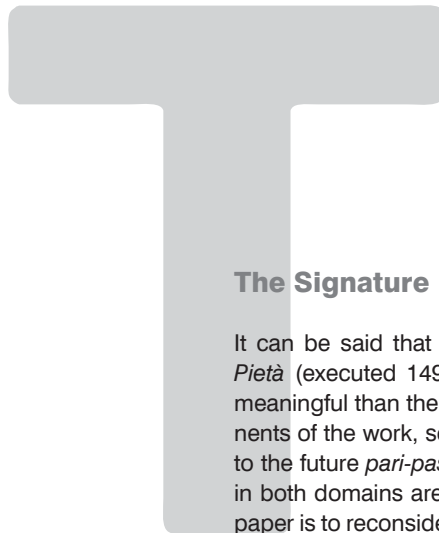


Irving Lavin

Divine Grace and the Remedy of the Imperfect. Michelangelo's Signature on the St Peter's *Pietà*



The Signature

It can be said that Michelangelo's signature on the St Peter's *Pietà* (executed 1498–1499/1500) is no less extraordinary and meaningful than the sculpture itself [Figs 1–3].¹ The two components of the work, sculpture and inscription, move from the past to the future *pari-passu*, and I believe the innovations they bring in both domains are profoundly interrelated. My purpose in this paper is to reconsider Michelangelo's work in what I believe to be a new light, which may also illuminate what I should call the inner relationship between Michelangelo's words and image.

MICHAEL • A[N]GELUS • BONAROTUS • FLORENT[INUS] •
FACIEBA[T]

The innovations and peculiarities of Michelangelo's signature, the only time he inscribed his name on a public work, have often been noted and discussed.² The text is in Latin and in a formula sanctioned by the venerable masters of antiquity, as reported by Pliny in the preface to his own work on Natural History:

I should like to be accepted on the lines of those founders of painting and sculpture who, as you will find in these volumes, used to inscribe their finished works, even the masterpieces which we can never tire of admiring, with a provisional title such as *Apelles*



1. Michelangelo, «Pietà» (1498–1499/1500), Vatican City, St Peter's

faciebat or *Polyclitus [faciebat]*, as though art was always a thing in process and not completed, so that when faced by the vagaries of criticism the artist might have left him a line of retreat to indulgence, by implying that he intended, if not interrupted, to correct any defect noted. Hence it is exceedingly modest of them to have inscribed all their works in a manner suggesting that they were their latest, and as though they had been snatched away from each of them by fate. Not more than three, I fancy, are recorded as having an inscription denoting completion – *Ille fecit* [he made this] (these I will bring in at their proper places); this made the artist appear to have assumed a supreme confidence in his art, and consequently all these works were very unpopular.³

Pliny's interpretation of the meaning of the formula was confirmed by Michelangelo's friend and mentor Poliziano, in an account he gave of an ancient relief he had found inscribed in the same way in Greek.⁴

With his use of the imperfect tense, '*faciebat*', rather than the perfect '*fecit*', Michelangelo thus *ipso facto* follows Pliny who – at the very beginning of his great work, the most conspicuous place – had positioned himself in the following of those truly great masters who were also truly modest. This is one sense in which, contrary to the common assumption, Michelangelo was not original: Alessandro della Latta has recently discovered a number of instances from the fifteenth century of artists' signatures with the imperfect verb.⁵ Michelangelo's signature is astonishing in that the text as inscribed entails what might best be called a visio-verbal pun, since the imperfect implies an unfinished action, and the inscription is in fact orthographically incomplete, the final letter T lost beneath the Virgin's kerchief. The tense of the verb thus also carries a substantive pun, inferring that the artist considered the work not only unfinished but also imperfect, the essence lying in the correlation between the meanings of these two ideas. Given the boldness of this concept, the conspicuous placement of the inscription, and the funerary context for which the sculpture was intended, it seems evident that the signature was more than an autograph identifying the artist and invoking classical precedent; it had personal significance for Michelangelo himself.

Latin

The text is in Latin capitals but with antiquated ligatures and abbreviations. These and the 'disappearance' of the final letter, can be and have been attributed simply to a lack of space, a sort of compromise between what he wanted to say and the place where he wanted to inscribe it. But careful analysis of the epigraphy of the inscription has shown that its commixture of elements was reasoned and preconceived.⁶ On the contrary, Michelangelo's signature must be understood as a deliberate



2. Michelangelo, «Pietà» (detail of Fig.1)

MICHAEL·ÂELVS·BONAROTVS·FLOENT·FACEBA
MICHAEL·ANGELUS·BONAROTUS·FLORENTINUS·FACIEBA(T)

3. Michelangelo, «Pietà», transcription of inscription

and meaningful pastiche (even more so now thanks to Alessandro della Latta's revelation of earlier Renaissance instances of '*faciebat*' signatures), conflating specifically classical with specifically Christian, even medieval, modes of expression. And so indeed is the sculpture itself, in its unabashedly sensual classical rendering of the theme of the Pietà, which is, however, conceived in a way that has long been recognized as reflecting the expressive nature of late Gothic tradition.⁷ In this way, as-



4. Michelangelo, Studies for the bronze and marble *Davids* (1501–1502), Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques (Inv. 714¹)

simulating the past in the present, the work incorporates, one might well say literally, considering the inscription, the ancient theme of the Church as successor to the religion of the Gentiles, the *Ecclesia ex Gentibus*.

The use of Latin entailed a recasting of Michelangelo's usual, informal way of signing his name in the Italian elided form of Michelagnuolo [Fig. 4].⁸ The separation of his Christian name into its two component parts, Michael Angelus, is not only more correct and formal epigraphically, however; it now identified the artist specifically with his namesake, the Archangel Michael. The Latin derivation of Michelangelo's name associated him to two major links in the process of salvation, one eschatological, the other intercessional. The reference to God's adjutant in the administration of Divine Justice and the weigher of souls at the Last Judgment is obviously appropriate for a sculpture in a funer-

ary chapel, but also for an inscription addressed to the future, whose verb refers to the artist's own action in the past.⁹ In Pliny's account the living artist speaks in the imperfect to the viewer and to posterity, in the context that the Renaissance called 'reputation'. Michelangelo, too, speaks in the imperfect from the grave to his reputation in the eyes of the viewer, but also to the Virgin Mary between whose breasts his proper self may be said to lie.

Divine Grace and the Remedy of the Imperfect

I believe that the Virgin's downcast eyes and the gesture of her left hand, often taken as expressions of lament, serve equally as allusions to the grace that Mary, as the eternal Church, sheds



5. Lorenzo Monaco (attributed), «Double Intercession» (before 1402), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art



6. Filippino Lippi, «Double Intercession» (c. 1495), Munich, Alte Pinakothek

through her sacrificial son and spouse on all mankind.¹⁰ In this sense the Virgin's effect might be described as ambivalent, or rather as bi-valent, comprising both the human tragedy of her son's death, and her prescient awareness of the intercessory role she will play as Queen of Heaven in the economy of salvation. In the *Double Intercession of Christ and the Virgin* attributed to Lorenzo Monaco at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mary gestures toward the people below [Fig. 5]; in that of Filippino Lippi in Munich her hand opens to the Pietà and saints in the predella; in both cases the ultimate recipient of her compassion is the spectator [Fig. 6].¹¹

Petrarch and Michelangelo

In this sense Michelangelo's imperfect verb may be seen as the artist's adaptation of the noun Petrarch had applied to the sinner in a canzone about the salvific efficacy of divine Love. Love is conceived as the light that shone upon him from birth as a remedy sent from heaven to redeem his imperfect self.

Whatever sweetness was ever found
in the hearts of venturesome lovers, gathered
all on one place, is nothing to what I feel,
whenever you turn
the black and white of those lovely eyes,
in which Love so delights, sweetly towards me:
and I believe that from my infant cradle
this was the **remedy Heaven sent**
for **my imperfections**, and adverse Fortune.

Quanta dolcezza unquanco
fu in cor d'aventurosi amanti, accolta
tutta in un loco, a quel ch'ì sento è nulla,
quando voi alcuna volta
soavemente tra 'l bel nero e 'l bianco
volgete il lume in cui Amor si trastulla;
et credo da le fasce et da la culla
al mio **imperfecto**, a la Fortuna adversa
questo **rimedio provedesse il cielo**.¹²
(emphasis mine)

'Imperfect' is an adjective; Petrarch's use of it as a noun in connection with the personal pronoun 'mio' gives it an explicit, personal, moral character that Michelangelo associated with the impersonal use of the verb in artists' signatures described by Pliny, where it only signifies modesty by way of incompleteness.

This sense of moral, as well as professional inadequacy suffuses the only work by Michelangelo that might properly be called a self-portrait, a kind of self-representative graphic signature, verbal as well as pictorial. I refer to a sheet on which he

transcribed a sonnet lamenting the task of painting the Sistine ceiling, and illustrated with a drawing [Fig. 7]. The poem is an almost demonic parody, in form as well in content, of his own work, the gist being that the agonizing physical conditions of the task impair his judgment (*giudizio*), that is, the noblest part of art, so that he is not a true painter, and he begs indulgence:

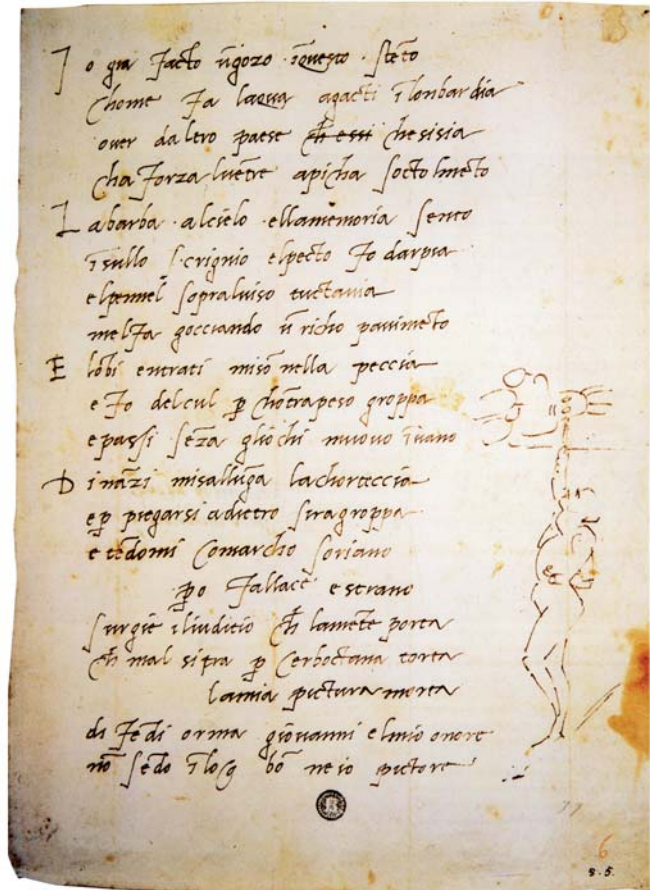
My belly's pushed by force beneath my chin.

My brush, above my face continually,
Makes it a splendid floor by dripping down.

And I am bending like a Syrian bow.

And judgment, hence, must grow,
Borne in mind, peculiar and untrue;

You cannot shoot well when the gun's askew.



7. Michelangelo, Sonnet and satirical sketch on the Sistine ceiling (1511–1512), pen and ink, Florence, Archivio Buonarroti, (Inv. No. XIII, 111')

John, come to the rescue
Of my dead painting now, and of my honor;
I'm not in a good place, and I'm no painter.

c'a forza 'l ventre appicca sotto 'l mento.

.....
e 'l pennel sopra 'l viso tuttavia
mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento.

.....
e tendomi come arco soriano.

Però fallace e strano
surge il iudizio che la mente porta,
chè mal si tra' per cerbottana torta.

La mia pittura morta
difendi orma', Giovanni, e 'l mio onore
non sendo in loco ben, nè io pittore.¹³

In the margin of the manuscript page he drew a sketch depicting his twisted body as the bow, his right arm holding the brush as the arrow, and a figure on the ceiling as the target. Of particular interest in our context is the striking contrast in style between the two parts of the sketch: the figure of the artist is contorted but elegantly drawn in a normal way; that on the ceiling is grotesquely deformed and drawn with amateurish, even childlike crudity, Michelangelo transforms the Sistine ceiling itself into a kind of graffito, deliberately adopting a subnormal mode to satirize high art – in this case his own. If, as I suspect, the grotesque figure on the vault alludes to the gruff lines that underlie the head of God the Father who creates the sun, the moon, and the earth [Fig. 8], Michelangelo's thought may reach further still: the graffito style would express the artist's sense of inadequacy in portraying the Supreme Creator of all things visible, and his unworthiness in the traditional analogy between the artist's creation and God's.

Strap

It has often been noted that the strap across the Virgin's chest on which the signature is inscribed serves no discernible purpose; this is in contrast to the closest precedent for the motif, Filippo Lippi's altarpiece of the Virgin in the Louvre, from the Barbadori Chapel in Santo Spirito in Florence (1437–1438), where the strap seems to allude to the kind of shoulder sack in which mothers frequently carry their infants [Fig. 9].¹⁴ Lippi's Christ child is not an infant, however; he stands with one foot on the throne, the other poised as if to leave the seat he will later occupy again in heaven alongside his mother and bride and queen, descending into this world to begin his mission of redemption. The origin of the later motif may lie in the newly appreciated masterpiece by Donatello, the *Madonna Bardini* (1420–1422), which encapsulates



8. Michelangelo, «Creation of the Sun and the Moon» (1508–1512), detail, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel

the process of redemption, focusing on the Virgin as the New Eve who displays the apple of her recuperation, and Christ, whose hypostatic nature is embodied in his nudity and in his prominently displayed, mutilated penis [Fig. 10].¹⁵ The terminuses of the process are evident in the young savior's eager grasp of his mother's kerchief, which will become his shroud, and his retrospective effort to escape from her grasp to pursue his destiny. Vasari says that Michelangelo praised Lippi's work endlessly, and often imitated him.¹⁶ He obviously understood his predecessors' train of thought here, and adopted it for his *Bruges Madonna*, where the Child, issuing from between his mother's legs, ventures his first step toward death and resurrection [Fig. 11]. In all three works, the pose alludes to Christ's two epiphanies, after the incarna-



9. Fra Filippo Lippi, «Barbadori Altarpiece», (1437–1438), Paris, Musée du Louvre



10. Donatello, «Bardini Madonna» (1420–1422), Florence, Museo Stefano Bardini

tion and following his sacrifice and resurrection. The *faciebat* of Michelangelo's signature refers precisely to that period in which all souls, including Michelangelo's own, await the Second Coming. In each case, Jesus is too old for the traditional babe-in-arms theme; in the St Peter's *Pietà* the Virgin is too young.

