How Northern was the Northern Master at Assisi?

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SINCE CARLO VOLPE OBSERVED in 1969 that the so-called *Maestro oltremontano* or 'Northern Master' of Assisi was 'più probabilmente inglese che francese', the question of the origins of the painters of the upper walls of the right (north) transept of the Upper Church of S. Francesco (Figs. 1–3) has exercised several historians of the greatest early showcase of Italian narrative art.[1] These origins have been explored in a literature dominated by specialists in Italian and Byzantine art, and not by historians of northern Gothic art such as the present writer; and the conclusions have generally been the same, namely that the right transept was worked on by artists who were not only Italian but also French or English, and who remained content to work in distinctively native styles. The history of pre-Giottesque painting in the Upper Church at Assisi is thus held to be profoundly cosmopolitan, and reasonably so: S. Francesco's position as a harbinger of the Gothic style in Italy is empha-sised by its French-influenced rib-vaulted structure and architectural

[1] C. Volpe, 'La Formazione di Giotto nella cultura di Assisi', in *Giotto e i Giotteschi in Assisi*, intro. G. Palumbo (Rome, 1969), 15–59, esp. 22–4. The first insight into the northern character of the right transept murals was offered by A. Aubert, *Die malerische Dekoration der San Francesco Kirche in Assisi, Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der Cimabue-Frage* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 20–8, 87–91.

sculpture and by its extensive use, from the middle of the thirteenth cen-
tury, of stained glass, until then a predominantly northern medium.[2] The
possibility of English, as well as French, influence on so major a monu-
ment is therefore an exciting one, and can be placed in the context of a
distinguished literature on Anglo-Mediterranean artistic relations,
notably Pächt's justly celebrated paper on 'A Giottesque episode in
English Mediaeval Art' (1943) and Saxl and Wittkower's *British Art and
the Mediterranean* (1948). In fairness, these studies all concerned the
impact of Italy on England, and especially the contemporary project,
most closely associated with Panofsky, of tracing the roots of the
Northern Renaissance and of endeavouring to understand the destiny of
European, and especially northern European, figurative art in terms of
the dramatic interplay of its northern and southern artistic traditions. In
apparently reversing the flow of influence, the 'Assisi problem' better
resembles the instance of the famous chapter-house murals formerly at
Sigena in Aragon, produced, it is claimed, by English artists whose work
resembles the great twelfth-century Winchester Bible.[3]

    In this paper it will be argued that the case for specifically English
influence at Assisi is actually vastly weaker than that proposed for Sigena,
and that to understand the right transept we may have to look away from
thirteenth-century London or Paris. This is not to rule out categorically
the possibility of any English influence at Assisi; caution may simply help
us to expose and understand the kinds of assumption about artistic iden-
tity and experience which can be seen in practice to have influenced our
understanding of what are exceedingly complex monuments which defy
categorical definitions of personal, group or national style. The complex-
ity of the Northern Master's work seems to deepen as its study develops,
not least in the wake of the 1997 earthquake which left this part of the
church relatively undamaged, but which has led to the opportunity for

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[2] For recent work on the architecture and glazing of Assisi, see among others W. Schenkluhn,
*San Francesco in Assisi: Ecclesia specialis. Die Vision Papst Gregors IX. von einer Erneuerung der
Kirche* (Darmstadt, 1991); J. Weiner, *Die Bauskulptur von San Francesco in Assisi. Franziskanis-
che Forschungen*, 37 (Werl, 1991); F. Martin, G. Ruf, *Die Glasmalereien von San Francesco in
Assisi. Entstehung und Entwicklung einer Gattung in Italien* (Regensburg, 1997).
[3] For the foregoing see O. Pächt, 'A Giottesque Episode in English Mediaeval Art', *Journal of
the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), 51–70; and see also O. Pächt, *The Practice of Art
History: Reflections on Method*, transl. D. Britt (1999), p. 35; F. Saxl and R. Wittkower, *British
Art and the Mediterranean* (Oxford, 1948); and for Sigena, W. Oakeshott, *Sigena: Romanesque
Paintings in Spain and the Artists of the Winchester Bible* (1972); C. R. Dodwell, *The Pictorial
Arts of West 800–1200* (New Haven and London, 1993), pp. 372–3; and see also W.
Oakeshott, *The Artists of the Winchester Bible* (1945).

further scientific study. Findings of this study, which cast some doubt on the analysis of the sequence of work proferred by John White and Bruno Zanardi, have been made available to me by Professor Romano.[4] Aside from pointing to important discoveries about the working methods and techniques of the right transept painters—such as that at least some of them were using oil media—these open up the possibility that the Northern Master was working in much closer proximity to the great master Cimabue than has previously been thought. However, since the intention here is to reflect on the style and pictorial thinking and character of these remarkable painters, rather than on their relative chronology and techniques, we will pass over these first-hand technical issues except in so far as they relate to the purpose at hand: to weigh and consider the issue of artistic identity in exceptional workshops situations.

A key issue is whether or not the concept of a Northern Master as a distinct artistic personality, bringing into being an equally distinctive artistic idiom, is helpful. Hans Belting appears to subscribe to this view in his study published in 1977.[5] Belting saw the 'Northern' or 'Gothic' Master and his '*Gotische Werkstatt*' as having a vital conceptual role in the planning and execution of the right transept decorations, and as being a by-product of the most advanced Anglo-French court art of the period. Assisi thus bore witness to a milieu to which renewed critical attention had turned in the 1960s and 1970s following the work on 'court styles' by Robert Branner.[6] Belting's analysis is in many essentials correct; but here it will be suggested that the intervention at Assisi of styles influenced by Gothic art was somewhat more complex than this apparently straightforward attribution implies. The right transept murals are surprisingly heterogeneous, witnessing to the co-existence of artists of different national origins, or of different training. In this sense they paraphrase the situation in the

[4] J. White and B. Zanardi, 'Cimabue and the Decorative Sequence in the Upper Church of S. Francesco, Assisi' and 'Cimabue and Assisi. Working Methods and Art Historical Consequences', in J. White, *Studies in Late Medieval Italian Art* (1984), pp. 110–34, 135–6. I am most grateful to Professor Romano for sending me drafts of her papers 'I maestri del transetto destro e la pittura romana' (to appear in *Il cantiere pittorico della Basilica Superiore di San Francesco in Assisi*) and 'L'inizio dei lavori di decorazione nella chiesa superiore. Pittori nordici e pittori romani fra Cimabue e Jacopo Torriti' a chapter from her book *La Basilica di S. Francesco ad Assisi. Artisti, botteghe, strategie narrative* (Rome, in press). Though our conclusions were arrived at separately, I much benefited from Professor Romano's stimulating and helpful opinions on the present paper.

[5] H. Belting, *Die Oberkirche von San Francesco in Assisi. Ihre Dekoration als Aufgabe und die Genese einer neuen Wandmalerei* (Berlin, 1977).

[6] R. Branner, *St Louis and the Court Style in Gothic Architecture* (1965); *Manuscript Painting in Paris during the Reign of Saint Louis* (Berkeley, 1977).

Winchester Bible itself, a famously complex and ambivalent achievement of English illumination. But national origin and training or experience are issues which should be kept apart, even if they commonly coincide. Belting's fundamental question about the work of the Northern Master, namely 'Wo aber ist dessen Heimat?', assumes, perhaps inadvisedly, that we are dealing with one style, with one homeland.[7] To be sure, components of this workshop idiom can be traced back to slightly earlier monuments of northern European art and architecture. Painters seldom emerge from a total vacuum. But, like so much in Assisi's quite exceptional history, the final result is a surprise. One can see why the impulses of evangelical Franciscanism under papal protection might favour radical but short-term gestures towards internationalism of this type. The analogy with contemporary 'Crusader art' in the Mediterranean is evident.[8] The point is that in attempting to read or diagnose this style, even if only to a limited degree, no claims will be made here about the identity of these artists so much as about their experience and, ultimately, what might be deemed to be the predicament of Franciscan art itself.

The Northern Master and his associates are agreed to have decorated the vault of the right transept and its three walls as far down as the dog-tooth string course beneath the wall passage and triforium. The blue vault was stencilled with gilt stars and painted with prominent crowned masks (Figs. 7, 8); the top of the east wall was provided with a large lunette image of the Transfiguration of Christ, with a Majesty of Christ in the lunette on the opposite west side; the north terminal wall was provided with two large figures set beneath fictive window tracery (Figs. 1–3); the triforium was filled on each side by six figures of the Apostles, and the blank wall surfaces above were adorned with gables and angel roundels (Figs. 24–5). All the work beneath the string course was executed by Cimabue's workshop. The two main analyses of these images are by Hueck and Belting. In 1969 Irene Hueck provided the first, and still in its essentials correct, breakdown of the stylistic components of the right transept's upper walls.[9] One team of painters, allied to artists who worked on the portico of Old St Peter's in Rome either under Urban IV (1261–4) or Nicholas III (1277–80), executed the apostle figures, gables and angel roundels of the east triforium *c*.1270–5. This artist was Italian, and had

[7] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 182.
[8] See e.g. R. Cormack and S. Mihilarias, 'A Crusader painting of St George: "maniera greca" or "lingua franca"?', *Burlington Magazine*, 126 (1984), 132–41.
[9] I. Hueck, 'Der Maler der Apostelszenen im Atrium von Alt-St. Peter', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 14/2 (1969), 115–44.

an Italian, again possibly Roman, collaborator on the north wall, perhaps the young Torriti. A second team or master 'aus Frankreich oder England' executed the two lunettes and two of the vault masks; and a third related team executed the west gallery apostles and angel roundels. Belting's discussion basically refined Hueck's, the *Gotische Werkstatt* conceptualising and setting out the decorations of the transept, Italians entering it early and then becoming rivals to the first '*Gotischer Meister*'.[10]

When these paintings were begun is a famously disputed point which will not be reviewed exhaustively here. That the murals marked a departure from the self-evidently Italian decorative and figurative styles present in the nave murals of the Lower Church in the 1260s or 1270s is quite clear. With the exception of some of the stained glass, nothing else at Assisi looks like them. In assessing the relative chronology of the work in the transepts and crossing of the Upper Church, John White's discussion of the plaster sutures of the grounds in the transept and crossing concluded that the right transept was plastered and painted before the crossing vault and the intervention of Cimabue's workshop, and that the northern-influenced painters also began the plastering of the apse. Professor Romano and others, however, favour the idea that the crossing and transept shared scaffolding and that the northern-influenced painters were working side-by-side with Cimabue.[11] In this sense the Upper Church frescoes possess a relative chronology, the Northern Master either preceding or in some way cohabiting with Cimabue's shop. But a relative chronology is not an absolute one, and Assisi is beset with all the problems of a major yet largely undocumented building. Cimabue's intervention is commonly dated to after September 1278 by means of the tiny Orsini arms on the representation of the senate house in the Rome-Ytalia image of Cimabue's St Mark on the crossing vault, but before 1296, the date of a grafitto cut through Cimabue's paint in the passage at the junction of the apse and right transept.[12] The 'Orsini' evidence placing the work hereabouts in the years *c.*1278–80, and so within the pontificate of Nicholas III (1277–80) is strong if not absolutely probative. In fact, though there is no reason in stylistic terms why the Northern Master could not have worked at Assisi in the 1280s or even 1290s, a date towards

[10] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 91, 116–18, 192–3, 195–6; also J. T. Wollesen, 'Die Fresken in Sancta Sanctorum', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 19 (1981), 35–83.

[11] White, *Studies*, pp. 127, 144–5.

[12] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 87–97 for a summary; G. Marchini, *Le Vetrate dell'Umbria*. CVMA, Italy, I (Rome, 1973), p. 18, pl. CLXXXIV (4).

1290 and hence during the pontificate of Nicholas IV is probably unlikely, even if some authorities (e.g. Bellosi) favour it for Cimabue's intervention.[13] But since the present paper is not concerned predominantly with chronology, we will take a date of *c.*1280 as a working hypothesis for the decoration of the right transept, after the completion of some or all of the church's glazing, and after the formation of what appear to be 'sources' for components of the style to be identified later. This dating is therefore much later than that proposed e.g. by Cadei (1250s), Poeschke, Romano, and Pace (1260s)—though Professor Romano has recently revised her dating of the Northern Master to nearer 1280—somewhat later than Hueck (1270–5), and much in line with Belting and Martin (1275–80).[14]

I

Let us begin this discussion of the 'Northern Master' with Marchini's theory as to the English origin of the iconography of the great Transfiguration lunette which, together with the Majesty lunette opposite, has suffered greatly from the pigment reversal which occurs with the oxidisation of white lead and from the decay of their originally brilliant pigments (Fig. 1). The effect of this on the dazzling white robes of the Transfigured Christ has been particularly dismal. Many of these figures are in effect negatives. Nevertheless these pictures are amongst the most striking produced in the late thirteenth century. The Transfiguration high up beneath the vault on the east wall can be regarded as forming a triptych with the transept's Ascension window in the north wall and the

[13] See e.g. J. White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250–1400*, 2nd edn. (Harmondsworth, 1987), p. 191, also White, *Studies*, pp. 107–8 in response to C. Brandi, *Duccio* (Florence, 1951), pp. 127–34 n. 10; cf. also A. Monferini, 'L'Apocalisse de Cimabue', *Commentari*, NS 17 (1966), 25–55, 38–40, fig. 8. For scepticism about the importance of the Orsini arms and a date for Cimabue's work *c.*1288–90, in line with Brandi's chronology, see most recently L. Bellosi, *Cimabue* (New York, London and Paris, 1998), pp. 86–90, 159–62.

[14] A. Cadei, 'Assisi, S. Francesco: l'architettura e la prima fase della decorazione', and V. Pace, 'Presenze Oltremontane ad Assisi: Realta' e Mito', in A. M. Romanini, ed., *Roma Anno 1300. Atti della IV Settimana di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Medievale, Rome 1980* (Rome, 1983), pp. 141–74 and 239–46; S. Romano 'Pittura ad Assisi 1260–1280. Lo Stato degli Studi', *Arte Medievale*, 2 (1984), 109–40, 123–7; J. Poeschke, *Die Kirche San Francesco in Assisi und Ihre Wandmalereien* (Munich, 1985), pp. 19–23; F. Martin, *Die Apsisverglasung der Oberkirche von S. Francesco in Assisi. Ihre Entstehung und Stellung innerhalb der Oberkirchenausstattung* (Worms, 1993), p. 125; also J. Michler, 'Grundlagen zur Gotischen Wandmalerei', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 32 (1990), 85–136, 117–18.

