

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF ART • 61 •

Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts

Symposium Papers XXXVIII

*Italian Panel Painting of
the Duecento and Trecento*

Edited by Victor M. Schmidt

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Distributed by Yale University Press,

New Haven and London



*Beyond the Limitations of Visual Typology:
Reconsidering the Function
and Audience of Three Vita Panels
of Women Saints c. 1300*

The *vita* panel, a format that has been the subject of considerable scholarly scrutiny, is a characteristic panel type of the duecento and trecento. More than thirty years ago, Hellmut Hager's fundamental study of the origins of the Italian altarpiece included careful consideration of the role of *vita* panels, especially those of Saint Francis, which were by far the most numerous, in the development of the genre.¹ Hager argued that initially Italian practice was to place panel paintings on side altars, a practice that only subsequently spread to the high altar of a church. More recently, Klaus Krüger's reconsideration of the development of the altarpiece again turned to *vita* panels of Saint Francis as crucial evidence.² For Krüger, Saint Francis panels, in their initial phase, were used in a manner analogous to the feast icons of Byzantium, being placed on the high altar, but only during the feast and octave of the saint. A second stage of development was the association of *vita* panels with side altars, through a connection with the remains of the saint in question, contained beneath or within that altar. In these circumstances the panel had a permanent function as a part of the holy person's shrine and was thus a stationary object. This second phase, Krüger noted, was strongly influenced by the example of Saint Francis panels, and important examples were to be found in the Franciscan orbit, that is, in the Second and Third Franciscan Orders, the nuns and tertiaries.

Two key examples were the panel of Saint Clare (died 1253) (fig. 1), dated by inscription to 1283,³ which is still found in the saint's burial church, and the panel of Beata Margherita of Cortona (died 1297) (fig. 2), now in the Museo Diocesano in Cortona, thought to have been painted around 1300.⁴

Considering the two paintings together, it is clear that in some basic respects the Margherita panel imitates the Clare panel. They could certainly be said to belong to the same panel type. But does that necessarily mean that they had the same functions or were intended for the same audience? In this essay I reconsider these two paintings, together with a third example, the panel of Saint Mary Magdalene now in the Accademia in Florence (see fig. 14), dated on stylistic grounds to c. 1280,⁵ in order to explore whether three paintings of the same basic visual typology are necessarily also comparable in their functions, in the audiences to whom they were presented, and in the ways in which they addressed those various audiences.

The panel of Saint Clare is in a relatively good and legible condition, following cleaning and conservation in the early 1950s, and it has recently received a certain amount of well-deserved art-historical attention, notably from Elvio Lunghi and Jeryldene Wood.⁶ The paint surface of the Margherita of Cortona panel, on the other hand, is in

Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life* (detail), *The Magdalene Preaching*, c. 1280, tempera on panel
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, photograph: Fratelli Alinari, Florence



abraded and fragmentary condition, and, before the studies of Margherita recently published by the present writer and André Vauchez and by Laura Corti, the painting had been considered only briefly in the literature.⁷ I therefore deal at some length with the reconstruction and analysis of the Margherita program before proceeding to consider similarities and differences in function between that work and my other two examples.

In 1946–1947 the *vita* panel of Margherita of Cortona was restored by the Soprintendenza alle Gallerie in Florence before being presented to the Museo Diocesano in Cortona. The panel had been extensively overpainted in the eighteenth or nineteenth

century.⁸ Restoration revealed a medieval paint surface that was damaged (in some places severely) but generally legible. Despite the forbidding appearance of the work, the best surviving passages of the paint surface were revealed as possessing undoubted quality and refinement. A further campaign of restoration in the 1980s removed some further postmedieval areas of pigment, making some of the scenes more difficult to read.⁹ Margherita of Cortona, who died in 1297, was regarded in Cortona as a saint, although she was canonized only in 1728. She had come to Cortona in the years before 1275 following the death of her lover, which left her in unofficial widowhood with a young son to support.¹⁰ She felt great remorse about the

1. Umbrian artist (Maestro della Santa Chiara), *Saint Clare with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, 1283, tempera on panel

Santa Chiara, Assisi; photograph: Istituto Centrale per il Restauro, Rome

2. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, c. 1300, tempera on panel

Museo Diocesano, Cortona; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence

irregularity of her former life and in due course joined a branch of the Order of Penitents, which was reformed, during her lifetime, as the Franciscan Third Order. Although Margherita was viewed, after her death, as an emblematic member of that order, it should be noted that her spirituality and asceticism far surpassed what was expected from ordinary members of this religious group.

The provenance of the Margherita panel cannot be traced before the seventeenth century, when it was in the possession of a group of female members of the Franciscan Third Order in the monastery of San Girolamo in Cortona, but it seems very probable that it came into the possession of this house, only founded in the fifteenth century, from the church of Santa Margherita in Cortona with which San Girolamo had very close connections, and in which Margherita was buried.¹¹ The panel is not dated by any inscription or document. On stylistic grounds it has been placed around 1300 and variously attributed to a Tuscan, Umbrian, or Aretine artist.¹² The main text of Margherita's *Legenda*, compiled by her Franciscan confessor Fra Giunta Bevegnati, was approved in 1308.¹³ A comparison of the scenes on the *vita* panel with the contents of the *Legenda* strongly suggests that the panel was devised before the *Legenda* was completed.¹⁴ It is therefore likely that the panel was produced early in the decade following Margherita's death in 1297. In the following discussion of the Margherita panel I consider in turn four possible functions for a *vita* panel: promotion, commemoration, devotion, and instruction, concentrating on the last of these four themes.¹⁵

When the people of Cortona who tended Margherita's cult and her burial place decided to have a painting made of the holy woman, they seem to have had a very specific prototype in mind. Although the panel shapes obviously differ, the central figure of Margherita is very similar in pose and gesture to the Saint Clare of the *vita* panel in Santa Chiara, Assisi (fig. 1).¹⁶ [The Santa Chiara panel is somewhat larger: it measures 281 × 166 cm, whereas the Margherita panel measures 197.5 × 131 cm]. The Santa Chiara panel would have been a very appropriate model in certain respects. Margherita's *Legenda*

proclaimed her to be the third light of the Franciscan Order, after Saint Francis and Saint Clare,¹⁷ and there is substantial evidence that the Cortonese aimed to present the burial church of Margherita as a pilgrimage site emulating the churches of San Francesco and Santa Chiara in Assisi.¹⁸ In the years around 1300, the *vita* panel was a good choice for the promotion of the cult of a saint or would-be saint. The formula was presumably familiar and easily recognized as a type for both established and new saints. Margherita is presented here with a halo and called, in the inscription at her feet, *Sancta* (see fig. 5). The visual parallel with Saint Clare would have further aided this promotion. The panel pressed the claims not only of Margherita herself but also of the order to which she belonged. Dressed in the veil and cloak of a female member of the Franciscan Third Order,¹⁹ she represented the exemplary holiness of membership of the order, an issue to which I will shortly return.

A *vita* panel could also commemorate the appearance and, in certain senses, the presence of a holy person. This presence might be located in the past, the present, or, indeed, in the future. For example, Hellmut Hager and Henk van Os have proposed that images of Saint Francis might commemorate a visit made by the saint at some time in the past to the church in question.²⁰ The image could also denote the presence of a saint as an intercessor, as a permanent heavenly advocate from whom help might be requested now or in the future. The image might, on the other hand, commemorate the presence of a holy person in a much less abstract form, that is, in the form of his or her earthly remains preserved in a nearby tomb or shrine, as is the case for both Clare and Margherita.²¹ Nancy Patterson Ševčenko's work suggests that in the eastern Mediterranean *vita* panel, by way of comparison, there was no close connection between burial place and use of a *vita* panel.²² This function of a *vita* panel thus seems to be a relatively recent one around 1300. Initially such panels (for example, those of Saint Francis) served to commemorate or stand for an absent body rather than the presence of a body. In the case of the Santa Chiara panel, the body was hidden away, buried below the high altar of the church dedicated to the saint (fig. 3). In



