The Representations of Elderly People in the Scenes of Jesus' Childhood in Tuscan Paintings, 14th-16th Centuries

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Images of Intergeneration Relationships

By

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This book is dedicated to all of my colleagues and friends from MaxNetAging: Inês Campos-Rodrigues, Kristen Cyffka, Xuefei Gao, Isabel García-García, Heike Gruber, Julia Hoffman, Nicole Hudl, Göran Köber, Jana Kynast, Nora Mehl, and Ambaye Ogato.

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INTRODUCTION

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI BY FILIPPINO LIPPI

The Adoration of the Magi [Fig. I-1] painted by Filippino Lippi in 1496 for the abbey church of San Donato a Scopeto in Florence (now preserved in the Uffizi Gallery) depicts a gathering of very different kinds of people. Even more striking, however, is the age difference between two groups of characters in the scene, giving the impression that almost everyone is either young (around 20 years of age) or old (over 60). With this emphasis on the distinction between the old and young, middle-aged people hardly feature. Nevertheless, Filippino was 39 years old when he painted this altarpiece, and we know from scholars' writings that the age of 40 was considered a very important stage in life, even regarded by some as the threshold of old age. It thus seems that the painter deliberately played down the representation of his own generation in this painting. The resonance of the artist in his own paintings is always a fascinating topic; from an aging perspective, this constitutes is a new approach.

The Holy Family is the focus of almost everyone's attention in this painting. On the same diagonal, the heads of the Child Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and Joseph constitute the heart of the composition: the three generations are superimposed. The character closest to the Child is the oldest magus, kneeling and kissing the right foot of Christ. On the left side of the painting, another quite old man kneels behind the magus, holding a gift. Then, two young men, very similar and both wearing red clothes, flank the magus worshipping Jesus. The magi's retinue surrounds this main scene, with an accumulation of different kinds of people. Two characters are detached from the group on the right of the painting: an old man speaking with a young oriental man. The old man is showing Jesus to the other with his right hand, probably to testify to the miracle of the Incarnation. Just behind them, two adolescents are looking up to the sky, a possible reference to the star that the magi had followed to find the Saviour. The muscles of one of the boys are highlighted, contrasting with the wrinkled brown skin of the older characters gathered on the right side

of the panel. The entire background is also interesting: the stable is in ruins, contrasting with the rich attire of some members of the retinue (especially those wearing ermine or leopard skin). A broken column on the right frames the painting and is probably a reference to the future flagellation of Jesus Christ[1]. From a city in the distance, a group of horsemen are seen riding towards the Nativity scene. The sun is shining directly down on the wrecked stable, on the same vertical line as Jesus' head.

Fig. I-1: Adoration of the Magi, Filippino Lippi, 1496, for the abbey church of San Donato a Scopeto in Florence, Uffizi Gallery Florence.

[1] This detail is frequently visible in the Nativities of this time in Western European art.

This painting was made especially famous by Giorgio Vasari's identification of several "portraits" of members of the Medici family[2]. However, Karla Langedijk argued this to be pure invention by the author of the *Vitae*[3]. Jonathan Nelson, for his part, took the view that the incorporation of these "portraits" was a way "to honour and flatter influential Florentines" in a discordant political context[4]. Indeed, the friars of San Donato a Scopeto needed the protection of the Florentine government[5]. Nelson thus considered this Adoration of the Magi to be a propaganda masterpiece. It is, in any event, interesting to note the variety of elderly people depicted here, mostly male and with many physical differences, which is quite rare in early modern Tuscan paintings, as we shall see in this study.

This painting raises a series of questions around a central topic: the elderly people surrounding the Child Jesus. This is not an isolated example; indeed, many Tuscan paintings highlight old age in the scenes of Jesus' childhood. Why are all these elderly figures in the Child Jesus' entourage? What is the purpose of these images depicting the generation gap? How do they relate to the reality of old age in Tuscan Renaissance society? On this subject, we shall see that the stages of human life and the aging process were a new topic that was beginning to be discussed by several Tuscan scholars in the 15th and 16th centuries. Old age was becoming more interesting, and the first "manuals" on the subject (especially on how to grow old healthily) emerged at this time. Several demographers have even pointed to a paradigm shift during this period brought about by the emergence of an older population after the plague[6].