Figure 1. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: east wall Transfiguration (above), Apostle arcade (below) (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Majesty (Belting's '*Gottesvision*') in the west wall lunette (Figs. 1–3).[15]
Though in its essentials a conventional representation, the Transfigur-
ation possesses one or two features worthy of comment: for example,
Christ holds a globe in His left hand, and is accompanied by God the
Father who indicates to Him from the periphery of the aureole (Fig. 4).
The inclusion of the First Person of the Trinity in the Transfiguration is
extremely unusual by Italian or Byzantine standards.[16] One might call it
a 'binity'—the glory of the only begotten of the Father (John 1: 14) since
the Holy Spirit is absent, unless we interpret the cloud from which God
emanates in an extremely specialised, though not unheard of, sense as the
Third Person.[17] The earlier Franco-Italian representation of the same
scene at Le Puy, for example, includes the Dove more normally found in
conjunction with the Baptism.[18]

The presence of the Father in the Transfiguration has been singled out
as key evidence in the delicate web of argumentation for English inspir-
ation in the right transept's decoration. In his monograph on the stained
glass of Umbria, Marchini observed that Transfigurations showing both
the Father and the Son occur in three English Psalters with Gospel minia-
tures of the early thirteenth century: BL MS Arundel 157, BL MS Royal
I.D.X., and Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.11.4.[19] Marchini omitted to
mention the inclusion of the same type of Transfiguration in the earliest,
most extensive, and perhaps most authoritative Psalter of this closely
related group, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 835, the so-
called Munich Psalter.[20] Fol. 24 of the Munich Psalter (Fig. 5) links the
Baptism and Transfiguration in a small homily on the relationship between
the Persons of the Trinity, the scenes depicting either the Third or the First
Person as well as the Second. In the Transfiguration, the Son stands within
an aureole emitting five (not six or eight) rays of light; behind and directly

[15] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 50–3; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, pp. 134–5.

[16] As in glazing of the Franciscans at Erfurt: E. Drachenberg, K. J. Maercker, C. Schmidt, *Die mittelalterliche Glasmalerei in den Ordenskirchen und im Angermuseum zu Erfurt*, CVMA (GDR vol. 1. 1) (Vienna, Köln, Graz, 1976), pl. 8.

[17] J. A. McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 9 (Lewiston/Queenston, 1986), pp. 114–15. That the cloud may just sig-
nify divinity is suggested by the Transfiguration on fol. 4 of the Floreffe Bible (BL MS Add. 17738).

[18] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pl. 89b.

[19] Marchini, *Vetrate*, p. 55: 'L'iconografia della Transfigurazione è tipicamente ed esclusiva-
mente inglese'; Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 52 n. 97, 193. See N. J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts, I, 1190–1250. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 4* (Oxford, 1982), nos. 24, 28, 51.

[20] Ibid., no 23.

Figure 2. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: north wall Ascension window (above), prophets; Cimabue, Lives of SS Peter and Paul (below window) (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).
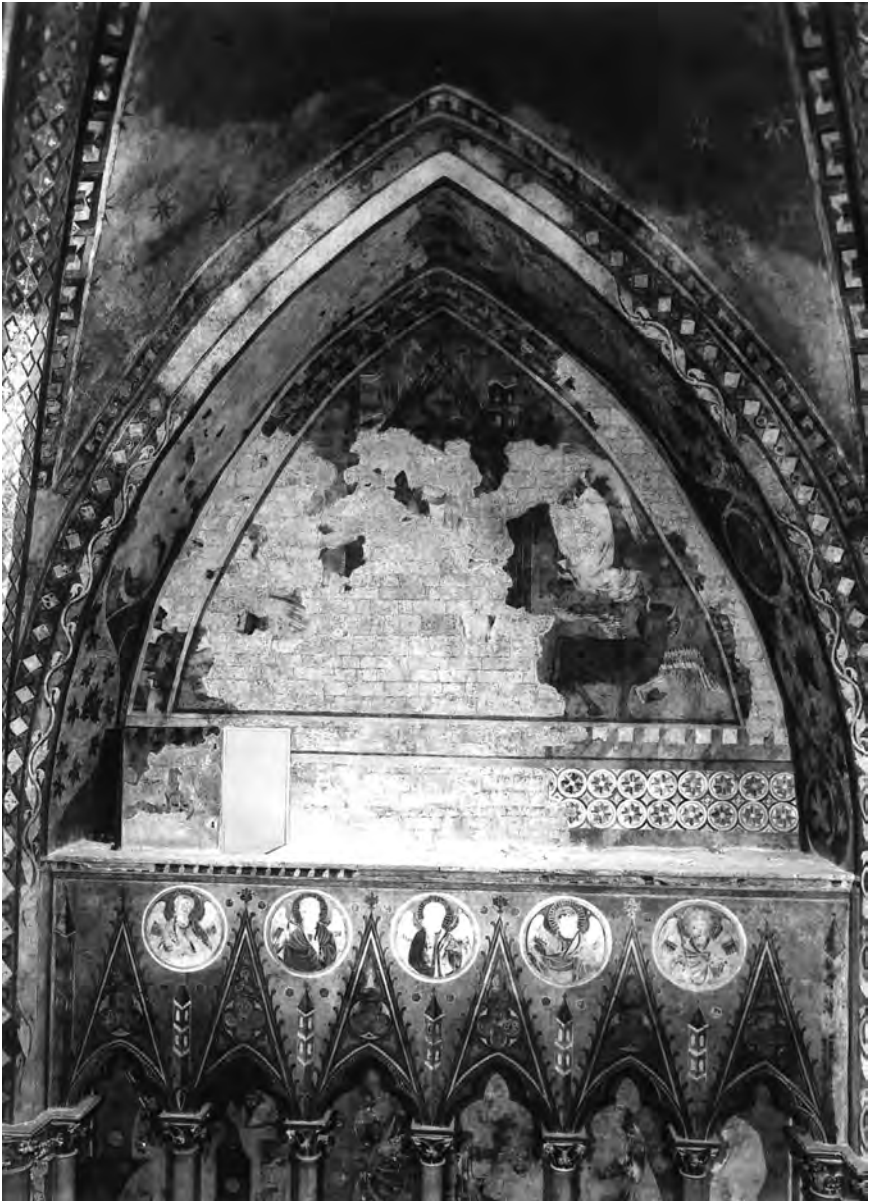
Figure 3. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall Majesty (above), Apostle arcade (below) (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 4. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: Transfiguration (detail)
(Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 5. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 835, fol. 24, Transfiguration (Foto Marburg).

above the aureole the top of the Father's head is visible within a second aureole, together with a banderole on either side reading *Transfiguratio Domini*. Fol. 4 of MS Royal I.D.X. and fol. 8 of MS B.11.4 show a similar arrangement with the head of the Father fully exposed. Munich's version, which aims by means of the eerily half-revealed God behind the Son to convey the mystery of the Trinity as revealed by the Son in the Transfiguration, is seemingly the most considered and hence doubtless the most authentic rendering amidst this group of manuscripts; it is reminiscent of the hierarchical arrangement of the contemporary Mercy Seat Trinity. That this association was understood in these manuscripts is shown by MS B.11.4, the artist of which comprehended and developed Munich's visual speculation on the intimate and mysterious relationship of the persons of the Trinity in its own representation of the Mercy Seat Trinity in its initial to Psalm 109 (fol. 130) in which the face of the Father is this time entirely covered by a large quatrefoil.[21]

In so far as these manuscripts include the Father as well as the Son, they resemble the Assisi scene. Yet compositionally they are different. One obvious difference is that the English examples do not include the thoroughly Italian or Byzantine broken-ground landscape at Assisi. There is also a subtler difference. At Assisi God emerges not from above the Christ, but from a cloud positioned to Christ's right outside the aureole, and indicates Christ. His head is fully exposed. MS B.11.4 retains the hierarchical arrangement of God above and behind the Christ in its Transfiguration and Trinity images. But at Assisi the 'binity' is arranged with God to Christ's right, a reversal of the common earlier practice in English Trinitarian iconography of Christ sitting on God's right in allusion to the opening line of Psalm 109 as also in the Creed, 'and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty'. In so transposing God and Christ, Christ's role at Assisi is as it were aggrandised.[22] It might of course have been the case that the hierarchical arrangement in the manuscripts was precluded in the mural in virtue of the elevation of the aureole of the Transfiguration right up to the apex of the wall rib, God as it were migrating downwards and sideways. This might also explain the unusual kneeling, not standing, positions of Moses and Elijah, which Belting

[21] G. Henderson, 'Narrative Illustration and Theological Exposition in Medieval Art', in K. Robbins, ed., *Religion and Humanism*. Studies in Church History, 17 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 19–35, 32–5.

[22] For English Gothic Trinity imagery, see G. Henderson, 'The Seal of Brechin Cathedral', in A. O'Connor and D. V. Clarke, eds., *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five': Studies presented to R. B. K. Stevenson* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 399–415.

nevertheless emphasises as allusions to Gothic Deësis, and hence to Judgement iconography.[23] But this practical necessity, if such it was, also confronted the painters with the option of placing God either to the right or the left of Christ; and their decision to place God on Christ's right must have been thoughtful. Had they known these English sources, they were moving away from them.

There are also other pressing objections to Marchini's theory. The manuscripts alluded to by him form a small and intimately related group, all linked directly or indirectly to Oxford, and all but one (MS Royal I.D.X.) with marked Augustinian, not Franciscan, associations. Their Transfiguration iconography does not occur elsewhere in English Gospel illustration in this period, and stylistically and historically the whole group stands well clear of the type of sources, principally later thirteenth-century ones, generally adduced in connection with the Northern Master's style. This is not to say that there was not a considerable tradition of visual speculation on the Trinity in medieval England which might have influenced Transfiguration imagery. One remarkable example is the mystical and affective Trinity picture at the start of the Anglo-Saxon Harley Psalter (BL, MS Harley 603).[24] A late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory showing the Transfiguration, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, includes the hand of the Father over the head of the Son.[25] Yet similar Trinitarian imagery occurs in the Gospels of Otto III (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm. 4453).[26] Closer still is the nearly contemporary thirteenth-century mural Transfiguration on the west wall of the west gallery at Gurk Cathedral in Carinthia, which includes a bust of God holding a scroll inscribed *filius dilectus* located over the Transfigured Son, though separated from Him by an oculus.[27] So far as is known, there

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[23] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 52.

[24] G. Henderson, 'The Idiosyncracy of Late Anglo-Saxon Religious Imagery', in C. Hicks, ed., *England in the Eleventh Century. Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 2 (Stamford, 1992), pp. 239–49, 243; B. Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought*. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 21 (Cambridge, 1997), p. 168.

[25] J. Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in Early Medieval England 700–1200*, (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1974), no. 16.

[26] G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, I (1971), fig. 416.

[27] O. Demus, *Romanesque Mural Painting* (1970), pp. 634–6, pls. 304–5; Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 52 n. 97. See further H. Wentzel, *Meisterwerke der Glasmalerei* (Berlin, 1951), p. 89 and E. Frodl-Kraft, 'Das Margaretenfenster in Ardagger. Studien zur österreichischen Malerei in der I. Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 16 (1954), 9–46, 20–1, 34–6, 43–4 (references owed to Professor Julian Gardner). It may be worth noting in this connection that Gurk possesses a rare example of (Venetian?) *Opus Alexandrinum* work, S. Hartwagner, *Der Dom zu Gurk* (Vienna-Frankfurt, 1963), pls. 124–5.

is no evidence for English influences at Gurk of the type discussed here, and the geographical gap between Gurk and Assisi via the Veneto—and possibly Venice itself, where representations of the Transfiguration were unusually common—is a good deal less considerable. In taste, finish and grandeur, Gurk's murals offer much more natural comparisons for the Northern Master's general approach than do the English miniatures.

Nor should we neglect the Franciscan character of this picture. In his study of exegesis of the Transfiguration, John McGuckin suggests that a Trinitarian inflection of this type was a noted, if not a major, theme in a few of the Greek Fathers.[28] But viewed locally within Franciscan exegesis, a prompt for this representation could have been proffered in a much more local and orthodox way by St Bonaventure's *Tree of Life*, which states that the Transfiguration is a revelation of the mystery of the Trinity, and its glory a prefiguration of the Resurrection.[29] As Bonaventure in his Life of St Francis implies, the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor as related in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9 offers a powerful subtext to the greatest Franciscan theophany, the Stigmatisation on Mount La Verna, not least in its emphasis on the esoteric nature of the events as a kind of *imitatio Christi*; the Ascension and Majesty images are thus disclosures of those things kept secret before the Resurrection.[30] The inclusion of God in the representation is in any event a cogent sign of what John Fleming has called the 'radical Trinitarianism' of Bonaventuran spirituality: the Transfiguration with God is located over the Apostles because the evangelical mission has been handed down to Christ and his Apostles and Franciscan followers from 'the father of all illumination' in the words of Nicholas III's Bull *Exiit qui seminat* of 1279.[31] In short, the artists at Assisi may perfectly well have been able to arrive at this formulation as a result of mainstream Franciscan promptings about the

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[28] McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, p. 113.

[29] E. Cousins, ed. and trans., *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, the Tree of Life, the Life of St Francis* (New York, Ramsey, Toronto 1978), p. 135; McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, p. 114.

[30] Cousins, *Bonaventure*, pp. 303 n. 3, 306–8.

[31] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 53 notes that there is much to suppose that in the right transept 'das Fragment eines älteren Programm-Konzepts überliefert worden ist', but whether this means that the Transfiguration was conceived as a type for a Stigmatization to be placed somewhere in the crossing is hypothetical. For Trinitarianism, see J. V. Fleming, *From Bonaventure to Bellini: an Essay in Franciscan Exegesis* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 153–5, for which reference I am indebted to the brief discussion (which accepts the English authorship of the Assisi mural) in A. Neff, 'Byzantium Westernized, Byzantium marginalized: two icons of the Supplicationes variae', *Gesta*, 38/1 (1999), 81–102, 82–7; and for Nicholas III's Bull see C. Mitchell, 'The Imagery of the Upper Church at Assisi', in *Giotto e il suo Tempo. Atti del Congresso Internazionale per la celebrazione del VII centenario della nascita di Giotto* (Florence, 1971), pp. 113–34, 129–30.

nature and significance of this Gospel event, rather than the stimulus of comparatively obscure English sources.

The Transfiguration is confronted in the opposite lunette by an image of Christ, presumably enthroned, beneath a large arched and gabled Gothic tabernacle surrounded by the four evangelist symbols, after Revelation 4 (Fig. 3). As both McGuckin and Miziolek have indicated, the notion of the Parousia and the Kingdom of God symbolising the fulfilment of the promise of the Transfiguration, in this case via the Ascension in the transept window, is familiar in earlier exegesis and art.[32] Mark 9: 1 indeed introduces its account of the Transfiguration with the imminence of the 'kingdom of God come with power'. This representation of the Majesty of Christ nevertheless requires comment. The image is patchily preserved, only the top of the canopy and the two right-hand evangelist symbols being clearly legible; and only a fragment of the shoulders and head of Christ is visible. Matthew's symbol comes at the top right, Luke's at the bottom right, implying that John was at the top left and Mark at the lower left. This order of Jerome's symbols, though known in German and Italian medieval art, departs from that usual in northern European Majesties of the period in exchanging John and Matthew.[33] How Christ was represented, and what he held in his left hand, is unknown.

Much the most striking (because unusual) element in the composition is the tabernacle framing Christ. The canopy consists of a single uncusped pointed arch, crocketed gable and lateral pinnacles, with an inscribed quatrefoil on the face of the gable with pointed trefoils in the interstices. Hans Belting very properly sees this lunette composition as a counterpart to northern European sculpted tympana, and he mentions the example of the earlier thirteenth-century canopied Marian image together with Christ on the *Porte romane* at Reims cathedral.[34] More peculiar in either an Italian or Gothic context, however, is the combination of a Majesty with a canopy, the tone of which is distinctly Apocalyptic: *ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus* (Revelation 21: 3). The model of the west facades of Amiens or Bourges might suggest a

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[32] McGuckin, *Transfiguration*, pp. 120–5; J. Miziolek, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 53 (1990), 42–60, 52–6.