Age

The explanation Michelangelo was said to have given, as reported by Condivi, for the inappropriately youthful appearance of the Virgin, that moral purity ensures physical perfection, may seem ironic and rather disingenuous when taken literally [Fig. 12]:

Don't you know that women who are chaste remain much fresher than those who are not? How much more so a virgin who was never touched by even the slightest lascivious desire which



11. Michelangelo, «Bruges Madonna» (1504), Bruges, Church of Our Lady

might alter her body? Indeed, I will go further and say that this freshness and flowering of youth, apart from being preserved in her in this natural way, may also conceivably have been given divine assistance in order to prove to the world the virginity and perpetual purity of the mother. This was not necessary with the Son, in fact rather the contrary, because in order to show that the Son of God truly assumed human form, as He did, and submitted to all that an ordinary man undergoes, except sin, there was no need for the divine to hold back the human, but it was necessary to let it follow its own course and order so that He would show exactly the age He was. Therefore you should not be surprised if, with this in mind, I made the Holy Virgin, mother of God, considerably younger in comparison with her Son than her age would ordinarily require, though I left the Son at His own age.¹⁷

Condivi goes on to say that the thought was worthy of any theologian, but was vouchsafed to Michelangelo by God be-



12. Michelangelo, «Pietà» (detail of Fig.1)



13. Michelangelo, «Medici Madonna» (1521–1534), Florence, San Lorenzo, Medici Chapel

cause he was divinely gifted not only to craft such extraordinary works but also to receive such sublime concepts.

Condivi's explanation really is sublime if one grasps the thought fully from its repercussions in the Madonna of the Medici Chapel [Fig. 13].¹⁸ Michelangelo's pronouncements are indeed often ironic, and in the *Medici Madonna* he refers to a paradox that lies at the heart of the church's teaching about the God's scheme of redemption. I am concerned here with a conspicuous feature of the work that has been consistently misread and misinterpreted. The Christ child is always described as suckling at his Mother's breast [Fig. 14]. There was some precedent for showing the infant turned toward his mother, away from the

spectator, as in more than one version of a composition attributed to Botticelli [Fig. 15]. Michelangelo had adapted this idea at the outset of his career, in the *Madonna of the Stairs* [Fig. 16]; here, in allusion to the theme of the Pietà, the Christ child seems to have fallen asleep at his Mother's breast, his arm dangling down, as if he had absorbed the passion itself from her milk. In a fundamental essay on the theme of the sleeping Christ child, Gizella Firestone long ago showed that the motif is a proleptic allusion to the sacramental death of Christ and the interval of forty hours he spent in the tomb awaiting the resurrection.¹⁹ In the *Medici Madonna*, however, the Virgin's upper torso is fully and explicitly covered, and Christ's face is buried deep *between* her



14. Michelangelo, «Medici Madonna» (detail of Fig. 13)

breasts. The motif is unprecedented, and this radical departure from the familiar modes of representing the Mother and Child provides a clue to the ultimate meaning of the Medici sculpture and, so I believe, to that of the St Peter's *Pietà*.

The key to the significance of Michelangelo's innovation lies in two fundamental tenets of the church's interpretation of the role of the Virgin in the process of salvation, both centered on the Song of Songs, the Old Testament book that is the very turning point of the idea that the Church of Christ replaced the Synagogue.²⁰ Christian thinkers understood this supremely passionate lyric as celebrating the union of God, through Christ, with the church on earth. The Song of Songs thus represented

the incorporation of the Old Dispensation in the New, announcing the establishment of Christianity as an institution, defined as the Mother Church, Mary–Ecclesia. Through her foreknowledge of her son's fate, Mary became the prophetess of the New Jerusalem, hence Christ's Bride and the Queen of Heaven. As a corollary, the breasts of the beloved, eulogized in the Song, were taken constantly as symbolizing the Old and New Testaments, with the sacrificial Christ between.

These two interrelated themes, Mary's foreknowledge of the Passion and her ultimate role as both Mother and Bride of her son were brought to bear by Rupert of Deutz on a passage that I believe guided Michelangelo to the final poses and actions of



15. Sandro Botticelli (attributed), «Madonna and Child with St John and an Angel» (c. 1505), London, National Gallery



16. Michelangelo, «Madonna of the Stairs» (c. 1490), Florence, Casa Buonarroti



17. Dutch Block Book, Block 12b (c. 1465), New York, Morgan Library & Museum (Inv. No. PML 21990)

the figures of the *Medici Madonna*, as well as the formulation and disposition of the inscription on the bosom of the Virgin of the *Pietà*. The passage, chapter 1, verse 13, reads as follows in the King James version:

A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me;
he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.²¹

Speaking for the Virgin, Rupert says,

For I was a prophetess, and because I was his mother, I knew he was going to suffer these things. When, therefore, I fondled such a Son, born of my flesh, at my bosom, carried him in my arms, nursed him at my breasts, and had always before my – nay, more than prophetic – mind, what kind of passion of maternal grief,

how much and how extensive, do you imagine me to have endured? This is what I mean when I say: 'A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts'. O sojourn, sweet indeed, but filled with unutterable groanings.²²

St Bernard devoted one of his eighty-six sermons on the Virgin to this verse, which he interpreted explicitly as both a presentiment of the passion of Christ and a witness to the power of love to overcome all suffering, including – especially important in our context – death:

Because myrrh is a bitter herb it symbolizes the burdensome harshness of afflictions. [...] There is nothing light about the cruel passion or the bitter death – only the lover finds it light. Hence she does not say: 'My beloved is a bundle of myrrh'; but rather he

is a bundle of myrrh 'unto me', because I love. That is why she calls him 'beloved', to show that the power of love can prove superior to all the miseries of suffering for 'love is strong as death'. As proof, too, that she does not glory in herself but in the Lord, that she does not presume on her own strength but on his, she says that he will lie between her breasts. To him she sings with safety: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me'.²³

Bernard sees the bundle of myrrh as the emblem of Christ crucified and urges his listeners to 'place it at the very center of your bosom where it will protect all the avenues to your heart. Let it abide between your breasts'.²⁴ The custom of wearing the crucifix suspended on a chain between the breasts was said to have been inspired by this interpretation of this passage in the Song of Songs, and in one of the most important early printed books, which illustrates the Song of Songs, Mary-Ecclesia is shown carrying the crucified Christ before her bosom, accompanied by a banderole inscribed with this very verse [Fig. 17].²⁵ The familiar line Bernard quotes from the twenty-third Psalm, about walking fearlessly through the valley of the shadow of death, is recited in the Office of the Dead, which makes it a singularly apt gloss on the *Pietà* and *Medici Madonna* as intercessory images in funerary chapels.

Michelangelo's signature text disappears beneath the kerchief of the Virgin, protected there as are her devotees huddled beneath her mantle in depictions of the Madonna of Misericordia. In this case, however, the kerchief has special significance because it alludes to a particular tradition in which this garment served to encapsulate the term of Christ's earthly life in the scheme of salvation. We have noted that the birth and death of Christ had long been conflated in images of the Christ child asleep in his mother's lap, posed as he would be in depictions the *Pietà*. Authority for the theme involving the head-dress stretches back to a sermon attributed to St Augustine, who remarked that the Virgin 'draped the Lord at his birth, and covered him at his death'.²⁶ In the immensely popular fourteenth-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, now attributed to John of Cauli-



18. Bernhard Strigel, «Disrobing of Christ», (c. 1520), Berlin, Staatliche Museen

bus (formerly the Pseudo-Bonaventure), the cloth is identified specifically as her veil, 'Then she wrapped him in her veil and laid him in the manger'; during the passion as he was displayed naked before the public and mocked, 'She rushes up, and gets close to him; she embraces him and girds him with her head-covering' [Fig. 18].²⁷ The Virgin's veil shields her God-son's innocence from first to last. Significant in this connection are two other episodes involving the display of a cloth that testifies to Christ's divine nature, that is, of course, the Veronica, displayed miraculously impregnated with Christ's face, and the kerchief



19. Pietro di Domenico da Montepulciano, «Madonna and Child with Angels» (1420), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

discovered in the empty tomb following the Resurrection, recorded in the gospel of St John as testimony to Christ's disappearance:

- ³ Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.
- ⁴ So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.
- ⁵ And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.
- ⁶ Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
- ⁷ And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
- ⁸ Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
- ⁹ For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.²⁸

In depictions of the *Lamentation* one of the women holds up the napkin in conspicuous display.

What might be called Michelangelo's special devotion to Mary's veil coincided with a convergence of all four of these traditions in a new iconographical theme. Appearing in the fourteenth century [Fig. 19], by the early sixteenth century, especially with Raphael, the theme, known as the *Madonna del Velo*, became commonplace [Figs 20–21].²⁹ The Virgin displays the veil beside her infant son and spouse, poised between covering and revealing the nude body of the epiphanic Savior, bridging the scheme of salvation from the incarnation through the Passion and Resurrection to the Second Coming. In these images as in Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the veil has acquired an independent, iconic significance, apart from any narrative context.

Invisible under the Virgin's headdress, the last letter of *faciebat*, the letter T, becomes charged with meaning. The oldest and most venerable symbol of the cross of the crucifixion was the *crux commissa*, the type shown in the Canticles woodcut [Fig. 17], a horizontal beam resting on a vertical stem, the letter T, sans-serifs. The Latin form with serifs in Michelangelo's inscription, known as the Tau cross from the overhanging arms of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Tav, ט, does indeed lie between Mary's breasts, in perfect fulfillment of Rupert's injunction.³⁰ I think of the St Peter's *Pietà* as a kind of proleptic anticipation of this fundamental understanding of the Song of Songs, and the heroic role it accords to the Virgin Mary in the process of salvation. This is the thought that Dante enshrined in the opening verse of the thirty-third, concluding Canto of the *Paradiso*, which epitomizes the entire scheme of salvation in six cataclismic words. Dante in his peregrinations in Heaven has encountered St Bernard, who intones the fateful prayer that begins, Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son. The succeeding verses explain the conundrum:

Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
humble and exalted more than any creature,
fixed goal of the eternal counsel,
thou art she who didst so enoble human nature
that its Maker did not disdain to become its creature.³¹

Ironically, without specific reference to the youth of the Virgin, Vasari included in his account of the *Pietà* a poem on the sculpture by Giovanni Battista Strozzi (1505–1571) that paraphrases Dante's stanzas. Through the theological paradox incorporated in the oxymoronic phrase 'vivo marmo morte', Strozzi perceives in the work a promise of the Resurrection:

Bellezza et onestate,
E doglia e pièta in vivo marmo morte,
Deh, come voi pur fate,
Non piangete sì forte
Che anzi tempo risvegliasi da morte,

E pur mal grado suo,
Nostro Signore e tuo
Sposo, figliuolo e padre,
Unica sposa sua, figliuola e madre.³²

Commentators on Dante identify the 'eternal counsel' in line 3 with a passage, famous for this connection, in Proverbs, the Book of Solomon.³³ Divine Wisdom speaks (Proverbs 8, 22–30):

22. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.
23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.
24. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.
25. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:
26. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
27. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:
28. When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:
29. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:
30. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.³⁴

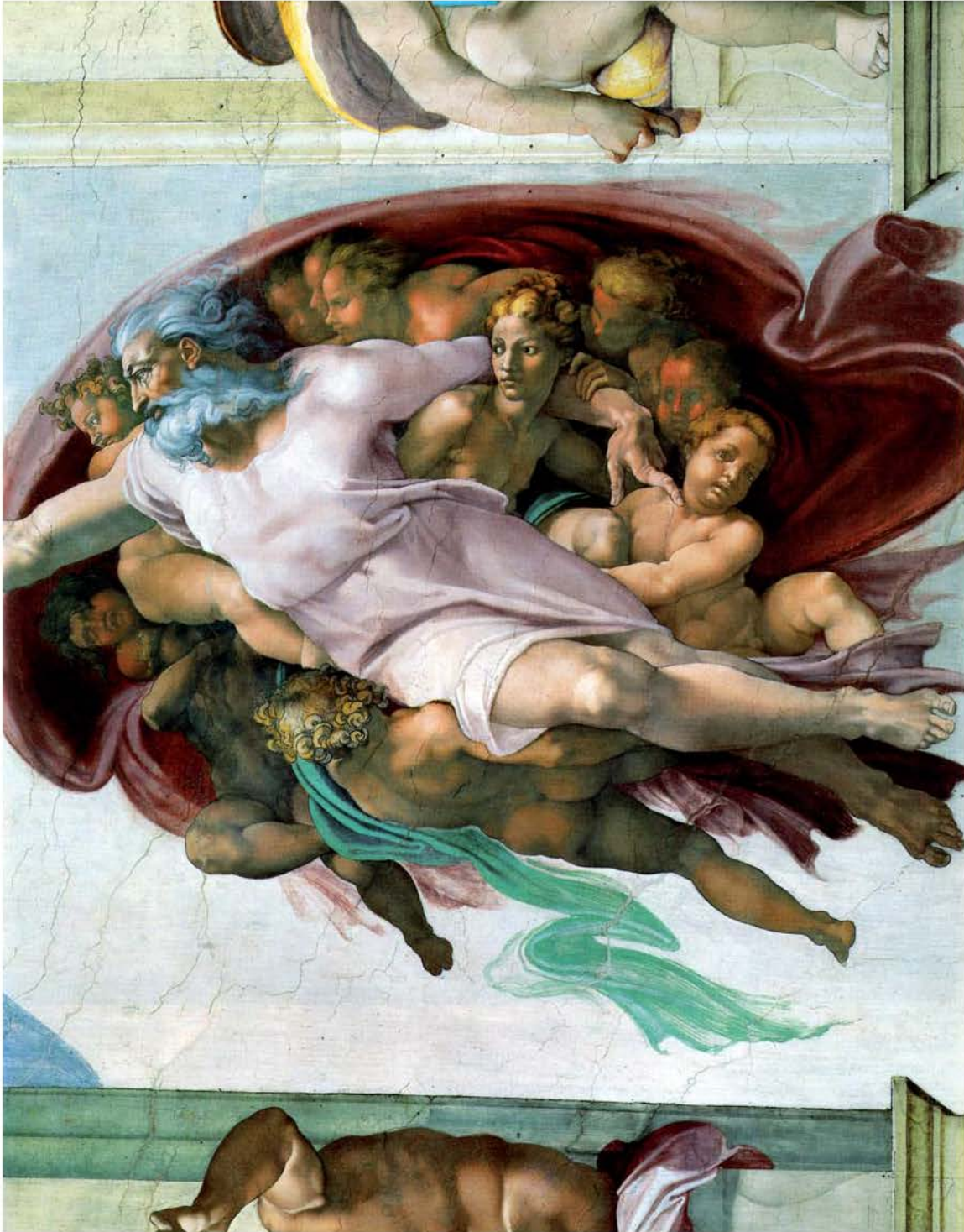
The very premise of Book 8, in fact, is the pre-existence of Divine Wisdom, before creation.



