Crucifixion, it is placed on the opposing wall; therefore the *Last Supper* is depicted without surrounding scenes, making it the focus of the wall surface.

¹⁰² There is the argument that the Gospel of John's account does not contain the characteristic features of the Synoptics' story of the Last Supper, such as the blessing of the bread and wine, although he is obviously referring to the same meal since he includes the Announcement of Judas' Betrayal. In this case, the fourth account is in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-25, when Paul explains the Tradition of the Institution. See Marshall, "The Accounts of the Last Supper" in *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 30-56.

Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke follow a similar narrative pattern, with few differences, while the Gospel of John has an original structure and is considered more symbolic, with its use of proverbs and esoteric teaching.¹⁰³ Mark and Luke both describe the location of the meal as a “large upper room.”¹⁰⁴ This description is characterized by the enclosed space in which the Last Supper is normally portrayed. Images which employ this type of setting all draw, to some extent, on the Gospels of Mark and Luke as sources. All of the Gospels, except Luke, state that Jesus and the apostles reclined at the table during the meal.¹⁰⁵ Although this posture is not shown in Italian Renaissance depictions, especially Florentine refectories, it is seen in several early images of the Last Supper, such as the Rossano Gospels, the mosaic in San Apollinare Nuovo (see Fig. 4), and the eleventh-century fresco at Sant’ Angelo in Formis. The typical seating arrangement would be three couches surrounding the table (a *triclinium*), with the fourth side open allowing access for the servants.¹⁰⁶ This setting is the most common depiction of the scene in the long history of Last Supper paintings, in most cases, exclusively in refectories, and is the approach used by Castagno in his fresco at Sant’ Apollonia.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ The Passion narrative for the three Synoptic Gospels starts with the Conspiracy against Jesus and Judas’ Betrayal. Beginning with the preparations for the Passover and ending before Peter’s Denial Foretold, these are the citations for Synoptics’ story of the Last Supper: Matthew 26: 17-30, Mark 14: 12-26, and Luke 22: 7-30. John 13: 1-30 includes the Washing of the Feet and the Announcement of Judas’ Betrayal. The New Commandment and Peter’s Denial Foretold follows this (13: 31-38), and the subsequent chapters, such as the Last Supper Discourses (Ch. 14) and the Vine and the Branches (Ch. 15), are where Jesus speaks in proverbs, making John’s Gospel more complicated to understand in comparison to the Synoptics.

¹⁰⁴ Mark 14: 15, Luke 22: 12.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 26: 20, Mark 14: 18, John 13: 12. Jane S. Webster explains the origins of this custom in *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John*. Academia Biblica, Number 6 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 102-103, n. 5: “The practice of reclining at meals seems to have arisen in the East and was known to the Jewish people as early as the eighth century (Amos 6:4-7). See also Jdt 12: 15; Tob 2: 1; Tob S 7: 9; Sir 25: 18; 32: 2; Mark 6: 40; 8: 6; Matt 15: 35; Luke 14: 10; 17: 7. By the sixth century, Greeks appeared to have adopted the custom from the Assyrians; the Romans adopted the custom soon afterward. See, for example, Plato, *Symposium*, 174e; Pliny, *Up*. 4.22.4. J.-M. Deter, ‘Aux origines de l’iconographie du banquet couché,’ *Revue archéologique* (1971): 215-58; ‘Le motif du banquet couché dans le Proche-Orient et le monde grec du 7e au 4e siècle avant J.-C.,’ in *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome* 246e (Rome, 1982).”

¹⁰⁶ Webster, 103. For the history and development of the use of a *triclinium*, see Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*, especially Chapter 1: “Romans, Greeks and Others on the Banqueting Couch,” 11-35.

¹⁰⁷ This is a general statement, with exceptions, such as where the figures fill both sides of a table as seen in Giotto’s fresco in the Arena Chapel (Fig. 11), in the case of refectories, as mentioned earlier, the fresco at S. Croce (Fig. 13)

The Gospel of John

John's version differs from the Synoptic Gospels in various ways. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all state that the Last Supper was on the day of Passover, while John begins his story noting that it is before the celebrated feast.¹⁰⁸ John begins his story with the Washing of the Feet, yet this event is not included in the Synoptics.¹⁰⁹ This episode takes the place of the blessing of the bread and wine (Institution of the Eucharist) as described by the other Gospels. After this, in the Gospel of John, Jesus identifies Judas as the betrayer. When Jesus was asked, "Master, who is it?" he answered, "It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it. So he dipped the morsel and [took it and] handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot."¹¹⁰

Scholars acknowledge Castagno's *Last Supper* as a representation of the narrative according to the Gospel of John.¹¹¹ This distinction is explained by the image of Judas holding the "sop" or piece of bread which has been dipped (Fig. 18). Contrary to this depiction, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark designate the one who dips his hand in the dish with Christ as the

depicts the figures only on the back side of the table (omitting the figure of Judas who is shown alone on the opposite side of the table).

¹⁰⁸ Matthew 26: 17, Mark 14: 12, Luke 22: 7, John 13: 1. For an explanation of this difference, see McCormick, "Appendix D: The Character and Date of the Last Supper," in *The Lord's Supper*, 115-119. He cites Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, tr. by Arnold Ehrhardt (The Macmillan Company, 1955) as an important source for this problem.

¹⁰⁹ Webster, 106-110 notes that the Gospel of John strongly emphasizes Jesus' knowledge of his impending death and explains the act of foot washing as foreshadowing the death of Jesus through the symbolic language of the Gospel of John. *The New American Bible*, translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the ancient Sources (Wichita, Kansas: Fireside Bible Publishers, 1994-1995), 1157, *13: 5 suggests that it is an allusion to the humiliating death of the crucifixion.

¹¹⁰ John 13: 25-26. Matthew is the only other Gospel who names Judas as the betrayer at this point of the narrative. Judas asked, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" and Jesus answered, "You have said so" (Matthew 26:25). What is unique about John's interpretation is that Jesus himself points out Judas by handing him the morsel.

¹¹¹ Borsook, 87; In Frederick Hartt's 1973 version of his textbook, he discusses Castagno's work at Sant' Apollonia in great depth (compared to later editions where the description is shortened). He suggests that Ludolph of Saxony's *Life of Christ* was a source for Castagno's *Last Supper*. The German fourteenth-century Carthusian monk discusses the events of the life of Christ as they are depicted in the Gospels and guides the reader through meditations in order to become closer to God. See "Andrea del Castagno," in *History of the Italian Renaissance: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture*, 219-231. Second printing (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc. and Harry N. Abrams, NY, 1973), 221 and Charles Abbott Conway, Jr., *The Vita Christi of Ludolph of Saxony and Late Medieval Devotion Centered on the Incarnation: A Descriptive Analysis* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1976).

betrayers.¹¹² This moment has often been represented in images of the Last Supper, as in the Arena Chapel (see Fig. 11). The fresco in the refectory of Santa Croce may also be a representation of this passage; however, Judas' hand appears to be holding a piece of bread as he reaches into the dish (Fig. 19).¹¹³ The Gospel of Luke identifies the betrayer when Jesus says, "the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me on the table."¹¹⁴ The *Last Supper* mosaic at San Marco in Venice displays this imagery (Fig. 20).¹¹⁵ There are other aspects of Castagno's *Last Supper* which fall in line with John's account, such as the beloved disciple reclining at the side of Jesus, but the sop is the one visual element that can separate John's narrative from the three other Gospels.¹¹⁶ The image of Jesus handing the bread, or Judas accepting it is seen in several early Italian panel paintings and murals.¹¹⁷ However, this is not common in later refectory paintings of the Last Supper in Florence. Castagno's fresco, and as mentioned, possibly Gaddi's at Santa Croce, are the first to do so.¹¹⁸ Even after the fresco at Sant'Apollonia, the specific imagery of the sop is rare. Stefano di Antonio di Vanni's fresco in terre verde at Sant'Andrea a Cercina (ca. 1450) and Ghirlandaio's *cenacolo* at San Marco (1477-

¹¹² Matthew 26: 23, Mark 14: 20.

¹¹³ Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 221 states that Gaddi's image represents Matthew and Mark's description of Judas dipping his hand into the dish.

¹¹⁴ Luke 22: 21.

¹¹⁵ See n. 54 above for the description of the *Last Supper* at San Marco.

¹¹⁶ John 13: 23. It is important to note that while most images of the Last Supper include the apostle who is leaning on Christ's shoulder, they may show Judas' hand in the dish or on the table, denoting a combined use of the Gospels. Examples of this can be seen in the images discussed above.

¹¹⁷ Including those previously discussed: Sant'Angelo in Formis, Duccio's on the *Maestà* (Fig. 9), Church of the Collegiata of San Gimignano, and Pietro Lorenzetti's in the Lower Church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi (Fig. 12). There are a number of early images that depict Jesus actually placing the bread in Judas' mouth: illuminated manuscripts, c. 1043-6 in the Escorial, Madrid, c. 1050 in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, c. 1140 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, c. 1153 in the British Library, London (which shows another figure of Jesus washing the feet of the apostles), a painted marble relief, c. 1184 on Modena Cathedral, and a painted stone relief, c. 1260 at Naumburg Cathedral; these images can be found in the small, but helpful book, *Last Supper* (London: Phaidon, 2000).

¹¹⁸ Gaddi's fresco may be considered a combination of the sop imagery and Judas reaching into the dish. Although the Abbey of Pomposa is not a Florentine refectory, I will note that it does show Judas eating the bread; he is the central apostle, opposite Christ. He is distinguished by a darker halo, which does not contain the stylized decoration seen in the other apostles' halos. Due to the damage at S. Paolo fuori le Mura and Santo Spirito, the method used to designate the betrayer is unknown.

80) both follow this model, with the sop in Judas' hand; however Ghirlandaio does not use it in his works at the Badia a Passignano (1476-77) or Ognissanti (1480).¹¹⁹ Later images such as Perugino's *Last Supper* at Sant'Onofrio delle Contesse (ca. 1490) show Judas seated opposite Jesus, looking out at viewer, holding the bag of coins.¹²⁰ It is not until Andrea del Sarto's *Last Supper* at San Michele a San Salvi (1511-27) that the sop is again portrayed in a Florentine *cenacolo*, and in this case, it is shown as Jesus handing the bread to Judas, rather than Judas holding the bread, as seen in Castagno's representation.¹²¹

Besides the distinguishing characteristic of the sop, Castagno's *Last Supper* has also been connected to the Gospel of John because of Judas' evil appearance. Following the announcement of Judas as the betrayer, John 13: 27 states: "After he took the morsel, Satan entered him." Based on this passage, Borsook and Hartt both associate Judas' pointed features with wickedness.¹²² This type of distinction had been used in the past; whether an artist chose to depict Judas with black hair, a blackened halo, without a halo or in one particular case, with a small devil figure entering his mouth as Jesus feeds him the bread, Judas' sinful nature was often visually emphasized in the Last Supper.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Ghirlandaio's images at the Badia and Ognissanti show Judas opposite Jesus, his back to the viewer, with his left hand propped on his hip or in his lap. The *cenacolo* at San Girolamo e San Francesco alla Costa (1488), attributed to the workshop of Cosimo Rosselli, depicts Judas in the same manner.

¹²⁰ Other later *cenacoli* with a similar depiction of Judas are by Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, called il Sodoma, at San Bartolomeo a Monte Oliveto (ca. 1515-16), Giovanni Antonio Sogliani at Santa Maria di Candeli (second half of the sixteenth century), and an artist, Ambito di Ridolfo Bigordi, at the Convento del Portico (ca. 1520).

¹²¹ Luchinat and Pisani, *La tradizione fiorentina dei Cenacoli* and Vertova, *I Cenacoli fiorentini* were used in order to determine the method in which Judas was identified as the betrayer in the *cenacoli* discussed above.

¹²² Borsook, 88, 89, n. 15 describes Judas' profile as "satyr-like," and explains that in the Middle Ages "the physical characteristics of pagan satyrs inspired representations of the Devil." Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222 claims that it is clear that the Devil has entered Judas, since he has "assumed an aspect of diabolical ugliness, with hooked nose, jutting beard, hornlike ears – and yet, ... a fixed look of desperation."

¹²³ Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur*, 273 notes the use of specific garment colors, the black halo, or absence of one, and the obvious isolation of Judas on the opposite side of the table as ways to separate him from the other apostles. *Last Supper* (Phaidon), 24 shows the illuminated manuscript in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, c. 1140 which shows a tiny black devil entering Judas' mouth.

The figurative language associated with the Gospel of John provides further indication that Castagno's fresco was based on this Gospel. Since Jesus spoke to the apostles at the meal in proverbs, John Spencer believes that the reactions of Castagno's apostles reflect their confusion.¹²⁴ John 13: 28 confirms the apostles' lack of comprehension; "Jesus said to Judas, "What you are going to do, do quickly. [Now] none of those reclining at table realized why he said this to him." With the Gospel of John presenting the Passion in such a complicated manner, the puzzled look of the apostles is appropriate in this image. Castagno's apostles are characterized by their isolated reactions. There is little interaction between the twelve; half of the figures appear to be kept to themselves, contemplating the moment at hand.¹²⁵ Spencer claims that Castagno's main concern in the frescos at Sant' Apollonia was to portray the meaning of Christ's sacrifice.¹²⁶ By illustrating the scenes of the Passion with his *Last Supper*, Castagno displays the narrative event in which Christ promises salvation to the apostles and its fulfillment through his death and resurrection.

¹²⁴ Spencer, 110. He also uses John 16: 17-18, "What does this mean that he is saying to us, ... We do not know what he means" to support this notion. This passage occurs later in the discourses, when Jesus alludes to his departure and return to the Father.

¹²⁵ This depiction and its purposes will be examined in Chapter V.

¹²⁶ Spencer, 111. Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and Modern Oblivion* emphasizes the idea that during the Quattrocento it was more important to explain the mysteries of the faith to current believers than to convert non-believers. As will be discussed further, the frescoes at Sant' Apollonia may have been a way to dispel understanding to its viewers.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF CASTAGNO'S *LAST SUPPER*

Castagno's fresco of the *Last Supper* clearly represents the room that is suggested in the gospel accounts (Fig. 21). Inside the room is a long rectangular table, where Christ and the twelve apostles are seated along benches that are built into the three walls of the building, with the front of the table open to the viewer. The figure of Judas, who sits on this front side of the table, is placed across from Christ. Christ is seated to the left of center, which is occupied by the reclining figure of St. John. The triclinium-like benches are raised by a slight step on the floor. The stool on which Judas sits is placed below this step, on the lower level of the floor. The interior decoration of the chamber consists of a combination of classical and contemporary elements. I will discuss how Castagno's fresco can be considered a representation of traditional, historicizing sources and also a move towards the Renaissance style.

Embellishing the Renaissance "perspective box"

One of the most noted characteristics of Castagno's *Last Supper* is the attempt at Albertian perspective. The illusion Castagno created has been varyingly discussed, either commended for its accuracy or criticized for its imprecision.¹²⁷ This contradiction further demonstrates the importance of Castagno's *Last Supper*. His innovative use of spatial relations helped to revolutionize the iconography of the Florentine *cenacolo*.¹²⁸ Creighton Gilbert believes that during Castagno's time, the use of the "perspective room" was "iconographically

¹²⁷ Gilbert, 378 states that Castagno's perspective in the *Last Supper* is not as accurate as sometimes discussed, but also not as inaccurate as it has sometimes been argued, as in Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222.

¹²⁸ Pisani, *Il Cenacolo di Santa Apollonia*, 26.

required.”¹²⁹ This supports the idea that Castagno’s *Last Supper* continues the traditional representations of his predecessors. Therefore, Castagno’s attempt at true perspective ties him to this convention, yet he is able to move a step forward with a closer illusion of reality.

The inside of the structure represented in Castagno’s *Last Supper* includes an array of decorative elements that help to distinguish the shape of the room. Along the three walls of the room are panels of fictive marble and a continuous frieze of a looping motif, or *guilloches*, with flower-like shapes within the circles. The back wall clearly contains six square marble panels and thirty-three and a half loops of the frieze. The side walls also have six panels, which would make the room appear to be square, yet at the angle the walls are set, the panels seem more rectangular than square.¹³⁰ However, the frieze on the left wall consists of seventeen loops, and the right wall has sixteen and a half (the half loop from the back wall continues at the right corner onto the right wall). This indicates that the side walls are shorter than the back wall, making the room approximately twice as wide as it is deep. The bench on which Christ and the apostles sit is covered with a tapestry that is pinned up along the walls of the room. The number of sagging curves of the tapestry are also fewer on the side walls than the back wall, reinforcing the room’s rectangular shape.¹³¹ The difficulty in determining the shape of the room is in part

¹²⁹ Gilbert, 379 explains that Castagno’s reference to Gaddi’s *cenacolo* through the internal composition and the presentation of the scene “in front of the wall plane” shows he was following an established practice, which is why he created the “perspective room” in his *Last Supper* at Sant’Apollonia. Gilbert continues this argument by stating that Gaddi’s idea of identifying the lower part of the fresco with the viewer’s experience was present early on in the Quattrocento, as seen in Masaccio’s *Trinity*.

¹³⁰ Hartt, “Andrea del Castagno,” 222 questions whether the marble panels on the side walls are half as wide as those on the back wall. Hartt states that the number of guilloches along the back wall, thirty-three and a half may reflect Christ’s age at this time. I will note that the number of loops on the side walls also adds up to thirty-three and a half.