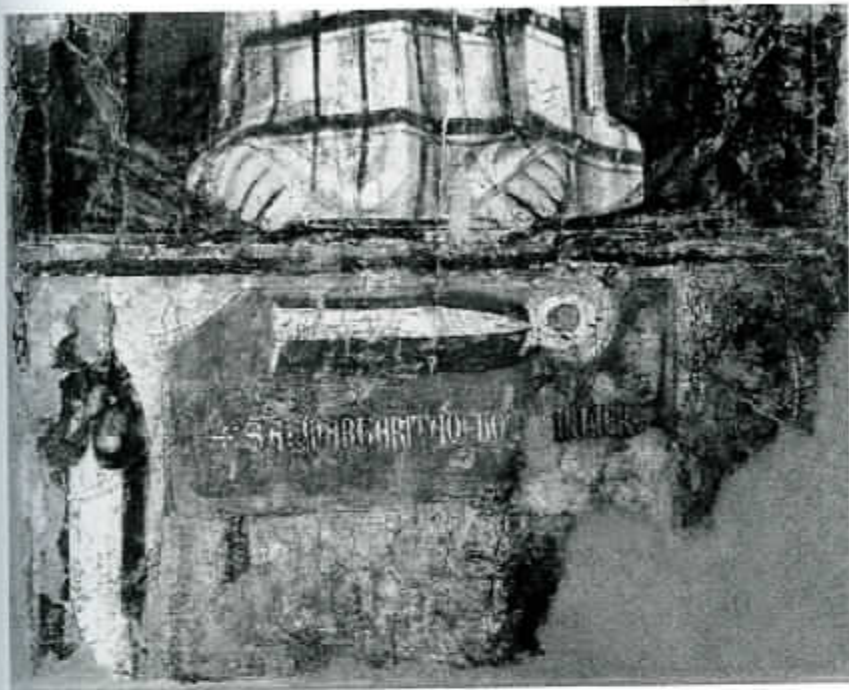
Margherita's case there was probably a very specific link between the central image of the saint on the *vita* panel and her embalmed body. The good state of preservation of Margherita's body was a source of pride and hope to the people of Cortona through many centuries. Even when the body was hidden behind wooden doors in a burial niche, the coffin had glass panels in the sides to ensure visibility.²³ Margherita's marble cenotaph, made in the second or third decade of the fourteenth century by a Siennese sculptor,²⁴ shows angels revealing the effigy not only by drawing curtains, as was common by this date, but also by raising the lid of the tomb chest to give a better view (fig. 4). In the *vita* panel, too, an unusual feature is the inclusion of two angels holding open a rich red hanging—the fabric in which Margherita's

body was dressed after death—to reveal her body to the spectator.²⁵ (The same fabric can be seen again, at the base of the panel, covering the bier on which Margherita's body is displayed.) Thus the panel explicitly commemorated the body, and also the miracles it produced, as indicated at the base of the panel by the sick and crippled who approach Margherita's shrine in hope of a cure (now barely legible; fig. 5).

Margherita's cult remained largely a local one in the centuries following her death, despite the best efforts of her promoters.²⁶ The majority of miracles recorded in the *Legenda* did not occur in the burial church itself, but a visit to the church to fulfill ex-voto obligations was an essential part of the procedure. The *vita* panel would thus have served as a focal point for such visits, com-

3. Santa Chiara, Assisi, interior toward the high altar. Photograph: Elvio Loughi.

4. Siennese sculptor (Gino di Fazio?), *Funerary Monument of Beata Margherita of Cortona*, c. 1310–1320, marble. Santa Margherita, Cortona, author photograph.



5. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *The Sick Come to Be Cured at Margherita's Shrine*, shortly after 1297, tempera on panel

Museo Diocesano, Cortona; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Architettonici, Artistici e Storici, Arezzo

memorating miraculous cures and the holy body through which these cures were achieved. Surprisingly, Margherita's ability to work posthumous miracles is referred to directly only once on the panel, in the image of Margherita lying on her bier painted at the base, but this does locate the scene as close as possible to any devout visitor.²⁷

The topic of commemoration also raises the issue of liturgical commemoration. Krüger has argued that in the case of Saint Francis *vita* panels the saint's feast and its accompanying liturgy provided the crucial context for viewing the panel.²⁸ Margherita, whose cult was not officially recognized in the Middle Ages, had to make do with a borrowed feast-day liturgy. Celebrations of the feast seem to have had a predominantly civic dimension, marked by activities culminating in a candle-bearing procession to the burial church.²⁹ In Margherita's case it may be more relevant to consider certain nonliturgical practices. We learn about ex-voto activities from the chapter of miracles appended to Margherita's *Legenda*. It is clear that the presentation of wax images, the encircling of Margherita's body with threads, belts, and long flexible tapers, probably also circumambulation of both church and body, were prominent events in the

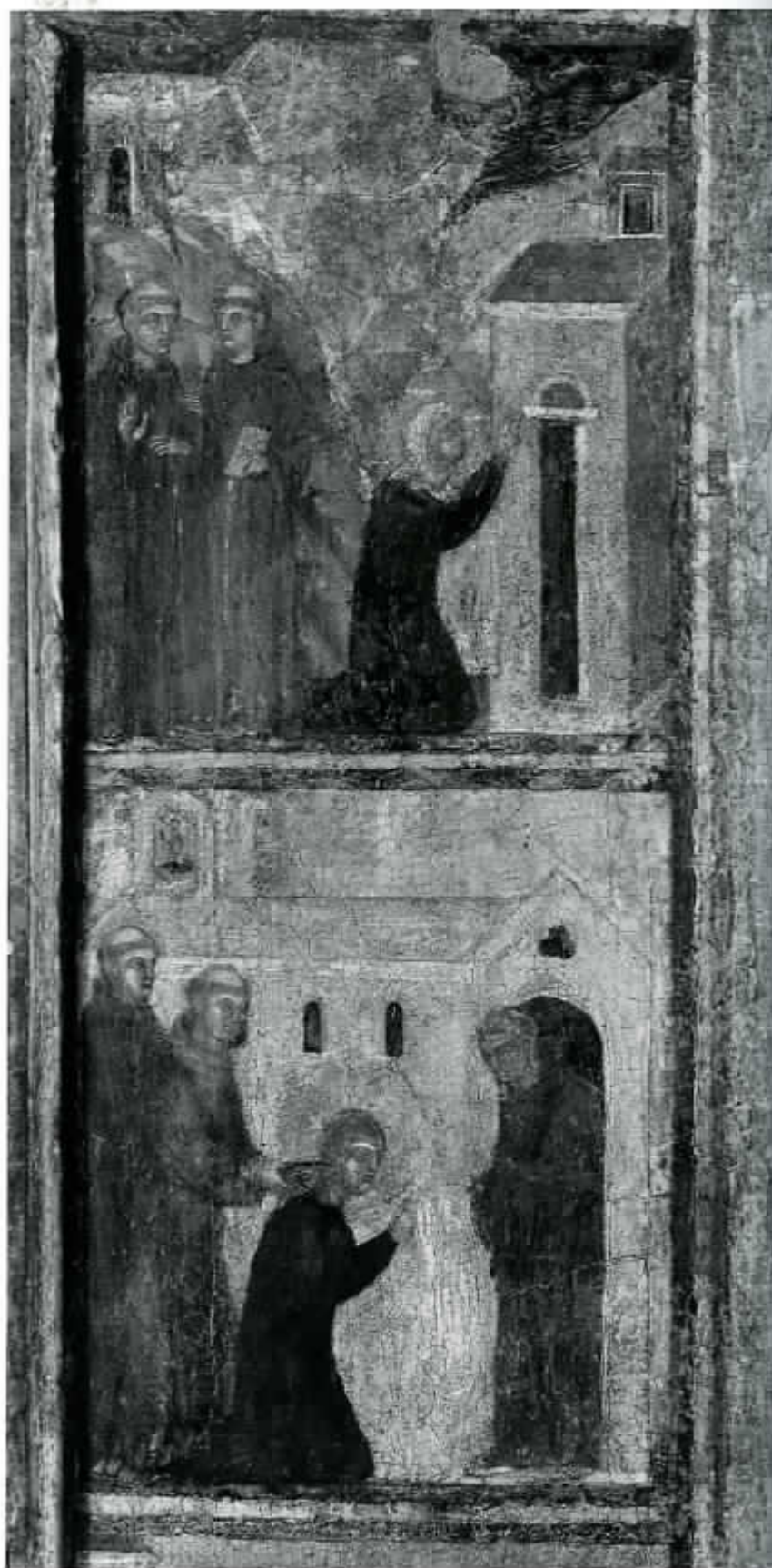
church and left behind many tangible offerings.³⁰ The *vita* panel was undoubtedly visited more frequently in this nonliturgical context, at least in the early years of its existence, than in the liturgical context of a saint's feast.³¹

The inscription beneath Margherita's feet reads: S[ANCT]A MARGARITA DEVOT[A] MULIER. The devotion that characterized Margherita was also thought to characterize those who visited her tomb. In the *Legenda*, Margherita's confessor confirms that her sanctity had been manifested since her death in the visits made not only by men hastening from different places but also by the many women who had come with devotion (*devote*) to visit her body and her tomb.³² These devout and devoted men and women included a group that would have identified particularly closely with this image of Margherita—the members of the Franciscan Third Order, many of whom lived close to the church of Santa Margherita (officiated by a secular priest who was a member of the order) and prayed within it.³³ The majority of Third Order members were laypeople. We know something about their religious activities from information gleaned from Margherita's *Legenda*, from the rule approved for the Franciscan Third Order in 1289, and from the recently published rule written in the vernacular for the *Sorores de Poenitentia*, whose text is very similar to the rule of 1289 and which is preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript that previously belonged to the church of Santa Margherita in Cortona.³⁴ Members were encouraged to attend church daily.³⁵ They were not expected to know the offices in Latin. Instead they were instructed to observe the canonical hours with repetitions of the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria, a practice that parallels that of monastic laybrothers.³⁶ To aid them in their devotions, the members of the Third Order could use a paternoster cord such as the one Margherita is shown holding in her hands in both the principal image of the panel and several of the scenes (figs. 2, 8, 12).³⁷ The *Legenda* reports that Margherita frequently repeated Pater Nosters and Aves in groups of one hundred.³⁸ Members of the Third Order looking at, or praying daily in the presence of, this image would have known how to mirror the saint's actions with their own.