20. Ambrogio Borgognone, «Madonna del Velo» (1512–1515), Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera



21. Raphael, «Madonna di Loreto» (1511–1512), Chantilly, Musée Condé



22. Michelangelo, «Creation of Adam» (1508–1512), fresco detail, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel



23. «Creation of Eve and Birth of the Church» (c. 1250), Bible Moralisée, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Codex Vindobonensis 2554, fol. 1^v)

Mary is younger than her son in two respects: in what might be called the original sense that depended on the prevoyance of God who in his Divine Wisdom (Dante's 'eternal counsel') conceived of her *in pectore*, as it were, from the beginning of time, as the medium through which Christ would redeem mankind, after Satan, through Eve, brought about the Fall and expulsion from Paradise. So she appears as Eve in the Sistine ceiling enfolded under God's left arm, while he extends his right arm to create Adam [Fig. 22].³⁵ Pietro Galatino (1465–1540), a well-known and much appreciated Franciscan scholar, theologian, and proponent of cabbalistic mysticism, in turn cited the passage in Proverbs in support of his argument for the Virgin's predestination. Explaining how the Mother and her Son together motivated the creation of the world, he identified Wisdom with Mary, for the love of whom, and for the salvation of the world through her clemency, God created heaven and earth.³⁶ Writing in Rome, where he was penitentiary and confessor to Leo X, Galatino's influential treatise, *On the Secrets of Catholic Truth* (*De arcanis catholicae veritatis*), was first published in 1518.³⁷ Michelangelo may well have known him.

The second, corollary sense of the Virgin's youth follows from the first. As Eve was born from Adam's rib while he slept, so the Church was born from the blood and water that issued from the side wound of Christ, dead upon the Cross (a miracle reported in the Gospel of St John (19:28, 30, 34-36), who says he was an eyewitness); the two episodes were illustrated and paired and described in exactly this way in the great moralized bible that systematically interpreted the New Testament as the fulfillment and completion of the Old [Fig. 23].³⁸ Mary is preternaturally young and preternaturally wise not just because she is sinless and immaculate, but because by this same token through the operation of Divine Wisdom she is the successor to Eve, and at the Crucifixion she was literally re-born as the bride of Christ, the Mother Church and the Queen of Heaven. In Michelangelo's vision the gesture of the Virgin's left hand is not just a demonstration of lament, it is also a dissemination of grace to all the faithful. The downward cast of her beautiful face sheds the salvific power vested in her love from time immemorial. And in his imperfect Michelangelo confides himself to her bosom and invokes her benevolence.

The Archangel and the Virgin

Beyond these theological considerations, there is a sense in which Michelangelo was linked personally to the intercessory role of the Madonna, through his given name. From the very earliest traditions of Mariolatry, when themes of her death and assumption were first formulated in the apocryphal writings of the Eastern church, the Archangel Michael ('like unto God') fulfilled his Old Testament role and replaced the pagan Hermes as



24. Luca Signorelli and Workshop, «Assumption of the Virgin with Sts Michael and Romuald» (late 1480s), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

psychopomp, the conveyor of souls.³⁹ The stories told of the gathering of the apostles round her death bed, Christ appears and asks the apostles how he should honor his mother; they reply that he should take her up to heaven, body and soul, so that she might sit beside him on the throne of heaven. Christ charges Michael to convey Mary's body to and from the tomb. The tradition begins in the west in the sixth and seventh centuries with Gregory of Tours (c. 538–594) and with the text known as the Pseudo-Miletus, and culminates in the greatest and most ubiquitous of all hagiographies, the Golden Legend of Jacopo da Voragine. In Jacopus's version Jesus appeared with a multitude of angels at the tomb of the Virgin, where the apostles had gathered. He inquired of them what honor and grace he might confer on her. They replied:

'To thy servants, O Lord, it seems right that as Thou, having vanquished death, reignest unto the ages, so Thou, Jesus, shouldst raise up the body of Thy mother and place her at Thy right hand for all eternity!' He nodded his consent, and instantly Michael the Archangel appeared, and presented Mary's soul before the Lord. Then the Saviour spoke, saying: 'Arise, my dear one, My dove, tabernacle of glory, vessel of life, heavenly temple, in order that, as thou hast not felt the plague of sin in carnal dealings, so thou mayst not suffer the corruption of the body in the grave!' And straightway Mary's soul went to her little body, and she came forth glorious from the tomb, and was assumed into the heavenly bride chamber, a multitude of angels mounting withal.⁴⁰

In early depictions of the Assumption Christ is often shown passing the soul of his mother to Michael to be carried aloft. The Archangel may thus be said to have played a material role in the assumption of the Virgin's body, glorified and uncorrupted by sin, exactly as Michelangelo explained to the critics of his sculpture. The signature of the artist thus invokes his namesake in the creative process of redemption. The Archangel, his name inscribed across her bosom, also serves as her guardian sentinel – Michael is Protector of the Universal Church – as he often does standing beside her at the Assumption or when she appears as Queen of Heaven [Fig. 24].⁴¹



25. Jacopo del Sellaio, «Lamentation» (1489 – c. 1493), formerly Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie (destroyed)

The Virgin's Seat and Christ's Foot

In many depictions of the Crucifixion the foot of the cross is set in a rocky mound. The skull of Adam and a snake are often represented there as mementoes of death and the expiatory fate to which God condemned Adam and Eve for their original sin instigated by the insinuating Lucifer. God also provided redemption for original sin by the sacrifice of his only son, and in representations of the *Pietà*, the lamenting Virgin was often shown seated with her son adjacent to the rocky base of the cross.

Perhaps the most powerful depiction of this subject before Michelangelo's was an altarpiece by Jacopo del Sellaio, destroyed during World War II, that Michelangelo certainly knew very well, since it was painted in Florence in the years immediately preceding the commission for Rome [Fig. 25].⁴² Seated before the cross on a rocky tumulus, the Virgin offers her son to



26. Michelangelo, «Pietà» (1498–1499/1500), view from left side, Vatican City, St Peter's



27. Michelangelo, «Pitti Madonna»
(1504), Florence, Museo del
Bargello

the spectator with open arms and hands; he is displayed on her lap as an altar sacrifice, while the instruments of the Passion lie emblazoned as the *Arma Christi* on the ground below.

Through her compassionate participation in the Passion and her power as joint intercessor, the Virgin also participated as co-redemptress with Christ in the process of salvation. Hence, the punning metaphor expressed by Christ when he appointed Peter as his successor, *Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam*, was also applied to her. In Michelangelo's *Pietà* the Virgin's rocky throne surely refers to this metaphor, applied to her as the stone on which the church was built, the stone being identified as Christ [Fig. 26].⁴³ The rocky seat, however, is not a carved, geometric building block, as in the *Madonna of the Stairs* [Fig. 16], the *Pitti Madonna* [Fig. 27] and the *Medici Madonna* [Fig. 28], where it suggests the Virgin's foreknowledge as *Sedes Sapientiae* [Fig. 29], the cornerstone

the spectator with open arms and hands; he is displayed on her lap as an altar sacrifice, while the instruments of the Passion lie emblazoned as the *Arma Christi* on the ground below.



28. Michelangelo, «Medici Madonna» (1521–1534), view from right side, Florence, San Lorenzo, Medici Chapel

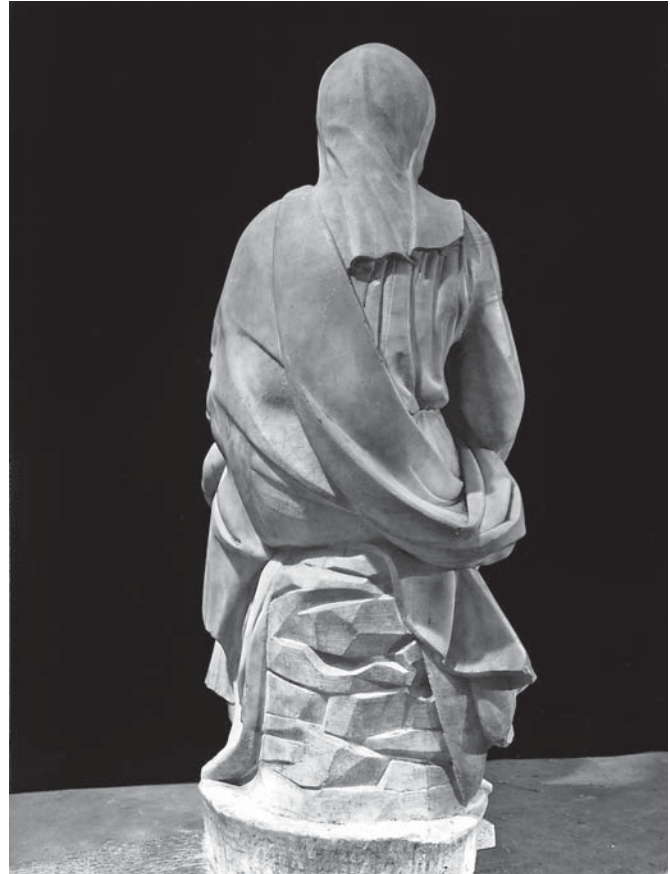


29. «Fortune and Wisdom», woodcut (after De Bovelles 1510, frontispiece)

or *pietra angolare* of the Ecclesia proper to Christ's architectural metaphor – the term ingeniously invoked in a sermon of 1493 by Savonarola for the junction between the Old Law and the New:

The cornerstone was Christ Jesus who joined two walls together, that of our Church and that of the Hebrews.⁴⁴

In the St Peter's *Pietà*, instead, the earthly seat of the Virgin, as in the *Bruges Madonna* [Fig. 30], suggests the rocky summit of Golgotha, where the Virgin together with her son replace the crucifix itself. In the *Bruges Madonna* the older-than-usual Christ child seems to step from his mother's groin down toward his destiny in the world that will lead to Mount Golgotha.⁴⁵ In the St Peter's *Pietà* there emerges from this portion of barren landscape the barren stump of a tree, its roots tightly entwined in the stone. The hewn-off remnant is a clear allusion to God's promise of retribution and salvation through the prophet Ezekiel:



30. Michelangelo, «Bruges Madonna», view of the back, Bruges, Church of Our Lady

And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.⁴⁶

The passage was echoed by Jesus after his condemnation by Pilate at the instigation of the Jews:

For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?⁴⁷

The metaphor of the green and dry tree would later play a key role in the ideology of the Sistine ceiling, where similar amputated tree stumps appear in the scenes of Adam and Eve, the protagonists of original sin [Figs 31–32]⁴⁸ The metaphor became a direct warning to the unfaithful when John the Baptist preached baptism:



31. Michelangelo, «Creation of Eve» (1508–1512), detail, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel



32. Michelangelo, «The Fall»(1508–1512), detail, Vatican City, Sistine Chapel



33. Fra Filippo Lippi, «Adoration of the Child» (c. 1460), Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie



34. Fra Filippo Lippi, «Adoration of the Child» (detail of Fig. 33)

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.⁴⁹

This menacing call to penance had figured prominently in Filippo Lippi's *Adoration of the Child* commissioned by Piero de' Medici and Lucrezia Tornabuoni for the chapel in the Medici palace, therefore well known to Michelangelo [Fig. 33].⁵⁰ The theme evidently evokes the Last Judgment, and the fact that Lippi inscribed his own name on the handle of the axe – FRATER PHILIPPVS • P[INXIT, or PICTOR] • – suggests that he thought of himself as an instrument of God's call to redemption [Fig. 34]. Filippo's example may well have inspired Michelangelo's strategic and prominent placement of his similarly profoundly meaningful signature on the *Pietà*.

Part of this meaning maybe discerned literally in a salient yet scarcely noted detail that actually joins Christ's body to the tree, that is, his left foot protruding toward the space of the spectator, the heel resting in the crotch of the severed branch.⁵¹ Technically, the branch supports the suspended leg, but in this context it invokes a famous passage in Genesis, in which God shelters the descendants of Eve from the serpent-devil whose head will be crushed and will insinuate under heel.⁵²

King James Version: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Douay Version: I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.



35. Vecchietta, «Pietà» (c. 1450), Siena, Museo Diocesano

The passage is crucial because it foretold the promise of redemption at the hand, or rather the foot, of a savior. It seems evident that Michelangelo's interpretation of the theme was inspired by a painted wooden Pietà of about 1450 by his great Sienese predecessor Vecchietta, where the Savior's right foot rests on the human-headed snake, signifying that with Christ's death the earth is healed [Fig. 35].⁵³ What makes the sculpture particularly poignant and relevant for Michelangelo is that it once bore an inscription with the artist's name declaration that it was made 'pro sua devotione'. Although the St Peter's *Pietà* was a commissioned work, Michelangelo's signature indicates that it was also made 'pro sua devotione'. Vecchietta subsequently included the snake under Christ's foot in the bronze figure he made of the *Risen Christ* for the altar of his own tomb chapel, which in turn became an important reminiscence in Michelangelo's *Risen*

Christ in S. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, and generated the tradition of auto-referential Christological imagery for the monuments Renaissance sculptors made for their own tombs.⁵⁴ But it is also ambiguous, particularly with regard to gender, and the Genesis passage became a major bone of contention between Catholics, who insisted on the feminine in reference to Mary and the Church, and the Protestants who insisted that Christ alone was the victor over Satan. The church's final, compromise, solution, that both together defeated evil, was established in a Bull of Pius V in 1569, and illustrated by showing the infant Christ placing his foot on top of the Virgin's, initially it seems in Raphael's *Madonna del Cardellino* (1505–1506) [Fig. 36], where the Virgin holds an open book and St John and Christ together hold a goldfinch, a frequent symbol of Baptism and the Resurrection; and in later paintings by Ambrogio Figino and Caravag-



36. Raphael, «Madonna del Cardellino» (1505–1506), Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi

gio.⁵⁵ There were many in the church who also sustained that the uniqueness of Christ required the masculine solution, as did Michelangelo, it seems, who vested the Virgin's contribution in her compassion and intercessory benevolence.