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[2] Giorgio Vasari, *Les vies des meilleurs peintres, sculpteurs et architectes* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1983), 323.

[3] K. Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici*, vol. 1 (Florence: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1981), 104-05.

[4] Charles VIII invaded Florence invaded in 1494 (the beginning of the Italian wars), a revolution temporarily drove out the Medici family, and the monk Savonarola installed a theocratic dictatorship.

[5] J. Nelson, "The Later Works of Filippino Lippi: From his Roman Sojourn until his Death (c. 1489-1504)" (PhD diss., New York University, 1992), 161-84.

[6] C. Klapisch-Zuber, "Réalités et représentations de l'enfance au Quattrocento", in *Desiderio da Settignano* (Venice: Marsilio, 2011), 79-88; C. Klapisch-Zuber and C. Cazalé-Bérard, "Mémoire de soi et des autres dans les livres de famille italiens", *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 59(4) (2004): 805-26; M.-T. Lorcin, "Gérontologie et gériatrie au Moyen Age", in *Vieillesse et vieillissement au Moyen Age* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 1987), 199-213.

So this book's main question is thus: can this paradigm shift be seen in the paintings belonging to the same context?

In seeking to propose some answers to these questions, the present study will focus mainly on paintings and frescoes in the Tuscan artistic context (essentially around the cities of Florence, Siena, and Pisa) from the 14th to the first half of the 16th century in order to ascertain the changes that occurred during this lengthy period. In comparing different kinds of iconographies and characters, I shall study both narrative scenes from Jesus' childhood (Nativity, Adoration of the Shepherds, Adoration of the Magi, Circumcision, Presentation at the Temple, and Jesus among the Doctors) and the Sacra Conversazione, with the Child Jesus in the arms of the Virgin Mary surrounded by elderly saints in "portraits".

Although the corpus studied for this book comprises nearly 300 paintings, the aim is not to be exhaustive, but rather to use some leading examples to understand what old age meant for the artists, patrons, and early modern people of Tuscany.

To date, there have been a few studies on old age in the modern period[7], not always specifically on art and none on Tuscan paintings. However, the aging process has already interested some art historians, such as Caroline Schuster-Cordone who wrote her doctoral thesis on the senescence of the female body in modern art and literature[8]. Anouk Janssen worked on images of growing old in modern engravings, especially those from the north of Western Europe dating from the 16th and 17th centuries[9]. Erin J. Campbell studied two aspects of old age: the image of senescence and the stylistic decline of artists with old age (that she called "old age style") in 16th-century Italian art[10]. In 1991, Herbert

[7] For a critical overview of the studies on aging in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, see A. Classen, ed., *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2007), 1-84. It is also interesting to note that most of the studies on aging in the context of the Middle Ages and Renaissance focus on literature; see, for example, M. Kohn, C. Donley and D. Wear, ed., *Literature and Aging: An Anthology* (London: The Kent State of University Press, 1992), or the edition of Senefiance, *Vieillesse et vieillissement au Moyen Âge* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 1987).

[8] C. Schuster-Cordone, *Le crépuscule du corps. Images de la vieillesse féminine* (Millau: Infolio, 2009).

[9] A. Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-wit: De Verbeelding van de Ouderdom in de Nederlandse Prentkunst (1550-1650)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2007).

[10] E. Campbell, "Old-Age Style and the Resistance of Practice in Cinquecento Art Theory and Criticism" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1998), 15-25.