[33] e.g. Niederzell auf der Reichenau, Demus, *Mural Painting*, pl. 242; Siena Pinacoteca, panel no. 1, H. W. Van Os, *Sienese Altarpieces 1215–1460*, I (Groningen, 1988), p. 13, fig. 3; cf. e.g. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, I, intro. figs 1–4.

[34] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 114, 189–90, pl. 120.

canopy with a Christ of the Last Judgement; but true Majesties are much more usually framed by mandorlas, and such Gothic models as were physically present at Assisi at this time, such as that on fol. 4 of the French Franciscan Missal now in the Tesoro, conform to this type.[35] Assisi's canopied Majesty lacks obvious Italian models, yet points forward to the representation of Christ on one of the faces of the Stefaneschi altarpiece (Rome, Vatican), and to the image of God seated on a high-backed quasi-gabled throne over the chancel arch of the Arena Chapel at Padua.[36] Gothic models dating to before *c.*1280 are equally unforthcoming, and it is probably significant that the only important later tradition of canopied Majesties is French. The most monumental French example is the Majesty on fol. 1 of the *Bible historiale* of Jean de Papeleu of *c.*1317 (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal MS 5059).[37] Similar canopied representations of a Majestic Christ occur in the *Te igitur* initials of a small group of early fourteenth-century Missals linked to the dioceses of Cambrai (Cambrai, Médiathèque municipale MS 153) and Châlons-sur-Marne (Chalons MS, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal MS 595).[38] From these a line of descent may extend to the enthroned Christs of the Turin-Milan Hours and the Ghent Altarpiece. Suffice it to add that this type of canopied Majesty is unknown in England before 1300.[39]

We saw earlier that Mark 9: 1 (Vulgate 8: 39) introduces the narrative of the Transfiguration with the imminence of the *regnum Dei veniens in virtute*. In so far as the Assisi Majesty is likely to have exemplified French, if not English, stimulus, its choice of a distinctly regal framing for the

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[35] Branner, *Manuscript Painting*, fig. 376; G. Morello, L. B. Kanter, eds., *The Treasury of Saint Francis of Assisi* (Milan, 1999), p. 137 no. 35.

[36] J. Gardner, 'The Stefaneschi Altarpiece: a Reconsideration', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 37 (1974), 57–103, 88 and pl. 16.

[37] P. Brieger, *et al.*, *Art and the Courts. France and England from 1259 to 1328* (Ottawa, 1972), no. 6, pl. 9; J. Gardner, 'The French Connection: Thoughts about French Patrons and Italian Art, *c.*1250–1300', in C. M. Rosenberg, ed., *Art and Politics in Late Medieval and early Renaissance Italy: 1250–1500*, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies, II (Notre Dame and London, 1990), pp. 81–101, 94 posits connections between this manuscript and Roman painters in France.

[38] H. Westermann-Angerhausen *et al.*, *Schatz aus den Trümmern. Der Silberschrein von Nivelles und die europäische Hochgotik* (Cologne, 1995), pp. 385–6, nos. 53, 54.

[39] The nearest analogy is supplied by the lozenge-shaped gable-like mandorlas of e.g. the Leiden Psalter, Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, I, no. 14, fig. 48 which, together with that exemplified in the Missal and Breviary of Châlons-sur-Marne (Brieger, *Art and the Courts*, no. 8, pl. 12) probably follow Carolingian precedents such as the Grandval and Vivian Bibles, Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts*, pls. 55, 58. The earliest English instances would include the early fourteenth-century embroidered panel of Christ in Majesty (that of John of Thanet) in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the canopied Trinity in the Ormesby Psalter, M. Rickert, *Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth, 1954), pls. 125, 135.

Majesty can be seen as a response to the text *regnum Dei* more proper to artists familiar with northern European patterns of visual thinking and association. In fact the idea of Christ's universal dominion, prefigured in the Transfiguration and revealed in the Ascension and Majesty, is given visual substance in more than one way in the right transept. Thus in the Transfiguration, Christ somewhat exceptionally holds up a globe of T-O form, its three differently coloured segments signifying Europe, Africa, and Asia perhaps in allusion to Psalm 95: 3–5.[40] We do not know if the Majestic Christ opposite held a similar globe; a book—as in the adjoining Ascension window—or a globe would be the normal alternatives for this type of image. French thirteenth-century Majesty images show a marked preference for T-O globes of this form, as in the Assisi Missal just cited, or on the small late thirteenth-century Parisian reliquary also in the Tesoro.[41] Italian images of Christ holding a globe, as for example the Ascension at S. Pietro, Tuscania, are rare, though globes are occasionally held by half-length Redeemer figures on Italian altarpieces. One English work of art commonly mentioned in connection with the Northern Master's style, the late thirteenth-century Westminster Retable made perhaps for the high altar of Westminster Abbey, has at its centre a full-length and statuesque depiction of Christ blessing and holding a globe filled with the firmament and life, and not of T-O form (Fig. 6). Elsewhere the present writer has suggested that this comparatively rare soteriological interpretation of Christ as *Salvator Mundi*, while possibly owing something to Apocalyptic inspiration, may itself descend from earlier French prototypes. Simone Martini's celebrated rethinking (at the sinopia drawing stage) of the image of a globe-holding Christ in the pediment over the main portal of Notre Dame des Doms at Avignon, under the patronage of Cardinal Stefaneschi, was itself probably a harmonising response to the iconography of French great church portals as much as to Sienese polyptichs.[42] In any event, the chronological and thematic relationship of the Westminster Retable's Christ to the right transept at Assisi is not sufficiently positive for any conclusion to be drawn.

One further and comparatively unremarked-upon aspect of the

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[40] J. B. Harley and D. Woodward, eds., *The History of Cartography, I. Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (Chicago and London, 1987), pp. 286–370.
[41] Branner *Manuscript Painting*, figs. 260, 269, 275, 376, 390, 401; Morello and Kanter, *Treasury*, pp. 137, 163.
[42] For discussions see P. Binski, 'What was the Westminster Retable?', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 140 (1987), 152–74, 168 and A. Martindale, *Simone Martini. Complete Edition* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 181–3, pl. 98.
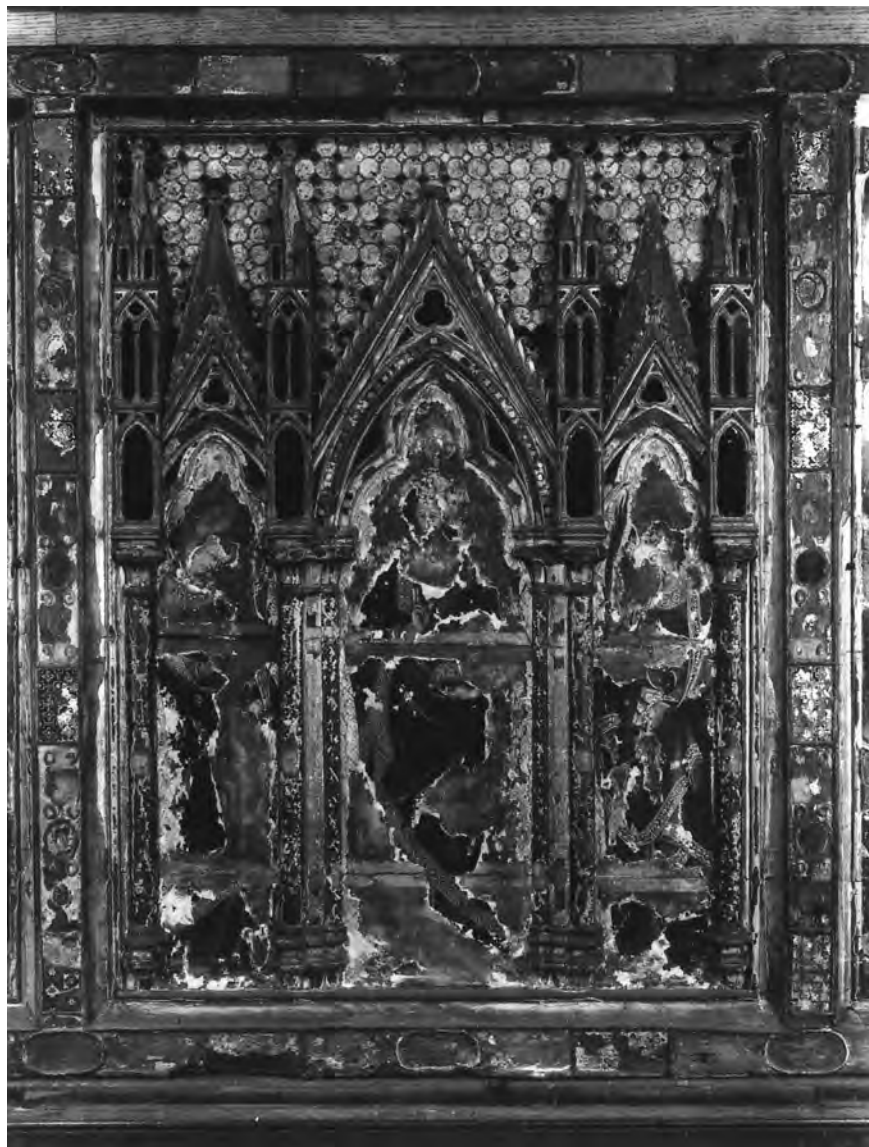
Figure 6. London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Retable, central section with Christ (centre), St Mary and St John (Warburg Institute).

iconography of the dominion of Christ in the right transept deserves discussion. The vault of the right transept, spangled conventionally with gilt stars like the vault of the Nicholas III's oratory of Sancta Sanctorum in Rome of the later 1270s,[43] possesses a series of eight venerable crowned and bearded heads painted in the lower corners of the vault webs (Figs. 7, 8). The crowns in part overlap the rib ornamentation as if they were an afterthought or correction.[44] To adorn any vault in exactly this way, whether Gothic or not, is unusual. As Belting notes, the heads can be thought of as acting as corbels, and to this we might add the use of masks or carved heads on roof bosses in much Gothic art. But here the masks are located oddly, neither in the position of a corbel nor of a boss; they are elements drawn from a Gothic vocabulary, yet organised in terms of a syntax unfamiliar to Gothic art. The present writer knows of no contemporary northern European vault murals of this period that deploy masks of this size in quite this way; and if analogies are to be sought they are to be found almost certainly in French, not English, practices.[45] Cimabue in comparison employed Atlantes at the corresponding points on the crossing vault, as had the vault painters of the Lower Church. Two of the eight heads on the east side of the vault nearest the Transfiguration are especially striking: they are very large, with prominent staring eyes, big protruding ears and abundant corn-yellow flowing leonine manes and beards which taper into the lower corner of the web (Fig. 8). Though wearing cylindrical, Italian or Byzantine-style, crowns rather than the Gothic fleuronned variety, their wild and venerable appearance is much more self-consciously Gothic than the remaining six on the vault, which are central Italian in style (Fig. 7).

How do these eight crowned quasi-corbel heads relate to the theologically lofty topics painted on the nearby walls and glass? They could be an epitome of the twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse. In the context of the parousial iconography of the transept, they might also signify those earthly dominions over which Christ is to hold sway. In his exposition of the eternity of Christ's kingdom, the twelfth fruit of the *Tree of Life*, St Bonaventure says that 'He indeed is King who has on his garment and on

[43] C. Pietrangeli, ed., *Sancta Sanctorum* (Milan, *c.*1995), p. 113, fig. 124.
[44] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 112.
[45] Ibid., pp. 112, 183–4. The location of figures at vault springings may, like the architecture of S. Francesco, reveal western French influence, see R. Branner, 'Keystones and Kings: iconography and topography in the Gothic vaults of the Ile-de-France', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, (Feb. 1961), 65–82. Cf. however the 15th-century vaults of the Marienkirche at Stralsund, H. L. Nickel, *Mittelalterliche Wandmalerei in der DDR* (Leipzig, 1979), pls. 84–5.

Figure 7. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: vault mask (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 8. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: vault mask (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords . . . whose kingdom will not be destroyed and whom all tribes and peoples and tongues will serve throughout eternity'.[46] Thus Christ is the prince of the kings of the Earth (Revelation 1: 5). The role of these royal corbel figures in supporting Francis's and Christ's church makes expository sense as a corollary of Christ's dominion, the natural end of the evangelical, and Franciscan, mission. Christ transfigured holds up the World, and the Evangelists accompany His Majesty opposite; the Apostles stand in the triforium beneath. On the adjacent great crossing vault the Evangelists reappear in Cimabue's work at the corners of the Earth addressing their Gospels to Judea, Italy, Greece and Asia; and Cimabue finished the lower walls of the right transept with the Acts of the Apostles. The fundamental continuity with Cimabue's work needs therefore to be stressed. These apparently marginal heads contribute meaningfully to what stands as one of the most powerful assertions in medieval art of the spread of Christ's mission to the ends of the Earth since the great Romanesque portal of the narthex at Vézelay.

II

The mixture of styles apparent in the masks on the vault is symptomatic to the present writer of the heterogeneous nature of all the work on the upper walls of the right transept. Technically too the situation was far from straightfoward. Some methods of preliminary treatment were known in both Latin and Greek painting, such as the incised drawing found on the figure of Moses in the Transfiguration. Thoroughly in keeping with Italo-Byzantine decorative methods is the consistent use throughout these 'Gothic' murals of haloes with gilded relief radiating patterns. It has not been sufficiently stressed that these halo designs are alien to the type of Gothic painting usually cited in connection with the Northern Masters' origins, notwithstanding their occurrence in Germanic painting.[47] Variations in the delicacy and number of striations of these radiating halo patterns show that the painters who set the haloes of the Transfiguration also set those of the Apostles in the west gallery opposite, since their slightly coarse designs contrast with the finer detailing of the largely

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[46] Cousins, *Bonaventure*, p. 169.
[47] Demus, *Mural Painting*, pls. 298, 305; cf. also the south transept murals at Braunschweig cathedral.

destroyed but more Romanising Apostles in the east gallery beneath the Transfiguration (Figs. 9–12). This weaving and criss-crossing of styles and techniques is characteristic of the right transept's upper walls and galleries. That techniques and styles do not always match is shown too by the use by all the painters of lead white grounds, the oxidisation of which explains the blackening and reversal of tones that are such common features of the east end of the Upper Church. The use of lead white is true also of Cimabue's work, despite the fact that much of this is in true fresco, and suggests that there was an important element of technical continuity between this 'northern' workshop and Cimabue's team.

This is stressed, finally, by the deployment of oil paint. The discovery of oil on primed plaster or masonry provides strong evidence for the importation to Assisi of techniques unusual in central Italian painting in the thirteenth century, but typical of important Gothic painting in northern Europe: English examples of the period include the murals and panels in Westminster Abbey, and regional schemes at Horsham St Faith (Norfolk) and South Newington (Oxfordshire); in France, the same technique was used in the spectacular murals at the east end of Angers cathedral.[48] From it we may deduce that the painters of the right transept were not simply Italians engaged in an elaborate mime of Gothic art while adhering to their particular technical traditions, but had among their number painters trained in the north. In this respect at least the use of the term 'oltremontano' is not idle.