The Murata and her Omelet

Perhaps the most remarkable, and to my mind least understood aspect of the *Pietà*'s history, is the fact and content of an extraordinary letter from an unknown correspondent written no doubt to Vasari in preparation for the second, 1568 edition of the *Vite*. Discovered in the archive of the artist's nephew, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Jr, by Karl Frey and published by him in 1930, the letter is remarkable in its orthography (an idiosyncratic doubling of certain consonants) no less than its content. The writer, who is himself doubtful of the veracity of the anecdotes he reports, tells of an episode comprising two astonishing details affecting the St Peter's *Pietà*. The paragraph relevant to the *Pietà* is as follows:

I write these few memories, as you requested, but with the proviso that you pick the rose among the thorns, what is true, and what among those things you judge to be worthy of mention. And so I say that having made the *pietà* of the [Madonna della] Febbre, and there having gathered a large crowd of people to see it, finding himself there also one day, one of them said, 'Who made this work?', and another responded, 'Our Gobetto da Milano made it'. And he remained silent; but the next night he hid in the Church with a small light and certain tools and inscribed those letters. And a Murata in a room opposite, thinking that someone wanted to harm the figure, thought to cry out; but perceiving the truth she warmly thanked him for making such a beautiful mate [Christ, the Spouse of all nuns], and she requested that he give her a bit of that wound in the chest of Our Lord. Moved by such devotion he removed some little particles and a bit of [marble] dust [*certe scaglioline con un poca di poluere*] and gave them to her. And to compensate him she made an omelet and he ate it right there that night. And this was the reason for writing those letters, which one really recognizes were made at night and virtually in the dark, because they are not finished.⁵⁶

The report has scarcely been taken seriously. Yet, the mistaken identification of the artist as Gobetto da Milano, Cristoforo Solari, an important contemporary sculptor who made splendid nude figures, and whom Vasari himself thought was one of the best artists in Lombardy, was actually a reasonable and quite perspicacious supposition by the presumably Milanese visitors.⁵⁷ Vasari evidently thought the story was true, since he reported it, without reservation, in the second edition of the *Vite*. Vasari's discussion of the signature in the 1568 edition repeats verbatim the passage in the 1550 edition, with one astonishing

exception, that is, Michelangelo's motive for inscribing the work. Originally Vasari remarked that Michelangelo had signed the sculpture 'as something in which he was satisfied and pleased for himself' ('come di cosa nella quale e sodisfatto e compiaciuto s'era per sé medesimo').⁵⁸ Subsequently Vasari substituted for this phrase the first part of his correspondent's seemingly factitious anecdote:

One morning he [Michelangelo] had gone to the place where it stands and observed a number of Lombards who were praising it loudly. One of them asked another the name of the sculptor, and he replied, 'Our Gobbo of Milan'. Michelangelo said nothing, but he resented the injustice of having the work attributed to another, and that night he shut himself in the chapel with a light and his chisels and carved his name on it.⁵⁹

The change had the effect of shifting the focus of motivation from the domain of pride to that of self-defence. But Vasari must also have been persuaded by the second part of his correspondent's account, which has seemed at best an amusingly pious and naïve anecdote, and which Vasari chose to suppress, no doubt because it seemed so bizarre. In fact, the story of the Murata betrays an intimate knowledge of an obscure detail of the topography of the basilica, theretofore unrecorded, and of the very particular religious practices of the community of female conventuals known as the Murate. The knowledge and understanding the story entails defies incredulity. There is, moreover, a profound, inner link between the signature inscription and the story of the nun, who was certainly a very real person who brought a very relevant poignancy to the episode.

The Murate (walled), sometimes called Incarcerate (imprisoned) or Cellane (cell-mates), were communities of passionately devout women who voluntarily entered into an extremely ascetic communal life of prayer, penance, service and, above all, radical isolation behind closed, windowless walls. They remained insofar as they were able in the face of considerable diffidence on the part of church authorities, fiercely independent, following their own rules and refusing to submit themselves to any of the regular religious orders. Although little known and little studied such communities were widespread in Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶⁰ The best known and best studied Murate establishment was that in Florence. Originating with a solitary recluse toward the end of the fourteenth century, the group yielded to the authorities and adopted the Benedictine rule in 1413. Retaining their original appellation, the convent grew in the course of the fifteenth century to the largest in the city with at least 150 inmates, occupying a large enclosed structure that included a church with important works of art endowed by wealthy patrons. The nuns were proficient creators of manuscripts and their magnificent embroideries were greatly prized. When the convent was suppressed in the nineteenth century it was converted into a prison,



37. Sano di Pietro (attributed), «St Catherine Nourishing at the Breast Wound of Jesus» (c. 1470), detail of *Madonna and Child with Saints*, Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale

which has now become a modern community of apartments for low and middle income citizens. Le Murate is located in the quarter of Santa Croce where Michelangelo had lived as a boy, in the Via Ghibellina where he later (1508) purchased the property that would become his home (Casa Buonarroti). He must have been quite familiar with the colorful history of the convent and the unorthodox traditions of the Murate. Dedicated to the Santissima Annunziata and St Catherine, the convent included a chapel whose façade was reputedly based on a design by Michelangelo.⁶¹

In Rome, there were communities of Murate attached in particular to the Patriarchal basilicas S. Maria Maggiore, the Lateran, and St Peter's, where they doubtless had their own chapels and performed services in the churches. At St Peter's the Murate occupied cells immediately adjoining the church, in the seclusion of the massive Roman walls conjoining the two ancient rotundas that had been converted into the chapels of St Petronilla, the original location of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, and the Madonna delle Febbre.⁶²

By virtue of their popular origins, their independence, their voluntary and spontaneous character, the Murate were clearly a widespread movement within the great efflorescence of passionate, mystical female piety that was central to what has come to be defined as late medieval piety.⁶³ The spiritual focus of this flood of devotion was a veritable blood mysticism vested in the Eucharist, the central, paradoxical mystery of Christ's death through which humanity was redeemed. In physical terms this Eucharist devotion, in turn, focused literally on the point at which and in which the salvific immolation was achieved, that is, the lance wound of Longinus in Christ's chest, from which John the Evangelist saw blood and water gush forth, the ingredients of the Eucharist sacrifice that gave birth to the Church.⁶⁴ The chest wound of Christ became the figuration and source of the spiritual sustenance of the devotee. Perhaps the central figure in this development in Italy was Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), whose innumerable Eucharistic visions and ecstasies included drinking directly from Christ's wound, or sucking the 'delicious' puss from the sores of the afflicted, in a penitential feast of adoration, celebrating the salvation assured by Christ's birth, death, and institution of the church [Fig. 37].⁶⁵ The most celebrated of these sacrificial ingestions occurred when Catherine was attending to a sister of the Order of the Penance of St Dominic suffering from cancer of the breast [Fig. 38]⁶⁶:

she immediately bent her face down over the sick woman's breast, put her mouth and nose to the horrible sore and remained there until the Spirit had conquered the rebellious feeling of nausea and tamed the flesh that was trying to oppose the spirit.

She described the experience:

Never in my life have I tasted any food and drink sweeter or more exquisite.

And Christ's reward for her patience and devotion:

'[...] you cheerfully drank that abhorrent drink. I therefore say to you that since with that act you transcended your own nature I will give you a drink that transcends every human nature and expectation'. And putting His right hand on her virginal neck and drawing her towards the wound in His own side, He whispered



38. Pieter de Jode I (after drawings by Francesco Vanni), «St Catherine of Siena Drinking Puss and the Blood of Christ» (1597), engraving, Rome, Gabinetto nazionale delle stampe (Inv. vol. 57, N25, FC 117986)

to her, 'Drink, daughter, the liquid from my side, and it will fill your soul with such sweetness that its wonderful effects will be felt even by the body which for my sake you despised'. And she, finding herself thus near to the source of the fountain of life, put the lips of her body, but much more those of the soul, over the most holy wound, and long and eagerly and abundantly drank that indescribable and unfathomable liquid.⁶⁷

Catherine had accompanied and no doubt inspired the foundress of the original Murate community in Florence on a mission to Rome, and the legacy of the future saint's consuming devotion Christ's wound surely lay behind the otherwise seemingly trivial nocturnal episode in St Peter's.⁶⁸ The piety of the St Peter's Murate community included one of the most demanding of monastic traditions, that of continuous, twenty-four hour de-

votions, which explains why our Murata happened to hear Michelangelo nearby chiseling his signature in the dead of night [Fig. 39].⁶⁹ Even the *scaglioline con un poca di poluere* suggest the fragmentation of the Eucharistic wafer when it is consumed, a fact that was ideologically correlated with the belief that the entire body of Christ was contained in each of the particles of the host.⁷⁰ Whether or not the Murata actually consumed the fragments Michelangelo scraped from his Christ's wound, he did so for her devotion, which must have touched the impassioned, mystical chord in his own spirit that created the *Pietà*. Moreover, the Murata's conception of the blood of Christ as the spiritual food of salvation must have motivated, perhaps in a spirit of *serio ludere*, her offer and Michelangelo's alacritous consummation of an omelet in compensation for the gift. Perhaps we know the name of this bold and whimsical woman: a few years later,

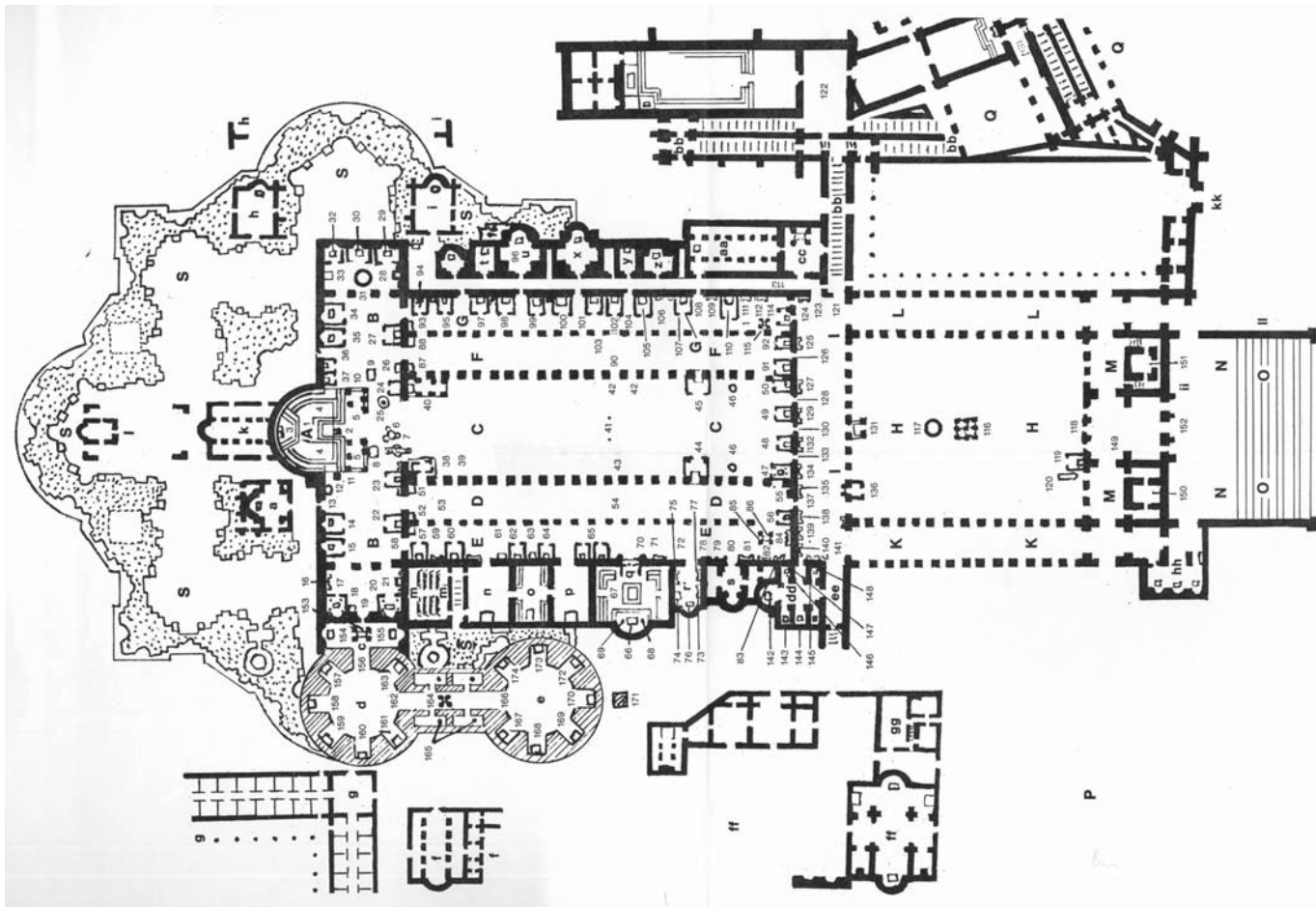
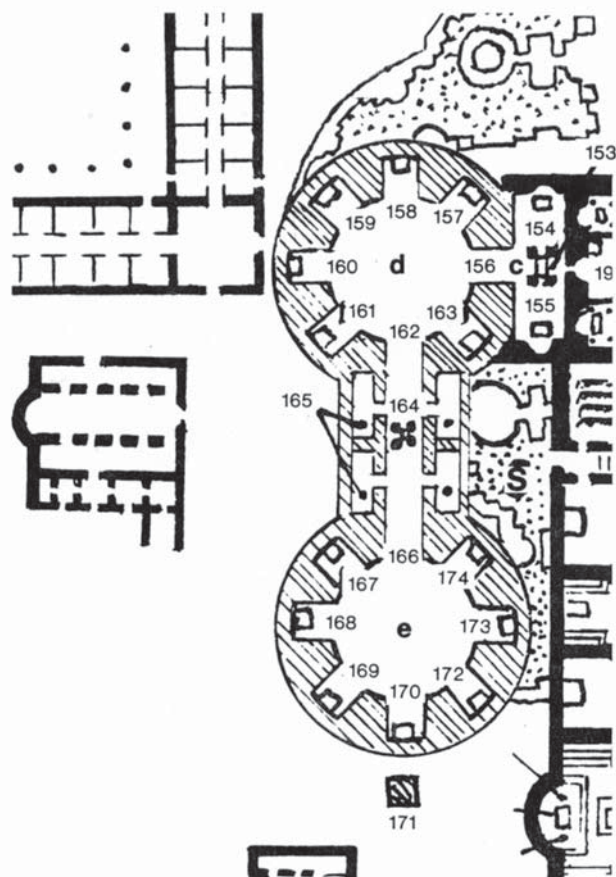


Fig. 49b. La pianta dell'Atrium.