¹³¹ Ibid., Gilbert, 379, Welliver, 52 and John White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 198 define the shape of the room with the sagging curves of the tapestry and the number of loops in the frieze. Welliver also mentions the number of figures that could be accommodated on the side benches as an indicator that the room is twice as wide as it is deep. However, he does not state the number of figures that he thinks could be seated on the side benches. There is only one figure seated on each side bench, with ten figures seated along the back wall, this arrangement makes the room’s width appear more than twice its depth, as Gilbert, 379 notes that the inconsistent arrangement of the figures makes the room appear to be almost five times as it is wide.

due to the incorrect recession of the side walls and the ceiling pattern.¹³² First of all, the side walls of the room appear to be placed at two different angles; the left wall is at a slightly larger angle, while the right wall is more perpendicular to the back wall. The depiction of the alternating black and white blocks on the ceiling is at odds with any sense of depth, since the pattern does not recede into space, and also because it would be impossible to see the ceiling on the inside of the room when the exterior roof is visible. In addition to these discrepancies, the ceiling pattern contradicts the horizontally rectangular shape established by the frieze and tapestry. There are fourteen blocks across the width of the ceiling, and sixteen blocks deep.¹³³ The pattern on the ceiling, along with the zigzag design on the floor may not be spatially correct, but they do serve as a method to engage the viewer and pull him into the fictive space.¹³⁴

Some of the eccentricities in Castagno's attempt at perspective are not uncommon. According to James Elkins, experimentation was inherent in the early development of "perspective boxes" during the fifteenth century.¹³⁵ One might expect the beginning generation of artists that knew perspective to be focused on technical skill, yet Elkins argues that these artists often disregarded the rules for the viewer's placement and were more interested in elaborating on the "perspective box," thus ending up using devices which opposed clarity.¹³⁶ Hartt notes that Castagno's departure from Albertian perspective was a choice the artist made so

¹³² James Elkins, *The Poetics of Perspective* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 221 states that the side walls do not diminish properly and the ceiling rows do not diminish at all, which contradicts a specific analysis of the space. Elkins believes a reconstruction of the room is difficult without knowing which cues are the standards to measure by. He claims with certainty that the room was intended to be rectilinear, but that Castagno had no intention of putting perspective into the space. Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222 also notes the failure of the ceiling panels to diminish; 223 refutes Elkin's idea that Castagno did not intend to use perspective, and only sees Castagno as diverging from rational perspective, as is discussed in the next paragraph.

¹³³ Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222.

¹³⁴ Walker, 68.

¹³⁵ Elkins, 128. Elkins' use of "perspective box" is similar to that of Gilbert's "perspective room," referring to the image of an enclosed space or room that the artist creates a sense of depth and space through the use of perspective.

¹³⁶ Elkins, 119; he also states that it is not until the sixteenth century that artists' work begins to demonstrate stronger technical ability, approaching true perspective and imitating reality.

that the painting would appear visually convincing from more than one viewpoint.¹³⁷ The intent to make the illusion valid to each person in the room may be regarded as a pioneering move for the artist; instead of following precise rules, he created his own interpretation of the structure.

The setting of a refectory complicates the possibility for a true perspectival depiction of the Last Supper. In his discussion of painted architecture, Warman Welliver notes the problems that artists face when painting a *cenacolo* on the back wall of a refectory.¹³⁸ The location of the viewer within the rectangular room influences the illusion of the painting. By moving closer or further away from the painting or moving laterally, from one side wall to another, the viewer changes his perception of the side walls, the ceiling and the floor of the fictive room.¹³⁹ According to Welliver, Castagno incorporated various tactics to counter-act the problems in painting a *cenacolo*. To prevent inconsistencies between near and far objects, Castagno eliminated any space beyond the diners; the shallow architectural space reduces the opportunity for illusory changes made by the movement of the viewer.¹⁴⁰ By placing the side walls of his room at a distance from the real walls of the refectory, and keeping their size to a small proportion of the width of the painting, Castagno controls the swelling of the wall that occurs for a lateral viewer.¹⁴¹ Although John White believes it is impossible to tell how deep Castagno's

¹³⁷ Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 223. Like Elkins' statement above, White, 199 credits the mathematical incorrectness of Castagno's composition to his possible attempt to avoid a "too-obvious mathematical logic;" noting that Castagno's image leaves a sense of measurability, which was more important to some quattrocento artists than a mathematical plan.

¹³⁸ Welliver, 50-51.

¹³⁹ Ibid. As an example of this phenomenon, Welliver explains that viewing Masaccio's *Trinity* from the distance of the length of a refectory, two to three times the painting's "correct" viewing distance, makes the ceiling appear to slope downward. Moving forward or back changes the angles of the side walls, while moving laterally towards a side wall causes the respective side wall in the painting to swell rather than shrink. Another factor which alters the "correct" viewing spot is the vertical placement of the viewer (their height or viewpoint in relation to the horizon line).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 52-53, n. 23 gives the dimensions of the painted space, depth first, as 7 by 14 *braccia*.

¹⁴¹ Welliver, 52, n. 14: one meter between the side walls of the painting and the refectory is taken up by a painted pilaster and brick wall that is parallel to the picture plane. Welliver discusses the strategies used by three *cenacoli* artists prior to Leonardo da Vinci (1495-98): Castagno (1447), Ghirlandaio (Ognissanti, 1480) and Perugino (1490). Although some of their practices were different, some methods were similar, such as limiting the proportion of the

painting should be or where the viewer should stand, Welliver developed a method to calculate the viewing distance of 22.3 meters.¹⁴² This is approximately four-fifths the length of the refectory, which measures 28.1 meters, making the viewing distance so large that the viewer could not substantially go beyond it.¹⁴³ All of these precautions used by Castagno help to restrict the possible placement of the viewer, but they do not limit it to a specific point. Hart's assertion that Castagno created his *Last Supper* to be seen from various viewpoints resolves some of the disparities in his fresco.

An Interior of Old and New

Just as the presentation of Castagno's image is tied to tradition and an innovative step a modern direction, the interior decoration of the room retains a somewhat ancient or medieval link to the past while also incorporating contemporary Florentine elements. The use of the marble panels along the walls of the room illustrates this combination of characteristics. While this type of embellishment originated in ancient Rome, marble revetments and painted fictive marble were both common practices in Italian Renaissance decoration and paintings.¹⁴⁴ The interest in materials such as stone, marble and porphyry was not unusual; the beauty, durability and scarcity of these elements made them quite expensive and hard to obtain; therefore, giving

side walls; it is significant that Castagno's fresco was the earliest of the three, making him the first to employ some of these devices.

¹⁴² White, 198. Welliver, 62, n. 33, third paragraph explains that he calculates the viewing distance (VD) by solving the equation, $VD : VD \text{ plus the depth of two rectangles} :: \text{apparent rectangle width at bottom step (measured on a photograph)} : \text{apparent rectangle width at the bottom of the painting}$. This ratio is an application of the rule that the apparent size of an object varies in inverse proportion to its distance from the viewer. (As one moves toward the painting, it appears larger, and as one moves away from it, it appears smaller.) Welliver, 52, n. 15; the width of the interior of the painted room is 7.94 m.

¹⁴³ Welliver, 52, n. 15.

¹⁴⁴ Steven F. Ostrow, "Appendix I: The History of Marble Revetment from Ancient Rome to the Sixteenth Century," in *The Sistine Chapel at S. Maria Maggiore: Sixtus V and the Art of the Counter Reformation*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton University (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1987), 464-480 gives a thorough explanation of this practice from as early as ancient Rome, with the revetments in Roman baths, the Pantheon, Constantine's spread of the marble decoration in The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the early Christian churches of San Vitale and Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, San Marco in Venice, and the Lateran Baptistry in Rome, to throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, when in Italy the practices of Cosmati work and painted fictive marble revived this form of decoration.

them a high sense of value.¹⁴⁵ The depiction of fictive panels of marble was intended to give the setting the same notion of prestige. The popularity of this style of decoration can be seen in other Renaissance paintings that include marble panels similar to those in Castagno's *Last Supper*, for example, Giotto's dado of Virtues and Vices in the Arena Chapel (1305), Masaccio's and Filippino Lippi's *The Raising of the Son of Theophilus*, in the Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence (1424-28, 1481-82) (Fig. 22), Fra Angelico, *The Judgment of St. Lawrence before the Emperor Decius*, in the Chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican, Rome (1448) (Fig. 23), and the four panels he painted beneath *Madonna of the Shadows* in the east corridor of San Marco (1450) (Fig. 24).¹⁴⁶ In each of these frescoes, the rectangular panels are framed by a simple molding and are placed along the wall of an enclosed space.

Classical Connections

The six square panels in Castagno's fresco are distinct in their color and pattern. They clearly represent specific marbles and porphyry which can be identified and may hold certain meanings. The first panel is serpentine, which is in fact, a green porphyry of remarkable hardness.¹⁴⁷ Castagno depicts the dark green stone with lighter green and white flecks to mimic

¹⁴⁵ Roger Jones, "Mantegna and Materials," in *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, vol. 2 (Florence: The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 1987), 75-76. Raniero Gnoli, *Marmora Romana* (Roma: Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1971, 1988), 98-118 notes that the Egyptian and Greek quarries were unknown in the Renaissance and the marbles and stones that were available were what the Romans left in Italy and what the Venetians took from Constantinople. Gnoli, Jones and Suzanne B. Butters, *The Triumph of Vulcan: sculptors' tools, porphyry, and the prince in ducal Florence*. Villa I Tatti (Series); 11, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1996), 41 discuss how these remnants of marble and porphyry were cut, sawn, and polished into shapes for inlays used to decorate churches and for Cosmatesque pavements, which served as models for Renaissance artists and patrons.

¹⁴⁶ For further information on these works see Giuseppe Basile, *Giotto, the Arena Chapel frescoes* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 319; Umberto Baldini, *The Brancacci Chapel* (New York: Abrams, 1992); Ladis, *The Brancacci Chapel*, 68-72; Innocenzo Venchi, *Fra Angelico and the Chapel of Nicholas V* (Vatican City State: Edizioni Musei Vaticani, 1999); and Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance & Figuration*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995 [Originally published as *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance et figuration*, Paris: Flammarion, 1990]). These are just a few select works that Castagno may have known or seen. The number of paintings (including several Annunciations by Fra Angelico) which use marble and stone decoration throughout the Renaissance is quite vast.

¹⁴⁷ Gnoli, 137-38, fig. 99. Mario Pieri, *I Marmi d'Italia: graniti e pietre ornamentali*, Terza Edizione Ampliata (Milano: Editore Ulrico Hoepli, 1964), Tav. XXIX. Gabriele Borghini, ed., *Marmi antichi*. Testi di Raniero Gnoli, Giorgio Ortolani, Patrizio Pensabene, Peter Cornelius Claussen, Filippo Tuena, Caterina Napoleone, Maria Cristina

its true nature. The second panel is red porphyry, which has a long symbolic history from ancient Rome to the Renaissance.¹⁴⁸ Due to its dark red or often purple color, porphyry is known to represent Christ's sacrificial blood and also denotes royalty or high status.¹⁴⁹ (I will return to the explanation of the symbolism of this stone after identifying the remaining panels.) The third marble has been identified as two different types of marble. Hellmut Wohl claims it is *fior di pesco*, a marble from Eubéa, which was used by the Romans to decorate private homes and villas, but not imperial or public buildings (Fig. 25).¹⁵⁰ Roger Jones identifies the marble in the third panel as *cipollino rosso*, which was also known as *africanone* in Venice and Ravenna (Fig. 26).¹⁵¹ Jones notes that this marble is strongly featured in the *Death of the Virgin* mosaic in the Mascoli Chapel at San Marco, which Castagno is thought to have designed. This connection makes a strong case for Castagno's imitation of this type of marble. However, I would like to suggest another possibility for the marble used in the third panel of Castagno's fresco. In studying the images in Gnoli and Borghini's texts, I believe *africano* (*marmor luculleum*) is a likely candidate for the type of marble depicted by Castagno (Fig. 27).¹⁵² Although the name is

Marchei, Barbara Pettinau, Paola Bozzini, Attilia Sironi. *Materiali della cultura artistica*, 1. Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, Istituto centrale per il catalogo e la documentazione (Roma: Edizioni de Luca, 1998), 277, fig. 119. Hellmut Wohl, *The Aesthetics of Italian Renaissance Art: A Reconsideration of Style* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 180 cites Donatello's use of green porphyry (from Larissa, in Greece) in his relief of the Entombment on the altar in the Santo, Prato for the tondo in the center of the sarcophagus, and at either end he placed square panels of *bianco e nero antico*, a black and white *breccia* marble quarried by the Romans in the Pyrenees.

¹⁴⁸ See Gnoli, 122-123, fig. 90. Borghini, 247, fig. 116.

¹⁴⁹ Butters, 50 notes that Christ's blood is recalled in altar panels, and fictive porphyry is often shown in scenes of his circumcision, flagellation, or the Pieta. Josef Deér, *The Dynastic Porphyry Tombs of the Norman Period in Sicily*, translated from the German by G. A. Gillhoff (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959), 150-156 discusses the imperial use of porphyry in ceremonies and for emperors' tombs.

¹⁵⁰ Wohl, 187-188 identifies the six marbles in Castagno's *Last Supper*. I agree with his choices, except for this third panel. Wohl, 187 states that *fior di pesco* is also known as *marmo calcidio* after the quarries south of Khalkis (Calcide). See Borghini, 212, fig. 63a and Gnoli, 184-6, fig. 127 for its decorative use. See also Pieri, Tav. XXIII.

¹⁵¹ Jones, 81 believes that Castagno imitated *cipollino rosso* in this panel because he would have seen this marble used in the pulpit at San Marco, Venice. For Castagno's attribution for the mosaic in the Mascoli Chapel, see n. 5 above. For further information on *cipollino rosso*, see Gnoli, 243-245, fig. 244, Borghini, 207, fig. 59.

¹⁵² Borghini, 133, fig. 1. Gnoli, 174-178, figs. 132, 133. Gnoli, 175 states that *africano* was introduced to Rome before the time of Augustus, and continued to be used throughout the Roman Empire. It was widely used in several

similar to *cipollino rosso*'s (*marmor carium o iassense*) other name, *africanone*, these are two different types of marble. Both are from the area of modern-day Turkey and certain types of each contain strong amounts of red and black veining; therefore they are similar in appearance, and could easily be misinterpreted. *Africano* can consist of colored fragments (red, green, white) of various shapes and dimensions, often within a dark stone.¹⁵³ The panel in Castagno's painting illustrates these elements; the powerful shapes of red, orange, white, green and black mix into a brown background.¹⁵⁴ The fourth panel, according to Wohl, is *bardiglio cappella*, from Seravezza (Lucca), a well-known Tuscan marble.¹⁵⁵ Castagno creates this marble with a blue background, covered in small yellow flecks of paint, and white veining throughout. The fifth panel imitates a less common marble, *breccia pavonazza*, which is from Ezine in Asia Minor.¹⁵⁶ The elongated colored striations in Castagno's panel are consistent with the description of this marble in Borghini's text.¹⁵⁷ The sixth panel in Castagno's fresco is a somber grey-blue color, believed to be *bardiglio di Carrara*.¹⁵⁸ This was another Tuscan marble Castagno would have known. The detail the artist used to illustrate these stones shows a strong desire to represent specific types of marble and porphyry in order to enhance the decoration of the room through familiar and meaningful materials.

The use of porphyry is fitting in Castagno's *Last Supper*, where the dining table is often associated with the liturgical altar, emphasizing Christ's sacrifice. With porphyry also seen as a

churches and palaces, such as the columns on the porch of S. Cecilia and part of a column in the octagonal courtyard of the Musei Vaticani. An example of *africano verde* is in the sacristy of St. Peter.

¹⁵³ Gnoli, 174.

¹⁵⁴ The "abstractness" of this marble panel has been continuously discussed by scholars; see Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 223 and Roettgen, 259. The possibility of these panels conveying some sort of emotional response of the apostles has also been mentioned, but still deserves further investigation. It is difficult to surmise whether or not such a connection would have been made in the Renaissance. I will not delve into this topic here, but I do recognize this idea, which is especially evident in the dramatic third panel placed over the group of Peter, Judas, Christ and John.

¹⁵⁵ Wohl, 187. See Pieri, Tav. VII.

¹⁵⁶ Wohl, 188. Gnoli, 240-241 states that this marble was used in Rome and Ostia in classical antiquity; fig. 248.

¹⁵⁷ Borghini, 180, fig. 33.

¹⁵⁸ Wohl, 188. Pieri, Tav. VI. Borghini, 153, fig. 13.

symbol of wealth or royalty, this panel, along with the other exquisite marbles in Castagno's room signify a palatial-like interior. Although the gospel accounts describe the space as the guest room in a Jerusalem home, Castagno decorates a chamber fit for a king. This extravagance is mimicked in the marble revetments on the tomb of Christ shown in the *Resurrection* and *Entombment* in the Passion scenes above (Figs. 28, 29). Marble decoration was common in Renaissance depictions of Christ's tomb, which is seen as an imitation of the practice from Roman or imperial monuments.¹⁵⁹ Porphyry's association with death and burial and the wall of marble panels in Castagno's fresco recall a tomb-like setting.¹⁶⁰ The enclosed space of the *Last Supper* is often regarded as representing Christ's own tomb, since it is at this moment that he acknowledges his sacrifice and death.¹⁶¹ The classicizing details, such as the allusions to ancient tombs, and the use of the marble panels displays Castagno's interest in antiquity.

