



MUSEUM OF
RUSSIAN ICONS

THE JOURNAL OF ICON STUDIES

VOLUME 2 | 2019

Savoldo's *Magdalene*: "True Reformations Are Internal"

Michael Calder

michael_calder@btinternet.com

Recommended Citation:

Michael Calder, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," *Journal of Icon Studies* 2 (2019)

<https://doi.org/10.36391/JIS2/001>

Available at <https://www.museumofrussianicons.org/savoldos-magdalene/>

Published by Museum of Russian Icons: <https://www.museumofrussianicons.org/>

Notes: This PDF is provided for reference purposes only and may not contain all the functionality or features of the original, online publication.

ISSN: 2473-7275

Michael Calder

Savoldo's *Magdalene*: "True Reformations Are Internal"¹

Abstract

The subject of Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo's series of *Magdalene* paintings has long been a matter of debate. Looking at the series in the context of the reform movement in Venice in the 1520s and 1530s, when Christ's resurrection could be viewed metaphorically, this article aims to demonstrate that Savoldo adopts a number of motifs to convey the idea of a renewing of life, which identify "Mary" as the mother. The case made here is that Savoldo's paintings move beyond representation to the actual process of transformation, with an experiential function where the beholder was an active participant and narrative function was subordinated.

Keywords: Savoldo, Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Resurrection, Garment of Glory, Eucharist, Pauline theology, Italian Reformation, Italian Renaissance, Venice.

The great Paul, that great profundity among the apostles,
expounded the mystery, which is now spoken of clearly.
The great beauty that had been veiled has now come out into the open,
and all the peoples of the world behold its luminosity.
The betrothed made the daughter of day to enter a new womb,
and the testing waters of baptism were in labour and gave rebirth to her:
he rested in the water and invited her: she went down, clothed herself in him and
ascended;
in the Eucharist she received him, and so Moses' words, that the two shall be one,
were established.
Jacob of Serugh, Homily 79: *Concerning the Veil on Moses' Face* ²

Introduction

A recent groundbreaking paper by Charlotte Nichols reconsidered the established interpretation of a series of *Magdalene* paintings by Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo (ca. 1480–ca. 1548), questioning both the subject and the implied narrative of the encounter between Mary Magdalene and the risen Christ as recounted in the Gospel of John (20:14–16).³ Nichols put forward a thesis that Savoldo created a multivalent image with an intentional lack of narrative clarity, in part to accommodate conflicting textual accounts over the roles of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene at the Resurrection, but also to address the *intellectual* demands of patrons for deliberately ambiguous subject matter.

However, this article seeks to question the likely function and appeal of the paintings within the context of not only contemporary iconographic developments but, importantly, also the reform movement in Italy, specifically Venice in the 1520s and 1530s, which has hitherto been largely overlooked in the discussions on these paintings. The aim is to demonstrate that these works, which reflect Savoldo's characteristically introspective approach to devotional themes,⁴ were not intended to represent Christ's resurrection as a narrative and to limit faith to just the cerebral. Rather, they convey the idea of victory over death by focusing on symbolic elements that once served an experiential function, similar to that of a Byzantine icon. Through abstract conceptualization and reflection, the beholder became an active participant, developing a personal relationship with the divine.

The paintings may have met a demand at the time for a more personal and sensory religious experience, where the writings of Saint Paul in particular were presented as the source for a renewal of one's inner nature (2 Cor. 4:16).⁵ Central to Pauline theology is the idea that human beings enter into relation with God by means of a Christ-mysticism; a union with Christ. Such a union involves a change in the person, so that one is "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17), and Christ lives in and through the believer (Gal. 2:20).⁶ As Augustine comments: "Christ is 'formed' in the inner self of the believer through faith" (Gal. 4:19).⁷

This article sets out to discuss two particular themes that point to the need for a reconsideration of the subject of the paintings: the vase as a symbol and the garment of glory. This analysis then leads to a review of how the paintings may have functioned within the context of iconographic developments at the time and in relation to the movement for religious reform in Italy. Firstly though, a brief outline of the sociocultural context of the series of paintings is included, followed by a short summary of the history of interpretation to date.