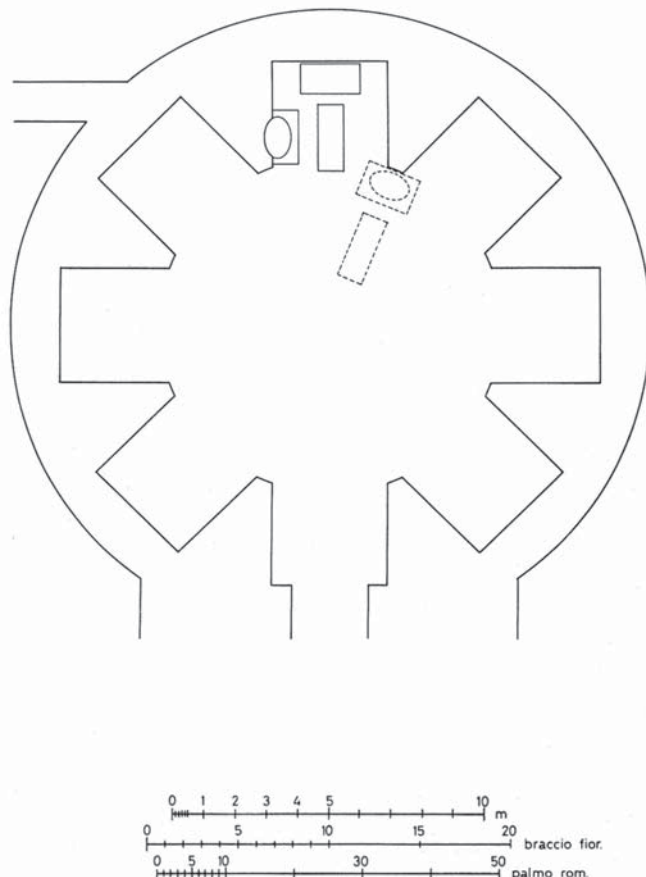
39. Alfaro Plan of St Peter's (after Galassi Paluzzi 1975, p. 416, Fig. 492)



40. Alfarano Plan of St Peter's, detail (after Galazzi Paluzzi 1975, p. 416, Fig. 492d)

in 1514, when the St Petronilla rotunda was dismantled to make way for the new church, workmen were paid for repairs in the quarters in a nearby Oratorium assigned to the Murate, notably Suor Cristina and her companions (Alfarano Plan S, Fig. 40; Fig. 41).⁷¹ The community's needs were provided by the Vatican, and it continued until 1571 when the remaining three, two Spaniards and a Sicilian, were moved to another church outside the Vatican, after which we hear no more of them.⁷²

The Murata's omelet was perfectly appropriate. The egg was among the most ubiquitous symbols of the two crucial events that embrace the Crucifixion in the history of salvation, Christ's birth and resurrection.⁷³ Eggs are commonly among the humble gifts brought by the shepherds in scenes of the nativity, and the Easter egg celebrates the rebirth of mankind promised by the resurrection. The themes of birth, death and resurrec-



41. Reconstruction of the location of *Pietà* in the Chapel of Petronilla (after Weil-Garris Brandt 1987, p. 115, diagram B)

tion are traditionally combined in scenes celebrating the Annunciation, in which the infant Christ descends from the Holy Spirit carrying the cross; and in scenes celebrating the Nativity, in which the shepherd offering eggs is counterposed with a lamb whose feet are bound in preparation for the sacramental sacrifice [Fig. 42].⁷⁴

Considered in this light the seemingly trifling story of the Murata, Christ's wound and the omelet, reveals and surely reflected the underlying meaning of the sculptured group itself, with the youthful Madonna bearing her mature son on her lap, as if suspended from a cross-strap inscribed with its creator's augury for his own salvation in the completeness of time. The two incidents, the added signature and the effusion from the chest wound, were complementary acts of a single penitential ritual.



42. Francisco Zurbarán,
«Adoration of the Shepherds»
(1638), Grenoble, Musée
des Beaux-Arts

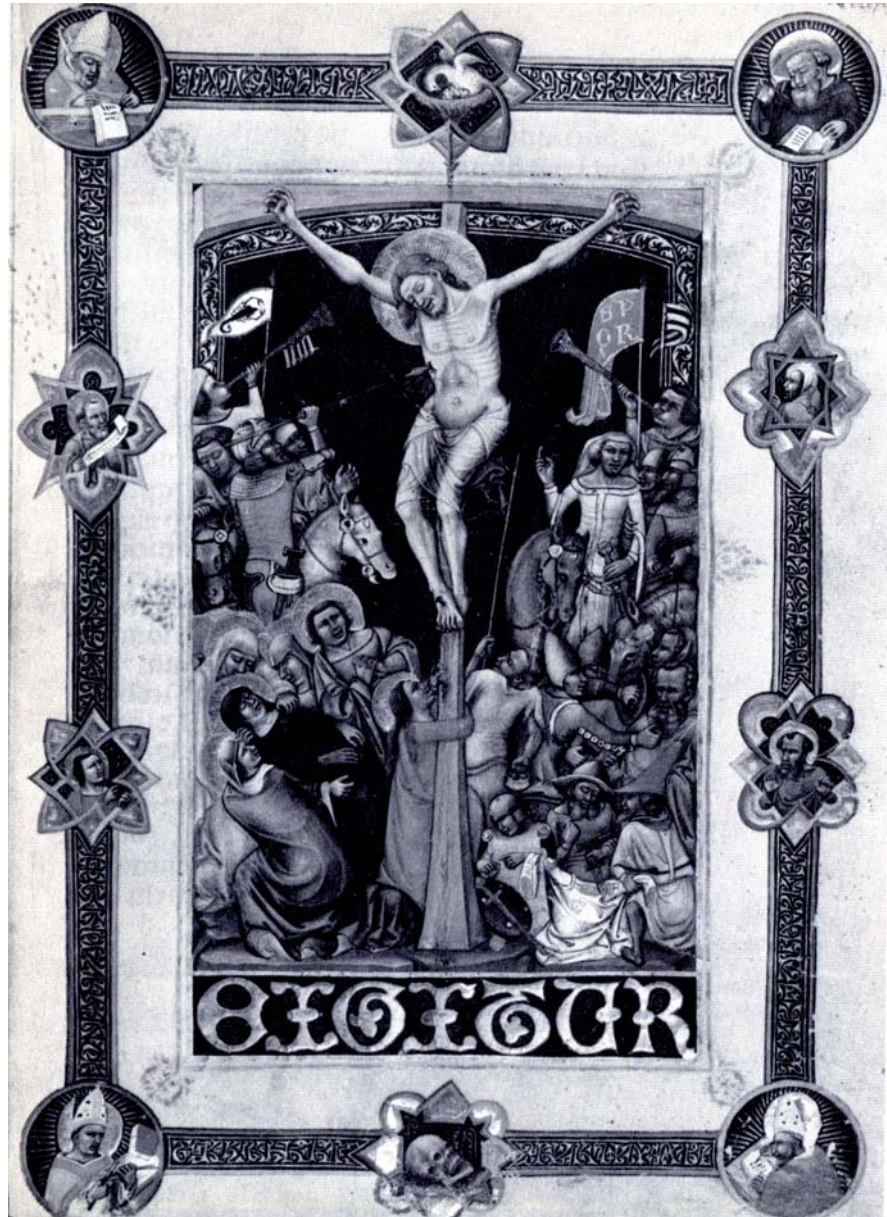
Te Igitur

Canon Missae

Te igitur, clementissime Pater, per Iesum Christum Filium tuum Dominum nostrum, supplices rogamus ac petimus uti accepta habeas, et benedicas, haec dona, haec munera, haec sancta sacrificia illibata, in primis, quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua sancta catholica: quam pacificare, custodire, adunare, et regere digneris toto orbe terrarum: una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro N. et Antistite nostro N., et omnibus orthodoxis, atque catholicae, et apostolicae fidei cultoribus.

Therefore, most gracious Father, we humbly beg of Thee and entreat Thee, through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, to deem acceptable and bless, these gifts, these offerings, these holy and unspotted oblations, which we offer unto Thee in the first instance for Thy holy and Catholic Church, that Thou wouldst deign to give her peace and protection, to unite and guide her the whole world over; together with Thy servant N., our Pope, and N., our bishop, and all true believers, who cherish the catholic and apostolic faith.⁷⁵

The coincidence of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet with the Latin letter T and the cross of the crucifixion was thought to be divinely providential by Innocent III in his famous treatise on the Sacred Mystery of the Altar, because it happens that the opening prayer of the Canon of the Mass, *Te igitur*, begins with the same letter.⁷⁶ The Canon of the Mass incorporates, literally, one might say, the very sacrifice, the consummation of Christ's flesh and blood through the wafer-host and wine, whereby salvation was achieved. The end of the literacy of the Old Testament is thus succeeded by the beginning of its fulfillment in the New. The association between the Tau cross and the Canon of the Mass was so intimate that they were actually conflated in missals where the *Te igitur* was illustrated by a scene of the Crucifixion in which the wood of the cross is not only T-shaped



43. Andrea da Bologna, «Crucifixion», Missal (3rd quarter 14th c.), Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Cap. S. P. 63B, fol. 189^r (after Cassee 1980, p. 4)

but actually has the form of the Hebrew letter.⁷⁷ In one notable instance the foot of the cross rests on the ground inside the scene while the arms surround it outside as a kind of embracing frame [Fig. 43]. The Old Testament–New Testament succession is explicit in the *Te igitur* Crucifixion illustration in another missal, in which Christ's chest wound exudes streams of

blood and water and the Tau cross is flanked by the figures of Ecclesia and Synagoga [Fig. 44]. The tau – T thus became the gateway through which the faithful may pass to the resurrection that is the supreme promise to which the offertory prayers of the Canon are devoted.

This is the sense in which Michelangelo's imperfect and missing T must be understood. Inscribed between the breasts of the Virgin he looks forward to his own death and ultimate aspiration. The first prayers following the Mass are devoted to the Virgin and the fruit of her womb, invoking her prayers, now and at the hour of our death. Finally, the sign of Michelangelo's invocation and aspiration is hidden from view, intimate and private, as it were. This, too, is an analogue of the profound, ineffable spirituality of the Canon of the Mass, which the priest offers up alone, and in silence.

The St Peter's *Pietà* is the only public work Michelangelo signed, and deliberately so, I think. Perhaps the ultimate irony of the *Pietà*, lies precisely in the exquisite, indeed loving refinement he gave to the surfaces of the sculpture, especially the face of the Virgin and the body of Christ, qualities which Vasari (and others) could only describe as a miracle of perfection:

It is a miracle that a once shapeless stone should assume such perfection as Nature with difficulty produces in flesh.⁷⁸

With his signature the young sculptor meditates upon death, the Savior's and his own, and the inscription is the signature of all his work, once and for all, for all eternity – the *rimedio* for his own imperfection through which he speaks from beyond,



44. «Crucifixion», Missal (13th c.), Manchester, John Rylands Library, Ms. 24, fol. 153^r

awaiting the resurrection.⁷⁹ In this sense the St Peter's *Pietà* is a kind of spiritual self-portrait, which adumbrates Michelangelo's preoccupation toward the end of his life with death and his own, ultimately imperfect tomb.

Appendix

1. Passages concerning the St Peter's Murate, from Garampi 1755:

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anzi il Panvinio nel suo libro *Ms. de Basilica Sancti Petri* (Lib. VII. cap. 1 pag. 508), dove parla della Cappella di S. Andrea che era allora nella vecchia Basilica, scrive, che in eo loco sunt cubicula Sanctimonialium, qua muris clausa perpetuam Dio ibidem servitum vovere.

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si può aggiungere quello, che ne lasciò scritto Tiberio Alfarano in un libro di Memorie, che si conserva Ms. nell'archivio della suddetta Basilica. *Recordo come a dì 19. de Maggio 1571, di giorno de sabbato innante l'Ascensione del Signore, le Monache Murate in S. Pietro, quale al presente era tre, doi Spagnole & una Ceciliana, stavano nelle stanze accanto la Cappella de' S. Gregorio & il Segretario. Furno trasportate per ordine delli Signori Riformatori & Vicario del Papa in Santa Martha all'arco di Camigliano in Roma, & poste in quel luoco, dove se sogliono recevere & consolare le donne così chiamate Malmaritate, acciò dette Murate consolassero dette donne, & esse stessero meglio de stanze, maxime che in S. Pietro sempre erano inferme. Ricordo come fu incomenciato a farsi una Cappella, dove stavano dette Murate, per riponere cose pertinente alla Chiesa a dì 1. Agosto 1571.*

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perciò qui converrà intendere per *Cella Muratorum* qualcheduna di quelle carceri o celle più rigorose, delle quali si è sopra parlato alla p. 100. e 159. *Murate* erano detto certe Monache incluse presso la Basilica Vaticana. 159.

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In Venezia presso la chiesa de' Santi Ermagora e Fortunato era un Luogo di eremite, *in quo quædam mulier, Mater nuncupata, nomine Benedicta, isthic clausa una cum duabus suis discipulis ad instar heremitarum. Basilicæ Principis Apostolorum de Urbe &c. ita quod ab eo loco nunquam exeat neque videri possit &c.* come può vedersi nelle lettere di Giulio II. dell'anno 1506. presso il Cornaro [*Eccl. Venet. Decad. VII. p.257.*]. In un Instrumento poi del 1518. si legge, che ivi *duæ aut tres moniales in cellulis suis seorsim reclusæ & muratæ pro tempore degere consueverunt* (*lvi p.258.*); e Paolo III. nel 1539. il chiamò *Monasterium monialium heremitarum reclusarum in Porticu nuncupatarum Ordinis S. Aug.* [*lvi p. 259.*].