Contemporary Styles

The contemporary elements Castagno used in the *Last Supper* are representative of Florentine Renaissance decoration. The building itself, along with the furniture and tapestry are examples of quattrocento style. The tiles on the roof are modeled after the red rooftops Castagno would have seen throughout Tuscany, as they are still present today.¹⁶² The looping frieze resembles an inlaid design of marble that would be seen throughout quattrocento Florence. The frieze of star-shaped flowers beneath the Gallery of Apostles on the exterior of Santa Maria del

¹⁵⁹ Didi-Huberman, 94-96 cites the Bardi di Vernio Chapel, Santa Croce as an example of the use of real, fictive, and painted marble. Taddeo Gaddi's *Entombment* (c. 1340) depicts Christ's tomb, inlaid with painted marble that replicates the actual tombs in the chapel, while the lower portion of the wall displays fictive marble panels. Pietro Lorenzetti makes a similar image in the lower church of San Francesco, Assisi; 82.

¹⁶⁰ See n. 149 above for sources which discuss the connection of porphyry to Christ's blood and death, and its use in tombs.

¹⁶¹ Ladis, *The Brancacci Chapel*, 70 connects the back wall of the *Raising of the Son of Theophilus* in the Brancacci Chapel, with its similar panels of porphyry and marble, to a mortuary setting. He notes that such panels were typical of ecclesiastical furniture, especially tombs, and that porphyry was also associated with death and burial.

¹⁶² Tuscan roofs are also seen in other paintings that used Florence as a backdrop for Biblical events, such as the work of Masaccio and Masolino in the Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence (see Fig. 21).

Fiore is a similar example of this type of decoration.¹⁶³ The furniture, such as the stool, table, and benches are typical of what would be found in a Renaissance home. The stool, *scagno* (*scanno/schanno*) on which Judas sits is one of the two types of stools common to furniture in Italian Renaissance interiors.¹⁶⁴ The wooden seat is supported by three stakes that make the legs of the stool. The table in Castagno's *Last Supper* is typical of the types of dining tables in the fifteenth century. The long board or *tavola* rests on two or more trestles (*trespodi*, *trespoli*, *trespiedi*, or *cavaletti*). These trestles represented something like a tripod, with three legs, or they could be a single column with a cross-piece at the top to support the *tavola*, as seen in Castagno's room. The *tavola* was usually wooden, and a tablecloth covered it while in use.¹⁶⁵ In Renaissance homes, the quality of table or bed linens was a symbol of status. These textiles were expensive and usually had to be bought from other countries.¹⁶⁶ In most cases fine linens were plain, regardless of where they came from, but the cloths used as table-linens were decorated with an all-over pattern of lozenges, such as the white tablecloth in Castagno's fresco.¹⁶⁷ This style is frequently depicted in other Italian images of the Last Supper.¹⁶⁸ Yet,

¹⁶³ See Cristina Acidini Luchinat, ed., *La Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore a Firenze*, 2 vols. (Florence: Giunti, 1994-1995), vol. 2, fig. 8.

¹⁶⁴ Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior 1400-1600* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1991), 168. The other type of stool is a box-like construction. The type represented in Castagno's fresco could also have four legs; the wooden legs were driven into holes bored into the base of the stool. Thornton describes the legged stool as similar to a "milking stool."

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 205 discusses the forms of tables used in the fifteenth century, and 168 describes the table in Castagno's image, which includes three columnar trestles to support the long, rectangular table.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 73. At the time, textiles were often bought from northern France and Flanders, and later on, Holland. Thornton, 69 explains the three Italian words used to describe a cloth, or piece of textile material: *tela* could be a linen cloth or canvas with ticking, *drappo* was a bit vaguer, possibly referring to silken materials or sometimes fine woolen textiles, *panno* described a woolen cloth, or a linen could be called a *panno lino*.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 73 and 168. The diamond-shaped pattern was called "diaper" in England, but Thornton thinks it is possible that this design was referred to as being *alla parigina* (in the Parisian manner) in Italian inventories.

¹⁶⁸ Examples of Last Supper images which use this patterned tablecloth include: the eleventh-century fresco at Sant'Angelo in Formis, Duccio's image on the *Maestà* (1308-11) (Fig. 9), Pietro Lorenzetti's at San Francesco, Assisi (c. 1315) (Fig. 12), the frescos at the Abbey of Pomposa, Ferrara (c. 1317), Sassetta's panel at the Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena (1423) (Fig. 6), Stefano di Antonio Vanni's frescos at San Andrea a Cercina, Florence (c. 1450) and the Hospital of San Matteo (c. 1466-67), Fra Angelico's fresco (1438/1442) and two panels (c. 1450, the fresco and one of the panels actually depicts the Communion of the Apostles) in the Museo di San Marco, Florence (see Fig. 5), Antonio Vivarini's (c. 1440- or 1484), now in the Museo Ca'd'Oro, Venice, a fifteenth-century tapestry by

this patterned tablecloth does not occur in later images of the Last Supper in refectories, and rarely in other paintings of the event.¹⁶⁹ This ties into Castagno's trend of following traditional precedents within his fresco.

The bench, or *banca*, on which Christ and the apostles sit, is a fixed part of the architecture. The bench may be wooden, attached to the wall, or marble, as it seems to be a continuation of the wall that converges into the platform on which the table and guests are raised. The ends of the bench show either a relief carving or inlaid ornament of an urn, or wine jar (symbolizing the wine that was served at the meal, and that of the Eucharist) framed within a rectangle and surrounded by a geometric design.¹⁷⁰ A *bancali* is the cloth that was laid on the bench and was often used with a *spalliera*, a long cloth that formed a back-rest, as seen in Castagno's fresco.¹⁷¹ The choice of textile that was used varied from a simple cloth to high-grade materials, such as velvet and rich carpets. In the fifteenth century, Florence was an important center for embroidery and needlework. This type of decoration was prominent in Italian Renaissance rooms, especially on bed pillows, bench-covers, and also bed and wall

the Tournai School in the Vatican, Rome, Titian's oil painting (1564) at the Escorial, Madrid; *Last Supper* (London: Phaidon, 2000) illustrates most of these images. For Vanni's at San Matteo, see Luchinat and Pisani, 123-125 and for Vivarini's, see Thornton, 209.

¹⁶⁹ Other styles of tablecloths that were depicted in Last Supper paintings sometimes had a design on the edge, such as Ghirlandaio's *Last Supper* at San Marco (1447-1480), Ognissanti (1480), and also the blue embroidered design at the ends of the cloth in Leonardo's *Last Supper* at Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan (1495-98). Fabrics made of linen, or linen and cotton mixes, with these decorative borders were referred to as "Perugia" and were mostly made in Lucca, Tuscany or Umbria; Elizabeth Currie, "Textiles and Clothing," in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Marta Anjar-Wollheim and Florea Dennis. Exhibition catalog, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (Victoria & Albert Publications, distributed in North America by New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), 344.

¹⁷⁰ Thornton, 168 describes the decoration of Castagno's *Last Supper*, while 171 discusses the types of benches that were used at the time. He notes that the fixed bench was typically seen depicted in fifteenth century scenes of the Last Supper. The fixed benches could be a simple shelf-like design or they could be boxed in underneath, with the seat being hinged to allow for access, to use the space as storage.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 173. The term, *spalliera* is derived from *spalla*, the Italian word for shoulder. *Spalliera* paintings were often shown in cycles, located at eye or shoulder level in a domestic setting, either as part of the wall decoration, within wooden entablatures above furniture, or as a cloth or tapestry, like the example in Castagno's *Last Supper*; see Anne B. Barriault, *Spalliera paintings of Renaissance Tuscany: fables of poets for patrician homes* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) for an in-depth study of this genre of domestic painting.

hangings.¹⁷² These wall hangings served a functional, as well as aesthetic purpose.

Contemporary Florentine palaces, with cold, stone walls, are known to have been decorated in this manner to keep the rooms warm.¹⁷³ The popularity of these hanging tapestries is evident throughout Italian Renaissance paintings, either as part of an interior setting or as a luxurious backdrop in various altarpieces.¹⁷⁴ The *milles fleurs* design of Castagno's *bancali* was common; Thornton refers to it as a costly Flemish verdure tapestry.¹⁷⁵ The dark bluish-green tapestry is filled with different styles of white flowers with leafy greenery. These flowers are another trait found in particular paintings of the Quattrocento, such as images of the Annunciation, where the Virgin is shown within a garden. The paradisiacal theme is appropriate for these paintings, as well as in Castagno's fresco. In scenes of the Annunciation, the garden may symbolize the beauty and purity of the Virgin Mary, but it also recalls the first Garden of Paradise, where God created man; therefore, the announcement of the Lord's Incarnation takes place in another garden to illustrate the coming of Christ as man. The symbolism of the interior paradise created by

¹⁷² Ibid., 79, 84 notes that the finest European needlework was often executed in Italy, first in Florence, then Milan.

¹⁷³ Currie, 350 notes that the fabrics were not just for decoration, but also for cleanliness, insulation and protection. The aesthetic appeal of the tapestries is witnessed in the frescoed walls of the Palazzo Davanzati. The walls in several rooms are painted with patterns to resemble wall hangings. See Roberta Ferrazza, *Palazzo Davanzati e le collezioni di Elia Volpa* (Firenze: Centro Di, 1994).

¹⁷⁴ Several Sieneese artists employ this decorative tool. Trecento altarpieces of the Madonna and Child by Duccio (*Rucellai Madonna*, 1285 and the central front panel of the *Maestà*, 1308-11) show a tapestry covering the throne on which they sit. Examples of wall hangings in an interior setting are seen in Simone Martini's *Dream of St. Martin* (1312-1319 ?) in St. Martin Chapel, Lower Church of S. Francesco, Assisi, Pietro Lorenzetti's *Birth of the Virgin* (1335-42), and a later woodcut from Girolamo Savonarola's *Predica dell'arte del ben morire*, Florence, 1496-7 (British Library, London IA.27321, fol. 11r); for a reproduction of this image, see Donal Cooper, "Devotion," in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Marta Anjar-Wollheim and Florea Dennis. Exhibition catalog, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (Victoria & Albert Publications, distributed in North America by New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), 195, Fig. 14.6.

A close resemblance to Castagno's tapestry is the wall hanging found in Fra Angelico's panel painting of the *Last Supper* (c. 1450) in the Museo di San Marco, Florence. Fra Angelico also includes tapestries behind the Madonna and Child in his *San Marco Altarpiece* (1443) and *Annalena Altarpiece* (1450), and as a backdrop in *The Judgment of St. Lawrence before the Emperor Decius* on the left wall of the Chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican, Rome (1448) (see Fig. 23). A scene from the predella of the *San Marco Altarpiece*, the *Miracle of the Deacon Justinian* shows a bedroom with wall hangings surrounding the bed. For illustrations and information on these works, see William Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993) and Venchi, *Fra Angelico and the Chapel of Nicholas V*.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 168. Barriault, 22 verifies that the floral pattern accounts for the name: *spalliera a verzura*.

Castagno, with the floral tapestry and rich decorations can be interpreted as a return to the garden, alluding to Christ's own death.¹⁷⁶

Ancient History

The foreshadowing of Christ's death is signaled by other aspects of the painted room. The enclosed space, as mentioned above, is often associated with a tomb. The ornamentation of the fictive marbles adds to the rich sense of beauty and eternal paradise. A noted adornment that supports the connection to the tomb is the two sculptures at the end of the bench (Fig. 30). These figures have been referred to as sphinxes and harpies; both are fantastical creatures linked to the afterlife.¹⁷⁷ Although the figurative characteristics of the sculptures in Castagno's *Last Supper* define them as harpies, I will discuss how the interpretation of them as sphinxes is also valid.¹⁷⁸

The inclusion of an Egyptian sculpture may seem odd within the scene of the Last Supper, but this feature is another link to the past. Egypt was a holy land of sanctuary throughout the Bible; Abraham and Sarah fled to Egypt, Joseph took his brothers there, and the

¹⁷⁶ Lavin, *The Place of Narrative*, 146 describes the setting of Castagno's room as a juxtaposition of interior beauty and the wretchedness of the exterior world. She notes that outside the side walls of the room are small areas of fertile grass, reminiscent of the garden scene, yet the tall brick walls on either side of the structure rise up to close off the area. Unlike other paintings, such as those by Taddeo Gaddi (his *Life of the Virgin* cycle in the Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence, 1328-30) and Fra Angelico (his *Annunciation* images), where there is a scene of paradisiacal beauty on the opposite side of the wall, the upper area of Castagno's brick wall illustrates a dark, rocky landscape. Lavin asserts that Castagno placed paradise inside the room, showing the holy figures of Christ and the apostles.

The carpet of flowers seen in *Annunciation* images, at the beginning of Christ's life, is also depicted in scenes of the *Lamentation*, or *Entombment*, signaling the end of Christ's earthly life. An example is Fra Angelico's *Lamentation* from the predella of the *San Marco Altarpiece*, now at the Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

¹⁷⁷ In ancient history, sphinxes are commonly seen as tomb guardians, and harpies were thought to have carried the souls of the dead to Hades.

¹⁷⁸ A harpy has a female head, the wings and feet of a bird, and a serpent's tail, while a sphinx may have a male or female head and a lion's body, with or without wings, and can be depicted in various poses: sitting, standing, crouching or reclining; John K.G. Shearman, *Andrea del Sarto*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 47, n. 6 and Theodor Reik, "Oedipus and the Sphinx," in *Dogma and Compulsion: Psychoanalytic Studies of Religion and Myths*, 289-332 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1973, 1975) [Originally published by International Universities Press, Inc., 1951], 290-291. Reik notes that sphinxes were akin to other fantastic hybrid creatures of antiquity, such as sirens, harpies, gryphons and cherubim. He states that in Egyptian sphinxes, wings are unusual, but in Greece they are standard; initially they were shown folded, then later the wings were usually open and raised. The elaboration of the sphinx often departed from the original prototype; in late Egyptian examples the lion's tail sometimes ended in a serpent, while still later Roman statues become composite creatures whose bodies were mixtures of many different animals. In Castagno's fresco, Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222 identifies them as harpies and Horster, 24 describes them as winged sphinxes.

Holy Family went to Egypt to seek refuge from Herod and the Romans.¹⁷⁹ This place within the Holy Land has been recognized by travelers as a pilgrimage site, even before the Renaissance.¹⁸⁰ The use of sphinxes in Renaissance art was not uncommon.¹⁸¹ They were commonly regarded as guardians of the mysteries of religion; therefore, they often appeared in settings relating to the Immaculate Conception, or the Incarnation of Christ.¹⁸² An apocryphal text explains this relationship. In an account by Andrew and Matthias, Christ calls sphinxes as witnesses against the high priests who doubt he was the Son of God:

On the right and left of the temple Jesus saw two sphinxes carved, and turned to us and said: Behold the form of heaven: these are like the cherubim and seraphim in heaven. And he said to the sphinx on the right: You semblance of that which is in heaven, made by craftsmen, come down and convince these priests whether I be God or man. It came down and spoke and said: O foolish sons of Israel. This is God who made man¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Leslie Greener, *The Discovery of Egypt* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 21 and Willis Roth Regier, *Book of the Sphinx* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 43.

¹⁸⁰ Greener, 24 explains that the earliest account of Egyptian sites visited by an early European was found in a manuscript discovered in Arezzo in 1883, by a librarian, G.F. Gamurrini. It describes the journey of a nun from Gaul, Lady Etheria, who traveled to visit the sites she read about in the Bible sometime between the years 379 and 388. Egypt was still considered Christian at this time. Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance," in *Studies in the Renaissance* 6 (1959), 7-27 discusses how the interest in ancient Egypt began in the Renaissance, because of the humanistic interest in the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome, it led to an interest in the ancient near east. See Jean-Marcel Humbert, Michael Pantazzi and Christiane Ziegler, ed., *Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art (1730-1930)*. Exhibition catalog. (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1994), 15-19 for the early Romans' interest in Egypt, as evidenced through their art and monuments.

¹⁸¹ Sphinxes are depicted at the four corners of the base of Mino da Fiesole's pulpit in the Prato Duomo (1473); see Gianni Carlo Sciolla, *La Scultura di Mino da Fiesole*, Università di Torino, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, *Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte*, vol. 3 (Torino: G. Giappichelli, 1970), 87 and Fig. 37. Günter Passavant, "Beobachtungen am Lavabo von San Lorenzo in Florenz", *Pantheon* 39 (1951), 33-50 discusses Verrocchio's sculpture (1465) and includes several figures illustrating the two harpies on the lower basin. The presence of sphinxes and harpies shows the popular decorative use of these ancient figures.

¹⁸² André Chastel, "Note sur le sphinx à la Renaissance," *Archivio di Filosofia* (1958), 179 quotes Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate* (1486) who declares that "The Egyptians carved sphinxes in all their temples to make plain that matters divine, even in writing, should be hidden under an enigmatic and poetic dissimulation." Examples of sphinxes used in these contexts are noted by Chastel, 181 who associates the sphinxes in Donatello's *Madonna in the Santo*, Padua (1448) with wisdom, as the Madonna is interpreted as *Sedes Sapientiae*. Shearman, 47, n. 6 explains that Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies* (1515-17) actually depicts two sphinxes on the base of the Madonna's pedestal; the name of the painting came about later in the eighteenth century, probably due to the figures' misattribution by Vasari in 1550.

