

# AMBROGIO LORENZETTI AND CLASSICAL PAINTING

Mary D. Edwards

Ambrogio Lorenzetti's interest in classical antiquity was first documented within his lifetime. A chronicle of 1337, probably authored by Agnolo di Tura, states that Ambrogio decorated the outside walls of a Sieneese palace with frescoes depicting "Roman stories."<sup>1</sup> In the following century, Ghiberti corroborated the painter's classical predilection by reporting that he had seen a drawing of a statue by Lysippus from the hand of Ambrogio.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, George Rowley has isolated specific types of classical art, citing them as the probable sources for figures in Ambrogio's paintings. Among them are a Roman coin which shows Security personified, seen by Rowley as the likely prototype for Ambrogio's figure of Peace because of its seated pose with head leaning against hand, elbow jutting out, and body diagonalized;<sup>3</sup> a terra-cotta mask of a satyr, seen by Rowley as the likely prototype for the mask which Ambrogio's figure of Dialectic holds because of the curly beard and snubbed nose;<sup>4</sup> a Roman mosaic representation of the season, Summer, seen by Rowley as the likely prototype for Ambrogio's allegorical figure of the same season because of the inclusion of sickle, sheaf of wheat, and wreath of leaves.<sup>5</sup>

But the purpose of this paper is not to present further examples of Ambrogio's use of classical coins or masks or mosaics as models for his images. Rather, it is to argue that the Sieneese master was inspired additionally by an ancient text -- namely by the *Natural History* of Pliny

the Elder. The premise presented here will be that by using Pliny as his guide, Ambrogio conscientiously sought to imitate in his works the paintings of classical artists which were themselves inaccessible to him except in the descriptions in the *Natural History*.

That Pliny's *Natural History* was both available and read in the fourteenth century is attested to by the fact that Petrarch not only owned but also annotated in the margins and paraphrased in his own writings the Latin author's text.<sup>6</sup> Thus, given Ambrogio's love of things antique, it is easy to conceive of Petrarch's slightly earlier contemporary as having consulted the *Natural History*. This is particularly true in light of the comments made by Vasari on Ambrogio. According to Vasari, the painter had "devoted himself to humanistic studies in his youth."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as an adult he frequented "always the society of men of letters and scholars [and] was received by them and addressed as a man of talent, continuing the while to be well thought of."<sup>8</sup> Thus, if Ambrogio was not introduced to Pliny as a schoolboy, it is very possible that he became acquainted with the author through his lettered friends as an adult. In any case, pictorial evidence in his paintings strongly suggests that Ambrogio both knew Pliny's *Natural History* and was inspired by it to compete with artists of the classical past.

A striking example of Ambrogio's possible desire to rival Greek painting is found in his handling of the drapery which partially covers the allegorical figure, Security, a nearly nude, winged female who hovers over the road leading through the city gates in *Good Government in the Country* (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> Unlike the merely thin fabric of the dress covering Ambrogio's figure of Peace in the adjacent fresco, the drapery which curls itself around the thighs of Security is transparent. In short, not only do the outlines of Security's lower limbs reveal themselves through her minimal covering, but the colours of her flesh shine through as well. Thus, the model for Security's drapery cannot be found exclusively in the drapery of ancient statuary as Rowley has suggested.<sup>10</sup> The simple reason is that in such statuary only the shapes of the underlying forms are visible beneath the drapery, not their colour. For the feature of transparency, then, Ambrogio very likely received additional inspiration elsewhere.

At first one might think that Ambrogio was inspired by the Italian masters of the previous generation in this regard, for Giotto made the hair and an occasional ear visible through the veils worn by some of the women in his frescoes in the Arena Chapel, and Duccio made the thighs of Christ and the two thieves visible through their loin cloths in the *Crucifixion* on the back of his *Maestà*.<sup>11</sup> It must be stressed, however, that neither painter dared depict as did Ambrogio a female body all but nude as is *Security*, the rosy flesh beaming through her transparent covering exuberantly. Thus, I believe that the inspiration necessary to carry Ambrogio beyond the perimeters set by Giotto and Duccio was provided by Pliny. This is because immediately upon introducing Polygnotos of Thasos in his chapters on painting, Pliny states that it was he "who first painted women with transparent garments . . ." <sup>12</sup> Deeply interested in antiquity as Ambrogio was, this pithy remark about one of ancient Greece's leading painters may very well have induced the fourteenth-century artist to produce a female whose body is visible through sheer drapery as had his Greek predecessor.