Covey observed that aging in art and representations of older people was a neglected topic[11], which still remains true today. In contrast to this lacuna, remarkable studies of the specific context of Tuscany in the 15th and 16th centuries have been produced, especially by two historians of demography: Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy discovered and made detailed studies of the census registers of the city of Florence. This source, called the *Catasto* and dating from 1427 (first version), is extraordinarily useful in terms of understanding the age distribution of the day[12]. However, this material should be treated with circumspection, because it does not provide a reliable picture of Tuscan society in the Quattrocento. Since these census registers were used essentially for taxation purposes, ages were often falsified (mostly out of ignorance rather than on purpose) in the *Catasto* declarations. Although the entire population (including those too poor to pay tax) was supposed to have been declared in this source, the most detailed information was usually confined to the upper class of Tuscan society living in the city. Klapisch-Zuber and Herlihy also wrote that age was usually not a concern for late medieval people. The intellectual élite needed to keep careful note of dates of birth in order to secure a political career for their children, but the majority of the population did not know their dates of birth. Nevertheless, the Renaissance saw the emergence of a new interest in the human being and, consequently, in the aging process as well; we shall see how this paradigm shift is expressed in Tuscan paintings from the 14th to the first half of the 16th century. The history and images of old age are closely connected to the history and images of the human body. Indeed, Renaissance scholars' new-found interest in the stages of human life often runs in parallel to the new-found interest in the human body encouraged by the legalisation of human dissection and the development of the science of proportions applied to architecture[13]. Contrary to the iconography of the aging process, the theme of the body and its images in art has been

[11] H. Covey, *Images of Older People in Western Art and Society* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 1.

[12] In general, historical demography has not been explored very extensively, principally because of the difficulty in finding workable material; I can, however, cite Pat Thane, Shulamith Shahar, Georges Minois, and Philippe Ariès. See also the volume: M. M. Sheehan, ed., *Aging and the Aged in Medieval Europe: Selected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Centre of Medieval Studies* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990).

[13] D. Arasse, "La chair, la grâce, le sublime", in *Histoire du corps. De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 412-77.

examined by many scholars, especially from the 1990s to the present day[14].

This study consists of three chapters. The first focuses on the images of elderly people, through the significant details of the body, gestures, attributes, and so forth, and a presentation of the iconography of the main elderly characters in the paintings of Jesus' childhood. The second chapter is devoted to ambiguity in the perception of old age in both literature and art, with a comparison between Tuscany and other specific contexts. The final chapter looks at intergenerational relationships. The paradigm shift will be examined throughout this book.

[14] The most important authors on the topic for the medieval and Renaissance periods are Jean-Claude Schmitt, Jean Wirth, Daniel Arasse, Linda Kalof, William Bynum, Jacques Le Goff, Jonathan Sawday, Jean Céard, and Kathleen Adler; see the bibliography for further details.

CHAPTER ONE

IMAGES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE

Although the elderly people depicted in Filippino's Adoration of the Magi have very diverse physiognomies, this was not always the case. Through a study of bodily features, gestures, attributes, and so forth, I will show that elderly characters are often archetypal in the scenes of Jesus' childhood, especially at the beginning of the chosen chronology. This chapter is also the occasion to see whether a change or even a transformation is visible in the depiction of elderly characters in the Tuscan context from the 14th to the first half of the 16th century.

I Significant details

a) Body

In the paintings of the corpus, old age is often linked to nudity (or semi-nudity). Indeed, the saints who lived in the desert, like Jerome, Onuphrius, and Antony, are represented as hermits and usually dressed in tatters. The naked chest and legs of these old saints are highlighted, often traducing their age. However, this accent on the naked old body seems to appear only at the beginning of the 15th century. The oldest example in the chosen corpus is the altarpiece painted by Benedetto di Bindo (active from 1389 to 1417) for the convent of Saint Mary of Siena (today preserved in the Pinacoteca Nazionale of Siena). The Virgin Mary is surrounded by Saints Andrea and Onuphrius. The latter is represented nearly naked with something resembling a piece of pelt around his waist. The slenderness of his legs is emphasised, with prominent knees and a swollen belly characteristic of malnutrition. Another interesting example, also produced in Siena, is the painting by Guidoccio Cozarrelli (active between 1450 and 1517) preserved in the Pinacoteca Nazionale (Siena). In this painting, the chest of Saint Jerome is enhanced not only through its skinniness (we can see the ribs on the upper part of his chest and his sunken belly), but also through its oldness (wrinkles on the belly) and colour (pale with grey and green shades, contrasting with the white and pink flesh of Mary and Jesus). Luca Signorelli's vision of old naked individuals is also interesting, because it reveals a change, characteristic of paintings dating between the