Comparatively few areas of the upper walls are free of stylistic weaving. The 'purest' styles are those of the Romanising east gallery Apostles and angels. But this does not mean that the remainder are exactly hybrids. Nothing in the style of the northern-orientated painters suggests anything quite so settled or resolved, since the inconsistencies are never quite ironed out. The Transfiguration has the appearance of a mural drawn by one team but painted collaboratively. Some such mingling might explain the somewhat schematic handling of the drapery surfaces and clump of leaves in the lower right-hand section of the Transfiguration, naturalistic Gothic forms, combined with an 'Italian' broken ground (Fig. 1).[49] The

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[48] See P. C. van Geersdaele and L. J. Goldsworthy, 'The restoration of wall-painting fragments from St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster', *The Conservator*, 2 (1978), 9–12; also P. Binski and I. Freestone, 'The technique of the Westminster Retable: a preliminary report with an analysis of the glass components', in S. Horn Flugelsang, *et al.*, ed., *Norwegian Medieval Altar Frontals and related material (Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, Acta 11)* (Rome, 1995), pp. 59–71, 60–1. For Angers see below n. 91.

[49] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 195, 196, 199.

Figure 9. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: east wall Apostle (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 10. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: east wall Angel roundel (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 11. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall Angel roundel (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 12. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall Apostle (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

same basic lack of integrity marks the Majesty painting opposite (Fig. 3). As Pace notes, this too is a *mélange*.[50] Only four passages are truly legible: Matthew's angel, Luke's ox, the projecting beam-ends beneath the lunette, and the canopy. The angel was palpably inspired by some sort of Gothic model. The ox is very hard to place idiomatically but does not look Gothic; the dentils are clearly Italianate; and the Gothic canopy is topped by a Cimabuesque townscape with obliquely set buildings related implausibly to the gable beneath, sketched out by a hand close to that of the Apostles on the east gallery. This mix, here approaching a bricolage, is much like the cluster of hands working on the vault masks at the top.

The Apostle galleries and angel roundels beneath the two lunettes with the Transfiguration and Majesty are arguably the most complicated areas of all, not least because it is here that much of the underdrawing of the figures has been exposed by the decay of pigment applied *secco*. Though poorly preserved, the Apostles in the east gallery are generally agreed to have been Romanising in style.[51] The figures, broad and classical in stature, with ample expanses of striated drapery, were set on a single pale blue ground. The drawing of the faces of the angels in the roundels above them agrees with them in style, with pretty, finely drawn features, hair arranged in proto-Cimabuesque curls with a hair-band, and the same delicately wrought haloes (Figs. 9, 10, 25). The west gallery figures are however better preserved and strikingly different. Unlike those on the east they are set on a red-blue counterchanged ground studded with large gilded five-petalled relief rosettes (Fig. 13).[52] As noted, the haloes more closely resemble those in the Transfiguration. The drawing of the angels also differs from those opposite: the hairstyles are looser and more flowing, and the drawing slightly rougher, than on the east side. The features of one of the angels, the first from the left, are amongst the most Gothic of any in the transept, with large feline eyes (Fig. 11). They resemble somewhat the facial features in the Transfiguration mural.[53] But small flecks of terre verde paint on the features indicate that the flesh tones were built up in an Italian (dark-light), not a Gothic (light-dark) manner.

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[50] Pace, 'Presenze', for an account of this problem; also Cadei, 'Assisi', p. 151; M. Bagnoli, 'San Francesco in Assisi. Gli affreschi del transetto nord della Basilica Superiore', in V. Pace and M. Bagnoli, eds., *Il Gotico europeo in Italia* (Naples, 1994), pp. 195–206, 200–4; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, p. 127.

[51] Hueck, 'Der Maler'; Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 116; for technical peculiarities in the east gallery, White, *Studies*, pp. 120–1, 127. For Torriti and Assisi, see most recently Bellosi, *Cimabue*, pp. 84–90.

[52] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 116; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, p. 135.

[53] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 197.

The west gallery Apostles are especially problematic (Fig. 24). Again the paintwork is out of key with the preliminary drawing. *Pentimenti* can be seen in the facial features: the Apostle on the far right has two left ears clearly indicating reworking if not total repainting (Fig. 12), and several of the Apostles, including Paul, have facial features which do not quite fit the profile of the head (Fig. 13). Unlike the finely delineated Apostles on the east side, the faces of the Apostles on the west side have unnaturally large staring eyes, bulbous noses and mouths with neat pink rosebud lips and drooping moustaches, quite unlike the underdrawing of the angel heads above. St Paul can stand as a model. These features, which are very hard to place in the history of contemporary painting, do not correspond to anything else by the Gothic workshop, and point to a considerable coarsening of style as work progressed from underdrawing to full colour.[54]

Belting regards the west gallery Apostles as a sub-group of the Gothic workshop, an opinion in line with the observation that these particular painters made the same sort of halo. Unlike the earthbound and classicising Apostles in the east gallery, the west Apostles have a Gothic hovering tip-toe stance (Fig. 24).[55] The manner in which the profiles of these standing figures float in relation to the arcading is not entirely convincing, for it is as if models were being used which had been developed for some other context. Their bodies are slimmer and more active than those on the east side, and in some cases the garments fall and turn in smooth undulations and Gothic meanders especially notable on the second Apostle from the left, whose cloak is pulled tight across his right forearm and breast. In one case, St Paul (Fig. 13), the draperies are broken by a complex of shooting drapery with the same fluid hemlines as found on figures in the Transfiguration opposite. The consequences of this simplification and broadening of surfaces are apparent in the decoration of the cloak of the fourth Apostle from the left with decorative eight-pointed stars, not unlike the cloth of honour and surrounding walls of Duccio's Rucellai Madonna of the mid 1280s.[56] The fact that the detailing of the painted arches and gables on the wall over the west Apostle gallery is more authentically French than that of the painted arches opposite may be

[54] But cf. Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 197. Contrary to Belting, the repainted heads of the 'St Paul' type bear no relation at all to the vault corbels, some of which are magnificently subtle essays in central Italian draughtsmanship, very close to the two large standing figures by the north window.

[55] Ibid., p. 198.

[56] J. White, *Duccio: Tuscan Art and the Medieval Workshop* (1979), p. 37 and fig. 17.

Figure 13. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall, St Paul (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

relevant to this. But to judge from the rather more old-fashioned drawing of some of the west side figures such as the third, youthful, Apostle from the left on the west side, which 'Gothic' is still open to debate: the absolutely up-to-date detailing of the gables above notwithstanding, the burly hip-shot physique of this figure (Fig. 14) is reminiscent of the north transept statues of Reims cathedral or the drawings of Villard d'Honnecourt of a generation or two earlier.[57]

This restless lack of conviction could be taken to be evidence for the happy co-existence of painters of different origins, or traditions, or model-books, or different technical habits and resources; or for longeurs in the execution of the pictures leading, as in the Winchester Bible, to rethinking and reworking. It could also indicate a measure of experimental co-operation between media peculiar to the situation in the Upper Church in the 1270s and 1280s. Here the Upper Church's new stained glass might be a factor, since wall painters would have to adjust their approach to a building already dominated by coloured glass. Hueck, Belting, and Martin all agree that the apse and transepts were glazed before the start of any painting in the upper church. The subject-matter of the right transept Ascension window—itself close in style to the St Francis Master of the Lower Church nave murals—which Martin dates to *c*.1275, was taken into account by the painters who added the two large figures beneath fictive tracery either side of the window, and who appear to point up to it.[58] Belting goes further, and argues for the completion of the nave glazing before the start of painting.[59] Hueck's analysis of the 'St Peter' master in the east Apostle gallery in the transept posits links with the more romanising glazing of the nave.[60] Belting and Martin see links with stained-glass procedure in the red-blue counterchanged ground of the west gallery; and both see the heterogeneity of these painting as being a component too of the 'Frenchified' group of windows of the church first discussed fully by Marchini.[61]

The links are certainly suggestive. Of the 'Frenchified' group the most

[57] W. Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140–1270* (1972), pl. 241; H. R. Hahnloser, *Villard de Honnecourt* (Vienna, 1935), pl. 55; cf. Pace, 'Presenze', p. 244.

[58] Hueck, 'Der Maler', 131; Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 184; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, pp. 126, 133, 134; White, *Art and Architecture*, p. 185.

[59] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 183, 193; cf. Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, p. 124.

[60] Hueck, 'Der Maler', 128–9.

[61] Marchini, *Vetrate*, pp. 38–58; Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 133, 184, 193; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, p. 136; Martin and Ruf, *Glasmalereien*, pls. 74–127; M. Lisner, 'Die Gewandfarben der Apostel in Giottos Arenafresken. Farbgebung und Farbikonographie', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 55/3 (1990), 309–75, 344–53.
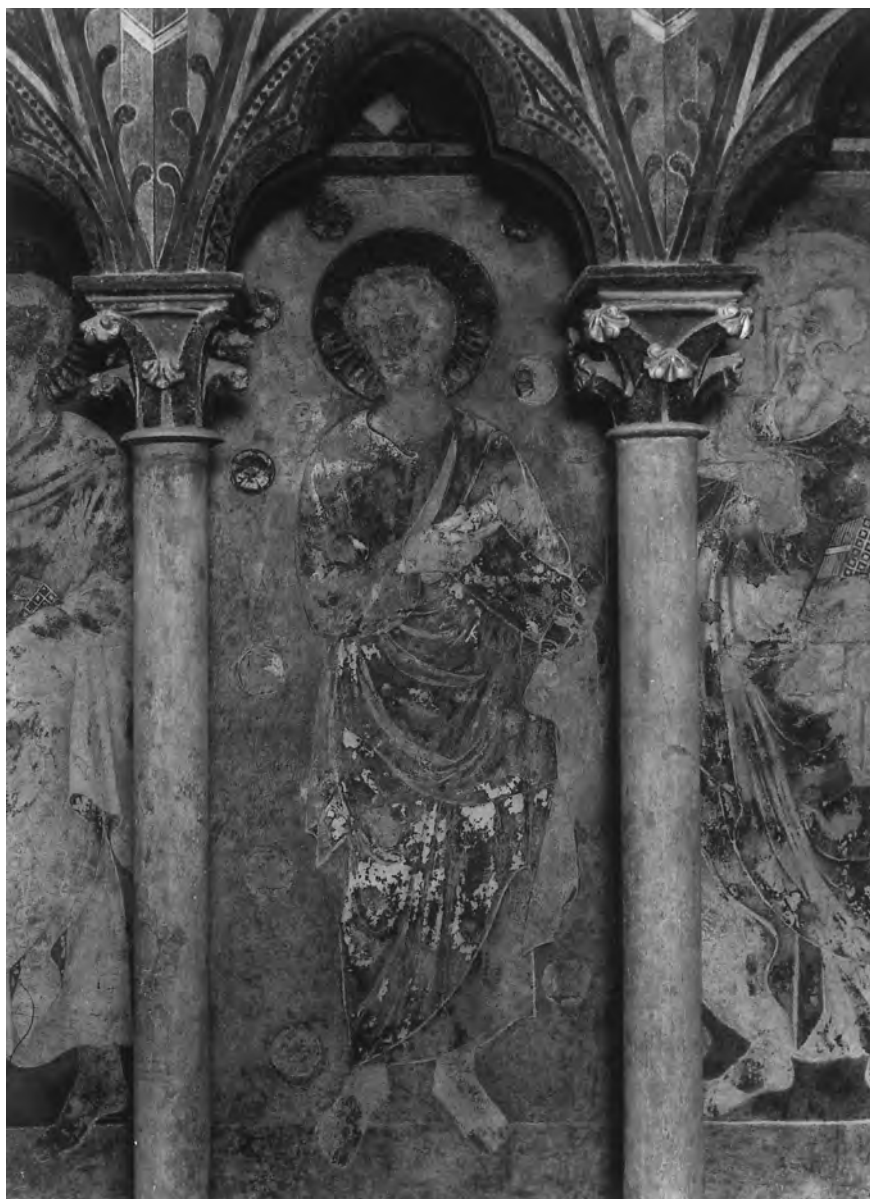
Figure 14. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall, Apostle (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

important are the left transept window (Marchini no. IX) and the two
right-hand nave windows nearest the crossing (Marchini nos. III and IV).
The left transept window showing the Virgin Mary, Virgin saints and
scenes from Genesis, is probably the most purely Gothic work at Assisi;
the style owes much to French or (better) Franco-German glazing, but
Bennett has indicated links too with the Bagnoregio Bible (Bagnoregio
cathedral) once in the possession of St Bonaventure, a manuscript with
illuminations which resemble a small group of English manuscripts cen-
tred on the Windmill Psalter (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS
M102) dating perhaps to the 1280s.[62] Though its striking yellow, green
and ruby palette and conspicuous use of rosette motifs resemble the
Gothic work in the right transept, window IV on the right side of the nave
before the junction with the right transept showing St James and St
Andrew is more important (Fig. 15): the bulk and gestures of the figures
are closer to the west Apostle gallery, as are the peculiar facial types with
the same oversized and uncoordinated staring eyes with clearly differen-
tiated irises and pupils.[63] This odd setting of the eyes also occurs in the
underdrawing of the fourth angel from the left on the west gallery of the
right transept (Fig. 16). Similarities of this order might well point to a
level of cooperation between the right transept painters and the nave
glaziers, a situation anticipating the employment of Cimabue on the great
oculus of Siena cathedral a decade or so later. Whether or not the wall
and glass painters were actually the same people seems less easy to
demonstrate: the architectural motifs painted on the west gallery are well
in advance of anything in the nave glazing, a consideration which might
demonstrate either the anteriority of the glazing, or the use of a separate
strain of modelbooks, or both.

What the glazing may suggest is a level of site-specific interaction
between the media, which in turn may account in part for the more het-
erogeneous aspects of the right transept murals, which have the appear-
ance of experimental works, pluralistic in technique, drawn or painted by
northern-trained artists closely supported by Italian painters.

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[62] Marchini, *Vetrate*, pp. 38–43, pls. xxv–xxxiv; A. Bennett, 'La Bibbia di Bagnoregio', in Pace
and Bagnoli, *Gotico europeo*, pp. 403–14, 408–10. The small birds which occur in the left transept
window are also reminiscent of English illuminated marginalia of the 1280s or later, as in the
Alphonso and Bird Psalters, see L. F. Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285–1385. A Survey of Man-
uscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 5* (Oxford, 1986), nos. 1, 10.
[63] Marchini, *Vetrate*, pp. 45–9, pls. xxxv–xxxvi; Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 195, 198; Martin,
Apsisverglasung, pp. 131; Lisner, 'Giottos Arenafresken', 350, figs. 18, 19.

Figure 15. Assisi, S. Francesco, window IV, right side of nave: St Andrew, detail.

III

Since oil painting on primed plaster was practised in England in the later thirteenth century, and since a number of scholars have been content to see an English dimension in the 'Gothic' art of the right transept, we should return now to the question 'which Gothic?' A review of the

Figure 16. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall Angel roundel (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

iconography of the pictures suggested that little progress would be made towards identifying an English identity at Assisi solely on those grounds. In this section we will review the evidence for an English style at Assisi before examining its painted architecture.