Though many of the faces of the figures in Ambrogio's works are relatively expressionless, a close look at the faces of some reveals that they are intensely expressive. And the intensity in these isolated instances is far more pronounced than that generally seen in the faces painted by other artists of the period. For example, in the *Franciscan Martyrdom* the face of the turban-wearing spectator at the left of the left arcade registers repugnance to an extreme degree at the sight of the decapitation before him (fig. 2). The eyebrows press together, the eyelids squint tightly, and the muscles around the nose flex, all of which forces the facial skin to bunch into a mass of wrinkles. Indeed, the use of wrinkles in this face anticipates Leonardo's effective use of wrinkles to underscore facial expression.

In this same fresco, the face of the helmed man at the left of the right arcade displays a perturbed amazement which is created with similar skill. Though the wrinkling of the facial skin is less exaggerated in the second face, the mouth is open and the teeth are visible, giving the impression that the man is uttering a gasp of horror which is all but audible. Anguish has also been rendered sensitively in the face of the

soldier wearing a crested helmet at the right of the right arcade in the *Franciscan Martyrdom*. And once again the wrinkling of the skin has been effectively conveyed.<sup>13</sup>

In some of Ambrogio's figures the expressiveness extends beyond the face to pervade the entire body. For example, in the *Sant' Agostino Maestà* Ambrogio's Christ Child not only bugs out his eyes and turns his mouth down at the corners, but also throws up his hands and kicks out his feet in horror at the sight of the goldfinch before him (fig. 3). In the *Allegory of Bad Government* the child whom Cruelty strangles not only sticks out his tongue dramatically but also claws at the air with his outstretched hands, and he strides through space with fully extended legs. In the *sinopia* for the *Annunciation* in the Oratory of San Galgano at Montesiepi, the Virgin not only appears to frown but also hugs the column next to her with severe anxiety and throws herself to the floor.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, as has been implied, emotion-filled faces are not unknown to early fourteenth-century painting; nor are bodies which reveal emotions by means of their exaggerated posturing. Artists who depict the Massacre of the Innocents usually include a number of distressed faces in their interpretations of the scene. Some of Giotto's grieving angels in his *Crucifixion* and *Lamentation* in the Arena Chapel wrench their bodies with anger or pain.<sup>15</sup> But Ambrogio surpasses the conceptions of earlier painters. In the cases of the witnesses of the decapitation, perhaps for the first time in the Proto-Renaissance period the skin of a face no longer appears fused to the skull which supports it. Rather, it seems to ride fluidly above the skull. Thus, a convincing, emotional immediacy is captured, since the movements of facial skin communicate much of human feeling. In the case of the strangled baby and the horrified annunciate Virgin, the body either explodes in an outcry of physical pain or twists closed upon itself in silent anguish. These bodies, then, have been contorted to the level of Expressionism -- a level not reached by the bodies of Giotto's angels, however moving is the stridency of their grief.

What caused Ambrogio to experiment with emotions so radically? Once again I think that the Sieneese painter has been inspired, now in general and not a specific way, by descriptions in Pliny of the works of ancient

artists. This is because, according to the Roman writer, several Greek painters were noted for having greatly advanced the pictorial representation of human emotion. For instance, in a passage on Polygnotos, Pliny states that this "artist made a first serious contribution to the development of painting by opening the mouth, showing the teeth and varying the stiff archaic set of the features."<sup>16</sup> He also mentions Parrhasios who "added vivacity to the features,"<sup>17</sup> and Aristeides who "was the first among all painters to paint the soul, and [who] gave expression to the affections of man -- I mean to what the Greeks call *Ethe* -- and also the emotions."<sup>18</sup> Since no contemporary artist provided models as expressive as the figures ultimately produced by Ambrogio, it is all the more inviting to assume that Ambrogio was challenged to imitate the lost precedents described by Pliny.

Ambrogio was also interested in capturing what might be called the emotions of Nature -- that is to say, meteorological effects. In a quatrefoil in the Sala della Pace he shows the figure of Winter standing in a snow storm with large, fluffy flakes fluttering down around him (fig. 4). As Rowley has observed, the "falling snow, directly observed from nature, seems to be the earliest convincing representation of weather conditions in medieval art."<sup>19</sup>

But though the quatrefoil represents the only extant depiction of meteorological activity by Ambrogio, it was not his only attempt at the feat. Among his lost frescoes in San Francesco in Siena was one which portrayed a violent rainstorm. Fortunately, a lengthy description of the painting is provided by Ghiberti, who writes:

[In the scene which occurs after] the decapitation of the monks there arises a storm with much hail, flashes of lightning, and thundering earthquakes; it seems as if it were possible to see painted heaven and earth in danger. It seems as if all were trying with much trembling to cover themselves up; the men and the women are pulling their clothes over their heads, and the armed men are holding the shields over their heads. The hailstones are so thick on the shields that they seem actually to bounce on the shields with the extraordinary winds. The trees

are seen bending even to the ground as if they were breaking, and each person seems to be fleeing, everyone is seen to be fleeing.<sup>20</sup>

This description brings to mind at once a comment Pliny makes about Apelles: "He also painted the unpaintable, thunder, for example, lightning and thunderbolts . . . ." <sup>21</sup> But if Ghiberti's description is true to the lost image, Ambrogio went much further than Apelles, for he added hail, earthquakes, and a wind strong enough to bend the trees to the ground. In this instance, then, Ambrogio seems not to have just equalled Greek painting but to have surpassed it once more, and by a substantial margin.<sup>22</sup>

Elsewhere in his descriptions of Ambrogio's lost frescoes in San Francesco, Ghiberti elaborates upon the scene which shows monks, who had been preaching in the Orient, being beaten by the Sultan's men. According to Ghiberti, "[there] is painted how two men, after having beaten [the monks] and after having been replaced by two other men, rest with the rods in their hands, their limp hair dripping with sweat, very disturbed and short of breath."<sup>23</sup> Not only were the flagellators psychologically expressive (i.e., they were "very disturbed") -- a feature which we can now expect in the work of Ambrogio -- but also they appeared to perspire and pant from their exertion. These latter achievements on the part of Ambrogio can well be compared with the identical achievements of Parrhasios. According to Pliny, Parrhasios painted two pictures of hoplites, "a hoplite in a race who seems to sweat as he runs, and a hoplite laying aside his arms, whose laboring breath we seem to hear."<sup>24</sup> Thus, it once more seems likely that Ambrogio took a cue from Pliny's *Natural History*, thereby producing details in his flagellation scene that were remarkable in the art of his own time and which could rival similar details in the pictures of Antiquity.

The Passion Cycle in the lower church of the Basilica of San Francesco at Assisi is generally attributed to Pietro Lorenzetti and workshop.<sup>25</sup> Though their period of execution is not documented, the frescoes are usually placed in the 1320's, possibly having been painted in two separate campaigns, according to some scholars.<sup>26</sup> Recently, however,

Hayden Maginnis has persuasively argued not only that the cycle was executed in a single campaign but also that it was completed prior to 1320.<sup>27</sup> If Maginnis' earlier date of completion is correct, it could mean that Ambrogio Lorenzetti, who is known to have collaborated with his brother Pietro on at least one work,<sup>28</sup> participated in the painting of the Passion Cycle as well. This is because we have no evidence that Ambrogio's style was fully defined in the late teens; hence, any assistance which he may have offered Pietro would not necessarily be recognizable to the eye of the modern viewer accustomed to attributing to Ambrogio only works similar to those already firmly linked to him by documentation.

If Ambrogio did participate in the production of the Passion Cycle at Assisi, the composition most likely to have come from his hand is the *Last Supper*. This picture is iconographically noteworthy because of the juxtaposition of the sacred meal with a genre episode which includes the mundane kitchen chores of cleaning the dishes and feeding the scraps to the household pets (fig. 5). It is precisely this innovation which provides the clue that the picture may be Ambrogio's; for the bold use of genre here anticipates the more expansive, though less daring, use of genre which Ambrogio displays throughout his frescoes in the Sala della Pace in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena.<sup>29</sup>

Also remarkable is the handling of the firelight in the *Last Supper*. The flames in the fireplace lick upwards energetically, and not only do they cause the dog and cat to cast distinct shadows onto the floor but also they bathe the undersides of the canopy of the fireplace and those surfaces of the room which face the fireplace with soft lambent tones.<sup>30</sup> In addition, they spill light onto the face of the boy who looks directly into them from over the shoulder of the man who wipes a dish.

It is the treatment of the firelight which brings a passage of Pliny to mind once again. Writing of Antiphilos, Pliny informs us that the painter "is praised for his picture of a boy blowing a fire, and for the reflection cast by the fire on the room, which is in itself beautiful, and on the boy's face."<sup>31</sup> Thus, apart from the fact that the fourteenth-century boy does not blow the fire, the left portion of the *Last Supper* in Assisi seems to be a tangible re-creation of the lost Greek picture by Antiphilos.