¹⁸³ Shearman, 49, n. 3 and Regier, 43 refer to this story from *Acts of Andrew and Mathias*, which can be found in M.R. James, Translation and Notes, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 13 and J.K. Elliott, ed. *The Apocryphal New Testament: a collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 288-89; this edition is based on James' work.

The knowledge of the sphinx as a witness to the Incarnation would explain their frequent occurrence in altarpieces in the Renaissance.¹⁸⁴ As described in the previous passage, there was the understanding that sphinxes are related to cherubim.¹⁸⁵ Several passages in the Bible refer to cherubim serving as guardians; this purpose has been transferred to the image of the sphinx.¹⁸⁶ Genesis 3: 24 states, “When he expelled the man, he settled him east of the garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.” This association with the tree of life (tree of knowledge) is connected to the idea of wisdom, another trait of the sphinx. This imagery goes beyond Christianity; Assyrian and Babylonian paintings, reliefs and ancient seals depict sphinxes (and similar winged animals) guarding the tree of life.¹⁸⁷

This notion of the sphinx acting as guardian has sources in Egyptian history. Sphinxes in Egypt are commonly seen in pairs, placed along the avenues which lead to ancient temples, and guarding the tombs (a practice which was translated into the decoration of Renaissance tomb sculpture).¹⁸⁸ In Egyptian culture, the fantastic hybrid-animal could also represent the king,

¹⁸⁴ Shearman, 49, n. 4, 5 lists several examples which depict sphinxes in an *Annunciation*, or on the throne, or near the Madonna in other altarpieces, such as: Filippino Lippi, *Madonna and Two Saints* (1503), fresco tabernacle, now in the Museum, Prato (sphinxes on altar behind Madonna).

¹⁸⁵ Regier, 12 and William F. Albright, “What were the Cherubim?” *Biblical Archaeologist* 1 (1938), 1-3.

¹⁸⁶ Regier, 15. Psalm 80: 2 and 99: 1 describes the Lord being enthroned on cherubim, Exodus 25: 18-22 and 37: 7-9 states God’s commandment to Moses to make two cherubim of gold for the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. In Exodus 25: 18 a notation in the study version of *The New American Bible*, translated from the Original Languages with Critical Use of All the ancient Sources (Wichita, Kansas: Fireside Bible Publishers, 1994-1995) states that these cherubim were probably in the form of human-headed winged lions. 1 Kings 6: 23-28 and 2 Chronicles 3: 10-13 describe the cherubim in the temple of Solomon.

¹⁸⁷ Regier, 12 notes a hematite seal found in Israel: Hans Henning Von der Osten, *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), item 331. Reik, 331 believes there is a religious significance in the Oedipus myth which relates to this imagery. The story of the Fall of Man in the Bible has an underlying sense of guilt associated with original sin, similar to the guilt of Oedipus. The cherubim in the biblical narrative resemble an Egyptian sphinx that guards a temple. The tree of life “plays the same subsidiary role as the sphinx in the Greek legend.” (The role of being a source of knowledge.)

¹⁸⁸ Reik, 292. Desiderio da Settignano’s Tomb of Carlo Marsuppini in Santa Croce, Florence (1460-61) depicts two sphinxes in the frieze on the base; Ida Cardellini, *Desiderio da Settignano* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità [Cremona], 1962), 40-54, 158-160.

queen, or divinities.¹⁸⁹ In this case, the sphinx (a combination of animal and man) not only signified the god, but also his human incarnation.¹⁹⁰ This similarity to the double-nature of Christ supports the use of the sphinx in reference to his Incarnation.¹⁹¹ Therefore the image of the sphinx used during the Renaissance follows the iconographic symbolism of the creature in ancient history. As a symbol of a deity, or knowledge and wisdom, the sphinx is appropriately depicted in connection with Christ, as Savior and the mystery of his human nature. The sculptures of harpies in Castagno's *Last Supper*, as derivatives of the sphinx, embody this interpretation, as well as serving as guardians to the tomb-like room where Christ recognizes his approaching death.

Medieval Practices

A medieval characteristic of Castagno's *Last Supper* is the use of the labels for the apostles.¹⁹² At the base of the platform which holds the dining table, the names of the apostles are inscribed to identify each figure, except for Christ and Judas. The names of Matthew and James (Major) are difficult to see, being the two figures on the short ends of the table, however it is clear that Castagno did include their inscriptions on the perpendicular planes of the step. The names are written in Latin, in capital letters, with ".S." placed in front of each name, to denote the title "saint," except that of Andrew (ANDREAS).¹⁹³ In the Middle Ages frescoes were often accompanied by instructive text, to either serve as narration for the scene or to offer the viewer

¹⁸⁹ Reik, 292. Facial similarities and inscriptions connected some sphinxes to kings and queens.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 305.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 309-10 explains how he believes the sphinx, as a winged creature, became associated with celestial deities, including Christ. The bird became a totemistic incarnation of the Savior in various belief systems. The sparrow and vulture-headed gods of Egyptians, doves of Aphrodite, raven of Wotan, cranes of the Ibykus, the vulture that ate Prometheus' liver and the birds that people of antiquity regarded as oracles (the vulture that appears to Abraham when he offers his sacrifice, the doves sent by Noah, the dove present at the Annunciation to Mary) were all originally gods that became auxiliaries of anthropomorphic deities.

¹⁹² Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur*, 262 identifies three types of writing that appear in Italian paintings of the Eucharistic meal at the end of the Middle Ages: titles, biblical citations, and the names of the dinner guests.

¹⁹³ The missing ".S." from Andrew's inscription may be from deterioration; it is impossible to know whether it was initially included by Castagno at the time the fresco was painted.

information.¹⁹⁴ However, the inclusion of words contradicts the medieval belief that the purpose of images was to instruct the viewer.¹⁹⁵ An explanation for this trend is the idea that text, such as labels and captions that identified figures that were recognizable and familiar, like the apostles in Castagno's fresco, served to reinforce something that was already known.¹⁹⁶ The labels Castagno uses can certainly be interpreted as serving this purpose, since the scene of the Last Supper is something the nuns at Sant'Apollonia would have known quite well. The didactic use of text within the image and the function this fresco performed for the nuns will be analyzed in the following section. The several elements that have been discussed in the description of Castagno's *Last Supper* comprise a variety of sources. The combination of classicizing and contemporary details gives Castagno's fresco a unique composition.

¹⁹⁴ As an example of this practice, see Joseph Polzer, "The Role of the Written Word in the Early Frescoes in the Campo Santo of Pisa," in *World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity*, ed. Irving Lavin. Acts of the XXVI International Congress of the History of Art (University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 361-366.

¹⁹⁵ This notion was popularized by Pope Gregory the Great in a sixth-century letter, stating that images were the books for the ignorant. Herbert L. Kessler, "Diction in the 'Bibles of the Illiterate'," in *World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity*, ed. Irving Lavin. Acts of the XXVI International Congress of the History of Art (University Park & London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 297-304 discusses this contradiction and formulates reasons for the appearance of text within medieval images.

¹⁹⁶ Kessler, 298, 302. Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, rhetoric, and the making of images, 400-1200* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 223 believes that the *tituli* in paintings, mosaics, sculpture and tapestries allows these objects to speak to the viewer.

CHAPTER V

THE PURPOSE OF CASTAGNO'S REFECTORY IMAGERY

In a monastery or convent, some of the buildings are known to represent a place for meditation.¹⁹⁷ The structure and decoration of these buildings, the church, cloister, and garden courtyards were created with this specific function; these spaces promoted visionary meditation through the use of images.¹⁹⁸ The paintings within a monastic setting interact, through their forms and colors, in a meditative dialogue with its viewers.¹⁹⁹ Castagno's frescoes of the *Last Supper* and *Passion* scenes served this same purpose for the nuns at Sant' Apollonia.

In addition to the chapter house, the refectory was an important communal room in a convent. This space was used for mandatory dining, special feasts, everyday contemplation, and even as the location for public punishment.²⁰⁰ Since the communal meal was thought of as a re-enactment of the Last Supper, the refectory was a symbolic space. During meals and prayer time, nuns would read and listen to biblical, theological and moralistic literature; this group experience enhanced the convent's shared textual knowledge.²⁰¹ Combining images with this

¹⁹⁷ Dominique Rigaux, "Women, Faith, and Image in the Late Middle Ages," in *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999), 77 states that the several locations, such as a private cell or the refectory were places of reflection and meditation, as suggested by the Mendicants, in the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.

¹⁹⁸ Carruthers, 224, 276.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 223 defines these types of paintings as *ekphrases*, medieval organizations of images which one moves, by mentally following the images.

²⁰⁰ Lowe, *Nuns Chronicles and Convent Culture*, 135-137 explains the uses of the refectory. Feasts occurred on special occasions, such as saints' days and meals with invited outsiders. *Pietanze* were meals that were donated by patrons and seen as a welcome change from the daily menus. The chapter house and/or refectory served as the place of punishment, where wrongdoers were sometimes beaten, or as a lesser punishment, served only bread and water or made to eat on the floor. Rigaux, "Women, Faith, and Image," 79 describes the refectory as a "'living,' geometrical space used to instruct the nuns."

²⁰¹ Cathleen A. Fleck, "'To exercise yourself in these things by continued contemplation': Visual and textual literacy in the frescoes at Santa Maria Donna Regina," in *The Church of Santa Maria Donna Regina: Art,*

textual knowledge was an aid towards meditation. An example of painted frescoes that encouraged this type of devotion is seen at Santa Maria Donna Regina in Naples. The choir in this fourteenth-century church of Clarissan nuns depicts scenes of the *Last Judgment*, the *Passion*, the *Lives* of female saints, and *Angelic choirs*. Cathleen A. Fleck believes that these frescoes, with labels, *tituli* below the narratives, and text on scrolls and books held by various figures, imply a previous knowledge of the themes; the nuns could recognize the concepts illustrated and described in the written word, and this would enhance their understanding of prayer and contemplation.²⁰²

An example of the type of literature that was commonly used in a conventual setting is the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.²⁰³ This text served as a religious handbook of contemplation, directing the reader in the study of Christian iconography related to the events in Christ's life. The beginning of the *Meditations* emphasizes the importance of interactive devotion that was practiced in convents and monasteries; the author states, "...if you wish to profit you must be present at the same things that it is related that Christ did and said, joyfully and rightfully, leaving behind all other cares and anxieties."²⁰⁴ This instruction for the viewer to "be present" at the scene which they are contemplating, leads them to identify with the participants in the scene.²⁰⁵ This notion of imitation is inherent to monastic life. The religious members aspire to lead a life in imitation of Christ, *Imitatio Christi*.

Iconography and Patronage in Fourteenth-Century Naples, ed. Janis Elliott and Cordelia Warr (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 117.

²⁰² Fleck, 109, 112. Carruthers, 221-224 supports Fleck's claim that these types of images were not "bibles for the illiterate," but were used to improve knowledge already obtained. This is also discussed by Kessler; as mentioned in n. 195.

²⁰³ See n. 75. The author addresses the text to a nun, most likely a Poor Clare; although it is written by a member of the Franciscan order, the *Meditations* was popular throughout Italy.

²⁰⁴ Isa Ragusa, trans. *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 5.

²⁰⁵ Fleck, 118.

In relation to the image of the Last Supper in refectories, the actions of the monks or nuns is seen as echoing of the actions of Christ and the apostles.²⁰⁶ By participating in their own meal and as members of a large collective, the monks or nuns present in a refectory seem to be guided more towards the idea of *Imitatio Apostolorum*.²⁰⁷ A monastic community would certainly aim to follow in the footsteps of the first community of the disciples of Christ, the apostles. Eckart Marchand considers this suggestion to be a theme within Castagno's frescoes at Sant' Apollonia.²⁰⁸ In his discussion of Castagno's image, Marchand notes that, like other images of the Last Supper, the elements of the Eucharist are included, yet he considers the apostles to be the true subject of the scene.²⁰⁹ By only showing the bread and wine, not the wafer and chalice, which is seen in later images of the Last Supper, Castagno focuses his image on the narrative aspect of the Last Supper theme, rather than the sacrificial, or liturgical connotations. This narrative formula is essentially known as when the traitor is announced.²¹⁰ This is the instant that Castagno chooses to represent. However, instead of a moment of action, such as the chaotic responses seen in Leonardo's later fresco, or the narrative sequences seen in Ghirlandaio's *cenacoli*, Castagno's *Last Supper* depicts a solemn scene that combines the complexity of human drama and the sacredness of the event.²¹¹ Due to various later representations of the Last Supper, today, we are accustomed to seeing scenes of havoc and strong emotions. Spencer believes this is the reason why Castagno's fresco is seen as isolated

²⁰⁶ Gilbert, 385 and see n. 35 above.

²⁰⁷ Wilkins, 406 uses this term and suggests that in the context of the Last Supper, the notion of *Imitatio Christi* can be expanded to the monks' desire to imitate the apostles. In this case, I believe that *Imitatio Apostolorum* can also be applied to the nuns, or any other member of a religious order.

²⁰⁸ Eckart Marchand, "Monastic *Imitatio Christi*: Andrea del Castagno's *Cenacolo di S. Apollonia*," *Artibus et historiae* 24, 47 (2003), 31-50. Hayum, "A Renaissance Audience Considered" also discusses this theme in relation to a more gender-specific study. She notes the role of women as food preparers and providers as explanation for the appearance of Last Suppers in convents, and considers the apostles to have been moral exemplars for the nuns.

²⁰⁹ Marchand, 34.

²¹⁰ Rigaux, *Banquet*, 75.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, Spencer, 111 states that Castagno seemed uninterested in the drama seen in Leonardo's and the narratives of Ghirlandaio, he also believes that Castagno's depiction of human emotion derives from the early Renaissance interest in man.

and is considered to be so different.²¹² Although they do not appear to be very expressive when compared to later representations, such as Leonardo's *Last Supper*, Castagno's apostles do portray more intense emotions than previous images of the event. Castagno's characterization of the apostles, as individual and identifiable figures is a key to understanding the purpose this fresco had for the nuns at Sant'Apollonia. By labeling the apostles with inscriptions and using recognizable characteristics, Castagno created distinctive exemplars for the nuns to identify with.

Images of the Apostles

To some extent the arrangement of the apostles at the Last Supper is designated by the description in the Gospel of John. In refectory representations, Jesus is normally shown in the center of the group, having an even amount of figures (six) on each side of him. We know that John, the favored apostle, would be seated next to him in order to be "reclining at Jesus' side."²¹³ Judas is not necessarily mentioned as sitting near Jesus in the Gospel, but he is usually shown this way in refectory paintings, so that he is either shown with his hand in the dish or receiving the sop from Christ, as in Castagno's fresco. Contrary to traditional depictions, Judas is shown on Christ's right-hand side, rather than his left, in Castagno's *Last Supper*.²¹⁴ According to John, Peter is also near Jesus and the beloved one because he persuades John to ask Jesus "Who is it?"²¹⁵ Beyond these conventions, the placement of the apostles is the choice of the artist.

An original aspect in Castagno's arrangement is the shift from the visual center. The main figure of the scene, Christ, is moved to the left of center, making the sleeping figure of

²¹² Spencer, 111.

²¹³ John 13: 23.

²¹⁴ Cristina Acidini Luchinat, "Note sulla psicologia dei commensali nei *Cenacoli* fiorentini prima e dopo Leonardo," in *Il Genio e le passioni - Leonardo e il Cenacolo: precedenti, innovazioni, riflessi di un capolavoro*, a cura di Pietro C. Marani (Milano: Skira editore, 2001), 48. Hayum, 255 also notes this change and questions the moral contrast between Judas being placed on the viewer's left (and Christ's), and the heraldic placement of the *Resurrection* in the scenes above, also on the left (being related to the right-hand side of Christ, and the blessed, in scenes of the Last Judgment).

²¹⁵ John 13: 25.

John the central figure (see Fig. 21). This shift causes the left side of the table to be more crowded, with five apostles, Judas and Christ, whereas the right side of John only has five other apostles. The designation of John as the visual center supports Marchand's notion that Castagno reduced the narrative by moving Christ and any action away from the center; therefore, he placed the focus on the apostles, and specifically, John, Christ's most beloved member of his followers.²¹⁶ John's close relationship with Christ was something the nuns would hope to attain.

The features Castagno gives his apostles are based on traditional descriptions that the Renaissance viewer would know from Biblical, oral and legendary accounts. *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine was a well-known thirteenth-century collection of the lives of the saints. This text was a source for many works of art throughout the Renaissance that depicted events from saints' lives or other stories that were not included in the Bible.²¹⁷ The Last Supper is not mentioned in *The Golden Legend*, but the characteristics of the apostles depicted by Castagno are reflective of what is described in their individual stories.

The two figures of Matthew (.S.MATHEVS) and Philip (S.PHILIPPVS) are at the left end of the table (see Fig. 30).²¹⁸ Their gestures indicate some type of debate. With his hands lifted up, and facing outwards, Philip looks at Matthew, who places his left hand on the table and his right hand towards his chest.²¹⁹ It is appropriate for these two figures to be involved in a

²¹⁶ Marchand, 34. This is another topic in Hayum, 255-256. She suggests the nuns would relate to John, being a virgin youth, who reflected the sanctity of the Virgin Mary, and goes on to discuss how she believes the decorative elements (sphinx-like guardian figures and flowered tapestry) indicate Mary's presence through visual association.