The Northern Master or his followers had no career beyond the Upper Church, and neither the general pictorial formulation of the right transept nor its details found general assent in Italy, not even in those places, such as the Sancta Sanctorum of Nicholas III, with close historical connections to Assisi's patronage.[64] Nothing exactly like it survives anywhere. Though there is one documented instance of a painter bearing an Italian name employed at the court of Henry III of England (1216–72), there is no documentary evidence for English painters working in Italy before the Avignonese papacy of John XXII.[65] English thirteenth-century pictorial art was known in influential quarters in the form of *Opus anglicanum* imported to Italy and to papal circles, notwithstanding the lack of any decisive links between that luxury medium and the type of work at Assisi.[66] It is inherently likely that English illumination was known in Italy. One extremely important Anglo-Norman Apocalypse manuscript, belonging to the so-called 'expanded Metz' recension, and forming an important part of discussions of Cimabue's Apocalypse at Assisi, namely the Gulbenkian Apocalypse (Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian MS L.A. 139), was in Italy at the time of its discovery, though from what time is unclear.[67] Adelaide Bennett's

[64] Pietrangeli, *Sancta Sanctorum*; S. Romano, *Eclissi di Roma. Pittura murale a Roma e nel Lazio da Bonifacio VIII a Martino V (1295–1431)* (Rome, 1992). For local illumination see also M. Assirelli and E. Sesti, *I Libri miniati del XIII e del XIV secolo* (Assisi, 1990).

[65] The only artist of the reign of Henry III with an Italian-sounding name is the painter William Florentyn associated principally with Guildford Castle: E. W. Tristram, *English Medieval Wall Painting. The Thirteenth Century* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 455–6; H. M. Colvin, ed., *The History of the King's Works*, II (1963), pp. 951–2. The English Franciscan illuminator (?), William the Englishman (d. *c.*1232), was buried in the Lower Church of S. Francesco, Tristram, *Wall Painting*, pp. 321–2; Marchini, *Vetrate*, p. 56. English painters were employed at John XXII's residence at Sorgues near Avignon in the early 1320s, see A. T. Luttrell and T. F. C. Blagg, 'The Papal Palace and other Fourteenth-Century Buildings at Sorgues near Avignon', *Archaeologia*, 109 (1991), 161–92, 174.

[66] A. G. I. Christie, *English Medieval Embroidery* (Oxford, 1938); J. Alexander and P. Binski, eds., *Age of Chivalry. Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400* (1987), pp. 157–61; N. J. Morgan, 'L'Opus Anglicanum nel tesoro pontificio', in Pace and Bagnoli, *Gotico europeo*, pp. 299–309.

[67] N. J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts, II, 1250–85. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 4* (1988), no. 128. I am inclined to set aside the Velletri Roll, ibid., no. 155, as French not English work (Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 204). The Oscott Psalter, ibid., no. 151, has been connected with Ottobuono Fieschi, though Gardner, 'French Connection', p. 88 is sceptical. I am grateful to Professor Gardner for allowing me to see his essay on this general subject 'Legates, Cardinals and Kings: England and Italy in the Thirteenth Century', now published in

discussion of the illuminations in the Bagnoregio Bible owned by St Bonaventure (d. 1274), which resemble the late thirteenth-century Windmill Psalter, has added an important dimension to our understanding of the style and date of the glazing of the south transept window in the Upper Church of S. Francesco.[68] The Bagnoregio Bible and the Ascoli Piceno cope, probably commissioned by Gregory X (1271–6) and given to Ascoli by the Franciscan Nicholas IV (1288–92), are in fact the only two surviving works of undoubtedly English style nearest to the circle of Assisi at this time.[69] But no matter how prestigious, neither could of itself 'explain' the Northern Master.

The period in which the right transept was being painted coincided too with the employment by the court and abbey at Westminster of Roman Cosmati mosaicists between the mid-1260s and 1280s.[70] This, much the most significant and coherent eruption into English medieval art of Italian ideas, was stimulated by the close connections with the papal curia of Abbot Richard de Ware (1259–83), by the fastidious and demanding tastes of Henry III (1216–72) and, almost certainly, by diplomatic links between Edward I (1272–1307) and Charles d'Anjou. Of all the Cosmati mosaic works at Westminster, Henry III's own tomb, underway at the latest by 1280, stands along with the great sanctuary pavement as the most eloquent example of the Anglo-Italian link. Its design in

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M. Seidel, *L'Europa e l'arte italiana* (Collana del Kusthistorisches Institut in Florenz, 3) (Venice, 2000), pp. 74–93. For discussion of either the Lisbon or the related Abingdon Apocalypses in the context of Cimabue's Apocalypse, see I. Hueck, 'Cimabue und das Bildprogramm der Oberkirche von San Francesco in Assisi', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 25/3:1981, 279–324; I. Carlettini, 'L' Apocalisse di Cimabue e la Meditazione Escatalogica di S. Bonventura', *Arte Medievale*, 2nd ser. 7/1 (1993), 105–28. Cf. however P. Klein, 'Introduction: the Apocalypse in Medieval Art', in R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1992), pp. 159–99, 194.

[68] Bennett, 'Bibbia'.

[69] R. B. Fanelli, *Il Piviale Duecentesco di Ascoli Piceno. Storia e Restauro* (Ascoli Piceno, 1990).

[70] See among others P. C. Claussen, *Magistri Doctissimi Romani: die römischen Marmorkunstler des Mittelalters (Corpus Cosmatorum, I)*. Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte und christlichen Archäologie, 14 (Stuttgart, 1987); also, in relation to the present issue, the review of the same by S. Romano, *Arte Medievale*, 2nd ser. 2/2 (1988), 311–14, 314 'E a questo proposito non si può fare a meno di pensare, mi sembra, che la "situazione Westminster"—chuinque sia, in fondo, il suo protagonista—si dimostra singolarmente e significativamente affine a un'altra, altrettanto e anche più famosa e a mio parere strettamente contemporanea. Intendo il momento di attività della bottega oltremontana nel transetto nord della basilica superiore di Assisi: un maestro quasi certamente inglese (etc.)'; J. Gardner, 'The Cosmati at Westminster: some Anglo-Italian reflections', in J. Garms, A. M. Romanini, eds., *Skulptur und grabmal des Spätmittelalters in Rome und Italien*. Akten des kongresses 'Scultura e monumento sepolcrale del trado medioevo a Roma e in Italia', 1985 (Vienna, 1990), pp. 201–15; P. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets. Kingship and the Representation of Power 1200–1400* (New Haven and London, 1995), pp. 93–107.

important respects reflects the outlook of the workshop of Arnolfo di
Cambio, a protégé of Charles d'Anjou; and it is likely to be significant
that when, in 1280, Edward I brought stones from France for its decor-
ation, he had been in the company of the Prince of Salerno, Charles' son,
at Amiens as recently as May 1279.[71] Whether or not the movement of
Roman mosaicists to Westminster also entailed the transfer there of
painters of Italian origin, in line with the later movement of the Rusuti
from Rome to the court of Philippe IV, is however quite unknown; there
is certainly no documentary or material evidence for it.[72] Westminster's
romanitas seems to have been a thoroughly unrepresentative if beautiful
fluke.

The years towards 1280 are thus part of a pre-history of fully docu-
mented, broad and self-conscious artistic exchange between England and
Italy, and, with the exception of their fondness for English embroidery,
the indifference of Italian patrons to English art is more striking than
their susceptibility. Yet the hypothesis of English influence at Assisi has
been deep-rooted since Volpe; it was accepted by Marchini, and was taken
up by Hans Belting in his extended discussion of the genesis of the
Northern Master's style.[73] Belting's discussion is not in fact geared to
demonstrating direct English influence in the right transept. He states
instead that Assisi reflects now-lost idioms which were reflected in turn
both by English and French works of the second half of the thirteenth
century, the English works simply being better preserved.[74] His is thus a
'lost model' approach. The lost model was probably French, and arguably
Parisian, though (if I understand his arguments correctly) it participated
in a reservoir of styles also known in southern England. Martin takes the
English analogies more seriously; and other commentators, notably Pace
and Bagnoli, explore these links while attending to the possibility that
slightly older English models were also known to the painters of the right
transept.[75] The key English works cited in connection with Assisi since

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[71] Ibid., pp. 102–3; see S. Murray, *Notre-Dame, Cathedral of Amiens. The Power of Change in Gothic* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 143 no. 26 after Amiens, Bibl. mun., MS 832.

[72] J. Gardner, 'Bizuti, Rusuti, Nicolaus and Johannes: some neglected documents concerning Roman artists in France', *Burlington Magazine*, 129 (1987), 381–3.

[73] Volpe, 'Formazione', p. 23–4; Marchini, *Vetrate*, pp. 50–8; White, *Art and Architecture*, p. 181, is guarded: this artist was 'possibly even English'.

[74] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p.194.

[75] Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, pp. 128–30; Pace, 'Presenze'; Bagnoli, in Pace and Bagnoli, *Gotico europeo*. See also L. Bellosi, 'Il pittore oltremontano di Assisi, il Gotico a Siena e la formazione di Simone Martini', in L. Bellosi *et al.*, *Simone Martini*. Atti del convegno 1985 (Florence, 1988), pp. 39–47.

Volpe have been the celebrated Westminster Retable in Westminster
Abbey, the Douce Apocalypse (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce
180), and the murals of St Thomas, St Christopher, and St Faith also in
the Abbey church (Figs. 6, 17, 18–20).[76] Belting was attracted to the
Retable and the Abbey murals first by their coordination of figurative and
architectural composition, which he saw as linked intimately with the
architectural *mise en scène* of the Assisi murals; his points about figure
style are secondary.[77] Since the time of Volpe, the Westminster Retable in
particular has become a focus for discussions of Gothic influences on
Sienese artists, notably Guccio da Manaia and Simone.[78]

The figures most usually compared to English or French work are the
Transfiguration and Majesty murals, the two Gothic crowned heads on
the vault, and the Apostles of the western gallery (Figs. 1–3, 8, 13–14).
Without doubt the baggy, loosely hanging fold-forms apparent in the
Transfiguration and Majesty murals are related generically to a late phase
of the so-called 'broad-fold' style of painting and illuminating which did
not appear in France or England much before about 1270, and in which
drapery forms undulate and have soft mobile curved hemlines.[79] Fold-
forms of this type do appear in central Italian painting, as in the work of
Duccio, but slightly later in the 1280s or 1290s, and then probably under
Gothic influence. The meandering hems are an extraordinarily useful
index of the type of Gothic work known to the Assisi painters. But con-
trary to the opinion of Volpe, Belting, Martin, and others, we do not
exactly see these hemlines on the Westminster Retable, or in its near rela-
tive the Douce Apocalypse (Figs. 17–18).[80] Douce's broad fold-forms are
stiffer, drier and flatter, and while those on the Retable undulate smoothly
they lack the developed sinuous profiles of those at Assisi, which do not

[76] For the Retable and its literature see most recently Binski, 'Westminster Retable', and Binski,
Westminster Abbey, pp. 152–67; and for the Abbey murals, ibid., pp. 167–74; for the Douce
Apocalypse, Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, II, no. 153 and bibliography, also no. 154. In
addition see F. Wormald, 'Paintings in Westminster Abbey and Contemporary Paintings',
Proceedings of the British Academy, 35 (1949), 161–76.

[77] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 185, 188–9, 200–1; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, pp. 129–30.

[78] Martindale, *Simone*, pp. 12, 65; J. H. Stubblebine, 'French Gothic Elements in Simone
Martini's *Maestà*', *Gesta*, 29/1 (1990), 139–52, 142; Bellosi, 'Pittore oltremontano'; E. Cioni,
'Guccio di Mannaia e l'esperienza del gotico transalpino', in Pace and Bagnoli, *Gotico europeo*,
pp. 311–23.

[79] Branner, *Manuscript Painting*; G. Vitzthum, *Die Pariser Miniaturmalerei von der Zeit des hl.
Ludwig bis zu Philipp von Valois*, (Leipzig, 1907); for a recent overview of post-1270 French illu-
mination, see D. Gaborit-Chopin *et al.*, *L'art au temps des rois maudits. Philippe le Bel et ses fils,
1285–1328* (Paris, 1998), pp. 256–334.

[80] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 200–1; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, pp. 129–30.

Figure 17. London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Retable, St Peter (Warburg Institute).

become a common feature of English figurative painting until the 1280s or 1290s. The head types differ in important respects, since those on the Retable and in the Douce Apocalypse have small, mobile peering eyes whereas those at Assisi are large and static, almost hypnotic. Also the basic anatomic conception of the Retable's figures, with exceedingly small

Figure 18. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 180, fol. 15v (p. 6) (Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art).

alert heads, nimble fingers and markedly fay supple postures, finds no counterpart in the broader more inert figures of the right transept. The Christ of the Transfiguration has an amplitude and a canon of proportions quite unlike the figures on the Retable, and none of the figures at Assisi possess the self-consciously complex but extremely accomplished postural and gestural language which is an obvious hallmark of the Retable and the Douce Apocalypse. The hands of figures in the Transfiguration are much more clumsily drawn, with broad palms and thick coarse fingers, than any shown on the Retable or in the Douce Apocalypse. The Westminster works are incomparably more exquisite. The same difficulties apply to the wall paintings of SS. Thomas, Christopher, and Faith in Westminster Abbey which are closer in scale to the images at Assisi (Figs. 19–20). Bar its architectural format, there is no compelling link to the broad powerful figures at Assisi in the slim wraith-like figure of St Faith, except the (by now commonplace) meandering hemlines of her draperies. A comparison of the kneeling St Thomas in the south transept with the angel of Matthew is similarly unenlightening: there is a generic relationship to be sure, but the detailed comparisons just do not work. Every distinctive mannerism of the Westminster group which makes it interesting and important in the history of European art is absent at Assisi.