I want to stay with this particular audience for the painting in considering one further theme among the possible functions of a *vita* panel, that of instruction. Margherita's *Legenda*, written in Latin and not translated or abridged in the vernacular during the Middle Ages, is a long and diffuse text unsuited to the instruction of the laity.³⁹ The text characterizes Margherita, on a number of occasions, as a mirror of sinners,⁴⁰ but the spiritual life portrayed in the *Legenda* does not, in its complete form, present a program that a member of the Third Order could easily have followed. I would propose that the *vita* panel, in contrast, is admirably adapted to this task. By careful selection of key episodes in Margherita's life, and arrangement of these episodes in a particular sequence, the painting can serve as a clear instrument of spiritual instruction.

First we see Margherita's conversion to the religious life (fig. 6). Margherita arrives in Cortona to do penance at the bidding of Christ. Two Franciscan friars watch as she kneels before the convent of San Francesco, Cortona, and specifically its Franciscan friars, are indicated by Christ as a worthy starting point for the penitent sinner. The vernacular rule of the *Sorores de Poenitentia* and the Latin statutes of 1289 both stress the importance of assuring the suitability of potential candidates and the role of the visitor (spiritual supervisor) in this process.⁴¹ The visitor should preferably be a Franciscan friar.⁴² In the next scene, Margherita places herself under the supervision of the Franciscan friars, and her hair is cut as a sign of profession. Although this was not part of the usual reception of a member of the Third Order,⁴³ it is visually reminiscent of a *nun* entering the Second Order [for example, fig. 7].⁴⁴ At the same time, Margherita receives the white veil of a member of the Third Order.⁴⁵ Thus the panel represents entry into the Third Order as a solemn event analogous to that of a nun entering her order. Moreover, when penitents are received into the Third Order, the proper route is via the friars of the First Order.

After her conversion, Margherita practices a life of asceticism, retreating to a small cell, giving away her garments to the poor, and wrapping herself in the mat of woven reeds on which she slept (fig. 8).⁴⁶



6. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Margherita Comes to Cortona to Do Penance, and Margherita's Profession and Her Investiture as a Member of the Franciscan Third Order*, shortly after 1297, tempera on panel

Museo Diocesano, Cortona, photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence

Margherita's asceticism and renunciation of goods went far beyond that prescribed for ordinary members of the order, but this scene serves to illustrate, in a forceful manner, the religious poverty of clothing and diet suitable to members of the Third Order and the acts of charity that often characterized their activities.⁴⁷ The representation of the handing on of worldly goods may have had a further resonance for the tertiaries, who were all exhorted to make a will within three months of joining.⁴⁸ Visually, of course, the figure of Margherita also recalls that of Mary Magdalene in her desert cave, covered by her luxuriant hair (see, for example, figs. 9, 13). Margherita was often referred to as a new Magdalene because of the strength of her penitence.⁴⁹

The next two scenes (fig. 8, lower scene; fig. 10, upper scene) are particularly damaged and difficult to interpret. The readings proposed here differ from previous suggestions.⁵⁰ Dressed in the checked robe of a penitent, and the veil and cloak of a tertiary, Margherita kneels in prayer before her cell. She is assailed by two manifestations of the devil. At her knees is a small dragon (visually rem-

iniscent of the iconography of the better-known Saint Margaret of Antioch). In front of her stands a smartly dressed figure wearing a white coif and a scarlet tunic with buttoned sleeves. This is the devil's page from the household of hell, described in the *Legenda* during one of Margherita's many struggles with the devil in his various guises.⁵¹ He holds out to her a round black object flecked with white; I suggest that this represents a mirror.⁵² The devil tries to distract Margherita by showing her a reflection of her physical beauty which she so despised.⁵³ At the same time we are reminded that Margherita was a mirror of sinners.⁵⁴ At the top right of the composition, Margherita's guardian angel comes to offer support, as is also described in the *Legenda* text.

The next scene is even more damaged (fig. 10, upper scene). At the left, Margherita again kneels in prayer before her cell, with her paternoster cord looped over her fingers as in the previous scene. To the right is a group of two or three figures, including the man in scarlet from the previous scene (of whom only a white cap, some white cuff buttons, and traces of red remain), hands held out in a gesture of request. It is also just possible to discern a figure with hooves matching, in this respect, another of the descriptions of the appearance of the devil to Margherita.⁵⁵ Margherita herself turns away from these apparitions, looking in the opposite direction and holding up her hands in a gesture of defense and dismissal. With the aid of her guardian angel, and of the prayers said with her paternoster cord, she has succeeded in rejecting the temptations of the devil.

Escape from temptation, fortified by prayer, was a worthy aim for members of the Third Order. In Margherita's case the consequent reward was great, as we see in the following scene (fig. 10, lower scene). Through the merits of Saint Francis, shown at the right, Christ appears to Margherita and absolves her from all her sins.⁵⁶ A well-instructed member of the Third Order would easily have made the connection between this plenary absolution and the following scene in which Margherita receives the eucharist brought to her cell (fig. 12, upper scene). Penance and absolution were essential preconditions for receiving the eucharist.



7. Umbrian artist [Maestro della Santa Chiara], *Saint Clare with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Saint Francis Cuts Saint Clare's Hair on Her Entry into the Religious Life*, 1283, tempera on panel

Santa Chiara, Assisi, photograph: Archivio Fotografico, Santi Conventi, Assisi



8. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Margherita Gives Her Possessions to the Poor and Wraps Herself in the Mat of Woven Reeds on Which She Slept*, and *Margherita Suffers the Temptations of the Devil*, c. 1300, tempera on panel

Museo Diocesano, Cortona; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Firenze



9. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Heavenly Food Is Brought to Mary Magdalene in Her Desert Cave by an Angel*, c. 1280, tempera on panel

Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Firenze

Margherita wished to communicate daily and was even granted permission to have an altar within her cell.⁵⁷ Ordinary Third Order members were expected to attend mass as often as possible but were required to confess and receive the eucharist only three times a year, at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.⁵⁸ The two clerics shown here cannot be identified with any certainty, but they may well be members of the secular clergy.⁵⁹ The rule recommends Franciscan friars as visitors, but does not insist on this as a necessity.⁶⁰ Margherita herself had a mem-

ber of the secular clergy, Ser Badia, as her confessor for the last seven years of her life, and he continued to minister to the tertiary community attached to the church of Santa Margherita after her death.⁶¹ The scene shown here may thus have been designed to reinforce for Third Order members their own religious experience.

The ultimate reward for a life of conversion, entry into the Third Order, poverty, charity, rejection of sin, confession, penitence, and participation in the eucharist is clearly illustrated in the last scene of the *vita*

10. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Margherita Resists the Temptations of the Devil*, and *Christ Grants Margherita Absolution from All Her Sins through the Intercession of Saint Francis*, c. 1300, tempera on panel
 Museo Diocesano, Cortona; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence



11. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Non Me Tangere*, c. 1280, tempera on panel
 Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Fratelli Alinari, Florence



panel (fig. 12, lower scene). Christ appears to Margherita presenting Mary Magdalene to her, and indicating that Margherita, too, has a throne reserved for her among the virgins in heaven.⁶² The spectator is thus also led to hope that by putting on the habit of the Third Order, and by following its spiritual program, he or she may ultimately come to paradise. The tertiaries would have had many opportunities to consider carefully a painting in their local church, as they were encouraged to attend on a daily basis. Once a month they were to be present at a special

meeting in church, at which a religious—according to the vernacular rule, a friar—must expound the rule and preach to them, leading them to penitence and to works of mercy and charity (“el quale frate ledebba ammonire et inducere ala sancta penitentia et aloper de la sancta misericordia et carita dedio”).⁶³ The preacher’s task of keeping his audience’s attention was not necessarily an easy one. The following paragraph of the rule has stern comments discouraging talking in church. The Margherita *vita* panel would have been a very useful tool in this



regard, helping to attract the members of the congregation and subsequently acting as an aide-mémoire of what they had heard.

There was one further occasion on which the tertiaries were expected to assemble. They were required to visit the sick and dying, to say a prescribed number of Pater Nosters and Aves at the death of a fellow member of the order, and to remain throughout the funeral service and burial.⁶⁴ At that testing time, the image of Margherita lying



12. Tuscan (or Umbrian) artist, *Beata Margherita of Cortona with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Margherita Receives the Eucharist in Her Cell*, and *Christ Presents Saint Mary Magdalene to Margherita and Shows Margherita the Throne Reserved for Her in Paradise*, c. 1300, tempera on panel Museo Diocesano, Cortona; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence.

13. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *The Eucharist Is Brought to the Magdalene in Her Desert Cave by Bishop Maximimus*, c. 1280, tempera on panel Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Fratelli Alinari, Florence.

on her bier at the foot of the panel painting (fig. 5), and of her vision of her throne in heaven, may have provided appropriate and comforting images before which to pray.

How helpful was the Santa Chiara *vita* panel (fig. 1) as a model for the individual Margherita scenes? The answer is, I think, that it was hardly helpful at all. Only one scene, Margherita's profession and investiture, seems to follow the Santa Chiara panel in composition and also in location on the respective panels (figs. 1 and 2, 6 and 7). The importance of entry into the Third Order, in the presence of the friars, may well be modeled on Saint Clare receiving the tonsure from the hands of Saint Francis himself. But the remaining scenes are very different in character and emphasis, even in the narrative direction of the sequence.⁶⁵ Perhaps the Santa Chiara panel was displayed too high up for the artist of the Margherita panel to

14. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, c. 1280, tempera on panel

Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence



be able to distinguish the scenes clearly.⁶⁶ Or, more likely, the scenes themselves were not considered appropriate models.

Another *vita* panel, the Mary Magdalene now in the Accademia in Florence attributed to the eponymous Magdalene Master and dated on stylistic grounds to c. 1280, provides closer parallels with the character of the Margherita scenes (see fig. 14).⁶⁷ The ascetic, reclusive Magdalene shown kneeling before her cave, receiving the eucharist or a heavenly vision, may be compared with the prayerful, penitent Margherita (figs. 8 and 9, 12 and 13). The designation of Margherita as a new Magdalene would have made Magdalene iconography an obvious source for an artist devising a new hagiographic cycle. For example, the scene in which Christ absolves Margherita of all her sins clearly resembles the *Noli Me Tangere*, with the figure of Saint Francis added as a compositional afterthought (figs. 10 and 11).⁶⁸

The artist may even have known the Florentine panel itself, although the similarities could simply be due to certain functional parallels between the two *vita* panels. Mary Magdalene's scroll bears a large and conspicuous inscription that stands out against the dark background of her hair: NE DESP. ETIS. VOS QUI PECCARE SOLETIS. EXEMPLO MEO. VOS REPARATE DEO (Do not despair, you who are accustomed to sin, and by my example, let yourselves be restored to God). The panel uses Mary Magdalene's story to explain clearly how her example can lead the repentant sinner to God. The Magdalene shows repentance and humility (fig. 14); she exemplifies the role of preaching in leading the laity to repentance (fig. 15).⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that the laity here are a mixed group of men and women shown in contemporary dress. Mary Magdalene practices prayer and contemplation, and she follows the offices in a very personal manner by being raised up by angels at each of the canonical hours (fig. 16).⁷⁰ She receives the eucharist twice, once administered by the bishop saint Maximinus and once brought to her, in the form of heavenly food, by an angel (figs. 9, 13). At her death her funeral is performed by Bishop Maximinus. In the later scenes on the panel she leads a solitary, eremitical life of prayer, but she is not a member of an enclosed, regular religious order. Her example could thus



be followed not only by the clergy but also by the laity in church, or in the solitude of their own homes, seeking a wilderness within the city. The Magdalene panel came to the Accademia in Florence from Santissima Annunziata, a Servite foundation, but it is not known whether it was originally made for that church, nor for what audience it was originally intended.⁷¹ The use of a prominent and extensive inscription in Latin suggests an audience that was either itself literate or was guided by someone who could convey to his flock the meaning of the inscription by using the images presented on the panel for its elucidation.⁷² One may speculate that members of the Order of Penitence, or of a lay penitent confraternity, might have been the type of group for which this panel was originally designed. Although this aspect of the Magdalene panel's function remains to be confirmed, we can make a definite statement concerning one of the other possible functions found in *vita* panels: it seems most unlikely that this *vita* panel was ever

displayed in conjunction with any of the saint's purported shrines.⁷³ In the present context—consideration of the functions of the Margherita *vita* panel—the Magdalene panel, with its prominent inscription, acts as a valuable confirmation. In the years around 1300 a *vita* panel could clearly serve to instruct its audience about an exemplary life of penitence and prayer.

If the choice of scenes on the Margherita *vita* panel suggests something about the concerns, spirituality, and devotions of those who looked at it, what can we deduce from the scenes on the Santa Chiara painting (fig. 1) about the expected audiences for that *vita* panel? Does it also offer a program of spiritual instruction to be followed, in this case, by the nuns of the Second Order? There is no space to consider this issue here in the detail it deserves, but I should like to make a few observations. Whereas we can be reasonably confident that the tertiaries in Cortona could have approached the Margherita panel and studied it closely, and could have discussed it with their spiritual advisers if

15. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *The Magdalene Preaching*, c. 1280, tempera on panel
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Fratelli Alinari, Florence



16. Magdalene Master, *Saint Mary Magdalene with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *The Magdalene Raised Up by Angels at Each of the Canonical Hours*, c. 1280, tempera on panel
Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence; photograph: Fratelli Alinari, Florence

17. Umbrian artist (Maestro della Santa Chiara), *Saint Clare with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Saint Clare Received by Saint Francis and His Companions at the Porziuncola*, 1283, tempera on panel

Santa Chiara, Assisi, photograph: Archivio Fotografico Suco, Cuneo, Astal



they wished to do so, the question of the visibility of and audience for paintings made for nuns' churches in central Italy in the later Middle Ages is problematic and has only recently become a topic of serious study, notably in the work of Caroline Bruzelius, Julian Gardner, and Ann Roberts.⁷⁴ An abbess or her representative, presumably working through an intermediary, might have discussed, advised on, and perhaps dictated the content of a painting. Benedicta (died 1260), second abbess of Santa Chiara, Assisi, paid for the large crucifix that is still displayed in the church (fig. 3) and was herself represented kneeling at the foot of the cross, holding a well-stocked purse.⁷⁵ It has been convincingly proposed, by both Klaus Krüger and Elvio Lunghi, that the model for this act of devotion and self-commemoration was the crucifix commissioned by Fra Elia, second minister general of the Franciscan Order, made for San Francesco at Assisi, outside the circumscribed monastery walls.⁷⁶ By analogy, the commission for the Santa Chiara *vita* panel could have come from within the community of nuns, even though, in the absence of any documentation concerning patronage, the two candidates who have so far been proposed as patrons are both prominent men

from outside the cloister: Bishop Simone of Assisi or Pope Martin IV.⁷⁷ Despite uncertainty about who initiated and paid for the commission, however, we can be reasonably sure about one thing: if the painting was displayed within the main church, as is assumed to have been the case, then nuns were not the principal audience for the work. There are two current theories about the panel's original display. Either it was placed on the high altar, directly above the site of Saint Clare's burial deep below pavement level,⁷⁸ or it was raised up, either on a rood beam or on the architrave of the grille enclosing the high altar, and was thus visible above and slightly behind the high altar.⁷⁹ The nuns' choir in Santa Chiara was situated, unusually, to the west of the crossing, in the angle between the west wall of the south transept and the south nave wall.⁸⁰ The strictness with which *clausura* was enforced at this date is not certain,⁸¹ but the nuns would have had to come right up to one of the two grated openings that formed the only means of communication between their choir and the church interior in order to have seen the panel in either of the positions postulated for it.⁸² The panel could not, therefore, have formed a focal point for them during the liturgy. On the contrary, the principal audience for the Santa Chiara panel must have been the friars who officiated in the church and the visitors—both religious and lay, pilgrims and local residents—who visited it. As in the case of the Margherita panel, the main image of the saint could promote her cult⁸³ and act as a focus for commemoration and devotion, but whom should the scenes instruct?

Let us first consider the friars as a potential audience. Jeryldene Wood has recently proposed that one of the messages contained in these scenes is an emphasis on the close links between the First and Second Orders at a time when the Franciscan friars were trying to renounce their responsibilities for the Clare nuns.⁸⁴ The new rule drawn up for the Clares under Urban IV in 1263 recognized that the First Order was unwilling to take full responsibility for the Second Order, and it was not until 1296 that the First Order's duties toward the Second Order were fully formulated.⁸⁵ Thus the panel was executed at a time of uncertainty in relations that has



18. Umbrian artist (Maestro della Santa Chiara), *Saint Clare with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Saint Agnes Attacked by Her Kinsmen*, and *Saint Agnes Received into the Second Order by Saint Clare as Saint Francis Cuts Her Hair*, 1253, tempera on panel
Santa Chiara, Assisi; photograph: Archivio Fotografico Sacro Convento, Assisi

19. Umbrian artist (Maestro della Santa Chiara), *Saint Clare with Eight Scenes from Her Life*, detail, *Miracle of the Loaf*, 1283, tempera on panel

Santa Chiara, Assisi.
photograph: Archivio Fotografico
Santi Conventi, Assisi.