²¹⁷ Fleck, 111 claims that along with the *Meditations*, the frescoes at Santa Maria Donna Regina were derived from the *Golden Legend*. An example of events that are in the *Golden Legend*, but not mentioned in the Bible is the Life of the Virgin, such as the Nativity of the Virgin and the Dormition of the Virgin. Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*, 75 states that the Italian version of *The Golden Legend* was not available until 1475; Castagno may not have used this as a direct source, yet the traits of the apostles would have been familiar through this text's previous translations and other written and oral sources.

²¹⁸ The title in parenthesis is the Latin name inscribed on the step beneath each apostle.

²¹⁹ Marchand, 35, n. 27 explains that Philip's hands, with the index finger straight and the others are slightly bent, is a gesture of speech and that Matthew's is considered a gesture of negation or remonstrance. Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 75 also notes that Philip appears to be doubtful or questioning of Matthew's view. Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant*

discussion; Matthew, as one of the evangelists, was known as a “giver of counsel by his salutary preaching...” and Philip was considered a “lover of higher things because of his illuminating preaching and divine contemplation.”²²⁰ The theme of contemplation continues in the next figure, Thomas (.S.TIOMAS). Known for his doubtfulness, Thomas is depicted propping his left arm up to hold his chin. He looks upward and appears withdrawn, away from everyone else in the room. As the man who did not believe until he saw, Thomas struggles with the incident at hand, just as he would later question Christ’s resurrection.²²¹ His gaze brings the viewer to the scenes of the Passion above, which represent the answers he needs. Thomas separated himself from the apostles in his disbelief of the resurrection, and he is visually distinguished in Castagno’s fresco.²²² Thomas’ halo is painted differently than the others; the round transparent disk is covered with tiny golden dots (Fig. 31).²²³ Castagno may have depicted it this way to set Thomas apart or it is simply because Thomas’ head is tilted up at an angle that is not seen in any of the other apostles. The attitudes of the three figures of Matthew, Philip and Thomas are all associated with faith. For the nuns at Sant’ Apollonia, debating, asserting one’s beliefs, questioning and thinking would be parts of establishing one’s faith and the journey to become closer to God.

The image of James (.S.JACOBVS), seated to the right of Thomas is at odds with the overall narrative presentation of Castagno’s *Last Supper*. James closes his eyes and raises a glass of wine, an act resembling participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist (Fig. 32). His

Last Supper, 85 believes the interlocking gestures of Matthew and Philip are an invention of Castagno, since the figures of Simon and Thaddeus in Leonardo’s *Last Supper* mimic the same movements.

²²⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*. Translated and adapted from the Latin by Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger (New York: Arno Press, 1969 [c. 1941]), 561, 260.

²²¹ John 20, 24-29 describes Thomas’ doubt of Christ’s resurrection, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

²²² Voragine, 39 says that Thomas was called “dividing” or “separating” because he set himself apart in this way.

²²³ Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 88 makes this observation and notes that in fourteenth-century Florence, great attention was placed on sainthood, and that halos were often used to signify saints that were canonized.

peaceful reflection shows a profound understanding of the symbolic wine and illustrates the proper respect one should have when re-enacting the Lord's Supper. There are some conflicting views as to whether this figure represents James Major (the Great) or James Minor (the Less). The other James is the farthest apostle on the right, at the end of the table. They are named in this manner because James Major was called first to Christ, then James Minor, although he was older than James Major.²²⁴ Therefore this age difference has led Dominique Rigaux to name the apostle next to Thomas, James Major, since the James on the opposite side appears older.²²⁵ Rigaux notes that this figure has a beautiful face surrounded by auburn hair and curled beard which resembles that of Christ's. This likeness is apparent; but it is James Minor that is historically thought to look like Christ, which is why Marchand believes that the figure next to Thomas is James Minor.²²⁶ It may have been understood that this apostle was James Major because he is known to have been closer to Christ than James Minor; that would provide a reason for him to be physically closer to him at the table.²²⁷ However, the representation of the figure, illustrating the Eucharistic sacrament, fits well with James Minor's history. James Minor was the first Christian bishop; Peter would succeed him as head of the Church. It is possible that James Minor and Peter are seated together since they are the future bishops of Jerusalem and Rome.²²⁸

²²⁴ Voragine, 262; Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*, 75.

²²⁵ Rigaux, 82.

²²⁶ Marchand, 38. St. Paul states in Galatians 1: 19, "But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord." Voragine, 262 calls James Minor the brother of the Lord, acknowledging that they had the same features, and James Minor was once mistaken for Jesus, supposedly the reason why Judas had to identify Christ by kissing him when he was arrested.

²²⁷ Voragine, 368-369 claims James Major was closer to Christ since he was called first, and that he was a witness to several of Christ's miracles, such as the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the Transfiguration. James Major was also the first apostle to be put to death, therefore receiving the grace of the apostolate earlier because he was the first to enter the glory of eternity. James Major was also the son of Zebedee, brother of John, which Steinberg, 78 states is why they are on either side of Christ in Leonardo's *Last Supper*.

²²⁸ Steinberg, 100, n. 41 notes that according to Eusebius, *History of the Church*, I, 1: "This James, whom the early Christians surnamed the Righteous..., was the first, as the records tell us, to be elected to the episcopal throne of the Jerusalem church. Clement [of Alexandria] in his [lost] *Hypotyposes*, book VI, puts it thus: 'Peter, James, and

The three apostles who surround Christ, Peter (.S.PETRVS), Judas and John (.S.JOHANNES) are all major characters in the events of the Passion (see Fig. 18). Christ is seated among his friends and enemy. The two most obedient and loved apostles are seated on either side of Christ, while his betrayer sits across from him, yet Peter, too, will betray Christ when he denies him three times after Christ's arrest.²²⁹ These men would serve as a reminder of moral conduct for the nuns; their bodily representations of good opposed with evil emphasizes the rewards and consequences one would receive for either following or straying from Christ.

Peter and John are also known to have been close companions throughout Christ's mission. On either side of Christ, they represent the opposing ideas of active and contemplative life, which they displayed during their lives.²³⁰ Peter is depicted as he is iconographically known in the West, with gray hair in the form of a tonsure and a short thick beard.²³¹ He is attentive and aware of the situation at hand, looking directly at Christ. Peter is the apostle who asks Christ about the betrayer, so he is the one who first learns that it is Judas. The reaction to this knowledge is shown in his anguished face, with knitted brow and intense gaze. Peter's gesture has been interpreted in various ways, most noting the odd position and questioning its purpose. Rigaux believes that Castagno replaced Peter's right hand with a left hand, making an ambiguous

John, after the Ascension of the Savior, did not claim pre-eminence because the Savior had specially honored them, but chose James the Righteous as Bishop of Jerusalem.” Steinberg uses this information to explain the relationship between Peter and James Minor in Leonardo's *Last Supper*. He claims that in Leonardo's fresco James Minor's gesture, reaching toward Peter mimics Peter's own gesture, reaching past John; therefore their similarities connect them.

²²⁹ Voragine, 330-331 describes Peter as he who obeys, or who mourns, because he answered Christ's first call, and he cried when he denied Christ. Peter was also chosen to be at the raising of the daughter of Jairus and the Transfiguration, he was the apostle asked to find the coin in the fish's mouth, and he received the keys from the Lord to the kingdom of heaven. Voragine, 58 states the extraordinary love God had for John, more than the other apostles, and that the Lord gave more of his intimate confidences to John, while he gave more external benefits to Peter.

²³⁰ Ragusa, 312 acknowledges the well-known characteristics of the two apostles by stating, “Peter symbolizes the active and John the contemplative, as Augustine himself says in the homily on the Gospel that is read for the feast of St. John.”

²³¹ Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 70.

gesture alluding to Peter's denial.²³² However, Marchand claims that rather than depicting Peter's right arm attached to a left hand, Castagno has placed Peter's right hand on the wrist of his left arm, and it is Peter's left palm which the viewer sees emerging from behind Judas. This pose seems to be a more realistic possibility than the mistake Rigaux assumes Castagno has made. Marchand states that Peter's gesture was common in Renaissance art; it is one of protection, in this case, towards the bread and wine to his right, which is fitting for his future position of the first bishop of Rome, and role as leader of the Church.²³³ Hartt agrees with the placement of Peter's hands, but his interpretation of the gesture is as a sign of fraud.²³⁴

With his back to Peter, Judas is seated in profile on the opposite side of the table. A figurative representation turning away from the Church, this image of evil action also contrasts with the contemplative figure of John. Judas, holding the sop in his right hand, looks down at John, in a sense of desperation.²³⁵ The stillness of his action calls attention to the resignation in his face, acknowledging his traitorous deed. The evil appearance of Judas was standard in Christian art, especially in images of the Last Supper.²³⁶ The contrast of Judas' dark skin and hair with that of John's fair youthfulness enhances the difference between good and evil, giving the nuns a clear image of the path to follow.²³⁷ The opposition between Judas and John and the direction of Judas' gaze upon John brings further attention to the central placement of the beloved apostle.

²³² Ibid., 78.

²³³ Marchand, 38, n. 45 explains Peter's gesture and that it was often shown as made by the left hand, as seen in Castagno's design for the figure of John at the *Death of the Virgin* in the Mascoli Chapel. François Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Age: Signification et symbolique*, 2^e édition (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1982), 174 explains that an open hand, with the palm turned toward the outside marks a person's receptiveness, acceptance, or adherence to something; with one exception being where the figure's arm is shown in tension, repulsing or rejecting a person, object or idea.

²³⁴ Hartt, "Andrea del Castagno," 222.

²³⁵ Ibid., Hartt contends that as Judas takes the sop, identifying himself as the traitor, he "seals his own fate."

²³⁶ See Chapter III, page 34 for the description of Castagno's Judas.

²³⁷ Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 96 discusses the opposition between Judas and John, including the angularity of Judas' features with the curves of John's and the closed eyes of John with Judas' glaring look.

The reclining figure of John is often said to be “sleeping;” however, this is not a literal description, and is generally considered to represent the idea of contemplation.²³⁸ In this act, John serves as a model for the nuns at Sant’ Apollonia. Christ himself looks down at John, while displaying a gesture of blessing.²³⁹ With the Lord looking upon John, the psychological attention of the painting is directed towards this exemplary figure. John’s meditation is realized in the scenes above; the *Crucifixion*, *Entombment* and *Resurrection* illustrate the mystery of Christ’s Passion and sacrifice.²⁴⁰

Seated next to John, Andrew (ANDREAS) is shown with a long gray beard, looking at Bartholomew (.S.BARTHOLOMEVS), on his left (Fig. 33). Being the first called by Christ, Andrew is commonly shown as the oldest apostle. He was the brother of Peter; therefore the two eldest and first-called are seated on either side of Christ.²⁴¹ Andrew holds a knife in his right hand and a loaf of bread in his left. Whereas the knife is usually shown with Bartholomew, due to the belief that he was flayed at his martyrdom, Rigaux believes it serves as an object which unifies the bread in his hand with the carafe of wine to his right.²⁴² Bartholomew, the only apostle with his hands together, returns Andrew’s glance in a sense of acknowledgement and agreement. Bartholomew’s folded hands resemble an act of prayer, a noted characteristic, stated

²³⁸ Rigaux, *A la table du Seigneur*, 49.

²³⁹ Hartt, *The Earliest Works, Part II*, 228 notes Castagno’s face of Christ, here, originated in his Jeremiah at San Tarasio, and is later used for the Christ in *The Death of the Virgin* at the Mascoli Chapel. Spencer, 110 describes Christ’s gesture as unusual; he believes Christ’s index and middle fingers are crossed, indicating a connection to the joining of two members of the Trinity within Christ.

²⁴⁰ Hayum, 259 explains that the upper scenes are visually connected to John through the vertical strip of marble framing separating the second and third panels of marble, which then leads upward to the vertical post of the cross in the *Crucifixion*.

²⁴¹ Steinberg, 76-77 also recognizes these relationships. Voragine, 7 recounts the moments Andrew was called by Christ: first he was called to *know* him, then called to *friendship*, called to be a *disciple*, and then as an *Apostle*.

²⁴² Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 75; 101 also notes that Andrew was eager to be martyred so that he could die in imitation of Christ and relates the knife as an allusion to his death. Voragine, 483 explains the various stories of Bartholomew’s death. St. Dorotheus said he was crucified, head down; St. Theodore said he was flayed; while other sources say that he was beheaded; some contradictions are made to agree by stating that he was first crucified, then flayed alive, and finally beheaded.

by Voragine in *The Golden Legend*.²⁴³ Andrew's look of understanding can also be associated with Voragine's description of the apostle. Bartholomew hoped to convey that from "one point of view, all things may be affirmed by God, and from another, all may be rightly denied."²⁴⁴

The figures of Andrew and Bartholomew hold a silent conversation; yet their characteristics of age and intense faith exemplify their dedication to Christ, admirable traits among members of a religious community.

The image of Thaddeus (.S.THADEVVS, he is also known as Jude) differs from his older companions. His similar placement to Thomas at the opposite end of the table connects the two young, beardless apostles. Thaddeus glances downward and raises both hands, hovering just over the table. His gaze denotes inward reflection, like that of James Minor and John, but his startled gesture indicates a reaction of surprise.²⁴⁵ Yet, the look of internal contemplation he shares with Thomas may refer to the special knowledge they received soon after Judas left and Christ gave his sermon.²⁴⁶

Simon (.S.SIMON), who is seated next to Thaddeus, also displays a posture of thought, with his head resting in one hand.²⁴⁷ Clutching his cloak, Simon's appearance evokes sadness;

²⁴³ Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 82 also recognizes the prayerful gesture; Voragine, 479 states that it was known that Bartholomew prayed on bended knees a hundred times by day and as many by night. Steinberg, "Appendix F," in *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*, 284 discusses this gesture – the twisting of fingers holding the hands together, yet the palms are open – in relation to a document written by Leonardo (now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London). The document is believed to be an early study of postures and gestures for his *Last Supper*, and his only extant writing on the subject. Steinberg states that the list seems to be based on observations and refers to images Leonardo previously saw.

²⁴⁴ Voragine, 479; also states that Dionysius in his *Magical Theology* explained: "The godly Bartholomew says that the science of God is much, and yet very little, and the Gospel is broad and large, and yet brief."

²⁴⁵ Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 75 sees Thaddeus as perplexed, and opens his hands with the announcement of the traitor, possibly feeling danger of the accusation (She sees Thaddeus' "putting the hands forward" as relating to the Italian translation of the account).

²⁴⁶ Marchand, 35 and 39 explain Thomas and Thaddeus' connection. In the Last Supper Discourses (John 14) Thomas, Philip and Thaddeus all question Jesus.

²⁴⁷ Steinberg, 79 and Voragine, 634 state that Simon and Thaddeus are brothers, a possible explanation for their arrangement next to one another. Along with Steinberg, Marchand, 38 notes that they preached together and were martyred together, so they share the same feast day, October 28. Garnier, 181 describes the posture of a figure with his hand supporting his head as suggesting anxiety, sadness, reflection, suffering, or pain (either physical or moral). Rigaux, 75 also recognizes Simon's state of sadness.

his head tilts down and toward the supporting hand, while his dark eyes gaze out onto nothing. As the “one who obeys or one who bears sadness,” Simon’s reaction of compassion shows his concern, possibly for Jesus, in the situation at hand, and for the future of the apostles and their faith.²⁴⁸ The last apostle, at the right end of the table, is James (.S.JACOBVS). Again, this figure is debated to be either James Minor or James Major. As I argued above, with the first James looking more like Christ, therefore making him James Minor, the final figure would be James Major.²⁴⁹ The figure of James Minor, with his blank stare and questioning gesture, repeats the theme of doubt and contemplation. With these images of the apostles, the nuns at Sant’ Apollonia would be able to identify with the individual figures; the nuns’ questions of faith and rigorous practice of meditation place them within the same realm as Christ’s first followers.

The visual tools Castagno uses throughout his frescoes at Sant’ Apollonia strengthen the meditative function of the images.²⁵⁰ The gestures of the apostles, their labels, and even the marble panels instruct the viewer in their state of meditation. The gestures are more than identifying factors for the apostles, they tell the viewer what to think and do. The conversations of Matthew, Philip, Andrew, and Bartholomew, the contemplation of Thomas, James Minor, John, Thaddeus, and Simon, and the questioning of Peter and James Major illustrate the actions which the nuns at Sant’ Apollonia, or any viewer, should take part in to further their understanding of the Christian faith. The apostles’ inscriptions tell the viewer who each figure

²⁴⁸ Voragine, 639 describes Simon as one who obeys and bears sadness.

²⁴⁹ Marchand, 38 agrees with the designation of this figure as James Major. He believes the apostle’s gesture may be saying “Surely it is not I?” as mentioned in Matthew 26: 22 and Mark 14: 19.

²⁵⁰ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1988 [1972]), 40-41 explains that most fifteenth-century pictures were religious images that were created for institutional ends, to help with the intellectual and spiritual activities of their followers. He quotes from the late thirteenth-century *Catholicon* by John of Genoa (a standard dictionary at the time), stating the purposes of these religious images: to instruct simple people, as mentioned in n. 195 above, to excite feelings of devotion, and, most appropriate for Castagno’s imagery, to illustrate the mystery of the incarnation and the examples of the Saints so that they may be remembered.

is; it is not an interpretation. It is clear that the identity of each figure was intended to be known; therefore, the viewer can recognize the individuals whom they aim to imitate.²⁵¹

As previously discussed, the marble panels in Castagno's *Last Supper* are a decorative element that recalls the historical use of revetments, as well as the contemporary depiction of these stones in other Renaissance paintings and sculpture. The marble panels along the back wall of the *Last Supper* are repeated in the tombs of the *Resurrection* and *Entombment* in the upper scenes.²⁵² The six panels correspond, in number, to the six angels surrounding the *Crucifixion*; this connection unites the two registers of the fresco, creating a comprehensive image that displays the meaning of Christ's final meal.