end of the 15th and first half of the 16th century. His first painting in the studied corpus is the altarpiece of Sant' Onofrio painted in 1484 and ordered by Bishop Vagnucci for the cathedral of Perugia [Fig. 1-1]. Onuphrius is represented nearly naked, with only a few leaves to hide his genitals. His flesh is light brown, his body very skinny, and his skin floppy, especially on his knees and arms. The saint is clearly depicted as old in contrast to the young pink body of the putto and the muscled chest of John the Baptist. In the two very similar tondi that Signorelli produced around 1492, the nudity of the old character (here, Jerome) differs quite markedly from the Sant' Onofrio altarpiece. The flesh is still brown (contrasting with the luminous face of Mary), but his body is incredibly strong and muscly. Jerome is not skinny, with his belly being quite visible, but he expresses power, which is quite unexpected for an old anchorite. Only his long white beard and baldness betray his age. The last example of the corpus, a large painting preserved in the Museo Statale d'arte medievale e moderna of Arezzo, dated from c. 1519-1523, is similar [Fig. 1-2]. A saint on the right of the Virgin Mary (probably Jerome) is depicted nearly naked, with a yellow piece of cloth around his waist and a very strong body in which every muscle protrudes, in contrast to his old bald head and long white beard. This transformation from a very skinny aging body to a strong and almost youthful one seems characteristic of the evolving concept of the body from the 15th to 16th century. Like old age, the body is ambiguous. Although the vision of the "real" old body was accepted in 15th-century painting (actually, over quite a short period), it was probably too difficult to continue depicting old saints with an unattractive appearance, especially when nudity was so accentuated in every art form and for many different sorts of characters with the emergence of the eroticisation of the gaze (this is especially visible in the following examples: the Virgin Mary with Saints Onuphrius and Bartolomeo, Pietro di Francesco degli Orioli, 1458-1496, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena; The Virgin Mary with Saints Jerome and Columbanus, Guidoccio Cozzarelli, active between 1450 and 1517, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena; the Virgin Mary with Saints Julian, Dominic, Nicolas, and Jerome, Mariotto Albertinelli, active between 1474 and 1515, convent of San Giuliano, Florence, Academia Gallery, Florence; The Virgin Mary with Saints John the Baptist, Antony, Steven, and Jerome, Rosso Fiorentino, ordered by Leonardo Buonafede for the Ognissanti church, Florence, 1518, Uffizi Gallery, Florence; The Virgin Mary with Saints Jerome and Francis, Jacopo Pontormo, c. 1522, Uffizi Gallery, Florence)[1].

[1] Arasse, "La chair, la grâce, le sublime", 429.

Fig. 1-1: Altarpiece of Sant' Onofrio, Luca Signorelli, 1484, ordered by Bishop Vagnucci for the cathedral of Perugia, Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Perugia, PD.

Fig. 1-2: Luca Signorelli, c. 1519-1523, ordered by the brotherhood of Saint Jerome, Museo Statale d'arte medievale e moderna of Arezzo.

Jean Wirth wrote that nudity is associated with both deprivation and insanity (like Job on his pile of manure). The Franciscans developed the theme of nudity in association with poverty and the idea of "following the Christ naked". The body was thus considered to be the clothes of the soul, while it was regarded as "unspiritual" to wear rich costumes. In their semi-nudity, these saints represented a lack, as the flesh promised resurrection. Humility is symbolised by old age as well as the naked body, mortified by deprivations[2].

According to Daniel Arasse[3], the great innovation of the Renaissance was the introduction of nudity into almost all art forms. Although young women are more often depicted than old saints, nudity seemed to be fundamental in Renaissance art, especially in the Italian context, and its depiction was quite "democratic" in the sense that anyone could be represented naked, included old people.