prompted Wood's suggestion that the choice of scenes was intended, in part, to remind the friars of their close links with Clare's order.⁸⁶ This suggestion certainly merits consideration, although it should be remembered that the friars attached to the monastery of Santa Chiara, tending a major shrine near the mother-church of the order, may have had a more positive view of Saint Clare, her foundation, and the consequent *cura monialium* imposed upon them than their brothers in other centers.⁸⁷ Whatever the general relations between friars and nuns at this time, the representation of Francis and his first companions in the *vita* panel scenes (for example, figs. 1, 7, 17, 18) would surely have been a source of interest for the friars as they continued to supervise professions and minister to the nuns' spiritual needs. The panel implies a further possible connection between the images and an officiating friar. Under each scene appeared an inscription that a literate guide may perhaps have been required to translate and expound on for the benefit of visitors to the shrine.⁸⁸

There is also considerable emphasis, within the scenes chosen, on the desire of Clare and her sister Agnes to enter the religious life and the miraculous signs that overcame the

opposition of their family.⁸⁹ This is a major theme of all four scenes on the left side of the panel (figs. 1, 7, 17) and is shown with particular force in the first scene on the right side (fig. 18). In the foreground we are shown how Agnes becomes miraculously heavy and immovable when their uncle, Monaldo, and other kinsmen try to prevent her from following Clare into the religious life. Monaldo's arm is paralyzed as he raises it to strike Agnes, while another man pulls violently at her hair in a vain attempt to move her. In the upper section of the scene, Agnes is shown again, kneeling before Clare to make her profession between her sister's hands, as Saint Francis himself cuts her hair. The sacrifice of her hair seems easy to bear when contrasted with the pain caused by the brutal tugging at Agnes' long tresses shown in the foreground scene. The first four scenes parallel events narrated in chapters 4 and 5 (paragraphs 7–9) of Clare's *Legenda*.⁹⁰ The last two scenes, which relate a vision granted to Clare shortly before her death, and her funeral attended by Pope Innocent IV, many members of the curia, and Franciscan friars, come from the closing chapters of book 1 of the *Legenda* (paragraphs 46–48). Between these two groups are set the remaining two scenes, which relate to events found in the central section of the *Legenda*, presented here in reverse sequence. One of these is, as we have seen, the entry of Saint Agnes into the order (chapter 15, paragraphs 24–26). The other, related in chapter 9 (paragraph 15) of the *Legenda*, is the only scene that represents life within the Second Order (fig. 19). When Clare divides in half the one small loaf that the friars were able to beg, and gives half to the friars, the piece that she retains proves miraculously to be sufficient for all fifty sisters within the monastery.

It has been noted that the choice of scenes is, in some ways, unexpected.⁹¹ There is no reference to the incident of 1240 in which, through the strength of her prayers, Clare drove the "saracens" of Frederick II's troops out of the nunnery, or to that of the following year, when she liberated Assisi from siege. Thus Clare does not seem to be presented in the scenes primarily as a defender of the city.⁹² Nor is there an insistence on poverty, although it could be said that the *Miracle of the Loaf* (fig. 19) refers to both reliance

on alms and eucharistic concerns.⁹³ Moreover, the omission of any posthumous healing miracles suggests that these scenes were not primarily directed at the many pilgrims whom, it was intended, would visit the church.⁹⁴ The apparent omission of certain scenes may imply that the eight scenes that were included were chosen in order to elucidate certain specific themes. A prominent theme, it seems to me, is that of recruitment. All the scenes raise issues that may well have been of concern to those considering entering the order and to their families. Entry into the order is shown to be a bold and daring act and one that can be undertaken by those of high social status.⁹⁵ Clare, the first candidate, is singled out by the bishop of Assisi, and entering the order is encouraged by Saint Francis (figs. 7 and 17). The act merits heavenly protection, overruling family opposition, which is fruitless (figs. 1, 18). In the Saint Agnes scene, we see the profession of a nun in the hands of the first abbess (fig. 18), a detail included here but not specifically described in the *Legenda* text. The miracle of the loaves indicates that the nun will be sufficiently fed and cared for by the abbess and her sisters. The chosen scenes offer no further information about life within the order, such as the finer details of the nun's spiritual life of prayer, meditation, or reception of the eucharist.⁹⁶ It seems that such themes (and the images that might accompany and stimulate them) must wait until the nun had herself entered *clausura* and were not appropriate subject matter for the audience of the Santa Chiara *vita* panel. This is in sharp contrast to the Margherita panel. Whereas the Margherita *vita* panel instructs members of the Third Order, the Santa Chiara *vita* panel does not act as a focus for the devotions of the nuns,⁹⁷ but it may have served to inform those who had not yet entered the Second Order, and perhaps also those members of the First Order entrusted with the care and supervision of the nuns.

What can a study of the Margherita panel tell us about the functions of the *vita* panel c. 1300, and were all these functions implicit in the use of the *vita* panel type? The panel's role as a focus for devotion is a function that panel paintings, and indeed works of many

other types, had possessed for many centuries. It is a function that can be expected but is in no way exclusive to *vita* panels.

The choice of the *vita* panel type gave special opportunities for the promotion of the cult of a saint c. 1300. By this date the panel type carried strong connotations through its use for other saints—both new saints, especially Francis, and long-established saints such as Nicholas and Catherine of Alexandria. As mentioned above, the Margherita panel does not give any particular emphasis to posthumous miracles. They are referred to only once, in the image of Margherita on her bier at the base of the panel. This presents a notable contrast with the preponderance of miraculous scenes on the *vita* panels associated with the early cult of Saint Francis. Only later, in the Bardi Saint Francis panel, was this emphasis superseded by a concentration on spiritual progress within the religious life.⁹⁸ Perhaps only a limited number of Margherita's miracles had been reported and approved by the time the panel was executed, but those arranging the commission may simply have had other priorities.

The central image of a *vita* panel could, on the other hand, be intimately related to the contents of a shrine, providing commemoration of the saint. The specific link between a large-scale, frontally placed representation of a holy person on a *vita* panel and the burial place of their body was a relatively new one.⁹⁹ The Margherita panel is among early examples of this function for the *vita* panel.

Nancy Patterson Ševčenko's work has shown how the very inception of the *vita* panel may have been linked with the desire to instruct a varied group of onlookers about the story and significance of a particular saint.¹⁰⁰ Instruction continued to be an important element in a panel type that gave ample room for scenes and that could even be expanded for an extensive and complex program such as the Bardi Saint Francis panel. The type of instruction offered by the Margherita panel may be relatively new. The *vita* panel could now convey a spiritual program to those who were eager to participate in some of the forms of regular religious life but who were more at home with the pater-noster cord than the prayer book.

I have referred throughout this essay to functions rather than locations. The Margherita panel has two sturdy iron rings attached to the top crossbeam on its reverse that could have been used with ropes or chains to stabilize it on a beam, on an altar, or simply to help attach it to a wall near Margherita's original burial niche. I think it quite possible that it was placed in all these locations in its time, although I would hesitate to describe it as having been conceived as an altarpiece.¹⁰¹ The issue of location may be hard, even impossible, to determine, but it seems to me important to remember that the painting could have

fulfilled all the functions outlined here—and a few more—wherever it was placed.¹⁰² When those commissioning the Margherita panel considered the Santa Chiara *vita* panel, they were happy to avail themselves of the powerful connotations accumulated by this distinctive panel type over the years. But they were also intent on using the panel to express other messages of their own, and in this the *vita* panel type proved to be an excellent choice, responsive to new uses and reinventions. In the case of the *vita* panel in the years around 1300, I believe that similarity of type should not lead us to assume similarity of function.

NOTES

I am grateful to Elvio Lunghi for generously supplying the illustration for figure 3 at short notice, and to Valentino Pace and Donal Cooper for help in locating bibliography. As always, this essay could not have been prepared for publication without the resources of the Warburg Institute Library and the assistance of the Conway and Witt Libraries, Courtauld Institute of Art.

1. Hellmut Hager, *Die Anfänge des italienischen Altarbildes* (Munich, 1962).

2. Klaus Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien* (Berlin, 1992). For constructive criticism of Krüger's thesis, see the review by Irene Hueck in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58 (1995), 419–424.

3. FACTE FUERU[N]T ISTE SUB ANNO D[OMI]NI 128[3] INDIC[T]IONE XI TE[M]PORE D[OMI]NI MARTINI PAPAE QUARTI. The inscription is damaged and restored, but, as Bellosi notes, the indiction that it mentions confirms that the year must be 1283. See Luciano Bellosi, *La pecora di Giotto* (Turin, 1985), 34, note 20. Edward B. Garrison, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence, 1949), no. 393, and the new edition, *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index. A New Edition on CD-ROM*, ed. Courtauld Institute of Art (London, 1998), with revised and updated bibliography and “iconclass” indexing.

4. Garrison 1949/1998, no. 403. The painting is not documented or inscribed but is generally dated a few years after Margherita's death (1297) on grounds of both style and content. For a summary of the arguments, with bibliography, see Joanna Cannon and André Vauchez, *Margherita of Cortona and the Lorenzetti: Sienese Art and the Cult of a Holy Woman in Medieval Tuscany* (University Park, Pa., 1999), 160–161.