Castagno's marble panels may be interpreted as another method the artist used to enforce the meditative purpose of the fresco. Georges Didi-Huberman sees painted fictive marble as "figurations" of the mystery of Christ's Incarnation, and that they were intended for daily devotion and theological reflection.²⁵³ Noting this association, Didi-Huberman explains the abundant use of fictive marble throughout religious images at this time, such as scenes of the Annunciation.²⁵⁴ A useful comparison can be made between the stones depicted in Castagno's *Last Supper* and the four panels of red and green fictive marble beneath Fra Angelico's *Madonna*

²⁵¹ In Baxandall's explanation of the reasons for images, he notes that a painter should tell the story in a clear, memorable way for viewer, so that the pictures can be accessible stimuli for meditation on the Bible and the lives of the Saints.

²⁵² Didi-Huberman, 85 also discusses the appearance of the colored marbles in both the upper and lower registers of Castagno's frescoes. He believes the panels function in relation to one another, representing the multiple "times of the narrative" depicting Christ's future death and resurrection.

²⁵³ Didi-Huberman, 1-7 uses this term in his examination of "nonfigurative" works of the Quattrocento, specifically Fra Angelico's imitation of marble; he describes them as "zones of multicolored blotches." To describe these works, Didi-Huberman used the Latin and medieval definition of *figurae*: pictorial signs that are understood in theological terms, that were made "to represent mystery in bodies beyond bodies, ...the supernatural in the visible and familiar aspect of things." In support of his argument, the author cites texts by Pseudo-Dionysius, John Scotus Erigena and Albertus Magnus, all of which were read during the early Renaissance when the dogma of the Incarnation was studied and evaluated.

²⁵⁴ See Chapter IV, 42-44, n. 146.

of the Shadows in the eastern corridor of San Marco (see Fig. 24).²⁵⁵ The vertical rectangles are framed by white fictive molding and are shown on a purplish-red background, probably imitating porphyry.²⁵⁶ Due to their placement the panels act like the base of an altar or resemble the succession of marble panels seen in tombs, a comparison also relevant for Castagno's fresco.²⁵⁷ The location of Fra Angelico's fresco underscores its function as a locus for meditation by the monks.²⁵⁸ The purpose of this extraordinary fresco is, like Castagno's image, to instruct the viewer, allowing them to focus on the event illustrated and to contemplate the meaning of Christ's life. Wohl calls attention to Didi-Huberman's failure to differentiate between the images of real and invented marble. He refers to the specific marbles that are represented in Castagno's fresco as an example of painted marbles that were intended to appear real.²⁵⁹ The difference between Castagno and Fra Angelico's frescoes of painted marbles is their depiction. Fra Angelico's loose brushstrokes simply suggest an idea; the panels show a representation of marble and therefore, evoke the implied meanings associated with the stone. In comparison, Castagno's rendering of the marbles is more precise; he attempts to recreate the detailed surfaces of distinct stones. This shows the artist's desire to portray an architectural setting that is nearly true-to life.

The space is realistic not only in its presentation, but also in the fact that it resembles the interiors of sacred buildings and residences of the Italian Renaissance. The decoration of

²⁵⁵ This fresco depicts a *sacra conversazione*, with the Madonna and Child surrounded by eight saints: Dominic, Cosmas, Damian, Mark, John the Evangelist, Thomas Aquinas, Lawrence and Peter Martyr. The subtitle, *Madonna of the Shadows* derives from the shadows that are cast on the right wall by the pilasters, evoking the architecture of San Marco; Didi-Huberman, 28-34 and 55-57 analyzes the fictive panels in Fra Angelico's fresco.

²⁵⁶ Hood, 255.

²⁵⁷ See Chapter IV, 37-41. Didi-Huberman, 82-85 notes the connection of Castagno and Fra Angelico's marble panels and their relation to tombs. He also considers Pietro Lorenzetti's *Entombment* in the lower basilica of San Francesco, and the fresco of fictive marble beneath it as a precedent to Fra Angelico's image.

²⁵⁸ Hood, 255 believes that this image served as a type of altar of the Virgin, where the monks said their daily matins, as proscribed by the Dominican rule.

²⁵⁹ Wohl, 178.

churches with marble revetments at this time was a direct link to antiquity and was praised by Alberti.²⁶⁰ In the seventh book of his treatise on architecture, “Ornament to Sacred Buildings,” Alberti states “that in public buildings as in sacred places, on condition of not departing from severity, it is right to maintain that the roof, walls, and the pavement of the temple should be executed artistically and elegantly, above all, insofar as possible, durably. Consequently the most appropriate kind of internal revetment for an enclosed space will be of marble or of glass, either in slabs or inlaid.”²⁶¹ The purpose of Alberti’s treatise (dated approximately 1452) was to describe how buildings should be made at the current time, and in the future; therefore, Castagno’s representation of the marble revetments in his *Last Supper* was not only a reference to the ancient past, but also a recognition of contemporary practices that were employed, discussed, and written about in the fifteenth century.²⁶² In the same way he used contemporary Florentine interior decorations, Castagno adorned his room with marble panels to indicate that the area was a sacred space, because these elements were familiar to the viewer. The adaptation of the current artistic and architectural interests within his work shows that Castagno, like Alberti, was on the cutting-edge of contemporary artistic practice.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.; also see Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Book VII, Chapter 10) in *L’architettura*, ed. P. Portoghesi, trans. G. Orlandi, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Milan, 1966), 544.

²⁶¹ Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (Book VII, Chapter 10), 544; as translated by Wohl, 178.

²⁶² Alberti’s treatise is different from the book he based his treatise on, Vitruvius’ *De architectura*, because Vitruvius explained how buildings were made in the past; Joseph Rykwert, “Introduction,” in *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavenor (Cambridge, MA; London, England: The MIT Press, 1988), ix – x.

CHAPTER VI

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTAGNO'S *LAST SUPPER*

Andrea del Castagno's work reveals the progression from late Gothic to early Renaissance style. The developments witnessed during this time can be traced throughout his work, and particularly at Sant'Apollonia. Castagno's use of both traditional and contemporary features in the *Last Supper* make this fresco stand out amid the numerous refectory images. Beyond the composition and decorative elements already discussed, this melding of old and new is even seen in the methods Castagno used to create the frescoes. His use of a red ochre underdrawing, *sinopia*, was the traditional system of fourteenth-century workshops.²⁶³ The *sinopie* are significant because they show Castagno's drawing skills, and they are evidence of the changes in techniques that can be associated with the stylistic developments during the middle of the fifteenth century.²⁶⁴ The recent restoration of the frescoes in 1999 showed that Castagno also used the "modern" techniques of cartoons (*cartoni*) and pouncing (*spolvero*).²⁶⁵ Castagno's

²⁶³ Pisani, *Il Cenacolo di Santa Apollonia*, 11. The *sinopie* of the upper scenes were discovered during the 1953 restoration by Leonetto Tintori. The frescoes of the upper scenes were detached for preservation, and in 1961 the recovered *sinopie* were also detached and displayed in the refectory/museum.

²⁶⁴ Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 98 believed that "Andrea, following the art of painting and devoting himself heart and soul to its studies, displayed very great intelligence in the difficulties of that art, above all in draughtmanship." Meiss, 151 notes the historical significance of the *sinopie*.

²⁶⁵ Pisani, *Il Cenacolo di Santa Apollonia*, 38. Cartoons were full-scale preparatory drawings on paper, usually used to transfer a design onto the working surface. Pouncing is a process for transferring a drawing or design (the cartoon) onto a wall (or any other surface, such as paper or canvas). The lines of a cartoon are pricked by a needle or stylus and powdered charcoal (*carbon*), wrapped in a cloth sack, is tapped or smeared through the perforations, resulting in a dotted underdrawing. The Italian term for this technique, *spolvero*, is also used to indicate the powder (*spolvero*), the pouncing marks (*spolvero* marks), and the pricked cartoons (*spolveri* or *spolvero* cartoons). My explanation of these terms comes from Ralph Mayer, *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Art Terms & Techniques*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperPerennial, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1969, 1991) and Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

For an overview and technical study of the restoration of the frescoes, see Rosanna Caterina Proto Pisani, ed. *Luce e disegno negli affreschi di Andrea del Castagno* (Livorno: Sillabe, 2000).

underdrawings exhibit the sketch-like quality found in most *sinopie*, but in some places they also show a higher quality of finish (Fig. 34).²⁶⁶ Horster suggested that the more detailed drawings were to guide an assistant, but Borsook noted that Castagno may have intended the *sinopie* to serve as a more definite preparatory drawing, displaying the final composition.²⁶⁷ This desire for a highly finished work coincides with the process Castagno followed in making the frescoes. In some areas, instead of drawing the *sinopie* free-hand on the *arriccio* (the second layer of plaster in a fresco), Castagno used *spolvero* cartoons to transfer the design onto the *arriccio* to draw the *sinopia*, he then either reused the same cartoons or traced new ones from the *sinopia*, and then transferred the design to the *intonaco* (the final layer of plaster on which paint is applied).²⁶⁸ Working in this way, Castagno added an important step with his *sinopie*. These preliminary drawings were no longer an exploratory phase, but now had a synthetic role - to integrate the various phases of the design.²⁶⁹ Before the 1430s, *spolvero* cartoons had been used for repeating patterns for framing elements in frescoes, but Castagno was one of the first artists of the Quattrocento to use *spolveri* to paint figural compositions.²⁷⁰ Castagno combined traditional and

²⁶⁶ Borsook, 88.

²⁶⁷ Horster, 125; Borsook, 88.

²⁶⁸ The presence of *spolveri* has been found in the scene of the *Last Supper*, but the analysis of Castagno's methods has been surmised from the *sinopie* of the upper Passion scenes; Borsook, 89. Juergen and Anne Markham Schulz, "The Great Age of Fresco in New York," *Burlington Magazine* 111 (January 1969), 51-52 first noted the traces of charcoal in the *Resurrection sinopia*, in the angel and the right-hand soldier, and suggested that cartoons could have been traced from the *sinopia* to copy the perfected design. In their review of the exhibition, they state that the trees in the *Resurrection* are clearly sketched, in contrast to the definition and shading of the other forms. Meiss, 151 identified *spolveri* in the Christ and the left soldier, and comments on the varied drawing styles in the *sinopia* of the *Resurrection*, concluding that the continuous contour lines of the soldiers indicate Castagno's intent was not to invent the composition at this stage, but to record it.

Borsook, 90, n. 22 explains that this was a habitual practice employed by Castagno. The *sinopie* for other frescoes, such as *The Vision of St. Jerome* from SS. Annunziata, show evidence of charcoal beneath the *sinopia*. Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 208-216 also explains Castagno's *sinopie*.

²⁶⁹ Bambach, 209.

²⁷⁰ Bambach, 12 names Castagno, along with Paolo Uccello, Domenico Veneziano and Piero della Francesca as the artists during the 1430s – 1460s who pioneered this practice. Then, the use of *spolvero* with *calco* developed later in the 1460s and 1470s to make the transfer of cartoons quicker. Bambach explains that the continued practice of underdrawings became more and more refined. The cartoon fragments of highly rendered heads led to the "ben

innovative methods to create his work at Sant'Apollonia, and therefore established his position in the Quattrocento as an artist who continued to push the boundaries and moved closer to a realistic representation of life in his work.

Although Castagno's *Last Supper* has often been described as a mundane, staged scene presenting a simplistic wall of figures behind the elongated table, the setting's sense of realism is a key trait in this fresco. Castagno includes two windows on the right wall of the room and depicts light entering the space through them, but an even distribution of light fills the room (see Fig. 21).²⁷¹ This disparity is an example of the frequent opposition found in Castagno's fresco, caused by the juxtaposition of old and new elements. However, the two painted windows may add another level of naturalism by replicating the actual windows in the upper register of the wall.²⁷² Borsook also notes that the illumination of the figures from the right coincides with the actual source of light for the refectory – seven windows along the eastern wall.²⁷³ The attempt to recreate Sant'Apollonia's dining room would have furthered the personal association the nuns had with Castagno's frescoes.²⁷⁴

The realism of the setting is enhanced by Castagno's creation of life-like figures. Vasari noted the boldness of Castagno's figures, a feature that distinguishes his work and makes the figures more realistic.²⁷⁵ Nearly a century ago, Crowe and Cavasalle noted that Castagno's

finito cartone" and "substitute cartoons" which enabled the original cartoon from becoming damaged, hence the prevalence of cartoons from the 1460s onward, compared to earlier examples.

²⁷¹ Wohl, 82-83. Crowe and Cavasalle, 137 acknowledged Castagno's "admirable distribution of lighting" throughout his work.

²⁷² It is unknown whether the two windows were part of the wall when Castagno painted the frescoes, or whether they were added at a later date; see n. 86.

²⁷³ Borsook, 87.

²⁷⁴ Hayum, 255 also discusses the possibility of Castagno imitating the refectory; she mentions Judas' placement on the lower step of the platform, a reference to the actual floor of the refectory.

²⁷⁵ Vasari, *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 98: "He [Castagno] showed very great boldness in the movements of his figures and much vehemence in the heads both of men and of women, making them grave in aspect and excellent in draughtmanship." Rigaux, *Un banquet*, 70 considers Castagno's apostles to be types of people the artist would have known, such as artisans, countrymen, and butchers. This association with "everyday" people supports the idea that Castagno's figures are true to life.

style (in general, since they did not see the frescoes at Sant'Apollonia), owed much to the Florentine sculptors, and described his work as more “sculpturesque than picturesque.”²⁷⁶ This idea has been mentioned briefly in scholars' examinations of the *Last Supper*, yet it has not been thoroughly investigated. I intend to show that Castagno's combination of styles, which leads to a greater sense of realism, is the result of the transitional period in which he lived and that he was influenced by the changes that were occurring in early Renaissance sculpture.

Castagno's figures in the *Last Supper* are significantly different from the more rigid figures of his early work; the effect seems a mixture of late Gothic and early Renaissance styles.²⁷⁷ Christ and the apostles are often described as strong sculptural forms that resemble classical philosophers.²⁷⁸ The imagery of these figures stems from medieval representations of prophets and apostles, especially the evangelists, as the philosopher-type scribe, sitting at his desk transcribing the word of God.²⁷⁹ Castagno's use of a traditional iconographic figure, is updated by the artist's life-like rendering. Castagno creates his figures by modeling with light and changing colors. The shifting hues, or *cangianti*, of the apostles' garments was a method for modeling drapery introduced by Giotto in the Arena Chapel frescoes and used by many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century painters.²⁸⁰ Although this practice spanned many centuries, Castagno's

²⁷⁶ Crowe and Cavasalle, 137.

²⁷⁷ Hartt, “The Earliest Works,” 166 considers the poses of the figures in the *Crucifixion* for Santa Maria degli Angeli (1430s/1440-42) to be static and rigid, which is why he dates this fresco to before Castagno's work at San Zaccaria. From observing the figures in this fresco, Hartt believes that Castagno had not yet studied the work of early Quattrocento sculptors, such as Nanni di Banco, Donatello, and Ghiberti.

²⁷⁸ Luchinat and Pisani, 131: “gli apostoli sembrano filosofi del mondo antico...”

²⁷⁹ The iconographic and formal precedents for these figures are found in illuminated manuscripts, Byzantine mosaics and other church decorations which would have been familiar to artists of the Italian Renaissance. Castagno's depictions of the evangelists in the chapel of San Tarasio (see Fig. 1), illustrate a derivative of the ancient prophet/philosopher type of figure, since they are standing rather than seated.

²⁸⁰ Wohl, 80. The term, *cangianti*, was defined by C. Cennini, *Il Libro dell'arte*, trans. D. V. Thompson, Jr. (New Haven, 1933). Hartt, “The Earliest Works,” 166 describes this effect as *couleur changeant*. He associates it with sixteenth-century Mannerism, notes Castagno's frequent use, and recognizes that it was not unknown to Trecento artists, such as Giotto, particularly in the *Lamentation* at The Arena Chapel.

cangianti achieves a higher level of realism than earlier artists', due to the full, sculptural forms Castagno employs in his apostles.

In his discussion of Castagno's earlier works, Hartt relates the figures at the San Tarasio and Mascoli Chapels to the statues of Orsanmichele and the façade and campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore by Nanni di Banco, Donatello, and Ghiberti.²⁸¹ By comparing Castagno's earlier figures to the later figures of the *Last Supper* apostles, Hartt recognizes the richness of the forms in the apostles at Sant'Apollonia, but does not name specific sources for these figures.²⁸² I believe that due to his early commissions for the Cathedral, in which he was in competition with artists such as Donatello and Ghiberti, Castagno was well-aware of the innovations of these early Quattrocento sculptors and was strongly influenced by their work.