The iconography of emaciated nudity linked to old age is also visible in one of the most famous elderly characters in Renaissance art: Saturn. Since the Middle Ages, he had been represented as an old man, dressed with only a cloak over his naked chest (Albumasar, *Introductio in astrologiam*, Ms. 785, fol. 34, c. 1400, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library) or sometimes completely naked (*Von den XII Zeichen des Gestirns*, MS C. 54 719, fol. 25v°, 1470, Zürich, Zentralbibliothek). Renaissance artists would then represent him as a cripple, thus adding infirmity to old age (*Von den XII Zeichen des Gestirns*, Ms. C. 54 719, fol. 25v°, 1470, Zürich, Zentralbibliothek; Saturn and his children, block-book, probably a German copy of a lost Netherlandish original, c. 1470). We will see below how the character of Saturn is important in the vision of old age in the context under study.

Besides the stick and nudity, the renaissance images of Saturn also share the white bifid beard with the images of the anchorite saints. Indeed, the long white beard is very often a spectacular mark of old age in Renaissance paintings. This last point is interesting, because we know that the fashion in Tuscany from the 14th to the first half of the 16th century encouraged every man to be shaved. Paul Payan explained this paradox with the idea that the symbolism of the long beard made reference to the Old Testament's patriarchs[4]. Indeed, we can note that some figures traditionally associated with the Old Testament in Jesus' childhood

[2] J. Wirth, *L'image du corps au Moyen Age* (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013), 38-39.
[3] Arasse, "La chair, la grâce, le sublime", 426.
[4] P. Payan, *Joseph, une image de la paternité dans l'Occident medieval* (Paris: Aubier/Flammarion, 2006), 256-57.

entourage are depicted with an impressive long beard. This is the case of Simeon and the Doctors (especially in the paintings of Giotto and Duccio). As we will later see, old age was mostly considered as a period of vices; however, the link between elderly characters and the patriarchs, through the detail of the long beard, was probably a means to rehabilitate old age. While childhood is promoted through the new interest shown in the Child Jesus at the end of the Middle Ages, old age probably benefited from the same movement, thanks to the figure of Abraham[5].

Shaven old faces appeared only in the 16th century, but remained very rare. In the corpus, there are only ten images of Joseph beardless. Saint Bernardino of Siena with his face well-defined (that even recalls a portrait[6]) is always beardless. Despite these few examples, the majority of old men represented in Jesus' childhood are bearded, often with an impressive long white beard (sometimes bifid), which is probably very symbolic, because it was not very common in the reality of the context studied here. Payan suggested that this symbol was more important at the end of the Middle Ages, because of the emergence of images of God as Ancient of Days and a legendary vision of Charlemagne with his flowing beard. Moreover, the historian quoted two examples of Popes who kept or shaved their beards and were criticised or celebrated for that very fact[7]. Contrary to the aspect of the body, there was no change in the popularity of long beards from the beginning until the end of the studied chronology. We can see long beards in the 14th century (Presentation at the Temple, Barna da Siena, c. 1333-1341, collegiate church Santa Maria Assunta, San Gimignano) as well as in the first half of the 16th century (Sacra Conversazione, Andra Piccinelli for the monastery of Monteoliveto fuori Porta Tufi, Siena, 1514, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena).

In this landscape of long white beards, Joseph and Saint Peter are the exception: they are depicted by artists with a shorter, well-cut beard (even if it is not systematic for Joseph). This detail, still evoking old age because it is white or grey, seems to be a way to individualise these two characters amidst the other old saints. Although the model of Saint Peter is well known by artists (especially with the influence of Byzantine icons), this appearance for Joseph (frequent from the 14th century) could have been a way to introduce him in the New Testament. For example, his short beard contrasts with the long beard of Simeon in the Adoration at the Temple; consequently, we understand that Simeon is still representative of the Old

[5] J. Le Goff and N. Truong, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Liana Levi, 2003), 122.
[6] We will see below that this idea of a portrait should be questioned.
[7] Le Goff and Truong, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge*, 367-68.

Testament, contrary to Joseph, who marks the arrival of the New Testament.