As Julian Gardner first noted in his review of Belting's study, even if

Figure 19. London, Westminster Abbey: St Faith (RCHME, Crown Copyright).

we accept the analogies between this group of English works and the right transept at Assisi, a series of chronological issues remain unresolved.[81] Belting was inclined to follow the chronology of the comparative English

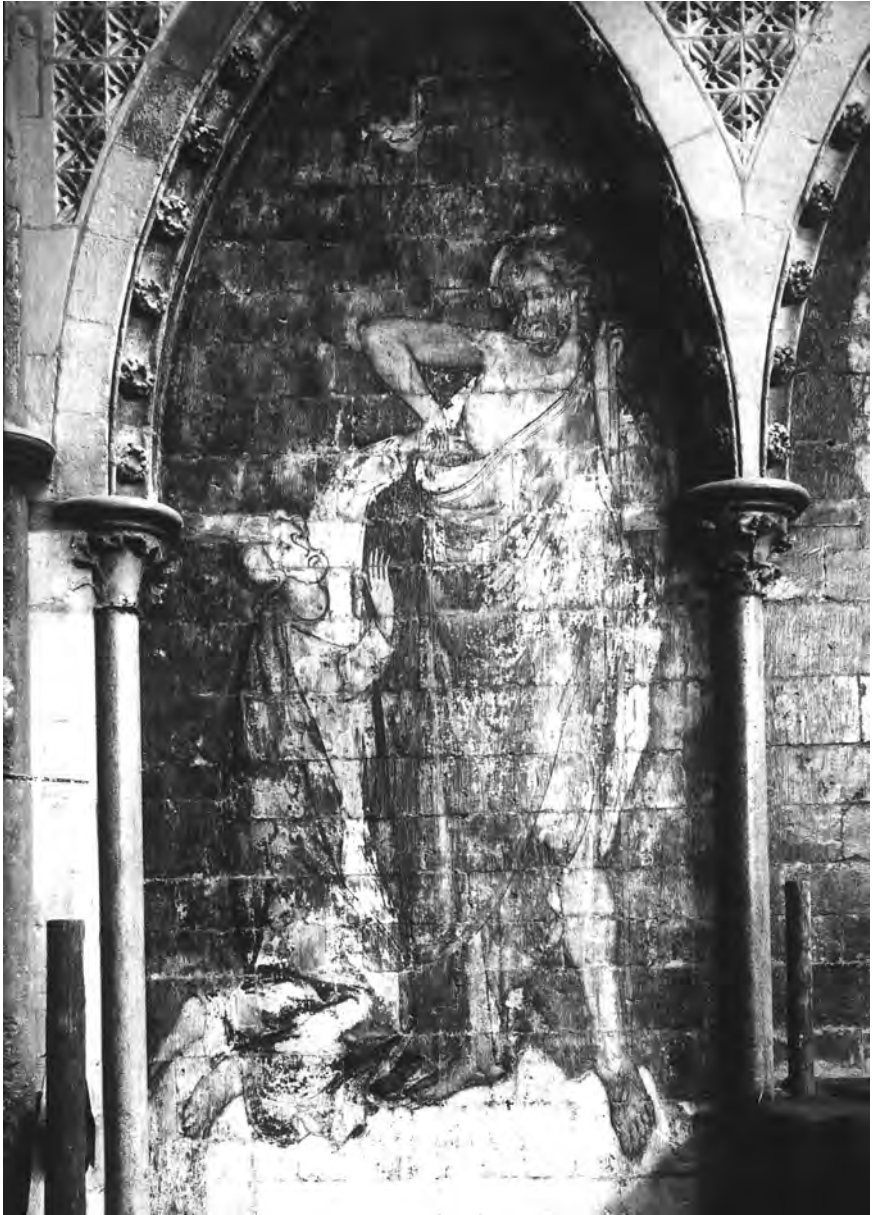[81] J. Gardner, in *Kunstchronik*, 32/1:1979, 63–84, 82.

Figure 20. London, Westminster Abbey: St Thomas (Dean and Chapter of Westminster).

sources laid down by Tristram and Wormald, which favoured a date around 1270 for the Retable, the Douce Apocalypse and the murals.[82] Of these works, the date of the Douce Apocalypse c.1270 (i.e. 1265–75) seems the most assured, and has been strengthened if not confirmed by the recent discovery of a panel much in the style of the Douce Apocalypse from the ceiling of the Painted Chamber at Westminster Palace, dating probably to the early 1260s.[83] But the date of the Retable itself, perhaps between 1270 and 1290, is still a notoriously open question; and the present writer has proposed that the Abbey murals of SS. Thomas, Christopher and Faith belong to a decidedly later phase of painting at Westminster than either Douce or the Retable, probably of the period c.1290–1310.[84] In short, the chronology for these undocumented works has recently tended, hypothetically at least, to slip later into the thirteenth century, raising doubts as to whether such works could provide a secure perspective on the dating of anything at Assisi executed around 1280. This difficulty of coordination besets all the most plausible English analogies for Assisi. The crowned heads on the vault are a case in point. It is difficult to see the force of the analogies repeatedly adduced between the two Gothic staring leonine heads and the drawing of the Veronica of fol. 221v of the Westminster Psalter (BL MS Royal 2. A. XXII), and the painting of a king in the Dean's Cloister at Windsor, both of the 1250s, or indeed the Douce Apocalypse where in each case the drawing is quite different.[85] Much better is the resemblance to the incised brass on the tomb of Archbishop William Greenfield (d. 1315) at York Minster (Figs. 8, 21), but this shows that the best English analogies may in fact not only substantially post-date Assisi, but also occur in media other than painting.[86] Similarities there are: but the price of accepting direct English influence in the right transept could be a later date for it, in the later 1280s, 1290s, or 1300s; and that in turn would entail postponing all the major later campaigns of painting in this great building. The chronological consequences for the triumphs in the nave of the Upper Church are obvious. Are the English analogies really so forceful that they justify such a price?

[82] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 200, after Wormald, 'Paintings'.
[83] Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, II, no. 153; P. Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster, Society of Antiquaries Occasional Papers*, NS 9 (1986); M. Liversidge, P. Binski, 'Two ceiling fragments from the Painted Chamber at Westminster Palace', *Burlington Magazine*, 137 (1995), 491–501.
[84] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 188–9; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, pp. 167–74.
[85] Ibid., p. 198 and pl. 116 a,b.
[86] J. Coales, ed., *The Earliest English Brasses: Patronage, Style and Workshops 1270–1350*, Monumental Brass Society (1987), pp. 58–9, fig. 47.

Paul Binski

Figure 21. York Minster, brass of Archbishop William Greenfield (d. 1315), detail.

Turning to the technique and decorative language of the painters, the occurrence of oil paint in most monumental painting at Westminster in the thirteenth century certainly connects to what we now know of the methods used at Assisi, and the use of (later oxidised) lead-white and some aspects of the palette can be matched in a small group of outstanding murals at Little Wenham and Brent Eleigh in Suffolk, again painted some time after *c.*1280.[87] Decorative motifs are also a useful index of the instincts and reflexes of painters. At Romanesque Sigena, foliage forms and other motifs of the type in the Winchester Bible reappear with startling plausibility and on a large scale. Assisi possesses a few motifs which are clearly Gothic in type: a bold coiled vinescroll motif on the intrados of the Majesty lunette, a diaper with fleurs-de-lis on the diagonal ribs of the vault, and a crisp meandering vinescroll on the piers next to the outer columns of the west Apostle arcade (Figs. 22–4).[88] Painted vinescrolls start to occur in English art in the period 1260–1300: in the canopy over the lost but copied mural of the Coronation of St Edward formerly in the Painted Chamber at Westminster of *c.*1263–7, on the very late thirteenth-century royal tombs in Westminster Abbey, and in the murals of the Ante-reliquary chapel in Norwich Cathedral (*c.*1300?), though the tendency in these cases, as on *Opus anglicanum*, is to use such scrolls to fill fields as *rinceaux*.[89] But they are also very common elsewhere in Gothic Europe: similar vinescroll patterns occur in Cistercian glass from Altenberg, of *c.*1260, in the nave clerestory glazing at Strasbourg of which more presently, and in the 'Frenchifying' left transept window of S. Francesco itself, where the leaves cross the stem in the same fashion.[90] Do we need to look further than Assisi's own stained glass workshops for an origin for some of these motifs? Not all the foliage forms at Assisi, such as the skinny running tendril motif painted on the main vault ribs, are so determinate in character, and the quality of some of the work is variable.

[87] For pigment reversal, White, *Studies*, pp. 157–8. The Little Wenham and Brent Eleigh murals are not fully published; see however D. Park and H. Howard, 'The Medieval Polychromy', in I. Atherton *et al.*, ed., *Norwich Cathedral. Church, City and Diocese, 1096–1996* (1996), pp. 379–409 and for reversal of lead white, pp. 396–7 and fig. 143.
[88] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 96–7.
[89] For Westminster, Binski, *Painted Chamber*, col. pl. I, pl. LI; for Norwich, Park, and Howard, 'Medieval Polychromy', pp. 390–400, col. pl. Va, figs. 141–2.
[90] Altenberg: L. Grodecki and C. Brisac, *Gothic Stained Glass 1200–1300* (1985), fig. 202; Strasbourg: V. Beyer, *et al.*, *Les Vitraux de la Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg*. CVMA France: IX/1 (Paris, 1986), figs. 260–3 for foliage borders; Assisi: Marchini, *Vetrate*, pls. xxxiii, xxxix (window IX); and see also J. Michler, 'Die Dominikanerkirche zu Konstanz und die Farbe in der Bettelordensarchitektur um 1300', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 55/3 (1990), 253–76, figs. 4, 24.

Figure 22. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: foliage detail (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 23. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: foliage detail (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 24. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: west wall Apostle arcade (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

The scale and handling is frequently coarser than in much Gothic work. Thus the clump of leaves in the lower right of the Transfiguration painting (Fig. 1) has a closed profile and lacklustre, mechanically regular, presentation out of keeping with the crisp verve of English Gothic botanical representation. The application of naturalistic leaf forms is in fact quite inconsistent: the finials which complete the steep painted gables over the west triforium include old-fashioned fleshy terminations reminiscent of 'Byzantine blossoms' as well as pairs of folded ivy leaves: but these latter folded elements can be closely matched in at least one canopy finial in the left transept glazing of the 1270s or 1280s.

    Another motif absolutely out of key with English painting of the later thirteenth century is the big loose ribbon pattern with roundels framing the Transfiguration lunette, accompanied by a vigorous but somewhat flabby acanthus roundel pattern on the corresponding intrados. Ribbon patterns of this type do not occur much in English art after the early thirteenth century. However they are relatively common in German Romanesque, French and Italian painting, as for example in the mid-to-late thirteenth-

century murals of St Maurille at Angers Cathedral.[91] The Angers murals are not the least interesting of our *comparanda* given their use of architectural enclosures and, like the Westminster pictures, oil paint. While the right transept painters were clearly rejecting or ignorant of the basically antique decorative repertory present in the contemporary Sancta Sanctorum murals, there are some grounds for scepticism about the presence at Assisi of motifs originating straightforwardly in what Romano has called 'sistemi decorativi inglesi e franco-inglesi'.[92] Such 'systems' prove extremely elusive and their components surprisingly widespread.

The taste for relief decoration on the part of the Assisi painters was also comparatively common in this period. Much of the work in the two lunettes and in the west Apostle gallery is marked by the use of relief plasterwork, particularly relief haloes and rosettes, or (in the Transfiguration) their stencilled equivalents (Figs. 13–14). The haloes are, as noted earlier, of a type not used in France or England. Bagnoli very fairly notes the use of rosette motifs in English art; relief (lead?) stars are scattered on the vaults of the Guardian Angels Chapel at Winchester Cathedral *c.*1230, and relief patterns, though not of this type, were used extensively in the Painted Chamber at Westminster from the 1260s onwards.[93] But the tradition of such ornaments in western European medieval painting was widespread. The vaults of the Lower Church at Assisi were set with small reflectors in a manner known in French Romanesque painting.[94] Radiating haloes and ornamental gessowork occur throughout the murals at Gurk Cathedral of *c.*1260–70,[95] and the early thirteenth-century murals at Le Puy have a veritable blizzard of embossed motifs reminiscent of the decoration of stucco altar frontals.[96] Belting, Martin and others compare these rosette motifs to those used in the glazing of the Upper Church, and in France at Tours cathedral, but their occurrence was demonstrably more dispersed.[97]

[91] For Angers, M.-P. Subes-Picot, 'Peinture sur pierre: note sur la technique des peintures du XIIIᵉ siècle découvertes à la cathédrale d'Angers', *Revue de l'art*, 97 (1992), 85–93; see also Gaborit-Chopin, *Rois maudits*, nos. 291, 293; and also J. Micheler, 'Grundlagen zur Gotischen Wandmalerei', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 32 (1990), 85–136; for Rome and environs, J. R. Benton, 'Antique survival and revival in the Middle Ages: architectural framing in late Duecento murals', *Arte Medievale*, 2nd ser. 7/1 (1993), 129–45, 139–42.

[92] Romano, 'Pittura ad Assisi', 112; S. Romano, 'Le storie parallele di Assisi: il Maestro di S. Francesco', *Storie del Arte*, 44 (1982), 63–86, 72–5.

[93] Bagnoli, in Pace and Bagnoli, *Gotico europeo*, p. 196 and fig. 3; Binski, *Painted Chamber*, pp. 65–9.

[94] P. Mora, L. Mora and P. Philipott, *Conservation of Wall Paintings* (1984), pp. 122–3.

[95] Hartwagner, *Gurk*, pls. 64–5; Demus, *Mural Painting*, pls. 298, 305.

[96] Ibid., pls. 183–6; Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 195.

[97] Ibid., p. 195.

Earlier, we noted that Belting was careful to distinguish between summoning English works as representatives of a general stylistic phase, and as actual sources.[98] He is similarly cautious about French stimuli; painting and illuminating in France in the period between about 1260 and 1290 is seen as a reflection of the source type at Assisi, and not as the source proper. No exact analogies can be found in surviving painting from France or the western sectors of the Holy Roman Empire in the post-*zackenstil* phase of German art. Formally, the soft fold configurations of the Gothic work in the right transept belong to a slightly later phase than, say, the work in the Douce Apocalypse or the Royal Group of French Psalters, of towards 1270; in England, as in France, the tendency in the 1260s was to produce figures with brittle profiles and garments that fall in dry angular pouches of cloth. This consideration is of importance only in so far as it weighs against the likelihood of a date for the start of work on the right transept much before *c.*1270–5. A key work in the transition towards the meandering fold style, which becomes prevalent in the 1280s and 1290s and of which the Assisi paintings at *c.*1280 would be relatively early instances, is the martyrology of Saint-Germain-des Prés (BN MS Lat. 12834) of 1267–82; and a fully developed example of the form is the picture-book of Madame Marie, probably of the 1280s (BN MS nouv. acq. fr. 16251).[99] As Belting notes, the book of Madame Marie offers just as plausible, if not better, comparisons for the right transept at Assisi as the English works.[100] Yet the genesis of this bold and accomplished style has yet to be fully explored. If works like the Douce Apocalypse really do date to *c.*1270, then the possibility of English influence in its formation should be taken seriously.[101]

Defining nationality in the case of styles of this type may not anyway be terribly constructive; the picture-book of Madame Marie was produced for a patron linked to Mons in Hainaut, in the diocese of Cambrai on the borders of France and the Holy Roman Empire. Like the Douce Apocalypse, the issue of the specifically Parisian or Île-de-France origins of its style, as opposed to other parts of north or north-eastern France, Flanders, Lotharingia, and England, is still open to debate.[102] As

[98] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 198–201.
[99] A. Stones, *Le Livre d'images de Madame Marie* (Paris, 1997), pp. 26–8; Gaborit-Chopin, *Rois maudits*, nos. 180, 199.
[100] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 202.
[101] Vitzthum, Pariser *Miniaturmalerei*, pp. 68–87; E. J. Beer, 'Pariser Buchmalerei in der Zeit Ludwigs des Heiligen und im letzten Viertel des 13. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 44 (1981), 62–91. Most recently, see J. Higgitt, *The Murthly Hours. Devotion, Literacy and Luxury in Paris, England and the Gaelic West* (London and Toronto, 2000), pp. 102–30.
[102] See the discussions in P. M. de Winter, 'Une Réalization exceptionelle d'enlumineurs Français et Anglais vers 1300: Le Bréviaire de Renaud de Bar, évêque de Metz', *Actes du 103ᵉ*

Adelaide Bennett has suggested, the style of the south transept window at Assisi is in some respects as closely connected with French-influenced London work of the 1270s or 1280s as with Parisian work.[103] In short, the figurative styles of the right transept have as yet no obvious single 'home-land' bar the extremely broad territories between southern England, north-eastern and eastern France, Assisi itself, and the Rhineland. But it is to the Rhineland especially that we should turn for some of the best comparative evidence of all.