2. Passages concerning the Murate from Alfarano 1914, with the corresponding page numbers; letters and numbers in boldface refer to those given in Alfarano's plan of Old St Peter's:

p. 85

Sed post hoc altare extra Basilicæ lateres, et iuxta secretarium erat Oratorium [**s**] antiquum, quod adhuc superest, cui dicatum ignotum, in quod translatae clausaeque ibi fuerunt sanctae Moniales vulgo le *Murate di S. Pietro*¹, quae inter sanctae Mariae de Febribus et sanctae Petronillae templa iuxta sancti Ioannis Chrysostomi sacellum, quibusdam in aulis antiquitus clusae Deo serviebant. Quibus denique Pij quinti iussu intra Urbis Monasteria collocatis, hic novissime commoditati Basilicæ designatus est locus; sed cum ad dictum oratorium non reperiretur accessus novusque aditus adaptaretur. Tunc in parietum spissitudine praedicta absidula et Altaris vestigia reperi fuerunt.

pp. 138–139

In hoc etiam transitu hinc inde erant aulae [**165**] sanctimonialium vulgo dictarum le murate di san Pietro, quae Deo noctu dieque laudes exolvebant; postea translatae, ut supra expressimus, iuxta sancti Gregorij oratorium et Basilicæ Secretarium; ac inde ad monasteria nobilissima Urbis.

p. 156

[at No. 78] Addietro alla parete della Chiesa et adietro a questo sepolcro per infino al Segretario se vedono vestigi de doi Cappelle agionate alla Chiesa, delle quali una è ancora in piedi, l'altra è deformata. Et in questi luoghi nel tempo della ruina della Chiesa furno transferite le monache murate, quale habitavano in certe stanze fra la Cappella o tempio de S. Petronilla et il tempio de S. Maria della Febre (quale è adesso Sagrestia) nel transito che se andava da l'un tempio all' altro appresso all'Altare di S. Gio. Crisostomo. Adesso l'anno del Signore 1570 nel mese de Maggio dette Monache furono trasferite al Monastero de S. Marta in Roma, et in questa Cappella è stato fatto repository d'alcune cose della Chiesa, et de sopradette Cappelle furno fatte stanze per li parocchiani, overo che hanno cura delle anime della parrocchia de S. Pietro.

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s. – Oratorium antiquum post Secretarium Basilicæ ubi aliquandiu sanctae Moniales vulgo le murate di san Pietro, ex altero antiquissimo loco translatae Deo servierunt.

¹ A questa nuova abitazione delle Suore chiamate *Murate* deve riferirsi il pagamento (2 nov. 1514) pubblicato dal Frey (*Jahrbuch*, 1911, p. 55).¹

p. 198

165. – Aulæ Sanctimonialium vulgo le Murate di S. Pietro quae Deo nocte dieque laudes exolvebant.

p. 200

Ricordo come a di 19 de Maggio 1571 di giorno di sabbato inante l'Ascentione del Signore le Monache murate in S. Pietro quale al

presente eran tre, doi spagnole, et una cecigliana stavano nella stanza accanto la Cappella di S. Gregorio et il Segretario furno trasportati per ordine delli Signori reformati [o reformatori?] et Vicario del Papa in Santa Marta a l'arco di Camigliano in Roma et poste in quel luogo dove se sogliono recevere et consolare le donne così chiamate male maritate acciò dette murate consolassero dette donne et esse stassero meglio di stanze in S. Pietro sempre erano.²

² Ecco come il Torrigio riferisce questa notizia nelle sue *Memorie Romane* (Vat. lat. 10185, p. 365): *Durò tal monastero molti anni finchè essendo rimaste a tre sole Monache (dette Rinchiuse, Murate et Incarcerate) sino al 1571. una delle quali era Siciliana e l'altre due Spagnole fu (essendone morte due) la terza per nome Sor Francesca d'ordine di Pio V trasferita, a. 1571 li 19 di Maggio in Sabbato, al Monastero di S. Marta all'Arco già di Camigliano presso al Collegio Romano. Stava-*

no le dette tre Monache in un luogo (dove dall'antico furono trasferite) vicino all'altare all'hora di S.Andrea nella Basilica vecchia, e la Rota rispondeva in Chiesa et il Parlatorio et di li si confessavano et si comunicavano. Havevano il vivere dal Palazzo Apostolico; onde si legge nelli libri della Compotistaria de Papa così come ho letto io stesso: Murate bocc. 3. Soprastante di murate bocc. 1; intendendosi di boccali di vino.

This paper was first presented at a symposium on artists' signatures organized by Nicole Hegener in Berlin in September 2008. The introductory paragraph was as follows:

Michelangelo Yes, Bernini No

When Nicole asked me to speak about Bernini and artists' signatures, I had thought about the problem and thought it might be a challenge to try to say something about nothing – Bernini simply did not sign his work, not once, not ever. Perhaps he chose not to sign out of modesty (he was in fact, frequently self-deprecating), or perhaps he thought the absence of his signature was his signature, i.e., you recognize the artist from his work: *ex ungue leonem*. The absence of self-recognition is striking because many of his contemporaries, and many deconstructionists now, consider him the most arrogant, self-important character of his time; even his own mother at one point accused him of behaving like the 'Padrone del Mondo'. This autographic silence is especially striking in view of his (in)famous reputation for emulating Michelangelo. The Michelangelo of his time, he was called, a phrase often repeated by

modern writers bent on illustrating his egregious self-aggrandizement. In fact, although he certainly admired and appreciated Michelangelo, and sometimes emulated him, he did not particularly like Michelangelo's work, as we know from his own comments reported in the sources. All this despite the fact that he was certainly aware that Michelangelo did sign ONE work, at least, and in an egregiously conspicuous place – on the very body of the Virgin Mary, not on her hem or some marginal and therefore appropriately modest place; and in an egregiously conspicuous location, the mortuary chapel of an important cardinal at the greatest church in Christendom, St Peter's. Were Bernini's failure to sign – and also, I might add, his failure to provide for any sort of tomb monument for himself, in contrast to Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà* – also ways in which Bernini sought, on the contrary, to distinguish himself from Michelangelo and his prideful and self-perpetuating gestures? Perhaps for Bernini the very absence of such self-testimonials constituted a kind of life-signature in absentia. This is more or less all I have to say about that particular nothing, and I will now turn to the corresponding subject of Michelangelo's only signature. At least it is about something.

¹ On the debated function and setting of the *Pietà*, see Weil-Garris Brandt 1987 and Wallace 1992.

² Recent discussions: Juřen 1974; Gilbert 1983, p. 28; Weil-Garris Brandt 1987, pp. 92–94; Pon 1996; Barolsky 1998, pp. 453–461; Matthew 1998, pp. 646 n. 76, p. 647 n. 106, p. 648 n. 129; Pestilli 2000; Goffen 2001, pp. 320–326; Wang 2004; McHam 2008, pp. 159–160; Hegener 2008, pp. 242–244.

³ Pliny 1938–1963, vol. I, pp. 16–19:

ex illis mox velim intellegi pingendi fingendique conditoribus quos in libellis his invenies absoluta opera, et illa quoque quae mirando non satiamur, pendenti titulo inscripsisse, ut *Apelles faciebat* aut *Polyclitus*, tamquam inchoata semper arte et imperfecta, ut contra iudiciorum varietates superesset artifici regressus ad veniam velut emendaturo quicquid desideraretur si non esset interceptus. quare plenum verecundiae illud, quod omnia opera tamquam novissima inscripsere et tamquam singulis fato adempti. tria non amplius, ut opinor, absolute traduntur inscripta *Ille fecit* (quae suis locis reddam); quo apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea.

⁴ Cited and translated by Juřen 1974, pp. 28, 29, n. 8:

Au cours d'une récente visite de Rome, j'ai regardé avec beaucoup d'intérêt, dans l'atrium de la maison de Mellini, une sorte de base avec l'inscription grecque: σέλευχος βασιλεύς, ζύσιππος έποίησιν⁹; en latin, cela signifie: 'Seleucus rex, Lysippus faciebat'. Il y avait avec moi le secrétaire apostolique Giovanni Lorenzi de Venise, homme très savant en langues classiques et grand admirateur de presque toutes les choses magnifiques de cette nature. Il me fit observer que l'artiste n'avait pas signé έποίησιν plutôt que έποίησεν, c'est-à-dire 'faciebat' (faisait) plutôt que 'fecit' (fit), sans intention bien précise, ce qu'aussitôt je saisis et approuvai. Car, comme le dit Plin dans la préface de son 'Histoire Naturelle', les meilleurs artistes mettaient même à des œuvres achevées une inscription suspensive, telle que 'Apelles' ou 'Polyclitus faciebat', comme si l'art était une chose toujours commencée et toujours inachevée: ainsi, en face des variations du goût, il restait un recours à l'artiste, qui se disait par là prêt à corriger tous les défauts qu'on lui signalerait, si la mort ne venait l'interrompre. C'est donc, dit Plin, de leur part un geste plein de modestie d'avoir signé toutes leurs œuvres comme si elles étaient

les dernières et comme s'ils avaient été enlevés à chacune par la fatalité. Selon la tradition, croit-il, il n'y en pas plus de trois qui aient reçu une inscription définitive 'Ille fecit' (Fait par un tel) et il en parle en son lieu. Cela fit clairement voir que l'auteur avait conçu une confiance absolue en son art, et valut à toutes ces œuvres une grande impopularité. De plus, des signatures analogues se trouvent dans d'autres endroits de Rome, affirmait Giovanni Lorenzi.

Romae nuper in atrio Melinae domus marmoream quandam veluti basin aspeximus, in qua graece sic erat: σέλευχος βασιλεύς, λύσιππος έποίησιν. Id latine sic valet: Seleucus rex, Lysippus faciebat. Erat ibi tum nobiscum Ioannes Laurentius Venetus, summi pontificis a secretis, homo linguae utriusque doctissimus, omniumque istiusmodi quasi lautitiarum studiosissimus. Is igitur nos submonuit, quod et statim arripuimus, agnovimusque non temere ille έποίησιν potius quam έποίησεν, hoc est, faciebat, quam fecit. Siquidem, ut ait Plinius in praefatione librorum Naturalis historiae: Summi illi artifices, etiam absoluta opera pendenti titulo inscripsere, ut Apelles faciebat, et Polyclitus, tanquam inchoata semper arte, et imperfecta, ut contra iudiciorum varietates superesset artifici regressus ad veniam, velut emendaturo quicquid desideraretur, si non esset interceptus. Quare, inquit, plenum verecundiae est illud, quod omnia opera tanquam novissima inscripsere, et tanquam aliquid singulis fato sit ademptum. Tria autem, non (ut ille opinatur) amplius absolute traduntur inscripta, Ille fecit, quae suis locis reddit. Quo apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea. Caeterum etiam alibi Romae simileis inveniri titulos, idem Ioannes Laurentius Venetus asseverabat (Poliziano 1553, p. 264).

On this now lost inscription, see the references in Juřen 1974, p. 29, n. 9.

⁵ In a paper presented at the same Berlin conference.

⁶ See the illuminating discussion of the epigraphy of the inscription in Wang 2004, pp. 454–459.

⁷ De Tolnay 1943–1960, vol. V, pp. 148f.; Pope-Hennessy 1970, pp. 8, 305.

⁸ Lavin 1993.

⁹ Wang 2004, pp. 465f., also perceived the significance of the orthography and the reference to the Archangel, but our interpretations differ.

¹⁰ On the Virgin's left hand, see Lavin 1966.