Versions and Sociocultural Context

There are four accepted *Magdalene* variants by Savoldo in existence, plus an engraving that appears to be of a fifth version,⁸ which have been dated to between the mid-1520s and ca. 1540 (figs. 1–5).⁹ Creighton Gilbert placed the Berlin variant (fig. 1), the only version that bears a

signature, but that lacks the vase, as the earliest in the series. Whilst opinions differ on the order of the series of variations, Nicholas Penny has provided a convincing argument that the paintings with a cropped composition and a dawn setting, the London and Florence variants (figs. 4 and 5), are likely to be the last in the series.¹⁰ Penny also points to the fact that the shawl in the Berlin version is more reminiscent of draperies worn by angels in the Pesaro altarpiece, dateable to the mid-1520s (see fig. 18).¹¹ Savoldo, who signed his paintings “de Brisia,” of Brescia,¹² is recorded as being in Venice regularly from 1521,¹³ and has been connected with a small number of painters associated with the regions of Lombardy and Veneto, including Lorenzo Lotto (ca. 1480–1556/7), Girolamo Romanino (ca. 1485–1566) and Alessandro Bonvicino, known as Moretto (ca. 1498–1554); the latter two, like Savoldo, coming from Brescia.¹⁴



Fig. 1 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *The Venetian Woman (Saint Mary Magdalene)*, ca. 1527–40, oil on canvas, 94.2 x 75.3 cm. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, cat. 307 (photo © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie / Jörg P. Anders)



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Fig. 2 Lorenzo Lorenzi, *The Magdalene*, ca. 1750, engraving after drawing by Giuseppe Zocchi recording a painting by Savoldo, 39.8 x 31.3 cm. Venice, Correr Museum (photo with permission of Archivio Fotografico, Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia)

Fig. 3 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Saint Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre*, ca. 1530s, oil on canvas, 92.7 x 79.4 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 97.PA.55 (photo: J. Paul Getty Museum)

Fig. 4 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Mary Magdalene*, ca. 1535–40, oil on canvas, 89.1 x 82.4 cm. London, National Gallery (National Gallery Picture Library; photo: © The National Gallery, London)

Fig. 5 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *The Magdalene*, ca. 1535–40, oil on canvas, 84 x 77.5 cm. Florence, Contini Bonacossi Collection (photo with permission of Gabinetto Fotografico delle Gallerie degli Uffizi)

Following the outbreak of the Reformation in 1517, which had implications Europe-wide, the period before the Council of Trent (1545–63) in Italy was a turbulent one in both the political and the religious spheres, with invasions by foreign powers and the sack of Rome in 1527.¹⁵ The 1520s and 1530s saw a debate, within different spiritual circles, over reform of the Church but it was also a time of religious “experiments,” with spiritual needs no longer satisfied by traditional ritual forms.¹⁶ In Venice from the fifteenth century there had been an increased demand for “more personal, sensory and affective modes of religious experience.”¹⁷ The *Beneficio di Cristo*, said to have been written by a Benedictine monk and one of the most influential books of spiritual devotion in sixteenth-century Europe, sold particularly well in Venice and the second edition was

published there in 1543.¹⁸ The *Beneficio di Cristo* encouraged a direct relation between the believer and God, mediated by Christ,¹⁹ a Christ-mysticism that was central to the thinking of Venetian “evangelical” communities for whom, in the early sixteenth century, the writings of St. Paul were a source for spiritual renewal.²⁰

“Christ has already begun to penetrate Italy, but I would like him to enter in glory, for all to see, and I believe Venice will be the gateway.” (Bernardino Ochino, 1542)²¹

“For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:3-4)²²

As early as 1520 Martin Luther’s works had been on sale in the Venetian Republic,²³ whose citizens’ cosmopolitan outlook and openness to religious diversity were key factors in the development of heterodox ideas and practices. Such ideas had initially made their way into elite circles but quickly gained wider interest.²⁴ These new sociocultural trends in religious thinking and devotion overlaid a special Venetian identification of the sacred with Byzantium,²⁵ and by the first half of the sixteenth century, Venice, which had become the center of Greek learning in the West, was known for the practice of Orthodoxy associated with the Eastern Church.²⁶