5. See below, note 67.

6. Jeryldene M. Wood, “Perceptions of Holiness in Thirteenth-Century Italian Painting: Clare of Assisi,” *Art History* 14 (1991), 301–328; Elvio Lunghi, “La decorazione pittorica della chiesa,” in Marino Bigaroni, Hans-Rudolph Meier, and Elvio Lunghi, *La Basilica di Santa Chiara in Assisi* (Perugia, 1994), 137–282, 164–188; Jeryldene M. Wood, *Women, Art, and Spirituality: The Poor Clares of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1996). Lunghi's discussion of the panel is stimulating and well informed. Wood's two contributions have the merit of being the first to investigate the choice of scenes on the panel at any length within a potentially fascinating context but unfortunately tend to be superficial, and do not take sufficient account of German scholarship, especially the work of Hellmut Hager, Hans Belting, and Klaus Krüger. See also the valuable observations in the following studies: Servus Gieben, “L'iconografia di Chiara d'Assisi,” in *Chiara d'Assisi. Atti del XX convegno internazionale. Assisi, 15–17 ottobre 1992* (Spoleto, 1993), 189–236, 191–194; Dominique Rigaux, “Claire d'Assise: Naissance d'une image XIIIe–XVe siècles,”

in *Sainte Claire d'Assise et sa postérité. Actes du colloque international organisé à l'occasion du VIIIe centenaire de la naissance de sainte Claire*, ed. Geneviève Brunel-Lobrichon, Dominique Dinet, Jacqueline Gréal, and Damien Vorreux (Nantes, 1995), 155–185, 166–171; Valentino Pace, “Immagini di santità. La pala d'altare di santa Chiara a Santa Chiara d'Assisi,” in *Chiara d'Assisi e la memoria di Francesco. Atti del convegno per l'VIII centenario della nascita di santa Chiara. Fara Sabina, 1994* (Fara Sabina and Rieti, 1995), 119–128.

7. See Cannon and Vauchez 1999, especially chaps. 4 and 11, with previous bibliography; *Margherita da Cortona. Una storia emblematica di devozione narrata per testi e immagini*, ed. Laura Corti and Riccardo Spinelli (Milan, 1998), 140–143. For the article by Laura Corti, see below, note 12.

8. For photographs taken before and during the course of restoration, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, figs. 143–145.

9. The photographs of individual scenes reproduced here (with the exception of fig. 5) therefore use photographs taken before the most recent restoration. The photograph of the complete panel illustrates its condition after that restoration.

10. *Iunctae Bevegnatis Legenda de Vita et Miraculis Beatae Margaritae de Cortona*, ed. Fortunato Iozzelli (Grottaferrata, 1997). See also the forthcoming English translation of the *Legenda* by Thomas Renna, currently being prepared for publication by the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, New York. For discussion of Margherita's life and further bibliography, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999.

11. Provenance recorded in a visitation of 1634 as part of Margherita's canonization process, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, *Riti*, Proc. 552, 524–526. Prior to the provision of a church for the community at San Girolamo (also known as the Poverelle) in 1570, the tertiaries heard mass at Santa Margherita, received their spiritual direction from there, and were buried there. San Girolamo was believed to occupy the site of Margherita's first cell in Cortona, and the tertiaries came to be regarded as the direct descendants of Margherita and her companions. See Lodovico da Pelago, *Sommario della storia della chiesa e convento di Santa Margherita da Cortona* . . . (1781), unpublished manuscript in the Archivio Conventuale of Santa Margherita in Cortona, “nota 3” and “nota 12.”

12. Giovanni Previtali, *Giotto e la sua bottega* (Milan, 1967), 133, note 29; Bellosi 1985, 193, note 25; *Il Museo diocesano di Cortona*, ed. Anna Maria Maetzke (Florence, 1992), 27 and 35; Corti and Spinelli 1998, 140–141; Laura Corti, “Esercizio sulla mano destra: Gestualità e santi nel medioevo,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Classe di lettere e filosofia*, ser. 4, quaderni 1–2 (1997), 39–50. I am grateful to Laura Corti for permission to read her text in advance of publication.

13. Iozzelli 1997, 477–478.

14. For more detailed argument on this point, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, chap. 11.
15. These themes approximate loosely to those articulated in the threefold justification for religious images proposed by Bonaventure and Aquinas. For a comparison of their views, especially concerning the role of art in instructing "simple people," see Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word and Image* 5 (1989), 227-251, especially 232.
16. For the proposal that the gesture of the right hand signifies penitence and conversion, see Corti 1997.
17. Iozzelli 1997, 439.
18. Cannon and Vauchez 1999, especially 47-51, 102-103. A further possible connection, not mentioned in Cannon and Vauchez, is the display, in both Santa Chiara and Santa Margherita, of a venerated crucifix visible through an opening in the main wall of the church. For the display of the Cross of San Damiano within the *clausura* of Santa Chiara, see Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1994, 48; for the carved wooden crucifix visible through an opening in the chapel situated in Margherita's cell, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 48-49, 101.
19. Since the Third Order was formed only in 1289, Margherita was originally invested as a member of the Order of Penitence and perhaps also as an oblate. Showing her dressed, throughout the panel, as a member of the Third Order is therefore, in part, an anachronism. For further discussion of this point, and of Margherita's dress in general, see Fabio Bisogni, "L'abito di Margherita," in Corti and Spinelli 1998, 33-43.
20. Hager 1962, 89-91; Henk van Os, "The Earliest Altarpieces of St. Francis," in *Francesco d'Assisi nella storia: Secoli XIII-XV (Roma, 29 settembre-2 ottobre, 1981)*, ed. Servus Gieben (Rome, 1983), 333-338, 334.
21. For Clare's burial, see Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1996, especially 24-34; for Margherita, Cannon and Vauchez 1999, chap. 4.
22. See Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "The Vita Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 53 (1999), 149-165. I am most grateful to Nancy Ševčenko for making her text available to me in advance of publication.
23. Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 76-78.
24. Gianna Bardotti Biasion, "Gano di Fazio e la tomba-altare di Santa Margherita da Cortona," *Prospettiva* 37 (1984), 2-19.
25. Iozzelli 1997, 451.
26. Fortunato Iozzelli, "I miracoli nella 'legenda' di Santa Margherita da Cortona," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 86 (1993), 217-276, especially 238-244 and fig. 8.
27. Fire damage at the base of the *vita* panel suggests an overenthusiastic and incautious use of candles before the image, either by those grateful for a miraculous cure or still seeking one. Such devotion continued beyond the Middle Ages; later fire damage necessitated the repainting of the panel mentioned above.
28. Krüger 1992, especially sec. IV.
29. Cannon and Vauchez 1999, chap. 2 and appendix 7.
30. Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 57-60.
31. For further consideration of Margherita's anomalous status and its implications, see Joanna Cannon, "Popular Saints and Private Chancies: The Sienese Tomb-Altar of Margherita of Cortona and Questions of Liturgical Use," in *Kunst und Liturgie im Mittelalter: Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Bibliotheca Hertziana und des Nederlands Instituut te Rome, Rome, 28-30 September 1997*, ed. Nicolas Bock, Sible de Blaauw, Christoph Luitpold Frommel, and Herbert L. Kessler (Munich, 2000), 149-162.
32. Iozzelli 1997, 184.
33. Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 28. For a summary of the character of the Third Order and its development from the Order of Penitence, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 2-3, 18-19, 27-29, with further bibliography.
34. For the statutes of 1289, see Gilles Gerard Meersseman, *Ordo fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1977), 1:394-400, and *La "Supra montem" di Niccolò IV (1289). Genesi e diffusione di una regola. Atti del V convegno di studi francescani, Roma, 1987*, ed. Raffaele Pazzelli and Lino Temperini (Rome, 1988). The text of a vernacular rule, claiming to date from 1279, has been discovered in Cortona in a fifteenth-century copy that previously belonged to the church of Santa Margherita in Cortona. See Maria Caterina Jacobelli, *La regola per le "sorores de poenitentia" nel codice 71 della Biblioteca di Cortona*. Accademia Etrusca, Cortona, Note e documenti 14 (Cortona, 1992). The text differs, in certain respects, from the rule of 1289 either because it preceded that rule, as Jacobelli argues, or—as seems more likely—because it represents a vernacular adaptation of the rule of 1289, altered slightly to suit local circumstances. For example, the Ave is named, in addition to the Pater Noster, as a suitable substitute for the canonical hours in the Cortona text. Jacobelli argues persuasively that this rule reflects the one followed by Margherita's female companions. Jacobelli tabulates and analyzes the differences between the rules of "1279" and 1289, the *Memoriale propositi*, and the rule of Mariano da Firenze. For criticisms of Jacobelli's acceptance of the 1279 date, see the reviews by Cesare Cenci in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 86 (1993), 435-437, and Lino Temperini in *Analecta TOR* 25 (1994), 277-279. [The references that follow cite first the relevant chapter number in the rule for the Sorores de Poenitentia and then the corresponding chapter in the rule of 1289.]