- 11 On the painting in the Metropolitan and the iconography of Double Intercession, see Williamson 2000.
- 12 <<http://www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/Italian/PetrarchCanzoniere062-122.htm>>; <http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/canzoniere/il_canzo.txt>.
- 13 Girardi 1960, pp. 4f., translation adapted from Gilbert and Linscott 1963, pp. 5f. On the relationship between text and image on this sheet see Lavin 1981, pp. 36; idem 1990, pp. 25–26; idem 1993, pp. 36–38; idem 1995, pp. 26–27.
- 14 On the strap see most recently and extensively Wang 2004, pp. 449–467.
- 15 The work has been fully rehabilitated by Francesco Caglioti in Seidel ed. 2010, p. 88.
- 16 Michelangelo–Lippi: ‘Michelangelo has never tired of singing his praises, and has frequently imitated him’ Gaunt 1963, vol. II, p. 6; ‘Michelagnolo l’ha non pur celebrato sempre, ma imitato in molte cose’. Vasari, vol. III, p. 338. Von Holst 1971, pp. 6–7, related the pose of the Christ child in the Barbadori altar to that of Christ in the Bruges Madonna, citing Vasari’s reference to Michelangelo’s admiration for Lippi, but with no discussion of its significance.
- 17 Wohl 1976, pp. 24f (I quote Condivi’s discussion of the *Pietà* in full):
 Poco da poi, a requisizione del cardinal di San Dionigi, chiamato il cardinal Rovano, in un pezzo di marmo fece quella maravigliosa statua di Nostra Donna, qual è oggi nella Madonna della Febre, avenga che da principio fusse posta nella chiesa di Santa Petronilla, cappella del Re di Francia, vicina alla sagrestia di San Piero, già secondo alcuni tempio di Marte, la quale per rispetto del disegno della nuova chiesa fu da Bramante rovinata. Questa se ne sta a sedere in sul sasso dove fu fitta la croce, col figliuolo morto in grembo; di tanta e così rara bellezza, che nessun la vede che dentro a pietà non si commuova. Imagine veramente degna di quella umanità che al figliuolo de Iddio si conveniva e a cotanta madre; se ben sono a’cuni che in essa madre riprendino l’esser troppo giovane rispetto al figliuolo. Del che ragionand’io con Michelagnolo un giorno: ‘Non sai tu, mi rispose, che le donne caste molto più fresche si manrengano che le non caste? Quanta maggiormente una vergine, nella quale non cadesse mai pur un minimo lascivo desiderio che alterasse quel corpo? Anzi ti vo’ dir più, che tal freschezza e fior di gioventù, oltra che per tal natural via in lei si mantenesse, è anco credibile che per divin’ opera fosse aiutato, a comprobare al mondo la verginità e purità perpetua della madre. Il che non fu necessario nel figlio, anzi più tosto il contrario, perciò che, volendo mostrare che ‘l figliuolo de Iddio prendesse, come prese, veramente corpo umano e sottoposto a tutto quel che un ordinario omo soggiace, eccetto che al peccato, non bisognò col divino tener indietro l’umano, ma lasciarlo nel corso e ordine suo, sì che quel tempo mostrasse che aveva apunto. Per tanto, non t’hal da maravigliare se, per tal rispetto, io feci la santissima Vergine, madre de Iddio, a comparazion del figliuolo assai più giovane di quel che quell’età ordinariamente ricerca, e ‘l figliuolo lasciai nell’età sua’. Considerazion degnissima di qualunque teologo, maravigliosa forse in altri, in lui non già, il quale Iddio e la natura ha formato non solamente ad operar unico di mano, rna degno subietto ancora di qualunque divinissimo concetto, come non solamente in questa, rna in moltissimi suoi ragionamenti e scritti conoscer si può (Nencioni 1988, pp. 18f.).
- 18 What follows here on the Medici Madonna and the Song of Songs is excerpted from the full discussion in Lavin 2001.
- 19 Firestone 1942, pp. 43–62.
- 20 The history and bibliography of the Song of Songs in the Renaissance has been studied in exemplary fashion by Engammare 1993.
- 21 Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi, | inter ubera mea commorabitur.
- 22
 Prophetissa namque eram et ex quo mater ejus facta sum, scivi eum ista passurum. Cum igitur carne mea taliter progenitum, talem filium sino meo foverem, ulnis gestarem, uberibus lactarem, et talem ejus futuram mortem semper prae oculis haberem, et prophetica, imo plusquam prophetica mente praeviderem, qualem, quantam, quam prolixam me putatis materni doloris pertulisse passionem? Hoc est quod dico: ‘Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus mihi, inter ubera mea commorabitur’. O commoratio, dulcis quidem, sed plena gemitibus inenarrabilibus! (Rupert of Deutz 1974, p. 32; cited by Astell 1990, p. 64).
 This interpretation of the passage became standard, and beginning in the late fifteenth century whole tracts were written using this verse as the title (Fasciculus Mirre) and point of departure for meditations on the Passion. The most popular of these, by a Dutch Franciscan friar, was first published in 1517 with woodcut illustrations and went through no less than 24 editions by 1565 (Engammare 1993, p. 452). The implications of Canticles 1, 13, for the development of the image of the Pietà has been studied at length by Schawe 1989–1990, who also reproduces a number of the relevant texts in an appendix.
- 23 Sermon 43, 1, on the Song of Songs, Bernard of Clairvaux 1971, pp. 220, 221.
 Myrrha, amara res, dura et aspera tribulationum significat....Non quia levis in se (nec enim levis passionis asperitas, mortis amaritudo), sed levis tamen amanti. Et ideo non ait tantum: Fasciculus myrrhae dilectus meus; sed: Mihi, inquit, quae diligo fasciculus est. Unde et dilectum nominat, monstrans dilectionis vim omnium amaritudinum superare molestiam, et quia fortis est ut mors dilectio (Cant. VIII, 6). Et ut scias non in se illam, sed in Domino gloriari, neque de propria virtute, sed de Domini adiutorio, praeumere fortitudinem; dicit illum inter ubera sua commoraturum, cui secunda decantet: Etiamsi ambulavero in medio umbrae mortis, non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es (Psal. 22, 4). (Migne 1844–1877, CLXXXIII, cols 993, 994).
- 24 Serm. 43, 5, Bernard of Clairvaux 1971, p. 223; ‘hunc medullis inserite cordis, hoc munite aditus pectoris, ut et vobis inter ubera commoretur’ (Migne 1844–1877, CLXXXIII, col. 995).
- 25 Meertens and Delen eds, 1949, XII, p. 2. Recent bibliography on this important blockbook in Schawe 1989–1990, p. 199 n. 74; Wilson and Wilson 1984, p. 106; Blockbücher 1991; Petev 1998. Notes on the influence of this blockbook in the North and in Italy will be found in Petev 1998, pp. 360f. n. 28, and Zuccari 1990, pp. 66f. The same illustration was cited by Baldwin 1984, p. 62, in relation to the passion imagery of Jan van Eyck’s Arnolfini portrait. In the *Speculum humanae salvationis* the Virgin is said to have collected Christ’s suffering in the bundle of myrrh and placed it between her breasts, *pro clipeo*: ‘Omnes autem poenalitates Christi Maria diligenter collegit et per compassionem fasciculum myrrhae ex ipsis compegit. Hunc fasciculum pro clipeo inter ubera sua collocavit et in tali armatura contra hostem nostrum dimicavit’ (Schawe 1989–1990, p. 211).
- 26 ‘illa Dominum pannis involvit cum natus est, hic linteis cum recessit’ (Sermon 248, De Sepultura Domini, 1, Migne 1844–1877, XXXIX, col. 2205, cited by Firestone 1942, p. 49).
- 27 ‘Quo facto, inuoluit eum in uelo capitis sui et posuit eum in presepio[...]; Accelerat igitur et approximat filio, amplexatur et cingit uelo capitis sui’

(John of Caulibus 2000, pp. 25, 252; idem 1997, pp. 31, 271). According to Bernardino da Siena, at Christ's death the Virgin 'believed that the days of Bethlehem had returned; she imagined that he was sleeping, and she cradled him to her breast. She imagined the winding sheet in which he was wrapped to be his swaddling clothes' (Mâle 1986, p. 1197).

28 John 20,3–9:

- 3 exiit ergo Petrus et ille alius discipulus et venerunt ad monumentum
- 4 currebant autem duo simul et ille alius discipulus praecurrit citius Petro et venit primus ad monumentum
- 5 et cum se inclinasset videt posita linteamina non tamen introivit
- 6 venit ergo Simon Petrus sequens eum et introivit in monumentum et videt linteamina posita
- 7 et sudarium quod fuerat super caput eius non cum linteaminibus positum sed separatim involutum in unum locum
- 8 tunc ergo introivit et ille discipulus qui venerat primus ad monumentum et vidit et credidit
- 9 nondum enim sciebant scripturam quia oportet eum a mortuis resurgere.

29 The Metropolitan picture was included by Firestone 1942, pp. 48f. Borgognone's *Madonna* in the Brera was cited as precedent for Raphael's *Madonna di Loreto* by Pfeiffer 1980–1984, p. 23; for this question see *Pinacoteca* 1988, pp. 104–106. On the motif see also Aronberg Lavin 1981, p. 201. For illustrations of the Virgin covering Christ's nudity at the Passion see Steinberg 1996, pp. 30, 34. The many associations of the Virgin's veil have been explored by Schreiber 2004, pp. 157–162, in connection with the Dangolsheim sculpture by Nicolaus Gerhaert in Berlin, where the child envelops himself in a billowing expanse of her hood.

In the second decade of the sixteenth century the theme was adopted in several remarkable variants by Jan Gossart (Ainsworth ed. 2010, No. 10, pp. 154–157, No. 11, pp. 158f., No. 113, pp. 410f.).

30 For the ancient tradition of the Tau cross, see especially Rahner 1953. The symbol was virtually divinized by St Francis and his Order: Fleming 1982, pp. 99–128.

In the discussion following my lecture in Berlin Matthias Winner pointed out that the letter tau is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This simple fact, although well known to me, had never been mentioned, nor had it occurred to me, in this context. When I subsequently discovered the virtually genetic conflation of the letter T and the Tau cross with the Canon of the Mass, the observation provided, as will be seen, a perfect confirmation of the arguments I had presented concerning the meaning of the inscription, the silent terminal T, and that of the *Pietà* itself. Needless to say, I am most grateful.

31 Paradiso 33, 1–6; Singleton 1975, pp. 370–371:

Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo figlio,
umile e alta più che creatura,
termine fisso d'eterno consiglio,
tu se' colei che l'umana natura
nobilitasti sì, che 'l suo fattore
non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.

32 Barocchi 1962, vol. I, pp. 18–19. On this relationship to Dante see Olivier 1892, pp. 24f. (cited by Barocchi 1962, vol. II, p. 189), Hibbard 1974, p. 45, Hartt 1994, p. 463, and the apt comments by Summers 1981, p. 337–339, and Land 1998, pp. 183–187.

33 In the commentary on Dante's *termine fisso* in this passage, Scartazzini and Vandelli 1979, p. 913, cite Proverbs 8, 22, noting that the sentence was applied to the Church of the Virgin.

34 Proverbs 8, 22–30:

22. Dominus possedit me initium viarum suarum antequam quicquam faceret a principio
23. ab aeterno ordita sum et ex antiquis antequam terra fieret
24. necdum erant abyssi et ego iam concepta eram necdum fontes aquarum eruperant
25. necdum montes gravi mole constiterant ante colles ego parturiebar
26. adhuc terram non fecerat et flumina et cardines orbis terrae
27. quando praeparabat caelos aderam quando certa lege et gyro vallabat abyssos
28. quando aethera firmabat sursum et librabat fontes aquarum
29. quando circumdabat mari terminum suum et legem ponebat aquis ne transirent fines uos quando adpendebat fundamenta terrae
30. cum eo eram cuncta componens et delectabar per singulos dies ludens coram eo omni tempore.

35 Michelangelo's reference here to the Old Testament's personification of Divine provoyance of the genealogy of salvation seems to me self-evident, although the figure inevitably, *ipso facto*, also incorporates reference to both Eve and ultimately to her successor, Mary. The Virgin was, after all, the *Sedes Sapientiae*, and the ultimate significance of the ceiling itself is a proleptic fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New. On the pertinence of the traditional association of Divine Wisdom with Mary, see Sheeben 1946–1947, vol. I, pp. 22–35; May 1955–1961, vol. I, pp. 76f. On the to my mind nugatory dispute over the identification, see Hall 1993 (Divine Wisdom, with reference to Kuhn 1975, pp. 28f.) and Steinberg 1993 (Eve). After this essay was completed, including the previous sentence, I discovered a paper by Kim E. Butler (2009) offering a comprehensive interpretation of the Sistine ceiling and Last Judgment in terms of Franciscan Immaculatist ideology. Among Butler's conclusions is that Wisdom–Eve–Mary–Ecclesia are not mutually exclusive; but it does not follow from this descendancy that, as Butler asserts, 'the operations of metaphor do not, in fact, permit a single answer' (259–63, 278).

36 Sapientia mundi, cuius amore creavit Deus Caelum, & terram, non solum autem totus mundus amore Beatissimae virginis à Deo conditus est, sed etiam sustentatur, mundus enim ipse, ob nostras pravas actiones, nullo pacto consistere posset, nisi ipsa gloriosa virgo, cum sua misericordia, & clementia pro nobis orando, sustineret (Galatino 1518, Bk 7, ch. 2, cited here after Marracci 1710, p. 615).

37 On Galatino see *Dizionario* 1960ff., vol. XXVII, pp. 492–494, and on his treatise Perrone 1983, esp. pp. 139–142.

38 Guest 1995, fol. 1^v, text p. 54; see Zapperi 1991, pp. 3–32, Bynum 1992, pp. 93–99, Easton 2006, pp. 399, 402.

39 The most helpful survey of this material for the art historian will be found in the magisterial work of Gertrud Schiller 1980, pp. 83–87. For a recent, careful study of these apocrypha, see Shoemaker 2003, for Michael esp. pp. 37–44, 110–113, 365–369.

40 Voragine 1969, p. 454; Voragine 2007, p. 872:

Tertia autem die ueniens Ihesus cum multitudine angelorum ipsos salutauit dicens: 'Pax uobis'. Qui responderunt: 'Gloria tibi deus, qui facis mirabilia magna solus'. Et dixit apostolis dominus: 'Quid gratie et honoris uobis uidetur ut mee nunc conferam genitrici?' Et illi: 'Iustum uidetur, domine, seruis tuis ut sicut tu deuicta morte regnas in secula, sic tue resuscites matris corpusculum et a dextris tuis colles in eternum'. Quo annuente Michael angelus continuo affuit et Marie animam coram domino presentauit. Tunc saluator locutus est

dicens: 'Surge proxima mea, columba mea, tabernaculum glorie, uasculum uite, templum celeste ut, sicut per coitum labem non sensisti criminis, sic in sepulcro solutionem corporis minime patiaris'. Statimque anima ad Marie accessit corpusculum et de tumulo prodiiit gloriosum; sicque ad ethereum assumitur thalamum comitante secum multitudine angelorum.

⁴¹ On Michael and the Virgin, see Schreiber 1942; on Michael and Christ, Hannah 1999.

⁴² See the fine essay by Baskins 1989. The painting was begun in 1487 and finished except for minor details on Sellaio's death in 1493. My reading of the work follows that of Schiller 1966–1991, vol. 2, 1968, p. 191, as does that of Baskins 1989, p. 476 and n. 20, neither of whom notes its importance for Michelangelo.

⁴³ We are indebted for this connection to Weil-Garris Posner (1970, p. 131, n. 64), who refers to Bernardino de Bustis (*Officium Conceptionis Virginis Mariae*, Milan, 1492): the Madonna is founded eternally 'super petram', and 'per petram autem in S. scriptura intelligitur Christus'.

A remarkable text by an earlier Franciscan, Servas Sanctus de Faenza, applies the petrine metaphor to the Virgin for her perdurance in the faith through the Passion, and her wisdom:

Unde ipsa est illa petra, super quam domus fundata, & firmata, quam etsi flumina, ventique percutiant; tamen inter flumina illa immobilis perseverat. Mons Sion non commovebitur in aeternum. Unde ei potuit dicere Christus illud Matthaei: super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam: quia in passione Dominica tota deficiente Ecclesia primitivorum in fide, sola Domina nostra firma in fide permansit, ut petra. Fuit ergo similis adamantini, cuius tanta est fortitudo, ut sanguine solo rumpatur hircino. Quia Maria, Regia Virgo numquam nisi Christi sanguine recenter effuso, potuit esse turbata, quia nullo fuit alio tempore perturbata. Si enim iuxta Philosophorum sententiam non cadit perturbatio in sapientem virum; quanto magis Domina omnium sapientissima numquam perturbationem mentis est passa? (Bona-venture 1668, vol. III, 364 col. 2A).

Servas Sanctus sermons on the Virgin were long attributed to St Bonaventure, and part of this passage was cited as such by Marracci 1710, p. 511. For the restoration to Servas Sanctus see Oliger 1924, pp. 166–170. I am much indebted to Father Servus Gieben OFM for his generous help in tracing the history of this work.

⁴⁴ On the Seat of Wisdom in the Medici Chapel, see Lavin 2001, pp. 57–61. Savonarola 1930, p. 86, cited by Calì 1967, p. 166 n. 105:

La pietra angolare era Cristo Gesù, che congiunse due muri insieme, cioè la Chiesa nostra con quella degli Ebrei.

The cornerstone metaphor was Christ's, who also used it in reference to the turn from the old to the new: Matthew 21.42 'Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?' (dicit illis Iesus numquam legis in scripturis lapidem quem reprobaverunt aedificantes hic factus est in caput anguli a Domino factum est istud et est mirabile in oculis nostris.) Also Acts 4.11.

⁴⁵ See Hibbard 1974, pp. 45f., who also refers to the Virgin's seat as Golgotha.