History of Interpretation

The earliest written record of any of Savoldo’s *Magdalene* variants is a mention in 1620 by Octavio Rossi, who describes a painting by Savoldo in the house of Averoldo in Brescia as “a beautiful Magdalene in the white cloth.”²⁷ This is considered to be the London variant,²⁸ the only known version with Mary in a silver-white shawl, whereas in the other painted versions her mantle, or veil, is gold. It was Carlo Ridolfi though who, in 1648, is first recorded as interpreting the narrative context of this painting as Mary Magdalene walking to the tomb, and who also indicated that it was “a famous painting, from which are derived many copies.”²⁹ When the Berlin version, which lacks the vase, first surfaced at the start of the nineteenth century, it was only recorded in secular terms, originally simply as a “cloaked young woman” or a “female figure” and later in the nineteenth century as a *Venetian Lady*.³⁰ The fact that the face of the Berlin version had been overpainted, and the whole painting had become severely discolored, is likely to have compounded difficulties in interpretation.³¹ Following restoration in 1989 it began to be seen as “deliberately ambiguous.”³² Even the London version has had its interpretation questioned: for a period in the nineteenth century, before acquisition by the National Gallery in 1878, when it was wrongly attributed to Titian, it was also known as *La Zingara* (The Gypsy Woman).³³

Mary Pardo’s seminal study on Savoldo’s *Magdalene* paintings, published in 1989, which focused principally on the London and Florence versions on the basis of their more pronounced lighting effects,³⁴ considered the images in the context of theories of pictorial illusion, and the link between literature, poetry and painting. Pardo placed the paintings within the narrative of Mary

Magdalene's meeting with the risen Christ, and specifically as representing the events in verses 14 and 16 of John 20, which describe the action of Mary turning and her recognition of Christ's true identity.³⁵ Mary, Pardo argued, is depicted in the process of turning towards the source of light, who is Christ, but we, the viewer, "intercept her glance."³⁶ That interpretation became generally accepted, although some have maintained that Mary Magdalene is represented as a Venetian courtesan.³⁷ Nicholas Penny, in an overview of interpretations of the paintings in the National Gallery Catalogue (London) published in 2004, expressed "no doubt" that the painting refers to Magdalene's recognition of Christ, albeit that it may represent a woman casting herself in that role.³⁸

However, questions remain over the identity of the main subject. Charlotte Nichols has reconsidered the established interpretation and notes the Marian characteristics of Savoldo's Magdalene figures. Nichols makes the case that Savoldo may have been responding to Byzantine, or Byzantine-inspired, prototypes, and suggests in particular the Lamenting Virgin or Mater Dolorosa, in the form of a veiled full- or half-length figure with fabric completely covering the hair and part of the forehead.³⁹ Examples cited are Paolo Veneziano's fourteenth-century *Lamenting Virgin* on the painted cover of the Pala d'Oro, the altarpiece of the basilica of San Marco in Venice (fig. 6), and the Mary in a white mantle in Rogier Van de Weyden's *Crucifixion* (ca. 1460, Escorial Palace, Madrid). She also argues that the cult of the Virgin Mary was particularly strong in Venice, because of its ties to the East, specifically Constantinople, and was more prevalent than the cult of Magdalene, despite the latter having existed there since the twelfth century.⁴⁰



Fig. 6 Paolo Veneziano, *Lamenting Virgin*, fourteenth century, detail of Pala Feriale (painted cover to the Pala d'Oro), basilica of San Marco in Venice (San Marco, Venice; photo: Cameraphoto Arte Venezia/Bridgeman Images, under license)

Pulling the evidence together, Nichols concludes that, on the basis of Western textual sources which describe Christ's appearance first to his mother,⁴¹ it is possible to interpret all of Savoldo's *Magdalene* images as representing the mother of Christ. Nichols sees this interpretation as particularly convincing in relation to the Berlin painting, the one without the "ointment jar." Here, as Nichols observes, the woman is clearly middle-aged and appears older than in the other three surviving versions.⁴² Nichols argues that it is the "presence of the vase" in the other versions, "and its role in Renaissance painting as the Magdalene's most widely recognized attribute" that has led

scholars in recent decades to treat the subject of all Savoldo's variations unconditionally as Mary Magdalene.⁴³ It is therefore to this we must first turn.