Ambrogio's use of foreshortening in his paintings demonstrates great skill. In the *Franciscan Martyrdom*, a radically foreshortened decapitated head rests in the centre of the composition on the ground plane just behind the picture plane (fig. 6). The unprecedented view up the nostrils and into the slightly opened mouth shown with the biting edge of the teeth visible unnerves the spectator perhaps even more than does the sight of the gore exposed by the executioner's cut.<sup>32</sup> Also impressive is the foreshortened hand of the young man seated on the back row in *St. Louis Before the Pope* who wears a cap tied under his chin.<sup>33</sup> In fact, so self-conscious is the desire to master spatial recession in the drawing of the severed head and the hand that one again wonders if Ambrogio were not attempting to rival the lost works of antique painters as they are described by Pliny. For instance, of Pausias the historian says: "[Wishing] to display an ox's length of body, he painted a front and not a side view of the animal, and yet contrived to show its size . . . . [He showed] great art in giving all figures full relief upon the flat surface, and in indicating their form when foreshortened."<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps a more subtle exercise in foreshortening on Ambrogio's part is found in the badly worn spear held by the grisaille statuette of a warrior atop the right-hand gable of the *Franciscan Martyrdom*.<sup>35</sup> Though the warrior is small in size and located within the fresco only peripherally, his spear projects boldly forward in space along a diagonal, its point aimed toward the spectator's spatial environment. Thus, despite the fact that he is merely a finial, the warrior seems to embody Ambrogio's response to yet another passage in the *Natural History*. Writing of Apelles, Pliny states that the Greek artist "painted in the temple of Artemis at Ephesos a portrait of Alexander holding a thunderbolt . . . . The fingers seem to stand out and the thunderbolt [seems] to project from the picture."<sup>36</sup>

Even in his Massa Marittima *Maestà*, Ambrogio experimented with the projection of objects in space. At the left and right of the bottom step of the throne in the painting kneel angels who play upon foreshortened fiddles. The bow of each angel is sawed along a diagonal which moves into the spectator's space. Moreover, the fingers of the fretting hand of the leftward angel are especially compelling, for like Alexander's



fingers as he held the thunderbolt, they "seem to stand out."<sup>37</sup>

In general Ambrogio's sense of perspective remained strong throughout his career. In admiring his skill, one may recall the words of Apelles on Melanthios and Asklepiodoros, as quoted by Pliny. According to Apelles, Melanthios was superior to him "in the distribution of figures," while Asklepiodoros was superior to him "in perspective arrangement, that is in giving accurate distances between different objects."<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Ambrogio reflected on these words, too, as he situated objects and figures in space with such accuracy when painting the small *Maestà*, the whole of *St. Louis Before the Pope* and the *Franciscan Martyrdom*, *Good Government in the City* and *Good Government in the Country*, the *Presentation* of 1342, or the *Annunciation* of 1344.<sup>39</sup>

As noted earlier, Ambrogio's frescoes in the Sala della Pace are replete with genre episodes. In *Good Government in the City* alone there are scenes showing girls dancing in the streets, men and two children relaxing in a tavern, cobblers at work in a shop, clothiers at work outside another shop, a man selling victuals in a third shop, five construction workers labouring on a roof, a man delivering a lecture to a classroom full of students, and a bridal procession through the streets -- all in addition to assorted merchants and passers-by who stroll among the buildings. In *Good Government in the Country*, there are scenes of falconers on horseback leaving the city, farmers working the fields, travelling merchants, and numerous hunters pursuing game in the woods and elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> The exuberance and variety of the genre episodes depicted in these two sections of the fresco are exceptional in mural painting of the period. Once more there are typological precedents described in Pliny's *Natural History* for at least some of the scenes which Ambrogio has shown. These precedents occur in the works of Pieraikos and Studius. According to Pliny, the Greek painter Pieraikos painted city scenes, such as "barber shops, cobblers' stalls, asses, eatables and similar subjects, earning for himself the name of *rhyparographos* [or painter of odds and ends]."<sup>41</sup> The Roman painter, Studius, on the other hand, painted country scenes, such as

villas, harbours, landscape gardens, sacred groves, woods,

hills, fishponds, straits, streams and shores, any scene in short that took the fancy. In these he introduced figures of people on foot or in boats, and on land of people coming up to the country-houses either on donkeys or in carriages, besides figures of fishers and fowlers, or of hunters or even of vintagers . . . .<sup>42</sup>

Very likely these two ancient painters made each of the individual scenes mentioned the subject of an entire painting. If so, then, in his frescoes in the Sala della Pace Ambrogio once more has outdone classical artists, for he has made a conglomerate out of numerous isolated episodes. None the less, the original impetus to paint such genre scenes -- whether urban episodes in the manner of Pieraikos (*Good Government in the City*) or rural episodes, with many active figures immersed in a landscape, in the manner of Studius (*Good Government in the Country*) -- may very well also have been inspired by a reading of Pliny.<sup>43</sup>