⁴⁶ Ezekiel 17:24:
et scient omnia ligna regionis quia ego Dominus humiliavi lignum sublime et exaltavi lignum humile et siccavi lignum viride et frondere feci lignum aridum ego Dominus locutus sum et feci.

⁴⁷ Luke 23:31:
quia si in viridi ligno haec faciunt in arido quid fiet.

⁴⁸ See on this subject Hartt 1950, pp. 141f., 186–190, followed by Barolsky 1990; Wind 2000, pp. 60–61, p. 139 n. 39.

⁴⁹ Luke 3:9:
iam enim securis ad radicem arborum posita est omnis ergo arbor non faciens fructum exciditur et in ignem mittitur (also Matthew 3:10).

On the link between Ezekiel's trees and the Baptist's see Erffa 1989–1995, vol. I, pp. 125f.

⁵⁰ We owe the decipherment of this image to Aronberg Lavin 1955, p. 94, followed by Mannini and Fagioli 1997, p. 127. Aronberg Lavin's idea was appropriated *in toto* by Ruda 1993, p. 227, who unscrupulously failed to acknowledge her contribution.

⁵¹ Wallace 1992, p. 250, perspicaciously describes the tree and foot as 'a symbolic suggestion of the renewal of life after death'.

⁵² Genesis 3:15:
inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem et semen tuum et semen illius ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius.

⁵³ See the fine catalogue entry by Gabriele Donati, in Seidel ed., 2010, p. 312.

⁵⁴ On this theme, which also includes Michelangelo's Florentine *Pietà*, see Lavin 1977–1978.

⁵⁵ The theme was first isolated by Mâle 1932, pp. 37–38, who emphasized its importance in response to the Reformation, when the enemy was defined as heresy.

A remarkable, chronologically intermediate portrayal of the theme is a picture by Rosso Fiorentino with the Madonna and Child and St John, in which Christ's foot rests on that of an old woman holding a book who may be St Anne or the prophetess Anna, or both, presumably referring to Mary's intercessory role through her pre-ordained virginity (Aronberg Lavin 1961, pp. 324–326). For the paintings by Figino and Caravaggio see Marini 2005, pp. 499–503.

On the symbolism of the goldfinch see Friedmann 1946. Interestingly, a goldfinch appears below the feet of Christ in Lippi's *Adoration* [Fig. 33], as noted by Aronberg Lavin 1955, p. 94 n. 49.

⁵⁶ Frey 1923–1930, vol. II, pp. 64–66:

Molto Magnifico Signor mio

Io scriuo questi pochi ricordi, come da V. S. mi fu ordinato, con protesto però, che delle spine ne pigli la rosa, qual sera la uerita, et questa in quelle cose che V. S. giudicava, meritino di esserne fatta mentione; et così dico: Che hauendo lui fatta la pieta della Febbre, et essendoci gran concorso di gente a uederla, trouandoui un giorno ancor lui, uno disse: 'Chi a [ha] fatta questa opera?' Et un altro rispose: 'L' a fatta un nostro Gobetto da Parina [Milano]'. Et lui stette cheto; ma la notte seguente si nascose drento in chiesa con un lumicino et certi ferri et ui scrisse quelle lettere. Et standoui in una stantia la dincontro una Murata et credendo, che fosse alcuno che uolesse guastare quella figura, uolse gridar; ma cognosciuta la uerita, lo ringratto assai, che auesse fatta una sì bella compagnia, et lo prego, che gli desse un poca di quella piaga del coftato di Nostro Signore. Et lui mosso da tal diuotione, ne tolse certe scaglioline con un poca di poluere et giele diede; et lei per remunerarlo gli fece una frittata, et lui se la mangiò proprio in quel luogo quella notte. Et questa fu la caufa del' scriuere di quelle lettere, quale ueramente si cognoscono esser state fatte di notte et quasi che al buio, perche non sono finite.

⁵⁷ Pestilli (2000, pp. 21–23) has noted Vasari's high esteem for Solari, but he does not imagine that Vasari might have thought the story had merit.

- 58 Barocchi 1962, vol. I, p. 18.
- 59 Gaunt 1963, vol. IV, p. 114.

nascendo che un giorno Michelagnolo, entrando drento dove l'è posta, vi trovò gran numero di forestieri lombardi che la lodavano molto, un de' quali domandò a un di quegli chi l'aveva fatta; rispose: 'Il Gobbo nostro da Milano'. Michelagnolo stette cheto e quasi gli parve strano che le sue fatiche fussino attribuite a un altro; una notte vi si serrò drento e con un lumicino, avendo portato gli scarpe, vi intagliò il suo nome (Barocchi 1962, vol. I, p. 18).
- 60 I have found no general study of the Murate beyond the remarkable documentary material gathered by Garampi 1755, pp. 99–101, 159, 505, 528 (for whom see Vanyacker 1995a, 1995b); followed by Moroni 1840–1861, vol. XII, col. 259, vol. LXVII, cols 171f. On the convent of Le Murate in Florence, see Paatz 1952–1955, vol. IV, pp. 344–356. Important studies of the history, conventual life, and art of the Florentine Murate include: Lowe 1990, Holmes 1999, pp. 215–244, Weddle 2003, Strocchia 2009; on the embroidery, Bacci 1927, Borgioli 2006, Fabiana Bari in Seidel ed. 2010, pp. 600–601.
- 61 Paatz 1952–1955, p. 344; Limburger, 1910, p. 119.
- 62 For a recent archaeological study of the Petronilla rotunda, see Gem 2005. The comments that follow here concerning the community at St Peter's are based on Garampi and on the numbered and lettered captions given in the margins of Alfarano's plan, as transcribed by the editor Michele Cerati (Alfarano 1914). A helpful redrawing of the Alfarano engraved plan (very large with very small lettering) were provided by Galassi Palluzzi 1975, p. 416, figs 492 a–e. These are excerpted in the Appendix below. A circumstantial history of the commission, the collocation and subsequent peregrinations of the *Pietà* will be found in Weil-Garris Brandt 1987.
- 63 The work of Caroline Bynum (1987) and Jeffrey Hamburger (1990) on female mystical piety, and devotion to the chest wound in particular, has been seminal in what has become a major field of medieval studies.
- 64 Bynum 1992, pp. 79–117; Lewis 1997.
- 65 Torriti 1988, p. 292, No. 261, the earliest known illustration of the subject.
- 66 Catherine's ecstatic visions of this literal form of consummation of the Host are discussed by Bynum 1992, esp. 162, 206, 211, 311, 380–381 n. 87. On Innocent III's doctrine of the Eucharist as food, see Barbéro 1953, pp. 176–182. The engraving reproduced here is one of twelve illustrations by Pieter de Jode I after drawings by Francesco Vanni in an illustrated life of Catherine, published in 1597 (*Catharina* 1998, pp. 101–104).
- 67 The Latin biography of Catherine by Raymond of Capua (1339–99) has recently received a monumental new edition, German translation and commentary, Jungmayr 2004; see paragraphs 155, 162, 163, 164, 187, 191, 413. English translation quoted here: Lamb 1960, pp. 141, 147f.; see also pp. 148, 149, 170, 173, 371.
- 68 I quote the opening passage of an important unpublished chronicle of the Florentine Murate, generously provided by Sandra Waddle, who is currently preparing a translation and edition of the text:

God planted the new vineyard of our congregation, a very small root of the great and very productive life of the Glorious Patriarch, our Father Benedict, in the holy church's garden, practically dangling there on the bridge. In a marvelous way he elected two of the most simple, despised subjects he could find. He infused much of his grace and divine light in those women who, in the guise of flaming seraphs, filled with holy love, founded this monastery. The first of them was the Venerable Mother Apollonia, a singular woman of praiseworthy life since childhood. She was born to a poor man named Ventura di Cennino from Valdarno di Sopra in the countryside outside Siena. At age nine she resolved to retire to a simple life with some women who lived in Siena in a kind of hermitage, intent only on serving God in extreme poverty and continual penitence, without any monastic rule. She stayed there until age sixteen, practicing every sort of virtue with great perseverance. But Pope Urban VI called the Blessed Catherine of Siena to Rome, and our Mother Apollonia went with her along with many devout spiritual women. They went to Rome in 1378, the year the pontiff was elected. When the holy woman died in Rome in April 1380, Apollonia returned to Siena to live in sanctity with the other above-mentioned women, living in the same hermitage as before.
- 69 The proximity may be judged from Weil-Garris Brandt's reconstruction of the location of the monument in the Petronilla Rotunda. Clement VII would later provide for perpetual devotions in the Medici chapel (Lavin 2001, pp. 75–78).
- 70 On the doctrine of concomitance, 'the omnipresence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist', see Bynum 2007, pp. 92–94, citing Megivern 1963. A discussion of Innocent III's treatment of the subject will be found in Barbéro 1953, pp. 126–130.
- 71 On the transferral, see Alfarano 1914, p. 85, cited in the Appendix below. The payments are published in Frey 1911, p. 55:

1514. 2. XI. Misure et stime delle stanze delle Murate di Santo Pietro, doue a (ha) a stare suor Cristina colle compagne, fatte da maestro Bernardello misuratore per maestro Pietro Matteo et Bartolommeo Marinarij misuratori a di 2 di Novembre 1514.

Sunto di spese, fatte buono alle Incarcerate di Santo Pietro, et prima in casa di suor Cristina nella capella di Santo Andrea, et prima vna schala di legniam, rinovata et transmutata baiocchi 6.
- 72 This ending of the Murata story can be supplemented by the known existence of a Murata establishment in Rome at a no longer extant church, S. Giacomo delle Muratte, whose name is preserved in the modern Via delle Muratte, between Piazza Colonna and Trevi (301 on the Nolli map: <<http://nolli.uoregon.edu/map/index.html?xurl=4.024&yurl=78.805&surl=2000>>). The street and convent are mentioned in other contexts by Habel 2002, pp. 30, 248, 335f. n. 86, and varying accounts of the origin of the church and convent are given by Ruffini 1847, p. 145, Adinolfi 1846, pp. 35f., Armellini 1942, vol. I, p. 351, Pietrangeli 1986, p. 40.
- In 1625 Panciroli reported that these nuns, who followed the rule of St Francis, had been joined by those of another convent of nuns 'rinchiuso nella fabbrica della chiesa nuoua', obviously St Peter's:

Dal fondatore che fù Romano hà preso questa chiesa il nome, e cognome, ne altro si è potuto sapere. Queste monache militano sotto la regola di S. Francesco. Celebrano la festa di S. Elisabetta Regina per vn'altro monasterio di monache rinchiuso nella fabbrica della chiesa nuoua, e che si uni a questo (Panciroli 1625, 409).
- 73 The multifarious symbolism of the egg has recently been surveyed, with particular reference to ostrich eggs, by Bock 2005.
- 74 Gerard Powell 2000, pp. 54–63. On the convergence of birth, death and resurrection through the Eucharist, and the agency of the Virgin, see Rubin 1991, pp. 134–147.
- 75 Lasance 1956, p. 776.
- 76 Innocent III (1160/61–1216), *De sacro altaris mysterio*, Migne 1844–1877, CCXVII, cols 840f.:

In Secreta recolitur memoria passionis. videlicet eorum quae gesta sunt per hebdomadam ante Paschalem, a decima luna primi mensis, quando Jesus adii Hierosolymam, usque ad septimam deci-

mam quando resurrexit a mortuis. Propter quod inter praefationem et canonem in plerisque sacramentariis imago Christi depingitur, ut non solum intellectus litterae, verum etiam aspectus picturae memoriam Dominicae passionis inspiret. Et forte divina factum est providentia, licet humana non sit industria procuratum, ut ab ea littera T canon inciperet, quae sui forma signum crucis ostendit et exprimit in figura. T namque mysterium crucis insinuat, dicente Domino per prophetam: Signa Thau in frontibus virorum dolentium et gementium (Ezech. IX).

For a thorough explication of Innocent's doctrine of the Eucharist, see Barbéro 1953. It is important to note, however, that Innocent refers not to the providential graphic relationship between the tau and the cross, but to a concomitant and equally fundamental aspect of the "divinization" of the tau in the Christian tradition which surely also underlay its role in the genesis of Michelangelo's inscription, that is, the one and only instance in the Vulgate in which the letter is actually named. Foretelling the impending annihilation of sinful Jerusalem, the prophet Ezechiel 9:4 (Douay Version) bids an avenging angel to trace with the sign of the tau the foreheads of the people who abhor the city's evils, and destroy all but those who bear the mark. In this way the tau became the brand of God's chosen people and the prophylactic talisman of protection and repair from all manner of afflictions, physical, psychological, and moral – including death itself, through its identification with the cross, the crucifixion, and the Eucharist. The tau thus became the emblem of salubrity par excellence, under the aegis especially of St Anthony Abbot and the hospitals, ubiquitous by the fifteenth century, of the Antonine order (beside the references in n.30, above, on the therapeutic Passover tau, see especially the pioneering essay of Hayum 1980, and on its multifarious benefits Husband 1992; more recent literature cited in Wood 2011). Mi-

chelangelo's deeply personal interest in this prophylactic and salvific theme is witnessed by the fact that one of his earliest works, recently rediscovered, was an astonishing painted copy of Martin Schongauer's horrific engraved vision of the Temptation of Anthony (Christiansen/Gallagher 2009).

77 For illustrations of the *Te Igitur* tau, see Cassee 1980, pp. 38–40.

78 Adapted from Gaunt 1963, vol. IV, p. 114: Barocchi 1962, vol. I, p. 18: certo è un miracolo che un sasso, da principio senza forma nessuna, si sia mai ridotto a quella perfezione che la natura a fatica suol formar nella carne.

79 Vasari attributed the *non-finito* in Michelangelo's work, and his decision to burn his drawings as death approached, to this sense of imperfection.

His imagination was so perfect that he could not realize with his hands his great and sublime conceptions, and so he frequently abandoned his works and spoiled many, for I know that before his death he burned a great number of his designs, sketches and cartoons, in order that no one should perceive his labours and tentative efforts, that he might not appear less than perfect (Gaunt 1963, vol. IV, p. 171).

Ha avuto l'immaginativa tale e sì perfetta, che le cose propostosi nella sua idea sono state tali che con le mani, per non poter esprimere sì grandi e terribili concetti, ha spesso abbandonato l'opere sue, anzi ne ha guasto molte, come io so che, innanzi che morissi di poco, abbruciò gran numero di disegni, schizzi e cartoni fati di man sua, acciò nessuno vedessi le fatiche durate da lui et i modi di tentare l'ingegno suo, per non apparire se non perfetto (Barocchi 1962, vol. I, p. 117).

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