Analysis

A—The Vase as a Symbol

"However, what of the presence of the vase . . . ?"⁴⁴

It is principally the presence of the vase in all but the Berlin version that leads Nichols to question the potential interpretation of any of the variants as simply the mother of Christ, and to read the subject as multivalent and the identity of the woman as intentionally ambiguous.⁴⁵

It is important to first consider the context in which the jar, or vase, sits. Pardo suggests that Savoldo in a number of works uses ruins to designate a "rustic setting" and that they evoke a symbolism of decay and renewal.⁴⁶ Both Pardo and Penny are of the opinion that the arched ruin behind "Mary" may possibly represent sepulchral buildings, which Pardo believes may stand for the enclosure for Christ's tomb.⁴⁷ Both Pardo and Penny also note the low wall that Mary stands beside that is in all versions except the Berlin one, and they describe the arched, or square, "niche" feature in the wall, which is immediately behind the "saint's attribute,"⁴⁸ a feature which is considered by Matthias Weniger to represent the open tomb.⁴⁹

In the nineteenth century J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, commenting on the London version, describe the "vase" as sitting on a "table,"⁵⁰ an interpretation which leads Pardo to exclaim: "the ointment jar on a stone ledge!"⁵¹ Whilst Penny describes the jar as a "small vase" of alabaster, or perhaps porcelain, he also sees it as sitting upon a "ledge" in front of the niche.⁵² However, the stone feature does not appear to be a ledge, in that it is not projecting from the wall. In all the versions in which the vase is included, its position near the back edge of the raised stone block or "table" makes it clear that this feature must be set slightly away from the wall and is more than likely freestanding. Whilst narrow, the feature has the appearance of a freestanding stone table, plinth or podium, particularly in the Getty version (see fig. 3) and in the engraving (fig. 7). The sun rising beyond the table and niche in the London and Florence versions, and in the engraving,⁵³ suggests the feature is located at the eastern end of the ruined building in which "Mary" stands, thus raising associations with the altar in a church. It may therefore be taken to be an altar table, which is reinforced by the fact that the altar is traditionally associated with Christ's sarcophagus in Easter ceremonies.⁵⁴ In a study by Karl Young of the development of the *Quem quaeritis in sepulchro* (Whom do you seek in the sepulcher) trope attached to the Mass, the altar was found in numerous versions of the ceremony to be suggestive of the sepulcher, with the ceremony in Brescia, of which Savoldo was a native, taking the most dramatized form.⁵⁵