In this paper I have tried to show that Ambrogio Lorenzetti was motivated by Pliny's *Natural History* to rival the lost paintings of classical artists with his panel paintings and murals. Because many of the features in Ambrogio's works which are regarded as innovative for his period -- reflected firelight, genre episodes, perspiration, heightened emotionality, radical foreshortening, and weather conditions -- are precisely those which were found in the pictures of the Greek and Roman artists described by Pliny, this conclusion seems especially tenable. Thus, it would appear that one full century before Alberti advocated the imitation of ancient compositions via their description in ancient texts, Ambrosius Laurentii, *pictor senesis*, was engaged in a similar but not identical practice, that of competing with classical painters by imitating certain of the characteristics of their paintings as transmitted to him via Pliny.<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

For James Beck, George R. Collins, and Howard Mc P. Davis. This paper originated at the Third Annual Colloquium on Mediaeval Civilization held at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, January 1980. It was also presented in September 1979 at the Fourth Conference on Patristic, Mediaeval, and Renaissance Studies at Villanova, Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup> See Agnolo di Tura del Grasso, *Cronaca senese*, ed. Lisini and F. Jacometti in A.L. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores* (Bologna 1931-37) XV, part 6, under the year 1337. It must be acknowledged that the patron most likely played a role in the choice of subject as well as the artist.

<sup>2</sup> See Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I Commentari*, ed. J. von Schlosser (Berlin 1912) I, 63.

<sup>3</sup> See George Rowley, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti* (Princeton 1958) I, 95, hereafter cited as Rowley. Cornelius Vermeule thinks that the drapery covering Peace displays "the diaphanous, clinging qualities of Julio-Claudian drapery based on Kallimachos' models of the late fifth century B.C., the so-called Venus genetrix type and the Nike balustrade." See his *European Art and the Classical Past* (Cambridge, Mass. 1964) 31.

<sup>4</sup> See Rowley, I, 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* I, 96.

<sup>6</sup> Petrarch's copy of Pliny's *Natural History* is MS. Lat. 6802 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. See Ernst Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller, and J.H. Randall Jr., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (13th ed., 1948; rpt. Chicago 1975) 123, n. 186. The authors cite several instances in Petrarch's "Ascent of Mont Ventoux" and "On His Own Ignorance" in which Petrarch quotes or derives information from Pliny. See nn. 12, 167, 186, and 189 on pp. 41, 112, 123, and 125, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> See Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (Florence 1550), ed. C. Ricci (Milan and Rome 1937) 169. This translation is from Rowley, I, 136. It should be noted that in the 1568 edition "agli studi delle lettere umane nella sua giovinezza" becomes simply "nella sua giovinezza alle lettere." See G. Vasari, *Le vite . . .* (Florence 1550 and 1568),

ed. Rosanna Bettarini (Florence 1966-71) II, part 1, 181-2.

<sup>8</sup> See Vasari, Ricci ed., p. 169, and Rowley, I, 136.

<sup>9</sup> For an illustration of Security, see Rowley, II, plate 173.

<sup>10</sup> See Rowley, I, 95, for his suggestion that the bodies and draperies of both Security and Charity may be based on "a Roman relief of a Wingless [*sic*] Fame (?) still preserved in Siena . . . ."

<sup>11</sup> For illustrations of Giotto's *Presentation of the Virgin*, see Edi Baccheschi, *The Complete Paintings of Giotto* (New York 1969) plate XX, and of Duccio's *Crucifixion*, see Edi Baccheschi, *L'Opera Completa di Duccio* (Milan 1972) plates LIII and LIV.

<sup>12</sup> See K. Jex-Blake and E. Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (1896; rpt. Chicago 1968) 103, hereafter cited as Jex-Blake and Sellers.

<sup>13</sup> For illustrations of these three heads, see Rowley, II, plates 113, 116, and 115, respectively

<sup>14</sup> For illustrations of the agitated Christ Child and the strangled baby, see Rowley, II, plates 86 and 178. For an illustration of the *sinopia* for the Annunciate Virgin, see Millard Meiss, *The Great Age of Fresco: Discoveries, Recoveries and Survivals* (New York 1970) 81. Meiss notes (p. 80) that the depiction of the Virgin shrinking to the floor is unprecedented.

<sup>15</sup> For an illustration of Giotto's distressed angels, see Baccheschi (at n. 11) plate XXXIII. Giotto's *Massacre of the Innocents* is plate XXV of this book.

<sup>16</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers (at n. 12) 103.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 133. Pliny's reference to "a coarse picture of a Gaul with his tongue out" may have induced Ambrogio to protrude the tongue of the strangled baby. See *ibid.* 93.