IV

One powerful argument fully explored by Belting for the employment of artists who were closely acquainted with Gothic monumental art is provided by the *mise-en-scène* of the upper parts of the right transept: the use of patterned rib vaults and corbel heads, the lateral extension of the north transept window tracery to either side by means of fictive painted tracery, the disposition of figurative scenes in pointed lunettes (part tympanum, part window) and the development by means of painted gabular forms of the west and east triforia of the transept itself (Figs. 1–3). This skeletonised Gothic '*struktive Illusionismus*' is seen by Belting as a key consideration in establishing the general identity of the painters, as well as being a prototype for the integration of architecture and painting explored later by the ateliers of Cimabue and the Romano-Florentine painters.[104] Here we will not take issue with Belting's extremely valuable and fundamentally correct insight; it is important instead to look beyond general composition to the actual motivic language used by the painters in representing architecture. That architectural motifs, bearing greater or lesser resemblance to real Gothic architecture, were becoming an important element in the composition of Gothic wall paintings by the later thirteenth century is beyond dispute. However, the extent to which even 'painter's architecture' followed closely on the heels of innovation in built architecture is sometimes forgotten.

The key areas are the gabular additions above the triforia, and the

congrès national des Sociétés savantes (1978) (Paris, 1980), pp. 27–62, and 'Visions of the Apoc-alypse in Medieval England and France', *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 70/10 (1983), 396–417; P. Klein, *Endzeiterwartung und Ritterideologie. Die englischen Bilderapokalypsen der Frühgotik und MS Douce 180* (Graz, 1983), pp. 51–63.
[103] Bennett, 'Bibbia'.
[104] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 112 ff., 118; 183 ff., 189.

canopy of the Majesty lunette. The triforia (Figs. 24–5) comprise shallow unvaulted wall passages, triforia in the strict sense, each of six arched openings incorporating painted figures of the twelve Apostles. The triforium arches are trefoil-headed and spring from brightly coloured and gilt French-style crocket capitals, the edges of the trefoils having carved foliate relief work. The painters extended this rather plain High Gothic triforium by depicting gables drawn up from the arches with pinnacles rising over the square abaci of the capitals but behind the gable faces. In the spaces between the apices of the gables they introduced roundels, five on each side, enclosing busts of angels. The five corresponding pinnacles beneath were duly shortened, while those on the outside attain to the full height of the gables, reaching up to touch the outer horizontal moulding beneath the upper lunette. Though Belting compares the setting of the Apostle figures within niches to Gothic models, this overall composition is unusual even by Gothic standards and quite different from that of the otherwise physically similar Sancta Sanctorum triforium in Rome, of the late 1270s.[105] Angel tondos occur in the adjacent Ascension window, installed *c.*1275 presumably prior to the execution of the murals, while figurative roundels were used in the transept frescoes at S. Maria Maggiore in Rome in the 1290s. But it is hard to find any other earlier Gothic triforium painted or sculpted in this way.

The use of extremely steep (31°) painted gables is unprecedented in Italian art. Relatively steep Gothic gables with trefoil-headed arches occur in the early 1290s on the nave walls of S. Cecilia in Rome probably under the patronage of the French cardinal Jean Cholet. But Assisi is appreciably more Gothic in its sharp, thin and precise detailing than work conducted elsewhere in central Italy at this time. Belting rightly argued that these new sharp forms amount to a radical modernising of the architectural vocabulary of S. Francesco itself.[106] Behind such a modernisation lies a fashionable understanding that external gabular forms were now suitable for an internal Gothic triforium or main arcade: so much might have been suggested by the recent elevations of the choirs at Amiens (complete 1269), Sées (begun *c.*1270) and Clermont-Ferrand (1248–80).

In supposing so we must, however, pay attention to the same sorts of inconsistencies in the right transept's painted architecture that characterise its figurative style. The painted gables over the triforia on the east and west sides differ distinctly in detail (Figs. 24–5).[107] Those on the west

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[105] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 116 for Gothic models.
[106] Ibid., pp. 193–4. See also Gardner, 'Stefaneschi altarpiece', 74–5.
[107] Ibid., 116 after Hueck, 'Der Maler', 125.

Figure 25. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: east wall Apostle arcade (Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

have crockets on the gables which end in tiny veined trefoil pads, while those on the east terminate in small coils. The faces of the west side gables consist of alternating trefoils and quatrefoils inscribed in circlets, the spandrels being filled with pointed trefoils. Within the foil forms are traces of foliate ornament, indicating that the geometrical forms are conceived of as tracery in the strict sense, i.e. 'bar' tracery. These details are handled very formally: Belting rightly notes their resemblance to the products of a Gothic masons' lodge.[108] On the east side, however, the gables are more simply detailed, the 'bar' tracery on the west being replaced with 'plate' tracery consisting of a simple outlined trefoil cut into the gable face. Viewed as a flat design this trefoil gable can be seen as a perfectly legitimate Gothic variant of the more complex gable type opposite which doubtless represents the original form. As painted, however, the orientation changes subtly. The inner face of the trefoil is painted so as to indicate that the trefoil is cut into the picture plane, being regarded not as a tracery component but as part of a flat expanse of penetrated

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[108] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 119.

marblework; this is reinforced by the representation within the small triangular interstices of small chips of cosmatesque-style inlay. The same oblique setting of the recessive faces of gables is used for the small steep crocketted gables which surmount the wall passage doorways, from which lamps depend (Fig. 26).[109] This type of detailing is more Italianate than that of the west gables, since the same principle of a gable treated as if made by *marmorani* is represented on the upper walls of S. Cecilia in Rome a decade or so later. It coincides satisfactorily with Hueck's designation of the east gallery paintings as belonging to a Roman atelier, those on the west being connected with the Northern Master.

But Gothic and Italian practices are intertwined in a fashion more complex than this simple east-west division suggests (Figs. 24–5). The east and west sides have different gables but share the same type of intervening campanile-like pseudo-pinnacles, the campaniles having paired windows and pyramidal tops, the whole being turned through 45°. Pinnacles emphasising vertical bay divisions would certainly be expected either side of Gothic gables of this type, and there are weighty northern precedents for pinnacles in this position turned through 45°: the west facade of St Nicaize in Reims, the transept facades of Notre-Dame in Paris and, more locally, the small French reliquary in the Tesoro at Assisi.[110] But the campaniles are obviously an Italian replacement for the High Gothic and Rayonnant form of tall slender square-section pinnacle with slender lights, gabular tops, and steep crocketted pinnacles and finials.[111] Earlier it was observed that the crowned heads on the vault displayed a Gothic vocabulary but a syntax unfamiliar to Gothic art in their location; here on the contrary the syntax is Gothic, but the vocabulary at least partly Italian. This choice is all the more striking given that true Rayonnant pinnacles appear to have been used on the canopy of the Majesty picture above (Fig. 3). But even here, the same odd elision of purely Gothic detailing with Italian is apparent in the townscape above the gable itself, as if the lines of the Gothic original were deemed too spare and required fattening-out by a Cimabuesque clutter. The finials of the west gallery gables have a curious mixture of Byzantine and Gothic foliage. These discontinuities reveal even more eloquently the complex situation in the right transept. If Belting is correct in attributing the *mise-en-scène* to a truly Gothic workshop, we have to explain why a workshop given such extraordinary conceptual power nevertheless did not carry through its

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[109] Belting, *Oberkirche*, p. 116.
[110] Gaborit-Chopin, *Rois maudits*, no. 120; Morello and Kanter, *Treasury*, pp. 161, 163.
[111] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 119; 188.

design principles consistently and at the level of details which would certainly matter to Gothic painters. The evidence is consistent with the idea that Gothic-influenced designers provided a basic gable model with the suggestion of lateral pinnacles at the preliminary drawing stage, perhaps for use as a 'repeat' pattern, and that these designs were worked over more (or less) faithfully by painters whose experience and understanding of the character and purpose of such architecture was different.

Whatever the truth of the situation, the forms of the painted architecture used in the transept are demonstrably more important as evidence for the date and general identity of the type of Gothic work invoked at Assisi than the literature on the subject has suggested, and certainly more so than the slightly more diffuse evidence of figure style. Let us begin by pursuing our 'English' theme and asking whether the detailing in the transept reflects English models. Here the evidence is ambivalent. It is certainly unlikely that English-influenced painters working c.1280 would reconceive a triforium with steep gables; gables are unknown in English triforia before the start of work on the Rayonnant nave of York Minster in 1291, itself reflecting the prototypes of Clermont-Ferrand and Sées.[112] Similar problems with dating affect the one clear-cut analogy with York at Assisi: the small crocketted gables over the wall passage doorways in the transept have the 'mouth' of the gable closed by a transom in the same way as the gables topping the main buttresses of the chapter house at York of the 1280s (Figs. 26–7), a detail adumbrated by the gables over the south transept doorways at Saint-Urbain at Troyes and probably pointing to knowledge of common prototypes in Champagne.[113]

Gabular detailing, probably under French influence, does occur on English episcopal tombs from the 1260s, such as Bishop Bridport's tomb (c.1262) at Salisbury; and more relevantly, given the 35° acuity of its tracery-filled triple gables, the tomb of Bishop Aquablanca at Hereford, probably underway after 1268 (Fig. 28). These anticipate the later and more properly Rayonnant steep gables on the tomb of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster at Westminster, around 1296.[114] Though the Aquablanca tomb's lean fragile detailing is strictly of pre-Rayonnant type, its effigy is

[112] C. Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral* (1990), pp. 186–7.
[113] J. Bony, *The English Decorated Style. Gothic Architecture Transformed 1250–1350* (Oxford, 1979), pls. 89, 275.
[114] M. E. Roberts, 'The Tomb of Giles de Bridport in Salisbury Cathedral', *Art Bulletin*, 65/4 (1983), 559–86; J. Gardner, 'The Tomb of Bishop Peter of Aquablanca in Hereford Cathedral', *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 15 (1995), pp. 105–10. For the tomb of the Earl of Lancaster, Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, pp. 115–16 and fig. 157.

Paul Binski

Figure 26. Assisi, S. Francesco, right transept: gable within triforium passage
(Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz).

Figure 27. York Minster, chapter house buttress, detail (Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art).

of interest in having side niches with pointed trefoil detailing; pointed trefoils are in fact not uncommon in English thirteenth-century architecture, but they are not used in the same way as on the west gables at Assisi. The only English gable of the period known to me with similar trefoil detailing to Assisi is on a tomb at Rochester cathedral (Fig. 29) perhaps attributable to Laurence de St-Martin (d. 1274) bishop of Rochester, a royal chaplain, *comes familiaris* of William de Valence and agent for the king at the papal curia.[115] We can say from this that motifs of this type

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[115] J. Blair and N. Ramsay, eds., *English Medieval Industries. Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (1991), p. 51, fig. 15. An example occurs in the Bangor Pontifical of 1309–1328, Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts*, no. 69, ill. 181.
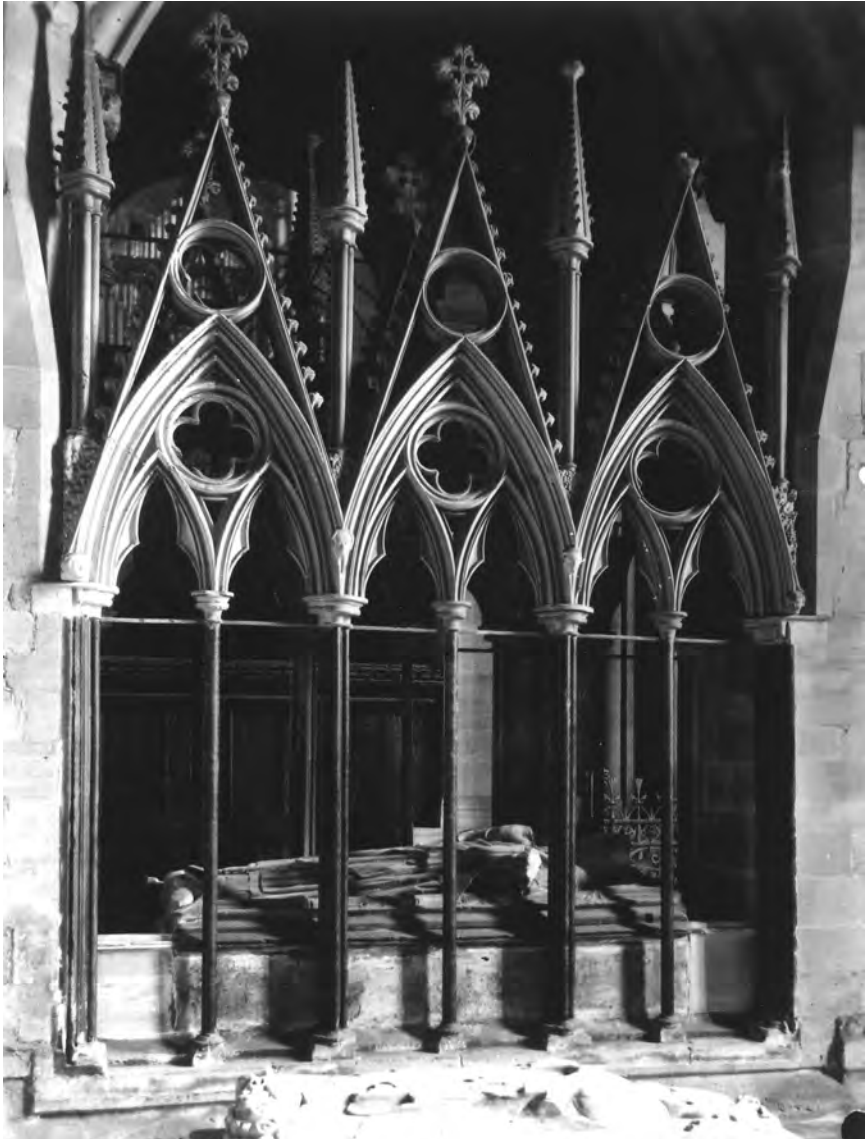
Figure 28. Hereford Cathedral, tomb of Bishop Aquablanca (RCHME Crown Copyright).

were known in England by about 1280, but whether they were exported from England is another matter.