The thick folds and highlights on the cloaks and mantles worn by the apostles in Castagno's *Last Supper* recall the sculpted saints on the exteriors of Orsanmichele and Santa Maria del Fiore.²⁸³ The solidity of Castagno's apostles and their representation as individuals strongly resembles the work of Nanni di Banco and Donatello. Nanni's public sculptures for Orsanmichele and the Cathedral façade are often considered a link from the Gothic style of the Trecento to the renewed interest in Classicism during the Quattrocento.²⁸⁴ The *Quattro Santi Coronati* (1409-16/17) illustrate Nanni's use of Roman portraiture (Fig. 35).²⁸⁵ Nanni created

²⁸¹ Hartt, "The Earliest Works," 171 compares the San Tarasio figures with Ghiberti's *St. John the Baptist*, Donatello's *St. Louis of Toulouse* (the drapery folds), *Zuccone*, and works by Nanni di Banco. He describes the unstable poses of the San Tarasio figures as "Donatellesque." Hartt, "The Earliest Works: Part Two," 228 also describes the drapery of the Mascoli Chapel figures as imitating Donatello's sculpture and considers the *Death of the Virgin* figures to be approaching the maturity seen in the *Last Supper* apostles.

²⁸² Hartt, "The Earliest Works," 172.

²⁸³ Ibid., "Andrea del Castagno," 223.

²⁸⁴ Mary Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 1, 25 makes this assessment due to what she says art-historical literature has described as Nanni's divided style – the classicism of the *Quattro Santi Coronati* and the gothic traditions of the *Assumption of the Virgin* at the Porta della Mandora, Santa Maria del Fiore.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 21 states the Nanni based his sculpture on classical Roman sculpture and notes his accurate depiction of the way men stand and converse in the *Quattro Santi Coronati*. The *Quattro Santi Coronati* are the patron saints of stonemasons and carpenters, the guild for which this sculpture was created, on the exterior of Orsanmichele.

four distinctly different characters with varied hairstyles, beards and expressions. The faces of the *Coronati* exhibit realistic facial features, with degrees of wrinkled skin showing the test of time.²⁸⁶ Several of Castagno's apostles exhibit similar features. The saint on the far left of the *Coronati*, who is shown in profile, with long, wavy hair and beard could be a likely model for Castagno's Christ or James Major, at the far right end of the table (Figs. 36, 37, and 33). The beardless Thaddeus has cropped hair and softly modeled features similar to Nanni's *St. Philip* (1410-12) for Orsanmichele, which was a standard representation of a Roman senator (Figs. 38, 39). This characterization derives from the *Coronati*, who have been described as debating philosophers.²⁸⁷

Like Nanni's group, Castagno's apostles are dressed in toga-style garments, reflecting these ancient sources. However, a noted difference is the bare feet of Castagno's apostles, whereas the *Coronati* wear Roman sandals. This distinctive feature emphasizes Castagno's portrayal of a humble figure, someone true-to-life. This naturalism is also seen in the apostles' weight and bodily structure. Filling the space behind the dividing white tablecloth, the seated posture of the apostles can be compared to Nanni's *Saint Luke* (1412-13) (Fig. 40).²⁸⁸ The monumental frontality of Nanni's evangelist is echoed in Castagno's wall of apostles. The *Saint Luke* is also noted for his potential for movement and the verism of his face.²⁸⁹ These qualities

²⁸⁶ Mary Bergstein, "Nanni di Banco, Donatello, and Realism in the *Testa Virile*," *Source 3* (Spring 1986), 8-11. In this article, Bergstein credits Nanni di Banco with the display of life-like immediacy through individualization, rather than the more common designation of Donatello. She sees Nanni as influencing Donatello's work, which she argues is evident in Donatello's improvement from the *St. Mark* (c. 1413) for Orsanmichele and *Saint John* (1408-15) for the Cathedral to the prophet sculptures of *Jeremiah*, *Zuccone*, and the *Beardless Prophet* (1416/18-1430s) for the Campanile. This is only her side of the argument, there are several scholars who see Donatello's figures as superior, and as the impetus for the Renaissance style (see discussion below).

²⁸⁷ Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, 21.

²⁸⁸ This sculpture, along with Donatello's *St. John* (1410-11) and Niccolò Lamberti's *St. Mark* (1408), was part of a group of the four evangelists intended for the façade of the Cathedral in Florence. The fourth evangelist initially was to be awarded to the sculptor with the superior figure. They were in paired niches on either side of the central portal, and are now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence; Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, 107.

²⁸⁹ Bergstein, *The Sculpture of Nanni di Banco*, 33 uses verism as a term to describe a particular quality in Roman Republican portraits.

are seen in Castagno's apostles; their individualized faces display various personalities, and Andrew's feet are positioned to indicate the moment before he may stand up.²⁹⁰ The use of both realistic and classicizing qualities observed in the apostles signifies Nanni di Banco's influence on Castagno, yet the individual characters that are emphasized by their various features and emotions seem closer to the sculptures of Donatello.

Donatello's sculptures for Orsanmichele and the Cathedral have been described as bringing forth a new style of realism, by reducing life to its bare essentials and depicting human emotions in a universal manner.²⁹¹ The *St. Mark* (1411-13) for the *Arte dei Linaiuoli e Rigattieri* niche at Orsanmichele is often cited by art historians as the earliest example of a truly Renaissance figure (Fig. 41).²⁹² The intense characterization, sense of the three-dimensionality of the figure, and potential for movement were unprecedented.²⁹³ These traits are evident in Castagno's apostles, showing that he is indebted to Donatello's sculpture.²⁹⁴ The naturalism in Donatello's *St. Mark* is not only due to his pose, but is also seen in his facial features. His full, curling beard and wavy hair frame his wrinkled brow and intent gaze, which indicate the

²⁹⁰ Andrew turns to his left, while his feet are turned to his right. His left heel is raised, as if he is putting his weight on his toes, in the act of standing up. This type of pose is seen in Michelangelo's later sculpture of *Moses* (1513-16) for the tomb of Pope Julius II intended for St. Peter's Basilica, but now in San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.

²⁹¹ Charles Avery, *Donatello: An Introduction* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 12, 21 explains that to achieve this realism, Donatello studied classical remains, which is evidenced in the heads, poses, and expressions of his figures. John White, "Personality, text and meaning in Donatello's single figures," in *Donatello-Studien, Italienische Forschungen*, 16 (Munich: Bruckmann, 1989), 170-182 focuses on Donatello's treatment of the individual human figure, noting that the artist's capability of capturing the essence of a human personality was the central achievement of his sculptures.

²⁹² H. W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), reprint ed. 1963, 19 regards Donatello's *St. Mark* in this way, stating that the sculpture predates the work of Masaccio, so often celebrated for being the turning point in Renaissance art. Hartt, "Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence," in *Writings About Art*, ed. Carole Gold Calo, 166-134 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1994)[First published in *Essays in Honor of Karl Lehmann*, ed. Lucy Freeman Sandler (Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1971)] acknowledges Janson's statement and uses it as a springboard to discuss how he sees fifteenth-century Florentine sculpture as more advanced than painting. The basis of his article suggests a connection between Florence's political history and the stylistic developments which occurred at the time.

²⁹³ Hartt, "Art and Freedom," 116.

²⁹⁴ Castagno may have also been influenced by other works of Donatello, such as the *Cavalcanti Annunciation* in Santa Croce, 1435. Scholars have commented on the similarity of the "scaly" pilasters in Castagno's *Last Supper* with those in Donatello's sculpture; see Roettgen, 259.

evangelist's deep thought. Castagno's St. Andrew mimics these physical and emotional characteristics. Although with longer hair and beard, the apostle expresses a strong rush of emotion, as he grasps the knife, staring at St. Bartholomew.

The faces of Donatello's prophet sculptures for Santa Maria del Fiore (1416-35) further illustrate the artist's ability to capture individual personalities. The hardened expressions of these figures, like the varied faces of Castagno's apostles, could be from any man among everyday Tuscans.²⁹⁵ Janson describes the head of the *Beardless Prophet* as realistically portraying old age, and being derived from Roman portrait busts.²⁹⁶ The same classicizing features I discussed in Nanni's sculptures are also present in Donatello's work. The powerful orator-style character is exemplified in Donatello's prophets, especially the *Jeremiah* and *Zuccone* (Figs. 42, 43).²⁹⁷ These figures exhibit a psychological presence inherent in human life. These vigorous figures are aptly brought to life, seen in mid-sentence, and frozen in a moment in time; Donatello's prophets clearly seem to have been examples for Castagno's apostles, who are captured in their own reactions at the Last Supper.

Despite the apparent connections to the work of Donatello, there is another sculptor who I believe influenced the appearance of Castagno's apostles. Two of Ghiberti's bronze sculptures for Orsanmichele, *St. John the Baptist* (1412-16) and *St. Matthew* (1419-23), exhibit the change in figural representation that occurred at this time (Figs. 44, 45).²⁹⁸ These sculptures were revolutionary in their own right since they were the first monumental bronzes cast since

²⁹⁵ Avery, 21 makes the connection of Donatello's prophets to the patricians, soldiers, churchmen, merchants, artisans or peasants of Tuscany.

²⁹⁶ Janson, 39.

²⁹⁷ Janson, 40.

²⁹⁸ Ghiberti also made the *St. Stephen* (1425-28) for Orsanmichele. Richard Krautheimer in collaboration with Trude Krautheimer-Hess, *Lorenzo Ghiberti* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982 [1956, 1970]), 86 stresses the idea that after Ghiberti created the *St. John the Baptist* "a new race of statues had appeared" at Orsanmichele. Donatello's *St. Mark* and *St. George* and Nanni's *Quattro Coronati* and *St. Philip* were all displayed by the time Ghiberti was commissioned to create *St. Matthew* for the *Arte del Cambio* (bankers).

antiquity.²⁹⁹ Ghiberti was another innovative artist who made use of the renewed interest in the classical world, and this is evident in his *St. Matthew*. Although the classical traits of this figure are apparent, the drapery style is often described as decorative, similar to the linearity of Ghiberti's *St. John the Baptist*, which represents a more International Gothic style.³⁰⁰ The drapery of the *St. Matthew* may contain traces of Ghiberti's earlier style, but it departs from the severity of the *St. John* and displays naturally-falling folds and curves in the garment.³⁰¹ Ghiberti created a more realistic figure in the *St. Matthew*, as can be seen in the wrinkled forehead of his face. The *St. Matthew*'s features, his hair and beard are closer to every-day life than the smooth cheeks of the *St. John*, with his stylized locks of hair and perfected profile (Fig. 46). The classically-inspired head of the *St. Matthew* and his *contrapposto* stance continues the iconographic connection to philosophers. The stillness of Ghiberti's figure is also seen in Castagno's apostles. They evoke the same powerful presence, inner reflection, and clear gesture as Ghiberti's *St. Matthew*. In Castagno's scene, Christ's serene face and blessing gesture recalls the *St. Matthew*; their similar features and fixed gaze are a powerful comparison. *St. Matthew*'s right hand, in a gesture of direction, points to the open book he holds in his left hand. The inscription on the pages of the book is the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 1: 1-3), which identifies the genealogy of Jesus. Castagno's Sts. Matthew and Philip make similar gestures at the left end of the table. They are in a discussion, where each figure gestures to the other, in an instructive manner, trying to emphasize their beliefs. The didactic gesture of the *St. Matthew*, signaling to the viewer the word of God, is an action that is represented, not only by

²⁹⁹ Eleonora Luciano, Assistant Curator of Sculpture, National Gallery of Art. *Monumental Sculpture from Renaissance Florence: Ghiberti, Nanni di Banco and Verrocchio at Orsanmichele*. Exhibition catalog; National Gallery of Art, Washington, September 18 – December 31, 2005 (Department of Exhibition Programs and the Publishing Office, 2005), 9.

³⁰⁰ Krautheimer, 82-85 discusses the influence of the International style on Ghiberti's *St. John the Baptist*.

³⁰¹ Luciano, in her recent description of the *St. Matthew* recognized Ghiberti's more realistic and balanced style in this figure, and sees the artist moving away from the "Gothic expressiveness" of the *St. John*. The statue was conservationally treated in 2002-05, and displayed as part of the National Gallery's exhibition.

the figures, but in the overall message of Castagno's *Last Supper*, displaying God's word for the viewer.

The actions and moods of Castagno's apostles continue the realistic nature of his scene.³⁰² Their gestures can also be compared to the martyrs and apostles on Donatello's bronze doors for the Old Sacristy at the church of San Lorenzo (1440-43) (Fig. 47). There, pairs of figures are shown standing, often facing one another, debating or writing. They are thought to be discussing the dogma of the church.³⁰³ This type of interaction, also seen in Nanni di Banco's *Quattro Santi Coronati*, (Fig. 35) brings them to life. Castagno's apostles embody this same characteristic, with the discussions, gestures, and expressions shared among the group of figures; although scholars have also referred to them as being separate and removed.³⁰⁴ They are involved among themselves; no one looks or gestures out toward the viewer. This seclusion creates tension within the scene. The figures are contained within the room; a space that is divided by the rectangular table. On the viewer's side of the table, Judas sits on his stool that rests on the lower level of the platform, with one foot on the step. Serving as a reminder of repentance and striving to follow Christ, Judas bridges the two spaces of the room, connecting the nuns/viewer in the refectory to this image of the *Last Supper*.³⁰⁵ The trio of Judas, Christ and John emphasize the closed aspect of the image. In this vignette, the central figures all look at one another, none look out in an attempt to reach the audience. Judas and Christ look at the

³⁰² In a description of Castagno's figure style, Crowe and Cavasalle, 127 noted the action of his figures to be full of energy.

³⁰³ John Pope-Hennessy, *Donatello Sculptor* (New York and London: Abbeville Press, 1993), 191 associates the theme of the door with the time it was commissioned – during the Church Council. IN Chapter VIII (p. 157-193), Pope-Hennessy discusses Donatello's work at the Old Sacristy, including a detailed description and analysis of the bronze doors.

³⁰⁴ As discussed at the end of Chapter III, Spencer recognizes the distant look of the apostles. He believes Castagno's removed portrayal of the apostles is to place greater emphasis on the representation of Christ's sacrifice through the *Last Supper* and the three Passion scenes.

³⁰⁵ Hayum, 255 also mentions Judas' placement as a way for the nuns to associate with the scene; she sees the floor of the painted room as a reference to the actual floor of the refectory.

center, where John's hands lie folded on the table. From this point, a visual line is created, connected downward by the center trestle of the table and leading upward to the vertical post of the cross in the *Crucifixion*. This center line from the *Last Supper* to the Passion scenes unifies the two moments in time.

The interiority of the scene emphasizes the tension that is seen throughout Castagno's frescos. The enclosed space is emblematic of the nuns' lives in *clausura*. With the nuns contained in their own box-like cloister, the painted chamber of Castagno's *Last Supper* appears to be a giant meditation on their personal situation. The brick walls on either side of the room are indicative of the nuns' own convent and ties their world to the world of the painting. The discussion of the perspective and projection of the chamber is almost unnecessary, when it is clear that the space really closes in on itself, depicting the closed nature of the nuns' lives. This feature is emphasized by the tomb-like arrangement of the marble panels, and sphinx-like figures guarding the room. Castagno's combination of old and new elements show that his fresco of the *Last Supper* is not the usual straightforward work it is thought to be, but an image reflecting multiple ideas, where the viewer may believe they see one thing, and then see it in another light. In this way, Castagno's *Last Supper* plays an exceptional role within the history of the representation of the Last Supper and in the tradition of painted refectories. Castagno's fresco displays traditional, iconographical precedents, while setting his work apart by adding new and innovational elements that create a distinctive depiction of the well-known theme.

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Fig. 1 Andrea del Castagno, *God the Father and six saints; two seraphim*. On the arch: *Prophets, Saints and Putti*. Frescoes. Chapel of San Tarasio, San Zaccaria, Venice, 1442.



Fig. 2 Castagno, *Last Supper; Resurrection, Crucifixion, Deposition*. Frescoes. Sant' Apollonia, Florence, ca. 1447.



Fig. 3 Painting of banquet scene. Hypogaeum of Crispia Salvia, Lilybaeum. Second century.

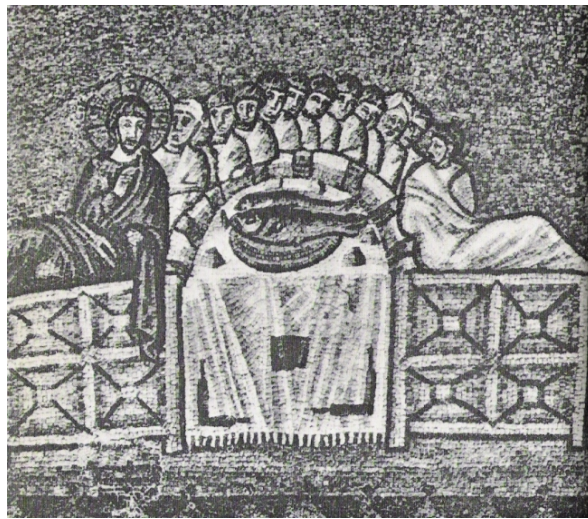


Fig. 4 *The Holy Supper*. Mural mosaic from S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. Sixth century.



Fig. 5 Fra Angelico, *Communion of the Apostles* (Cell 35). Fresco. Museo di San Marco, Florence, 1438/42.



Fig. 6 Sassetta, *Institution of the Eucharist*. Tempera on wood. Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, 1423.