<sup>19</sup> See Rowley, I, 96 and, for an illustration, II, plate 190.

<sup>20</sup> See Ghiberti, I, 41. This translation is from Rowley, I, 133.

<sup>21</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers, 133.

<sup>22</sup> Vasari also described Ambrogio's storm, saying, "In this painting, with great art, he most skillfully depicted the disorder of the air, and the fury of the rain and winds, in the struggle of the figures. From

these, modern masters have learned the manner and the principle of the invention, for which, as it had not been used before, he merited infinite commendation." See the Ricci edition, p. 168. The translation is from Rowley, I, 136. See Rowley, I, 96 for his observation that since snow was not painted in antiquity, Ambrogio's snowstorm is likewise an innovation. For a brief discussion and an illustration of what may be a newly discovered fragment of Ambrogio's rainstorm, see Max Seidel, "Wieder-gefundene Fragmente eines Hauptwerks von Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Pantheon* 36 (Spring, 1978) 119-27 and colour plate I.

<sup>23</sup> See Ghiberti, I, 40. This translation is from Rowley, I, 133.

<sup>24</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers, 115.

<sup>25</sup> See E.T. Dewald, *Pietro Lorenzetti* (Cambridge, Mass. 1930) 23-6 for a brief discussion of these frescoes, and p. 23, n. 2, for citations regarding their attribution to Pietro.

<sup>26</sup> The frescoes are placed in the 1320's by, for example, Dewald, *ibid.* 37. Among those who believe that the frescoes were executed in more than one campaign are John White and Robert Oertel. See White's *Art and Architecture in Italy: 1250-1400* (Baltimore 1966) 245-9, and Oertel's *Early Italian Painting to 1400* (New York and Washington 1968) 221-8, esp. p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> See H.B.J. Maginnis, "Assisi Revisited: Notes on Recent Observations," *Burlington Magazine* 117 (August 1975) 515, and H.B.J. Maginnis, *Pietro Lorenzetti and Assisi* (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton Univ. 1975) 183-209. Maginnis' argument is unconvincingly challenged by Robin Simon in his otherwise excellent "Towards a Relative Chronology of the Frescoes in the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi," *Burlington Magazine* 118 (June 1976) 366.

<sup>28</sup> An inscription of 1335 which read: "Hoc opus fecit Petrus Laurentii et Ambrosius eius frater MCCCXXXV" once appeared with the frescoes on the facade of the Spedale di S. Maria della Scala, Siena. See Ugurgieri, *Le Pompe sanesi* (Pistoia 1649) II, 338.

<sup>29</sup> For an illustration of the left portion of the *Last Supper*, see Meiss (at n. 14) 71. On p. 70 Meiss observes that an "entire kitchen is unprecedented alongside a Last Supper . . ."

<sup>30</sup> The cast shadow has been noted by Meiss, *ibid.* 70, and by Maginnis

in "Cast Shadow in the Passion Cycle at San Francesco, Assisi: A Note," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 77 (1971) 63-4. Cast shadows appear in some Roman works, for example in the "unswept floor" mosaic in the Vatican Museum. For an illustration, see Mary Johnston, *Roman Life* (Chicago 1957) 224.

<sup>31</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers, 163.

<sup>32</sup> For an illustration of the severed head, see Rowley, II, plate 118. I do not think that the exposure of the teeth was necessarily inspired by Pliny's passage on Polygnotos quoted above. Teeth are visible in the mouth of the singing man at the far right of Simone Martini's *The Knighting of St. Martin* in the lower church of the Basilica at Assisi, in the mouths of several singing monks in the *Institution of the Crêche* at Greccio in the upper church of the Basilica at Assisi, and in the mouths of at least two singing monks in the *Transportation of St. Clare* in S. Chiara in Assisi. For illustrations, see Meiss (at n. 14) 75, and Giuseppe Palumbo et al., *Giotto e i Giotteschi in Assisi* (Rome 1969) 81 and 227, respectively.

<sup>33</sup> For an illustration of this figure, see Rowley, II, plate 105. The young man's left ear is visible through his gauze-thin cap, which provides a conservative example of Ambrogio's interest in transparent drapery.

<sup>34</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers 153. In *Good Government in the City* Ambrogio shows a pack donkey moving into depth in a three-quarter rear view, quite possibly inspired by this particular passage from Pliny. For an illustration, see Meiss (at n. 14) 79. It should be noted here that in the lower, right-hand corner of the Laurentian *Crucifixion* at Assisi, several mounted horses are shown in a rear view. Perhaps Ambrogio either painted the foreshortened horses in this fresco, or else advised his brother Pietro on their composition. Of course, it is also possible that Pietro knew and was inspired by Pliny as well. For an illustration of the *Crucifixion*, see Dewald (at n. 25) plate 50.