Wrinkles are often the most distinctive sign of old age. Sometimes, they are the only detail to identify the elderliness of a character. Indeed, until the first half of the 15th century, bodies were usually hidden by clothes, and the posture of old people was not very different from that of young characters. With the Platonic vision of the beautiful good that dominates the medieval period[8], Jean Wirth remarked that we have to wait until the 13th century to see somebody irreproachable from a moral point of view depicted with wrinkles. Prior to this, youth and beauty were the only way to represent a saint. Indeed, wrinkles can also be the mark of the devil. Many devils (from the Romanesque period) are depicted with creased skin that leaves the bones visible[9]. The end of the Middle Ages thus marks the moment when old age became more accepted, especially in the images of saints. Wrinkles consequently become the mark of a long and full life.

Baldness is also a very frequent characteristic of the elderly people in the corpus, from the beginning to the end of the chronology under investigation. This detail concerns nearly all characters, whether saints or laymen (for example, shepherds). Only one character seems to be spared from baldness, notably God the Father. Indeed, hair is usually a symbol of power (since Antiquity). So, as we can expect, baldness gives some clues about the weakness of the person. This weakness is then linked to old age. In the corpus, more than one-third of the old men are totally or nearly bald. Contrary to beards, baldness seems to be more frequent in the paintings from the 15th and 16th century. Although some rare characters are depicted totally bald, especially in the 16th century (altarpiece of Sant' Onofrio for the cathedral of Perugia, Luca Signorelli, 1484, Museum of the Opera of the Duomo San Lorenzo, Perugia; [Fig. 1-1] The Virgin Mary with Saints Jerome and Francis, Jacopo Pontormo, c. 1522, Uffizi Gallery, Florence; The Virgin Mary with Saints Mary Magdalene and Antony, Bernardino Fungai, active from 1460 to 1516, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, etc.), usually the elderly saints in Jesus' childhood entourage have only slight baldness, looking like a tonsure. This detail is probably a link to the monastic world, usually emphasised at this time (monasteries were, for example, one of the main patrons who ordered paintings). Moreover, the link between old age and monks makes sense in

[8] See, for example, J. Wirth, *L'image médiévale. Naissances et développement (VI^e^-XV^e^ siècles)* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), 71.
[9] Wirth, *L'image du corps au Moyen Age*, 51, 55.

this context, because, as we will see below, thanks to the care provided in monasteries, monks were usually able to live longer than lay people[10].

b) Gestures

The most frequent image of the three magi in early modern Tuscan paintings shows one of them, always the oldest, on his knees in front of the Child Jesus, offering him a gift and/or kissing His feet. This posture is interesting, because it is very difficult for an old man to kneel, even in the Middle Ages. There is thus a kind of paradox between the gesture (bending and kneeling down) and the age of the character. Contrary to other details in the Adoration of the Magi, the posture of the oldest magus does not vary from the early 14th century to the end of the 16th century in our corpus. Jean-Claude Schmitt made an interesting distinction between the representations where Joseph or the magus is kneeling on one or both knees. Indeed, the two knees are associated with prayer, while one knee evokes the respectful homage to a prince[11]. In the context studied here, Joseph is often kneeling on both knees, while the magus is kneeling on one. This distinction makes sense, because Joseph is represented as praying in adoration of the Saviour (this iconography appears later in the chronology, contrary to the image of the magus kneeling), while the magus worships not only a God, but also a king. Regarding the link between the gesture and aging, this could be a clue of the magus' extreme humility before the Child Jesus. The magus is thus a good model for the pious rich people who ordered such images or prayed before them.

The theme of the kiss of the Child Jesus' feet is presented in the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*[12]. There is a strong link between the kissing of the feet of the Child Jesus by the oldest magus and the kissing of the feet of the dead Christ by Mary Magdalene. The gesture of the eldest magus could thus make reference to the death of the Christ. In the Adoration of the Magi painted by Gherardo Starnina (c. 1398-1409, Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas-City), the eldest magus kisses the feet of the Child Jesus held by His mother. One detail is interesting here: Jesus is wrapped in His swaddling clothes, as is quite usual in the 14th century, but His feet have been released so that the magus can kiss the naked flesh. The importance of Christ's flesh is highlighted here and makes a connection with the

[10] This is especially true for nuns, but some very old monks are also mentioned in the data studied by the historian demographers, Le Goff and Truong, *Une histoire du corps au Moyen Âge,* 121.
[11] J.-C. Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 300.
[12] Pseudo-Bonaventure, *Meditations Vitae Christi*, chap. VII, 52; chap. IX, 64.