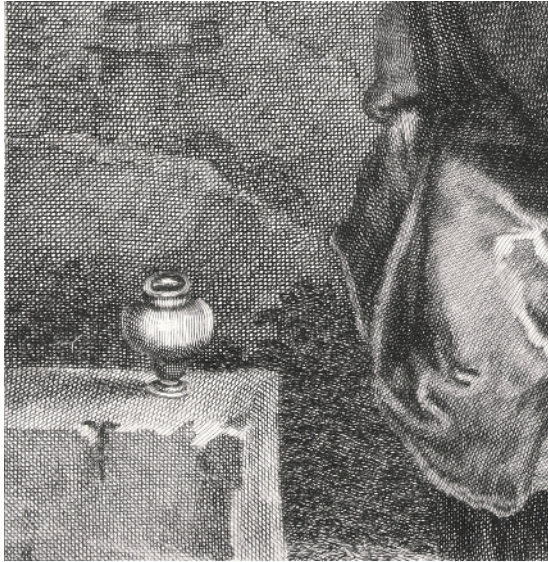


Fig.7 Detail of Lorenzo Lorenzi, *The Magdalene* (fig. 2) showing the vase

In Renaissance churches, images of the Virgin Mary might be located on an altarpiece,⁵⁶ or on the building fabric, either in the conch of the apse or on an eastern chancel wall, where they were seen juxtaposed with the altar, potentially indicating a link between Mary and the Eucharist.⁵⁷ Barbara Lane has argued that the altar is often alluded to in images of Mary in early Netherlandish painted altarpieces, and that in many cases the paintings associate the container for the consecrated host, the tabernacle, with the Virgin Mary's body and specifically her womb.⁵⁸ This may relate to two traditional metaphors for the Virgin, likening her to an altar and the tabernacle.⁵⁹ Netherlandish paintings have been noted as having a strong influence on Venetian artists, such as Giovanni Bellini,⁶⁰ and also Savoldo, whose wife appears to have been Flemish.⁶¹ Whilst the issues around the transmission of motifs are complex,⁶² Peter Humfrey has pointed to a number of fifteenth-century Venetian altarpieces featuring Mary that appear to allude to the Eucharist. Although with subjects such as the Virgin and Child enthroned it is difficult to be sure the extent to which a reference to the host and tabernacle was intended, some works, including Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe altarpiece* (ca. 1478–80), seem to present a reasonably persuasive case.⁶³ Such altarpieces were perhaps meant to bring the mind of the viewer to the Eucharistic rite. Romanino from Brescia, who, as mentioned earlier, was connected with Savoldo, certainly appears to allude to Mary as the tabernacle: in his *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints* altarpiece for the Church of San Francesco in Brescia, ca. 1516 (fig. 8) Mary looks within the setting to be enthroned upon an altar with the Christ-Child slumped in her lap; in his altarpiece for the Church of Santa Maria in Calchera in Brescia, ca. 1525 (fig. 9) he includes within the painting an actual altar, together with an altarpiece that depicts Mary holding the dead Christ, positioned directly above the celebrant, who is shown standing in front and holding the paten with hosts. The presence of vessels in works of art associated with the Virgin Mary has also been said to emphasize her role in the incarnation and reinforces the concept of her as the container of Christ.⁶⁴



Fig. 8 Etching after Girolamo Romanino, ***Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints Altarpiece*** (ca. 1516) in the Church of San Francesco (Chiesa di San Francesco d'Assisi), Brescia, Italy, published in 1884 (photo: license from iStockphoto)



Fig. 9 Girolamo Romanino, ***Mass of Saint Apollonius Altarpiece***, ca. 1525. Brescia, Santa Maria in Calchera (photo: Mondadori Portfolio/Electra/Sergio Anelli/Bridgeman Images, under license)

Alexander Nagel has noted how in the early sixteenth century a controversial practice developed in northern Italy of placing a container for the host, the sacrament tabernacle, upon the high altar, replacing a sculpted or painted image as the central focus.⁶⁵ It was only after the Council of Trent that this development became accepted Church practice; before that time it was seen, according to Nagel, as ideologically challenging, having been initiated first in Florence in 1497 by the reformer Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98). Peter Humfrey has pointed to the small, now lost, Venetian Church of San Sepolcro where in 1510 the tabernacle became the principal element of the altarpiece.⁶⁶ In 1518, in the basilica of San Marco, a sacramental altar was placed directly behind the Pala d'Oro in the apse, but perhaps more pronounced developments took place in the Veneto region in the 1530s. Nagel points to works on the high altars at Vicenza Cathedral by Aurelio dall'Acqua, who was associated with heterodox circles in Venice, and at Verona Cathedral, where in both cases a sacrament tabernacle became the central focus. At Verona Cathedral, which was dedicated to the Mother of God, the renovation works included the semi-circular *tornacoro* (iconostasis or choir screen), which with the apse formed an elliptical enclosure, and a raised tabernacle that could be seen as presenting Christ's body at the altar. Nagel suggests the interior architecture at Verona Cathedral could be understood as an animated body containing Christ's presence, with the bodily metaphor potentially extending to Christ in the Virgin's womb:

he interprets the *tornacoro* as completing a feminine ovoid enclosure encircling the tabernacle, and forming an extension of the Marian program of the apse of the cathedral.

Timothy Verdon has pointed to examples of the Lamentation in late fifteenth-century Italian art where Mary's womb is juxtaposed with the open tomb, and has also highlighted a devotional text from around the same time which states that the tomb "stands for the virginal womb of his mother," echoing an older womb-tomb analogy.⁶⁷ Michelangelo's *Pietà for Vittoria Colonna* (ca. 1540, fig. 10) was interpreted by Colonna, who was closely associated with sixteenth-century reformers,⁶⁸ as Mary making of her body "a sepulcher,"⁶⁹ and was considered by Leo Steinberg to intentionally evoke childbearing before the body is lowered into the tomb.⁷⁰ According to Nagel, this motif emphasizes the theological point of Christ's death as a source of regeneration, so that his death is "inseparable from the renewing of life, the giving of birth."⁷¹