One reason for supposing that they were not is that motifs of this type nowhere occur in surviving English painters' or illuminators' architecture of the second half of the thirteenth century. Rayonnant forms are quite
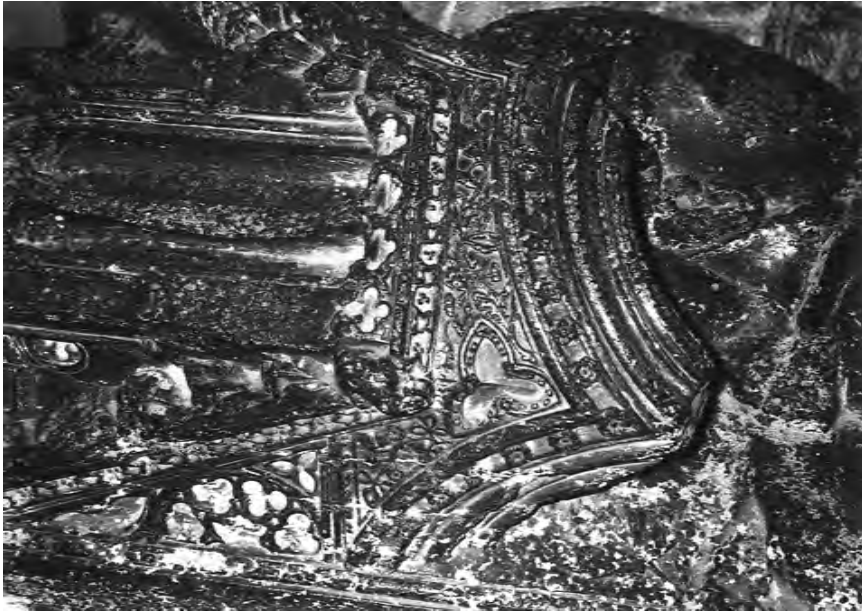
Figure 29. Rochester Cathedral, tomb of Bishop Laurence de St-Martin, detail (John Blair).

unknown to the artist of the Douce Apocalypse (Fig. 18) and its sister manuscript in Paris (BN MS Lat. 10474) of c.1270, nor to the artists of the earlier, pre-1272, phases of work on the Painted Chamber at Westminster, works cited here because their integration of real and painted architecture offers an analogy of sorts for the practices at Assisi.[116] The frame of the Westminster Retable (Fig. 6) suggests intimate knowledge of mid-century French High Gothic, not Rayonnant, architecture. Steep gables of the Assisi type occurred in the Painted Chamber, but only in the biblical scenes painted probably in the period 1292–7, and without the same type of tracery detailing; other pre-1300 schemes which include architecture, such as the murals in the north aisle at Stone church in Kent (c.1270) or in the Ante-reliquary chapel at Norwich towards 1300, are different.[117] When we can more assuredly trace positive similarities between Italian design and English painted architecture the results are surprising.

[116] Binski, *Painted Chamber*, pp. 57, 60–1. The combination of a large quatrefoil motif plus finely crocketed gable in the coronation picture in the Painted Chamber, ibid. col. pl. I is similar to the recorded retro-facade dado decoration of the Lady Chapel of Saint-Germer-de-Fly of ?before 1267, see D. Kimpel and R. Suckale, *L'Architecture Gothique en France 1130–1270*, trans. F. Neu (Paris, 1990), pp. 428–31, fig. 379.

[117] Binski, *Painted Chamber*, pp. 72–7, pls. XVIII–XIX, LIIa; Tristram, *Wall Painting*, pl. 144b for Stone.

The dialogue between Roman Cosmati mosaicists and Westminster court art may explain the remarkable resemblance between the ciborium of Arnolfo in S. Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome, dated 1285, and one of the Churches in the earlier Douce sister Apocalypse manuscript in Paris of *c.*1270.[118] In so far as this may be a criterion of Anglo-Italian exchanges in the years 1270–90, it exposes a common architectural language more old-fashioned than that cited in the Assisi triforium. So once again we cannot point to conclusive evidence of English origin for any of the Assisi motifs.

It is however possible to make positive suggestions as to the genesis of the most advanced micro-architectural forms at Assisi which point to origins so far insufficiently explored in the history of the Gothic workshop at Assisi. Belting's analysis draws attention to the numerous approxima-tions in France to the right transept gable arcade: Notre-Dame's transepts, the west facade of Reims, the west facade at Auxerre, the mural from the Palais des Archevêques at Narbonne and stained glass at Tours, not to mention the French-influenced works of art at Westminster.[119] But these comparisons remain approximations, and it is hard to trace gabular forms adorned with tracery in quite this way in northern French figurative art or architecture produced before *c.*1270. Absolutely exact comparisons can nevertheless be found. Belting makes little of the one sector where this type of gable became a *leitmotiv* in the late thirteenth century, namely in stained glass produced in the upper Rhineland, in the area between Colmar and Worms.[120] The key monument is the clerestory glazing of the nave at Strasbourg cathedral, of which construction began in the 1240s and was still underway in the 1260s. The extraordinarily ambitious canopies developed in the nave clerestory at some point between the 1260s and about 1275 include the earliest instances of the inscribed alternating quatrefoils and trefoils, and pointed trefoil spandrels at Assisi. Exactly these motifs characterise the drawings prepared probably around 1277 or slightly later for the west facade of the cathedral, notably the interior tri-forium of the tower bays ('Plan D') which are to all intents and purposes identical to the Assisi instances, not least in being both steep and linked by intervening turned pinnacles, and having exactly the same configur-

[118] P. Binski, 'The Cosmati at Westminster and the English Court Style', *Art Bulletin*, 72/1 (1990), 6–34, 25, figs. 24–5.
[119] Belting, *Oberkirche*, pp. 184, 186, 187, 188, pls. 114d–115, 118d.
[120] Ibid., p. 187 n. 99; Pace, 'Presenze', p. 246 n. 30, though in neither case is the connection explored.
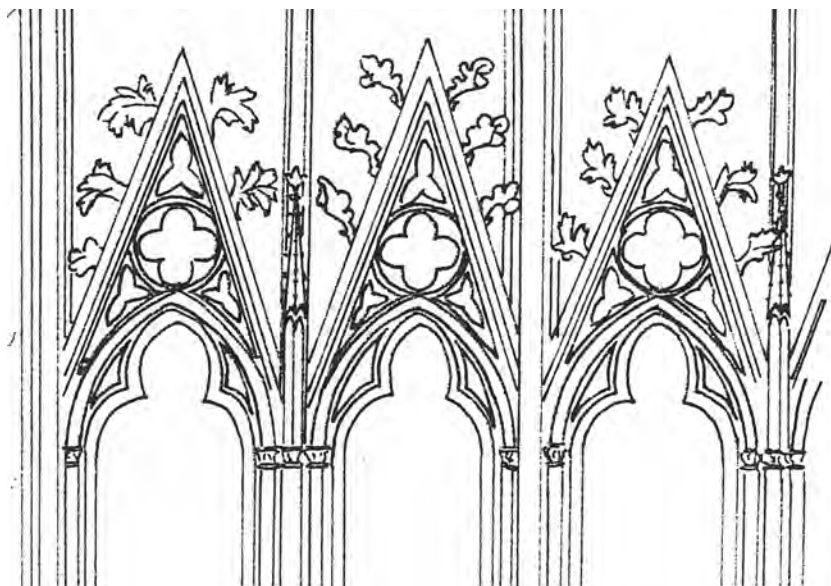
Figure 30. Strasbourg cathedral, triforium arcading in north west tower, from Riss D (after Wortmann).

ation of tracery on the gable faces (Figs. 24, 30).[121] The windows and architecture are marked throughout by the same dry spare detailing as Assisi. Becksmann's survey of aedicules in stained glass, though perhaps prone to slightly early dating, shows that the post-Strasbourg afterlife of this form can be traced especially in the upper Rhenish sector of the Holy Roman Empire, as for example at the Dominican church at Colmar.[122] Strasbourg's nave triforium glazing, very heavily restored as it is, nevertheless also offers a suggestive Gothic parallel for the combination at Assisi of standing figures under arcades with roundels above containing

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[121] P. Binski, 'English art at Assisi?', *The British Art Journal*, 1 (1999), 74–5; R. Becksmann, *Die architektonische Rahmung des hochgotischen Bildfensters. Untersuchung zur oberrheinischen Glasmalerei von 1250 bis 1350* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 109–19, pl. 82–5; Beyer, *et al.*, Strasbourg, pp. 285–470, figs. 276, 302, 304, 307, 313, 315; J. Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th & 13th Centuries* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 413, 532 n. 5 for modification of Becksmann's chronology. For the west front, see R. Wortmann, 'Der Westbau des Strassburger Münsters und Meister Erwin', *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 169 (1969), 290–318 and especially 'Noch einmal Strassburg-West', *Architectura*, 27 (1997), 129–72, esp. figs. 20–1. I am most grateful to Dr Paul Crossley for these references. Professor Romano now informs me that Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten came to a similar conclusion about the motifs in an unpublished paper delivered in 1993 (see a brief *resumé* by F. Martin in *Arte Cristiana*, 82 (1994), 289–92).
[122] Becksmann, *Bildfensters*, pl. 36; cf. also pls. 9, 27, 35, 37 and Drachenberg, Maercker, and Schmidt, *Erfurt*, pp. 183–5 and fig. 6, 187–8, pl. 118b.

bust-length figures of angels with unusual radiating haloes.[123] Though not necessarily the direct source for the Assisi arrangement, this shows that by the 1270s prestigious Gothic models existed which could have sanctioned the type of arrangement found at Assisi *c.*1280.

Several points follow from the suggestion that the architectural sources for Assisi are as likely to have been found in Rhenish Rayonnant of the 1260s and 1270s as in the Île-de-France, Champagne, Burgundy or England. The first is that if this supposition is correct, it would render a date for the start of work on the right transept before *c.*1275 unlikely, and a date in the 1250s or 1260s highly unlikely, in terms of the dates of the sources. Even at a date of *c.*1280 the Assisi work is tellingly up to date. Second, the Gothic elements in the figurative style of the right transept might also have come, if not from precisely this area, then from neighbouring territories indirectly exposed to English influence, for example Lotharingia and Hainaut. If what has been said here is true, it is striking that artists at Assisi turned to the one source, Strasbourg, which was, as Klotz has suggested, a key centre of influence for architectural design in central Italy throughout much of the *trecento*.[124] It has not before been sufficiently stressed that Assisi might have inaugurated this Rhenish orientation, nor that this orientation might have arisen not merely because of Strasbourg's relative proximity, but also because of the size and authority of its stained glass workshops, a natural attraction to the designers of a church like Assisi where stained glass was emerging as a major, indeed in the early stages the dominant, medium of interior decoration.

[123] Beyer, *Strasbourg*, pp. 257–83, figs. 218–57, 243.

[124] H. Klotz, 'Deutsche und italienische Baukunst im Trecento', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 12/3–4 (1966), 171–206; I am grateful to Dr Brendan Cassidy for this reference. We might also note the names of some personnel associated with either S. Francesco or with Franciscan commissions: the two bells founded in 1239 for the campanile of S. Francesco are signed by Bartholomaeus Pisanus and his son Loteringio, H. Thode, *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien* (Berlin, 1885), p. 203 (reference owed to Dr Rosalind Brooke); and for the career of Friar Petrus Teutonicus, see D. Gordon, 'The Mass Production of Franciscan Piety. Another look at some Umbrian *verres eglomisés*', *Apollo*, 140 (1994), 33–42. The occurrence of 'Simonesque' iconography of the Madonna of Humility in a group of manuscripts associated with Metz in the mid-fourteenth century should also be considered in the context of this debate, for which see M. Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death* (repr. Princeton, 1978), pp. 132–56 and the forthcoming studies of Dr Beth Williamson.

V

We return finally to the questions posed at the outset. First, the case for direct and significant English influence of any type in the Upper Church and in the right transept especially remains unsubstantiated. It is not necessarily borne out by the contents of the Transfiguration lunette, nor by the figurative and architectural style of the Gothic-inclined painters in this part of the church. In so far as links existed, they are likely to have been indirect. Andrew Martindale was probably justified in seeing connections between England and Assisi in terms of the impact of Italian art at Westminster, not vice versa, and not until the mid-fourteenth century— that is to say, in terms of the agenda of influence by Italy on England first mapped out by Pächt.[125] Nor is the case for influence from the Île-de-France and Paris proposed by Belting conclusive. While manuscripts and other up-to-date art objects certainly found their way from Paris to Assisi at this time, the right transept could well suggest contacts with the entire region between north-eastern France and Strasbourg. In no sense, then, is this simply an expatriated 'court' art.

Second, the complexity of the right transept poses questions about the integrity of its art, and hence about the identity and working practices of its painters. That the painters of the right transept were trying to invoke arrangements and effects characteristic of transalpine Gothic art is beyond serious dispute. Gothic ideas here form part of a *lingua franca*. But could artists other than those of northern origin adopt or feign this *lingua franca*? So much seems to have been the insight of Robert Oertel.[126] The notion of a *Maestro oltremontano* is essentially an art-historical fiction which lends coherence to—in short which symbolises—a complex reality, brought about at Assisi by unprecedented circumstances, namely the first wholesale combination of stained glass and wall painting in an Italian Gothic church. Indeed it is not entirely unreasonable to see the 'homeland' of this odd *mélange* as Assisi itself. What artistic practices might have given rise to the links explored in this paper remain mysterious. But at least one truly great work of art from Assisi around 1290 indicates the way in which these circumstances might have been turned to brilliant advantage: the extraordinary chalice of Nicholas IV made by Guccio da Manaia presumably before 1292, whose squirming figures

[125] A. Martindale, 'St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, and the Italian Experience', in D. Buckton and T. A. Heslop, eds., *Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture presented to Peter Lasko* (Stroud, 1994), pp. 102–12, 105, 107–8.
[126] L. Bellosi, *La pecora di Giotto* (Turin, 1985), pp. 179–191, 199 n. 71.

strikingly resemble in general form, though not in detail, those on the Westminster Retable.[127] Guccio's chalice comes nearest to suggesting what a translation of the peculiar idiom of an English or Anglo-French object into Italian terms might look like. That this should be a piece of enamelled metalwork, neither glass nor paint, is symptomatic.

Finally, the circumstances just mentioned were fundamentally Franciscan: the basilica of S. Francesco was built, and in its early stages decorated, very much in line with the norms of northern European Gothic churches, but in the knowledge too of earlier Franciscan art, as for example at Erfurt.[128] The Rhineland may later have been just as much a factor as was the court art of the Île-de-France or England. To understand this we need merely to recall that from a Franciscan perspective, links between England and Germany had been strong. They had begun with the appointment of two English lecturers to the German friars in 1228 and 1231, and had continued in the 1270s with the appointment of Peter of Tewkesbury, formerly Provincial Minister in Cologne, to the same position in England.[129] Such circumstances favoured an eclecticism unmatched elsewhere in Italian art of the later thirteenth century. The existence of a far-flung aesthetic regime at Assisi can be seen as a corollary of the evangelical objectives of its Order. Artistic eclecticism in this sense was not circumstantial but ideological. It exemplified both an assimilation of, and a reaching-out to, the World. The next two or three decades at Assisi, starting with the assumption of power by Cimabue's clearly much more centralised and homogeneous workshop, and then by Romans and Giottesque painters, were to witness a form of *rappel à l'ordre*, and the replacement of an evangelical eclecticism by 'Roman arguments' and papal *gravitas*. A once-inclusive Franciscan vision was replaced by a vastly more exclusive, and, it has to be said, vastly more successful, project of renewal.

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[127] Cioni, 'Guccio'; Bellosi, 'Pittore oltremontano'.

[128] H. Wentzel, 'Die ältesten Farbfenster in der Oberkirche von S. Francesco zu Assisi und die deutsche Glasmalerei des XIII. Jahrhunderts', *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, 14 (1952), 45–72; Martin, *Apsisverglasung*, passim.

[129] J. Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 92, 164, 173; D. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, I (Cambridge, 1948), p. 181.