<sup>35</sup> For an illustration, see Rowley, II, plate 120.

<sup>36</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers 129.

<sup>37</sup> For illustrations, see Rowley, II, plates 61, 65, and 66. Rowley dates the painting ca. 1330.

<sup>38</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers, 121.

<sup>39</sup> For illustrations, see Fowley, II, plates 19, 88, 104, 112, 154, 9, and 1, respectively. Early in his life of Ambrogio, Vasari remarks upon how well the painter placed his fingers in his pictures. See the Ricci edition, p. 167.

<sup>40</sup> For illustrations, see Rowley, II, plates 206, 207, and 208 for scenes in the city, and 222 through 230 for scenes in the country. For the argument that many of the activities shown in *Good Government in the City* and *Good Government in the Country* represent the Mechanical Arts as defined by Hugh of St. Victor, see Uta Feldges-Henning, "The Pictorial Programme of the Sala della Pace: A New Interpretation," *JWCI* 35 (1972) 145-62. My conclusions about the genre scenes do not preclude the possibility that Ms Feldges-Henning's hypothesis is correct, nor hers mine.

<sup>41</sup> See Jex-Blake and Sellers, 145.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.* 147. It should be noted that Ambrogio's landscape vista in *Good Government in the Country* is as rich and varied as those by Studius; it also includes a stream, woods, hills, harbours, villas, and shores.

<sup>43</sup> Naturally, the patron again doubtless determined to some extent Ambrogio's choices. And it must be remembered that in the Arena Chapel Giotto placed beneath the figures of Justice and Injustice terse landscape scenes which serve as forerunners of a sort to Ambrogio's far more ambitious landscapes. Finally, given the size of the Sala della Pace, the inspiration to develop the landscapes as Ambrogio did may have come in part from the challenge inherent in the subject when inserted into wall space of such magnitude.

<sup>44</sup> Particularly relevant are the following words from Alberti's *On Painting*, tr. John R. Spencer (New Haven 1956) 91: "I advise that each painter should make himself familiar with poets, rhetoricians and others equally well learned in letters. They will give new inventions or at least aid in beautifully composing the *istoria* . . . we who are more eager to learn than to acquire wealth will learn from our poets more and more things useful to painting." The passage follows a summary of Lucian's description of the *Calumny* of Apelles which became a popular subject in the later fifteenth century in Italy.