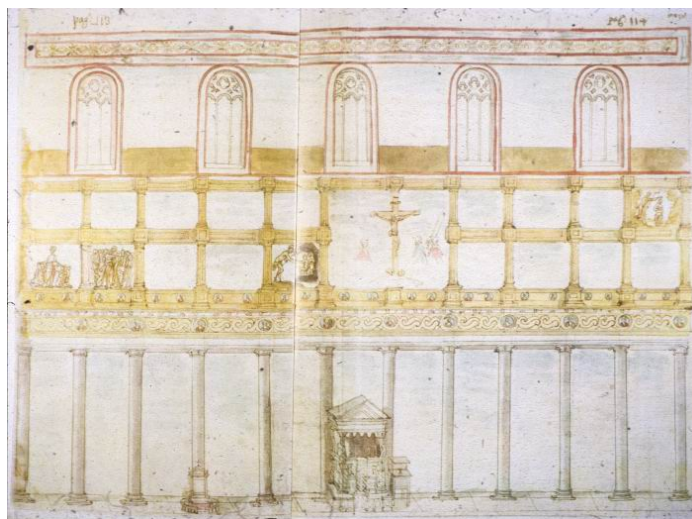


Fig. 7 Old St. Peter's, Rome. View of nave, with New Testament scenes. Begun 319-22. Drawing by Giacomo Grimaldi, 1620.



Fig. 8 Duccio, back of *Maestà* altarpiece. Tempera and gold leaf on panel. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, 1308-1311.



Fig. 9 Duccio, *Last Supper*, *Maestà* altarpiece. Tempera and gold leaf on panel. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, 1308-1311.



Fig. 10 Giotto, south wall frescoes, The Arena Chapel (The Scrovegni Chapel), Padua, 1305.



Fig. 11 Giotto, *Last Supper*. Fresco. The Arena Chapel, Padua, 1305.

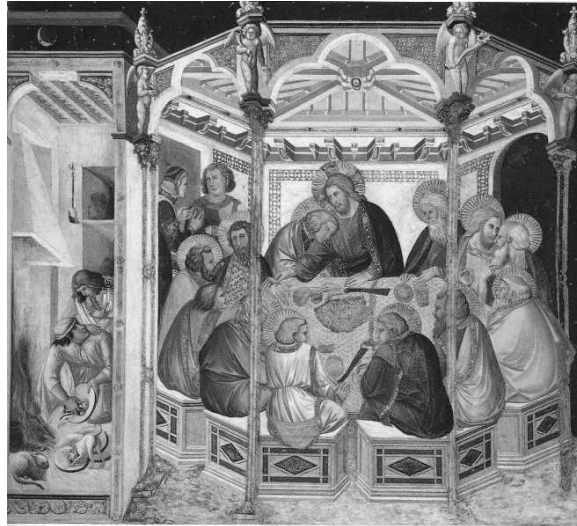


Fig. 12 Pietro Lorenzetti, *Last Supper*. Fresco. Lower Church of the Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi, 1310-1315.

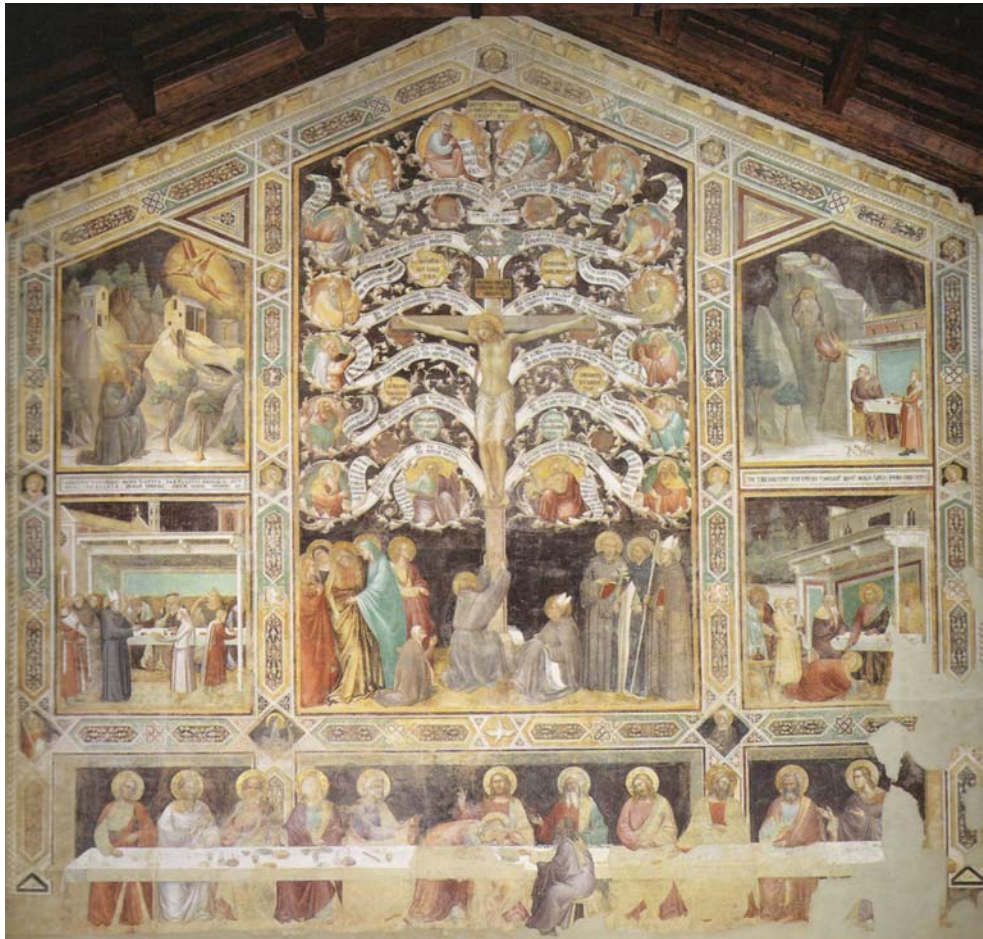


Fig. 13 Taddeo Gaddi, *Last Supper; Crucifixion; Stigmatization of St. Francis, St. Louis of Toulouse Feeds the Poor, An Angel Ordains the Priest Who Brings Food to St. Benedict in the Desert, and The Meal in the House of the Pharisee*. Fresco. Santa Croce, Florence, 1345-60.



Fig. 14 Andrea and Nardo di Cione, *Last Supper; Crucifixion*. Fresco. Santo Spirito, 1367-68.



Fig. 15 Castagno, *Resurrection, Crucifixion, Entombment*. Detail of Fig. 2.

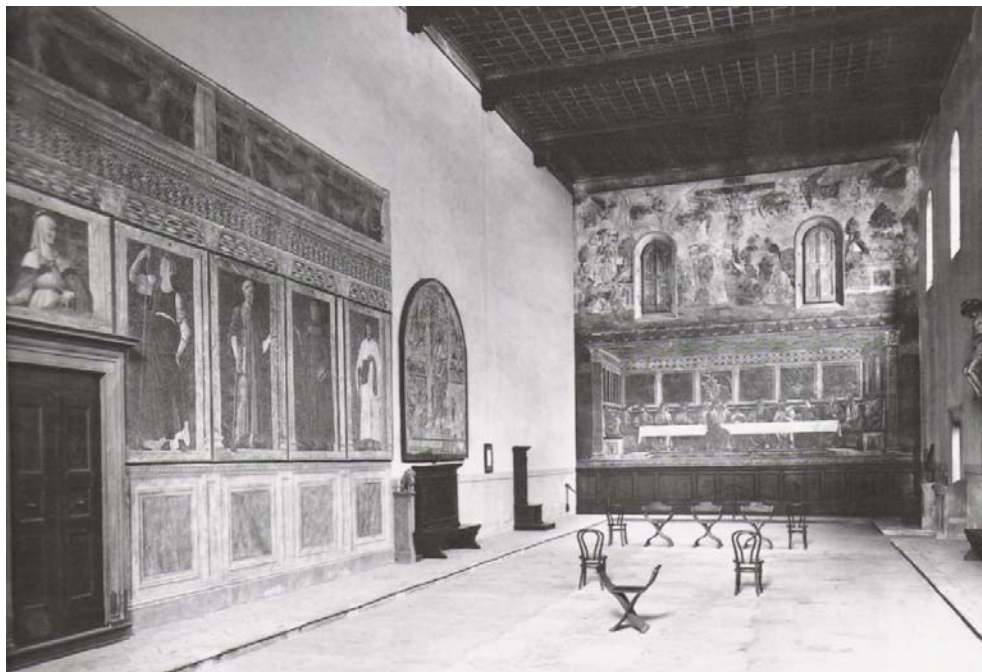


Fig. 16 *Cenacolo* of Sant'Apollonia with the *Famous Men and Women* by Andrea del Castagno, photograph from the beginning of the nineteenth century.



Fig. 17 Ghirlandaio, *Last Supper*; *Expulsion of Adam and Eve*; *Murder of Abel*. Frescoes. Badia a Passignano, Florence, 1476-77.



Fig. 18 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, Peter, Judas, Christ and John.



Fig. 19 Taddeo Gaddi, detail, *Last Supper*, Judas' hand in dish. Detail of Fig. 13.



Fig. 20 *Last Supper*. Mosaic, south vault of central dome. San Marco, Venice. Late twelfth-century.



Fig. 21 Castagno, *Last Supper*. Detail of Fig. 2.



Fig. 22 Masaccio and Filippino Lippi, *The Raising of the Son of Theophilus and Saint Peter in the Chair*. Fresco. Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, 1424-28, 1481-81.



Fig. 23 Fra Angelico, *The Judgment of St. Lawrence before the Emperor Decius*, Chapel of Nicholas V, the Vatican, Rome, 1448.



Fig. 24 Fra Angelico, *Madonna of the Shadows*, east corridor San Marco, Florence, 1450.

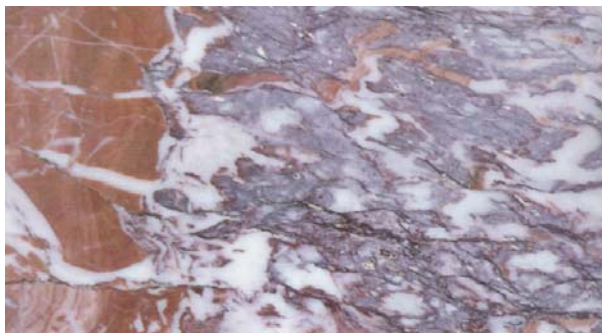


Fig. 25 *Fior di pesco* (*Marmor chalcidicum*).

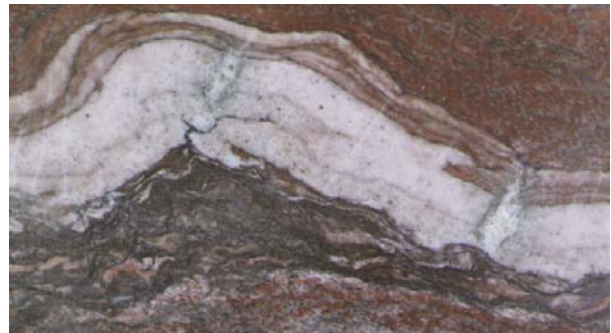


Fig. 26 *Cipollino rosso* (*Marmor carium o iassense*).

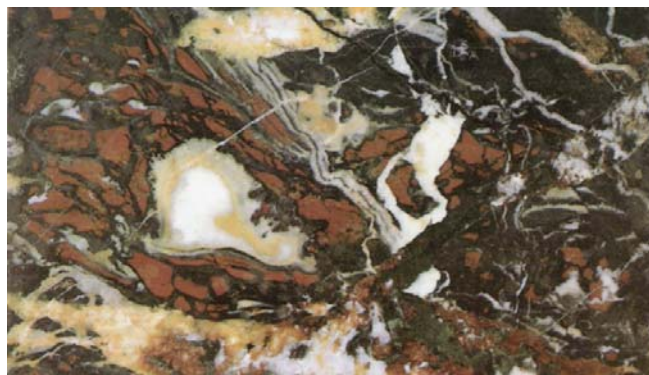


Fig. 27 *Africano* (*Marmor luculleum*).



Fig. 28 Castagno, *Resurrection*.



Fig. 29 Castagno, *Entombment*.



Fig. 30 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, left end of table with harpy/sphinx sculpture, Matthew, Philip and Thomas.



Fig. 31 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, Thomas.



Fig. 32 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, James Minor.

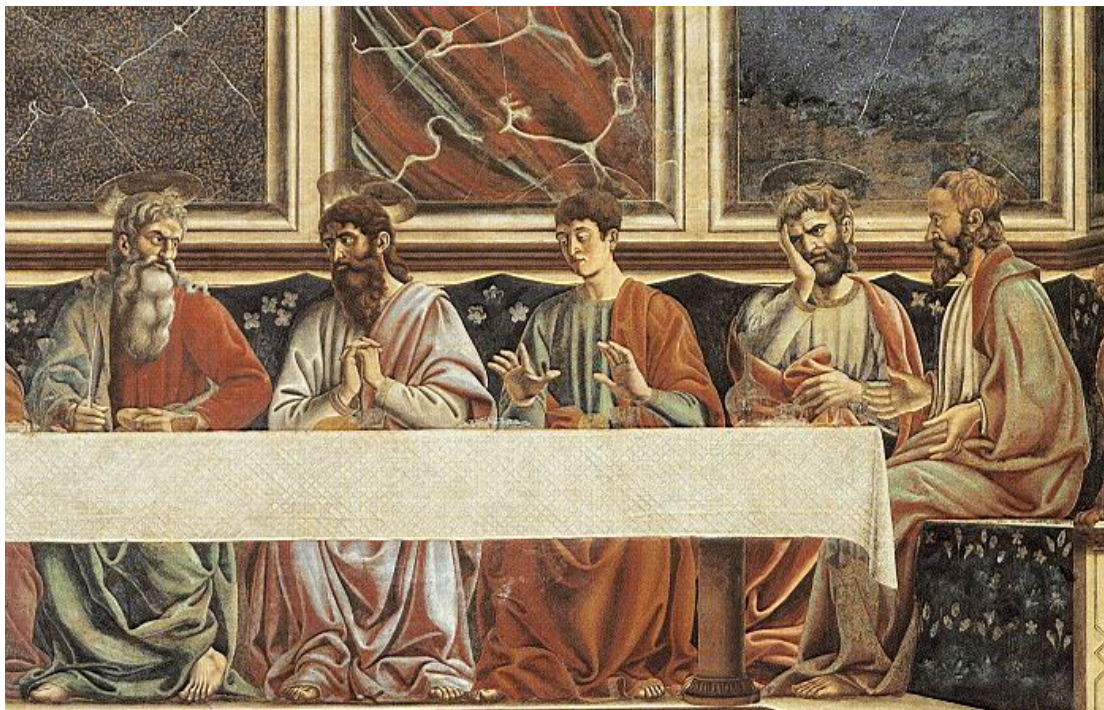


Fig. 33 Castagno, detail *Last Supper*, right end of table with Andrew, Bartholomew, Thaddeus, Simon and James Major.



Fig. 34 Castagno, comparison of *sinopia* and fresco of *Resurrection*.



Fig. 35 Nanni di Banco, *Quattro Santi Coronati*. Marble. Orsanmichele, Florence, 1409-16/17.

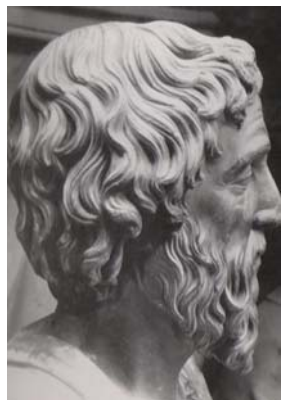


Fig. 36 Nanni di Banco, detail, *Quattro Santi Coronati*, far left saint.



Fig. 37 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, Christ.



Fig. 38 Nanni di Banco, *St. Philip*. Marble. Orsanmichele, Florence, 1410-12.



Fig. 39 Castagno, detail, *Last Supper*, Thaddeus.



Fig. 40 Nanni di Banco, *St. Luke Evangelist*. Marble. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, 1412-13.



Fig. 41 Donatello, *St. Mark*. Marble. Orsanmichele, Florence, 1411-13.



Fig. 42 Donatello, *Jeremiah*. Marble. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, 1423-25.

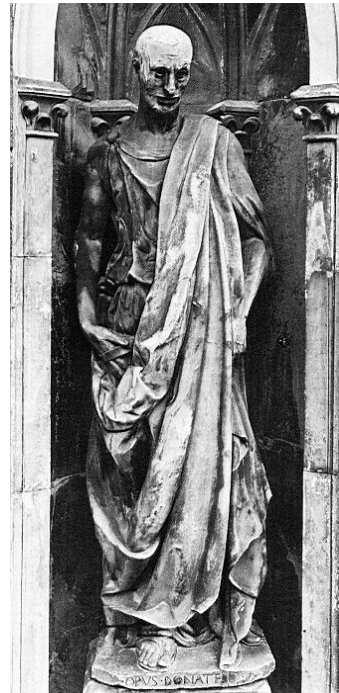


Fig. 43 Donatello, *Zuccone*. Marble. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, 1423-25.



Fig. 44 Lorenzo Ghiberti, *St. John the Baptist*. Bronze. Orsanmichele, Florence, 1412-16.



Fig. 45 Ghiberti, *St. Matthew*. Bronze. Orsanmichele, Florence, 1419-23.



Fig. 46 Ghiberti, comparison of heads of *St. John the Baptist* and *St. Matthew*.



Fig. 47 Donatello, *Martyrs and Apostles*. Bronze doors, Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo, Florence, 1440-43.