35. "Come debbano andare continuamente ala chiesa," chap. XIX, Jacobelli 1992, 20; chap. XIII, Meersseman 1977, 1:398.
36. Chap. XV, Jacobelli 1992, 19; chap. XVIII, Meersseman 1977, 1:397 (Ave Maria not mentioned).
37. Meersseman 1977, 2:1145, note 3.
38. See, for example, Iozzelli 1997, 248, 296-300.
39. In contrast to, for example, the *Liber* of Angela of Foligno which had a clearly organized text and circulated in both Latin and the vernacular. See the valuable introduction in Enrico Menestò, "Beate e sante dell'Umbria tra Duecento e Trecento: Una ricognizione degli scritti e delle fonti agiografiche," in *Sante e beate ombre tra il XIII e il XIV secolo. Mostra iconografica* [exh. cat., Oratorio del Gonfalone] (Foligno, 1986), 61-87, 69-72. For an analysis of the relation between the *Legenda* text and the version of Margherita's story presented on the *vita* panel, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, chap. 11.
40. Iozzelli 1997, 245, 261, 327, 376, 401.
41. "... che modo se debba tenere circha quegli che vogliono pigliare questa vita," chaps. I-III, Jacobelli 1992, 14; chap. I, Meersseman 1977, 1:394. Married women wishing to enter the order must first gain their husband's permission. Chap. V, Jacobelli 1992, 15.
42. Chap. XXIV, Jacobelli 1992, 22-23; Meersseman 1977, 1:400.
43. "In che modo le novitie debbano receversi ad professione," chap. IV, Jacobelli 1992, 14-15. Reception consisted of a promise, made in the hands of the visitor, and in the presence of the "abbess" of the order, to obey all God's commandments, the rule, and the instructions and penances imposed by the visitor. See also chap. II, Meersseman 1977, 1:394-395.
44. Mariano d'Alatri proposes that Margherita was not only a penitent but also an oblate and sees the cutting of her hair as an indication of this particular status. See Mariano d'Alatri, "L'ordine della Penitenza nella Leggenda di Margherita da Cortona," in *Prime manifestazioni di vita comunitaria, maschile e femminile, nel movimento francescano della Penitenza (1215-1447). Atti del IV convegno di studi francescani, Assisi 1981*, ed. Raffaele Pazzelli and Lino Temperini (Rome, 1982), 67-80, 70-71.
45. For the habits of the Order of Penitence and of the Franciscan Third Order, and Margherita's variation on these, see Bisogni 1998.
46. As the *Legenda* indicates, it was some years before Margherita began to follow a life of severe reclusion. See Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 23-25.
47. Chaps. VI-VIII, X-XIII, XIX, Jacobelli 1992, 15-18, 21; chaps. III, V, XIII, Meersseman 1977, 1:395-396, 398. It is possible that this scene also refers to the penitent's duty of peacemaking and settling quarrels (chap. XVII, Jacobelli 1992, 19-20; chap. XVII, Meersseman 1977, 1:400) since the figure on the
- right of the composition may be a woman who spoke against Margherita, doubting her humility and love of the poor, but was treated charitably by her (Iozzelli 1997, 218; Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 196-197).
48. Chap. XVI, Jacobelli 1992, 19; chap. IX, Meersseman 1977, 1:397. The stated intention was to avoid unseemly quarrels after a tertiary's death. Presumably they were encouraged to make dispositions that favored charities and the order itself, as indicated by wills recorded for the Cortona members.
49. For example, Iozzelli 1997, 185, 245.
50. George Kaftal proposed that the scenes represented Margherita's Miraculous Saving of a Suicide and [tentatively] Margherita Washing the Feet of Lepers; see George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), col. 668. Elizabeth B. Nightlinger, "The Iconography of Saint Margaret of Cortona" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1982, 55), identified the first scene as Margherita Receiving Food from the People of Cortona to Distribute to the Poor and considered it impossible to identify the second scene. Kaftal's identifications have generally been accepted.
51. Iozzelli 1997, 445-448.
52. Saint Catherine of Alexandria is represented studying her reflection in a circular mirror in the inner wing of a former altarpiece from Bât, now in the Christian Museum of Esztergom (no. 54.2) attributed to a Hungarian artist, the First Master of Bât, and dated c. 1430. The worldliness of this image is contrasted with a pendant piece in which Saint Catherine is shown a picture of the Virgin and Child. See the catalogue entry by Gyöngyi Török in *The Christian Museum of Esztergom*, ed. Pál Cséfalvay (Budapest, 1993), 20, 175-176. I am grateful to Victor Schmidt for bringing this work to my attention and making available the catalogue entry.
53. See, for example, Iozzelli 1997, 203-206.
54. See above, note 40.
55. Iozzelli 1997, 198.
56. Iozzelli 1997, 207.
57. Iozzelli 1997, 294; Lodovico da Pelago, *Antica leggenda della vita e dei miracoli di Santa Margherita da Cortona*, 2 vols. (Lucca, 1793), 2:37.
58. Chaps. XIV, XV, Jacobelli 1992, 18, 20; chaps. VI, XIII, Meersseman 1977, 1:396-398. A cancelled item under the same paragraph in the rule of the Sorores de Poenitentia prescribes more frequent communion, and monthly confession, but Jacobelli is uncertain of the date of this addition and cancellation.
59. For discussion of which precise event in Margherita's life may be recorded here, see Kaftal 1952, cols. 668-672.
60. Chap. XXIV, Jacobelli 1992, 22; Meersseman 1977, 1:400.
61. For Ser Badia and his successor, Ser Felice, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 155-158.

62. The female figure whose hand Christ holds has previously been identified as the Virgin, but the descriptions of visions of Mary Magdalene in Margherita's *Legenda* match the scene on the panel painting more closely (for example, Iozzelli 1997, 231–232, 294–295). Since the panel painting probably represents a moment in the development of Margherita's story before the completion of the *Legenda*, it is not possible to point to a precise vision in the text which the picture represents. The color of the woman's garments—blue mantle over red tunic—is generally more appropriate to the Virgin than to Mary Magdalene, but the latter does wear this combination of colors in works by the Maestro di San Francesco; see *The Treasury of Saint Francis in Assisi*, ed. Giovanni Morello and Laurence B. Kanter [exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York] (Milan, 1999), 78, 79, 141. Although Mary Magdalene seems to me the most likely identification (see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 164, for further arguments), the *Legenda* text relates, on several occasions, Christ's insistence that Margherita should pray to the Virgin, especially through the Ave Maria; for examples, see Iozzelli 1992, 202, 278, 307, 426, 425.
63. Chap. XIX, Jacobelli 1992, 20–21; chap. XIII, Meersseman 1977, 1:398 (preacher only described as “virum religiosum”).
64. Chap. XXI, Jacobelli 1992, 21–22; chap. XIV, Meersseman 1977, 1:399.
65. The Santa Chiara scenes begin at the lower left which, as has been pointed out several times, may imply that it was originally displayed at a significant height. The sequence on the Margherita panel, and the Magdalene panel discussed below, begins at the top left, perhaps implying that in these cases the paintings were displayed reasonably close to eye level.
66. For the original location of the Santa Chiara panel, see below.
67. 164 × 76 cm, Garrison 1949/1998, no. 404. For a concise discussion and further bibliography, see *La Maddalena tra sacro e profano*, ed. Marilena Mosco (Florence and Milan, 1988), 43–45.
68. For further discussion of links between the iconography of the two saints, see Cannon and Vauchez 1999, 64, 102, 166–167, 198, 216, 241.
69. For the Magdalene as “Apostola Apostolorum,” see Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (London, 1993), chap. 3. For much relevant discussion see now the excellent study by Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalene: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2000).
70. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1993), 1:380.
71. The painting entered the Florentine Galleries in 1810. It came, together with several other items, from the collection formed by Father Raimondo Adami, prior general of the Servite Order, in 1789. Adami's collection was housed in Santissima Annunziata, where he resided, but it is possible that he used his own funds to purchase items from outside the church to add to the collection. (It may be significant that another painting attributed to the Magdalene Master that also came from Santissima Annunziata, the Saint Luke now in the Uffizi, includes two devotees in Franciscan habits.) See Luisa Marcucci, *I dipinti toscani del secolo XIII*, *Gallerie Nazionali di Firenze* (Rome, 1985), 50–53; Eugenio Casalmi, *La Santissima Annunziata di Firenze: Studi e documenti sulla chiesa e il convento* (Florence, 1971), 65, note 39.
72. There are no indications on the panel that the individual scenes were ever supplied with inscriptions, as on the Santa Chiara panel.
73. For the rival cult centers at Saint Maximin, Provence, and Vézelay, see Victor Saxer, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident des origines à la fin du moyen âge* (Auxerre and Paris, 1959).
74. Caroline Bruzelius, “Hearing Is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca. 1215–1320,” *Gesta* 31 (1992), 83–92; Julian Gardner, “Nuns and Altarpieces: Agendas for Research,” *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 30 (1995), 29–57; Ann M. Roberts, “Chiara Gambacorta of Pisa as Patroness of the Arts,” in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia, 1994), 120–154. Carola Jaggi is currently studying the architectural and functional aspects of Clare choirs in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland.
75. 415 × 300 cm, Garrison 1949/1998, no. 542. The inscription accompanying her is: D[OMI]NA BENEDICTA POST CLA[RA] P[RE]S[IDI]A ABBATISSA ME FEC[IT] HERI. For excellent color reproductions, see Lunghi 1994, 152–155. Benedicta came from an important local family. On 16 July 1259 she and her sister Emilia ceded all their movable and immovable property to their mother. See Rigaux 1995, 167, note 15, 162, note 19. See also Elvio Lunghi, “Francis of Assisi in Prayer before the Crucifix in the Accounts of the First Biographers,” in this volume.
76. Krüger 1992, 159; Lunghi 1994, 154–156.
77. Bishop Simone, a Franciscan, who was in office when the papal interdict was lifted from Assisi in 1283, is proposed as a patron, acting together with the friars attached to Santa Chiara, by Lunghi 1994, 182–184. Less convincingly Wood (1996, 31, 58) proposes Martin IV as patron, acting with the advice of the nuns, principally on the grounds that his papacy is mentioned in dating information in the panel's inscription (cited above, note 3).
78. See, for example, Krüger 1992, 69, 82, 96; Gardner 1995, 32.
79. The suggestion that the Chiara panel, together with the Benedicta Crucifix and a panel of the Virgin and Child Enthroned (277 × 156 cm; Garrison 1949/1998, no. 5, color illustration; Lunghi 1994,