Figure 1





Figure 3



Figure 2

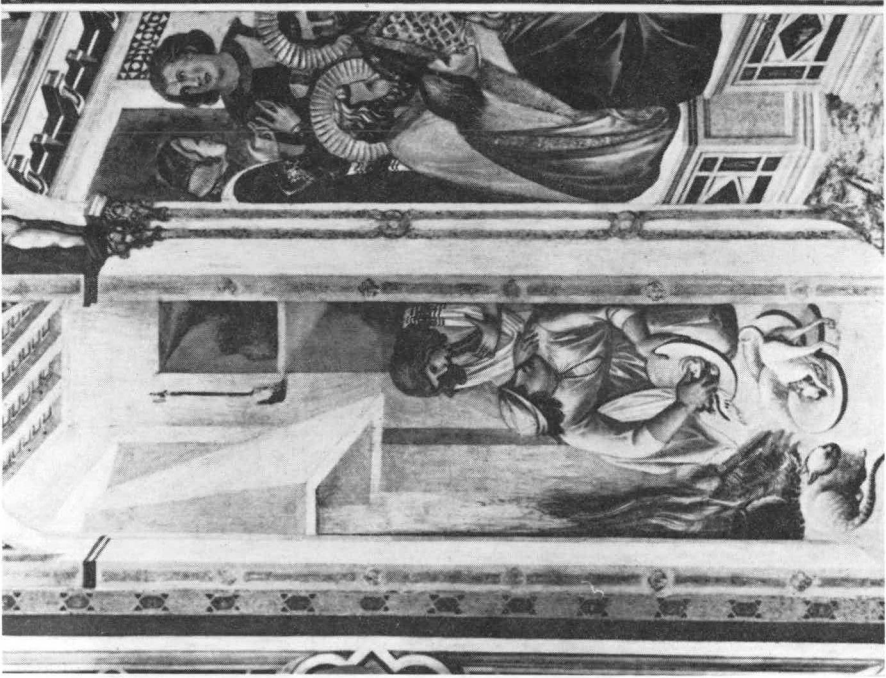


Figure 5

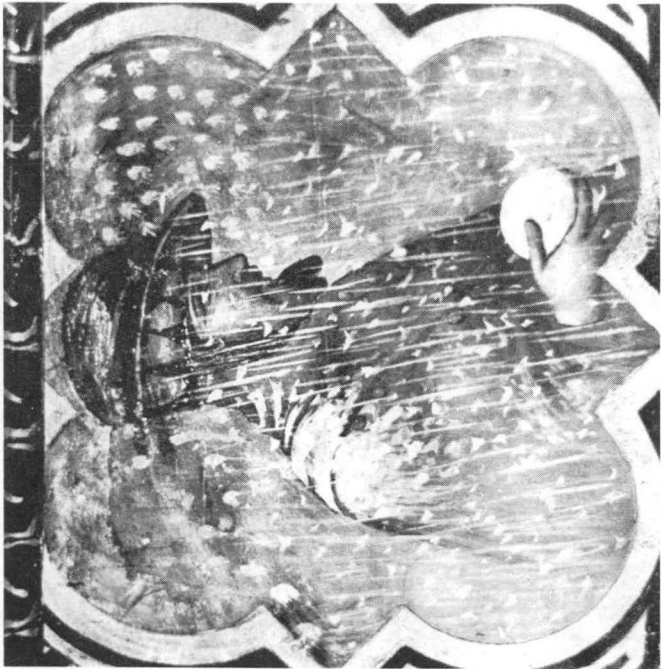


Figure 4

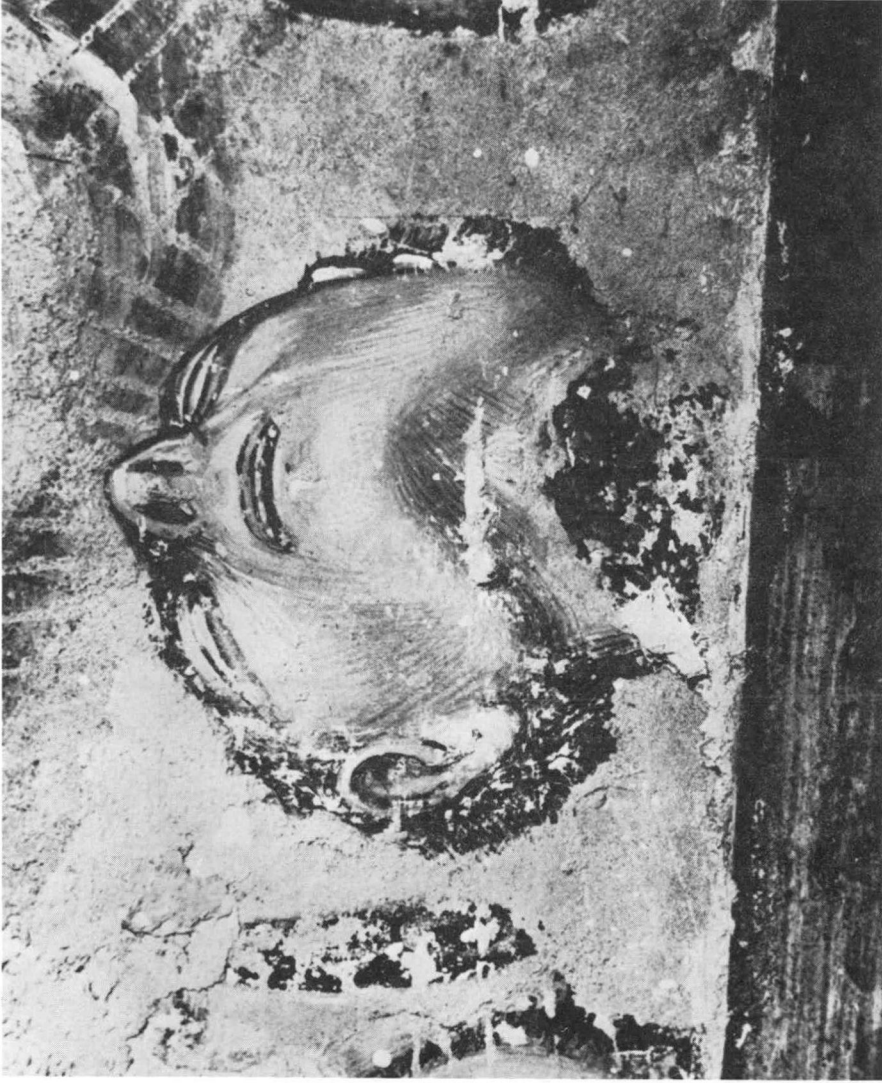


Figure 6