Fig. 10 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà for Vittoria Colonna*, ca. 1540, black chalk on cardboard, 28.9 × 18.9 cm. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (photo: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum from Wikimedia Commons; artwork in the public domain)

In the versions of Savoldo's painting where the vase sits on the table, what is clearly significant is that the top is open; the vase is unstopped or unsealed. When Mary Magdalene is represented at the tomb, she is most commonly depicted holding the ointment jar, and Susan Haskins has suggested that, as the jar in Savoldo's *Magdalene* appears to have been left, it might imply that Mary Magdalene had already been to the sepulcher.⁷² Whilst such an interpretation might fit with the narrative in John (20), if Mary had now returned to the tomb after first going to the sepulcher when still dark to find it empty, in such a scenario the ointment would be unused, and the jar would presumably still have its lid on, or stopper in, as is conventionally shown.⁷³ Given that a jar, as a container, can symbolize a womb,⁷⁴ a stopped vase might represent the Virgin Mary's anatomical virginity, the sealed womb. Of note here is Savoldo's *Annunciation* (ca. 1530–35) where

behind Mary in the dark, on a shelf, between two books standing upright is a vase with a lid on (fig. 11, fig. 12).⁷⁵ This may be a reference to the sealed womb, or to the sealed tomb that is to follow: as Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373) says, “Mary’s womb, like the grave, bore an unbroken seal.”⁷⁶ In the West, throughout the medieval period, Church theologians interpreted the Gospel of Matthew such that the angel “rolled back the stone” from the sepulcher, not to enable the risen Christ to come out, but to demonstrate to the holy women that the tomb was empty, when he announces that “He is not here; for he is risen” (Matt. 28:1–6).⁷⁷ However, in Italy, between the fourteenth and latter part of the sixteenth centuries, the Resurrection was frequently depicted with an open tomb, with Christ emerging from it or often floating in the air above similar to an Ascension, none of which was described in scripture, leading the Council of Trent to object to both the open tomb and the floating figure in Resurrection images.⁷⁸ The reason for portraying the Resurrected Christ hovering above an open tomb appears to stem from the evolution of that image in Western art from manuscript illumination, where the Resurrection scene and the Women at the Tomb (the empty tomb with the angel) became merged into one.⁷⁹ In images of Christ emerging, the tomb may have been shown open simply in order to visually communicate the Resurrection message more explicitly. In both cases the embellishment of the scriptural message involved a process of consolidation where the angel’s purpose became obsolete and he was often left out. By contrast, the open, or unsealed, vase in Savoldo’s *Magdalene* paintings may have been used as a device to symbolically represent the act of making known that the Resurrection had occurred, as recounted in Matthew, replicating the function that the radiant angel performs when he rolls back the stone.⁸⁰



Fig. 11 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Annunciation*, ca. 1530–35, oil on canvas, 173 x 114 cm. Venice, Accademia, cat. 1529 (Gallerie dell’Accademia di Venezia; photo: Archivio fotografico G.A.VE granted by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism)

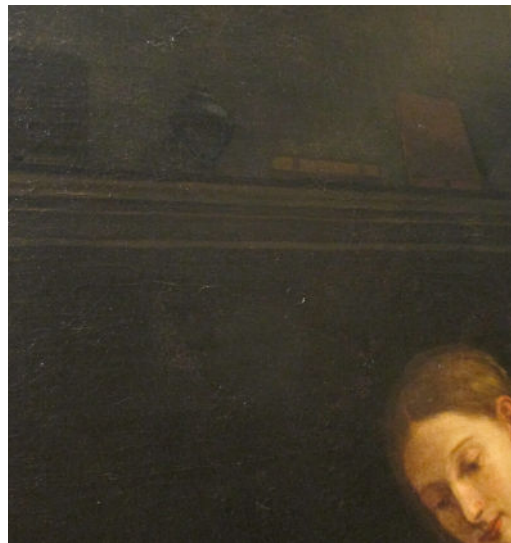


Fig. 12 Detail of Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Annunciation* (fig. 11) showing the sealed vase on the shelf (photo: © author)