189), was raised on a rood beam was first made in Leone Bracaloni, "Il prodigioso Crocifisso che parlò a San Francesco," *Studi francescani* 36 (1939), 185-212. Hager (1962, 95, 156-157) argued that the base of the panel had an additional piece that was intended to be socketed into a support, possibly on a beam, so that the panel could be displayed leaning forwards. Lunghi (1994, 185-188) has proposed that the Santa Chiara panel, together with a lost Saint Francis panel, stood on the east architrave of the "pergola" screen around the high altar (see fig. 3), slightly to the west of the Benedicta Crucifix rood beam. Irene Hueck, in an important review in *Kunstchronik* 50 (1997), 287-292, disagrees with Lunghi's proposal and makes a convincing case for the initial arrangement of the Chiara panel and Virgin and Child Enthroned on the rood beam, flanking the Benedicta Crucifix.

80. Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1994, 47-48, 58; Bruzelius 1992, 85.

81. See the valuable comments in Gardner 1995, especially 30-31, 50-56, with further bibliography.

82. The presence of a physical barrier at this point is confirmed by the description of a Virgin altar ("altare parvum"), dedicated in 1265, as standing "iuxta claustra Dominarum"; Michael Bihl, "Documenta inedita Archivi Protomonasterii Sanctae Clarae Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 5 (1912), 663-697, 668, cited in Gardner 1995, 32. Marino Bigaroni [Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1994, 39-40, 47, 48] says that this altar, situated in the south transept, was used for a daily celebration of the mass that the nuns could view through a grate from within their choir. Bigaroni states that a second, smaller grated opening ("comunicchino") originally also existed in the west wall of the south transept to the right of the larger grate (replaced in the eighteenth century by one giving a view to the high altar).

83. For the local and civic importance of Clare's cult, see Giovanna Casagrande, "Presenza di Chiara in Umbria nei secoli XIII-XIV: Spunti e appunti," in *Chiara d'Assisi: Presenza, devozione e culto*, ed. Vincenzo Criscuolo, Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina 45 (Rome, 1994), 137-161.

84. Wood 1996, 30-31.

85. For a summary, see John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford, 1968), 212-215, 411-412.

86. Wood (1996, 31) states that the panel "visually rebukes the friars." Rather surprisingly Wood (1996, 12) distinguishes between the scenes to the right of the central image, which she characterizes as those referring to the Franciscan form of Saint Clare's monasticism, and those on the left (which include several images of Saint Francis and his companions), which she characterizes as alluding to the voluntary nature of Clare's vocation.

87. For the gradual diffusion of Clare's cult within the Franciscan First Order, as indicated by both legislation and liturgical manuscripts, see the

fundamental study by Fra Aureliano [= Stephen Joseph Peter] van Dijk, "Il culto di Santa Chiara nel Medioevo," in *Santa Chiara d'Assisi: Studi e cronaca del VII centenario (1253-1953)* [Assisi, 1953], 155-205.

88. These fragmentary inscriptions have, most regrettably, never been fully transcribed; see Pace 1995, 123-124; Rigaux 1995, 167.

89. Wood (1991, 314 and 1996, 11) emphasizes that voluntary vocation is the theme of the left column of scenes. She also notes that Clare is shown as an exemplar and intercessor and that the panel focuses on her poverty and virginity (1991, 308, 314, 320).

90. Francesco Pennacchi, *Legenda Sanctae Clarae Virginis* (Assisi, 1910). For a careful description of each scene, noting the paragraphs of the *Legenda* and canonization process to which each one relates, see Benvenuto Bughetti, "La tavola di Santa Chiara nella sua Basilica d'Assisi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 19 (1929), 939-945. Rigaux (1995, 167) considers that the inscriptions below each scene were not taken directly from the *Legenda* text.

91. See Rigaux 1995, 166, 171.

92. Lunghi in Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1994, 182. Lunghi considers that this omission rules out the participation of the commune in this commission despite their donations to the building of Santa Chiara.

93. For the interpretation of a Dominican Miracle of the Loaves, see Joanna Cannon, "Dominic alter Christus? Representations of the Founder in and after the *Arca di San Domenico*," in *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans*, ed. Kent Emery, Jr. and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind., 1998), 26-48, especially 33-39.

94. Meier argues that the design of the church was intended more for pilgrims than nuns and considers that the construction of a grille around the high altar indicates that crowds of pilgrims did indeed visit the church; see Hans-Rudolph Meier, "Santa Chiara in Assisi. Architektur und Funktion im Schatten von San Francesco," *Arte medievale*, ser. 2, 4.2 (1990), 151-178, 169-170; Bigaroni, Meier, and Lunghi 1994, 126, 130-131.

95. For recruitment and social status in the early days of the order, see Jacques Guy Bougerol, "Il reclutamento sociale delle Clarisse di Assisi," in *Les ordres mendiants et la ville en Italie centrale (vers 1220-1350)*, *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome, Moyen Âge-temps modernes* 89 (1977), 629-632; Clara Gennaro, "Clare, Agnes, and Their Earliest Followers: From the Poor Ladies of San Damiano to the Poor Clares," in *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. Daniel Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago, 1996), 39-55 (originally published in *Movimento religioso femminile e francescanesimo nel secolo XIII. Atti del VII convegno internazionale, Assisi, 11-13 ottobre 1979* [Assisi, 1980], 169-191); Giovanna Casagrande, "Le compagne di Chiara," in *Chiara d'Assisi* 1993, 383-425, 394.

96. For a fascinating example of this genre, made for an enclosed group of Dominican tertiaries, see Gaudenz Freuler, "Andrea di Bartolo, Fra Tommaso d'Antonio Caffarini, and Siense Dominicans in Venice," *Art Bulletin* 69 (1987), 579-586.

97. A convincing proposal, made by Krüger (1992, 203) and Hueck (1997, 290), is that the small triptych of the Virgin and Child with Nativity and Passion scenes in Santa Chiara, Assisi (137 × 51.5 cm; Garrison 1949/1998, no. 325, color illustration; Bigaroni, Lunghi, and Meier 1994, 192), once stood on the transept altar dedicated to the Virgin in 1265, discussed above, designated for the daily mass celebrated for the benefit of the nuns. For a brief but sensitive consideration of the place of a Lucchese diptych of the Virgin and Child, Crucifixion, Passion Scenes, and Saints (Florence, Uffizi; Garrison 1949/1998, no. 243) in the devotions of the Clares, see Hans Belting, *Das Bild und sein Publikum im Mittelalter: Form und Funktion früher Bildtafeln der Passion* (Berlin, 1981), 204-209 [translated as *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion* (New York, 1990), 133-138]. For the relations between images and devotions in the lives of north European nuns, see the groundbreaking work by Jeffrey Hamburger, including the studies now conveniently

collected in *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1998).

98. For important discussions of these issues and further bibliography, see Krüger 1992 and Chiara Frugoni, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimmate* (Turin, 1993).

99. See Krüger 1992, especially part 3, chaps. 1 and 4.

100. See Ševčenko 1999.

101. For the consideration of the provision of altars in San Basilio, see Cannon 2000. An important broadening of our understanding of the location and means of display of large-scale panel paintings in the later thirteenth century is to be found in the work of Irene Hueck, for example, "La tavola di Duccio e la Compagnia delle Laudi di Santa Maria Novella," in *La Maestà di Duccio restaurata. Gli Uffizi, Studi e ricerche* 6 (Florence, 1990), 33-46; Hueck 1995, Hueck 1997.

102. The legibility of the scenes would, of course, have been impaired if it were displayed raised up to a significant height, but this seems unlikely to have been the case since the maximum height to the top of the vaults in the church of San Basilio, for which I have argued it was originally made, was only 7.4 m.