Eucharist. We find the same details in the other Adoration of the Magi painted by Starnina (1408, Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai), with a kind of red stripe on the swaddling clothes of Jesus, pointing once again to the Eucharist: red is the colour of blood and the wine transformed into Christ's blood. Daniel Arasse wrote that the kneeling posture of the magus (a gesture observed in nearly all of the corpus examples) refers to a specificity of the liturgy of this time[13]. Indeed, in the 14th and 15th centuries, Christians received the Eucharist on their knees[14]. Consequently, there is a very interesting link between the Eucharist and the kissing of the feet of the Child Jesus. From another point of view, some medieval scholars claimed that the kissing of a young child could extend one's life expectancy[15]; this image could also be a clue of this superstition, even if the topic of the "vampire" is not at all evoked here[16].

Following the same idea of the Eucharist's symbol, the Child is often depicted as an offering, as the Host, suggesting His future sacrifice. This idea is especially visible in some Presentations at the Temple in the corpus (Barna da Siena, fresco of the collegiate church Santa Maria Assunta of San Gimignano, c. 1333-1341; Giovanni del Biondo for the convent degli Angioli, Florence, 1364, Academia Gallery). In 1364, Giovanni del Biondo painted a very good example: the Child is given by His parents on the altar as a Sacred Host. Millard Meiss remarked the fact that Jesus is wrapped in His swaddling clothes, not to emphasise on His young age, but rather to stress the fact that He is an offering[17]. However, the character who usually receives this metaphorical host is Simeon. He is represented with his hand open in the direction of the Child, given by His mother. Some early examples of the corpus show Simeon holding the Christ with both hands covered by his cloak (Giotto, fresco of the Scrovegni chapel, Padua, 1303-1305 [Fig. 1-3]; Duccio, predella of the Grande Maesta,

[13] D. Arasse, *Léonard de Vinci, Le rythme du monde* (Paris: Hazan, 1997), 352.
[14] C. Gerbron, "Le Christ est une page. Exégèse et mémoire dans l'*armadio degli argenti* de Frau Angelico", *Histoire de l'Art* 71 (2012): 51-62.
[15] Roger Bacon, *Opus Majus*, 1267, part 6; Marsilio Ficino, *De Vita libri tres,* book 2, chap. 11.
[16] The theme of the old "vampire", who tries to retain his/her youth by sucking the vital fluid of young people, is already present in medieval poetry and remains in traditions during the Renaissance. The tension between new mothers and older women as well as the idea that old women can give the evil eye to babies derive from this same belief. See C. Schuster-Cordone, "Maternité et sénescence. Le corps féminin entre prodige et transgression", *Micrologus* XVII (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2009), 399-413.
[17] M. Meiss, *La peinture à Florence et à Sienne après la peste noire* (Paris: Hazan, 1994), 27-28.

1308-1311, Museo dell'opera del Duomo, Siena; Giotto, c. 1320, Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum, Boston; Ambrogio Lorenzetti, altarpiece of the altar Saint Crescentius of the cathedral of Siena, 1342, Uffizi Gallery, Florence; Gentile da Fabriano, predella of the Pala Strozzi, 1423, Uffizi Gallery, Florence; Giovanni di Paolo for the conservatorio di San Pietro a Colle Val d'Elsa, Siena, 1403-1482, Pinacoteca Nazionale; Giovanni di Paolo for the ospedale di Santa Maria del Scale, 1403-1482, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena) or with a white cloth (Bartolo di Fredi for the church Sant' Agostino, Florence, 1388, Louvre Museum, Paris). This detail, inspired by offering customs, emphasises once again the solemnity of the scene and the sacred aspect of the Child.

Fig. 1-3: Presentation at the Temple, Giotto, fresco of the Scrovegni chapel, Padua, 1303-1305, PD.