In conclusion, it seems entirely possible that Savoldo's vase, sitting upon what might be seen as an altar table, bears an association with the mother's womb, paralleling the dramatization of Mary's relationship with the altar and the tabernacle at a time of increased devotional focus on the Eucharist and the symbolism of the tabernacle, but linked to liturgical ceremonies performed at the altar relating to Easter, such as those previously referred to where the altar symbolizes the sepulcher. Of particular note are two medieval liturgical rites, *depositio* and *elevatio*, performed as part of the Easter ceremony connected with the *Visitatio Sepulchri* (Visit to the Sepulcher).⁸¹ In the first rite the host was inserted into a pyxis or "sealed container" placed on an altar, and then on Easter Sunday, in the *elevatio*, the host was taken out of the container as a symbol of the Resurrection.⁸² Savoldo's unsealed vase upon the altar may signal the occurrence of the Resurrection, reminiscent of the *elevatio* ritual.

B—The Garment of Glory

"Whatever its ultimate filiation, the shawl is singular by virtue of its structural role in the design, which is partly a matter of scale and partly of optical richness. Resembling metal beaten to a shell-like thinness, the very quality that makes it mirror-like and elusive, it differs noticeably from the more fictile drapery in the majority of Savoldo's paintings."⁸³

Mary Pardo described Savoldo's painted veil as "a virtuoso demonstration of luministic surface description."⁸⁴ In his study of painting in sixteenth-century Venice, David Rosand suggested that Titian's work needed to be seen within the context of the traditional use of luminosity in Christian imagery, where light symbolically functioned as the carrier of divine significance, but where such luminosity was now being realized through the new medium of oil painting, building on the work of Venetian artists such as Giovanni Bellini and Giorgione, and before them Jan van Eyck in the Netherlands.⁸⁵ The representation of luminous reflections on drapery through tonal highlights was an acknowledged specialism of artists from Brescia, including Titian's contemporaries Romanino and Moretto, and particularly Savoldo.⁸⁶ The case being made here is that Savoldo's *Magdalene* paintings need to be seen in the context suggested by Rosand: as a new realization of the special role that the imagery of light plays in its association with divine significance. The luminosity of "Mary's" veil in Savoldo's *Magdalene* paintings, where brilliant gold or silver highlights on the drapery produce the effect of light coming from an external source,⁸⁷ goes so far as to create the appearance that the subject herself is transfigured. Christ is usually represented wearing white and gold garments in both the icon of the Resurrection and the icon of the Transfiguration, an effect for which, in the latter case, Dorothy Lee has coined the expression "garments of divine light."⁸⁸ In all three Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration Christ's garments displayed radiance, which echoed the fact that in every Greco-Roman mystery religion the outward symbol of the *transfiguratio* was "the garment."⁸⁹ The transfigured appearance of Savoldo's subject has been noted by some scholars, but the established interpretation of the figure as Mary Magdalene is still followed.⁹⁰

The normal convention in paintings of the Virgin Mary is for her *maphorion* to be dark blue, but there are examples, most notably from within the small group of painters from Brescia associated with Savoldo, where Mary wears a silver or white robe, such as in Romanino's *Nativity* (ca. 1545) and Moretto's *Apparition of the Virgin* (ca. 1534).⁹¹ Similarly, whilst Mary Pardo points out that Romanino's Magdalene in the *Feast in the House of Simon the Pharisee* (ca. 1532–33) is in a gold cloak, Charlotte Nichols has cited contemporary examples where the Virgin Mary is clothed in gold, such as Romanino's *Madonna and Child between Saint Bonaventure and Saint Sebastian* (ca. 1517–18), and she argues that the use of a gold veil would more likely have carried Marian associations for a sixteenth-century north Italian audience.⁹² However, it must be said that the color of the subject's veil in Savoldo's paintings is not in itself enough to determine whether the figure was intended to represent the Virgin Mary or Mary Magdalene, or indeed both. Also, whilst a red dress such as the one visible under the subject's shawl might in many circumstances be seen as an additional indicator that Mary Magdalene was intended, in that she is traditionally represented in a red dress, the Virgin Mary is often depicted in a red dress as well, particularly by Savoldo, including in his *Annunciation*, ca. 1530–35 (fig. 11), and his *Madonna and Child in Glory*, ca. 1525 (fig. 18).⁹³ What we can say is that the red dress lends weight to the suggestion that the subject is one or other of the Marys, or both.

Arguably of greater significance than the color of "Mary's" veil is what Savoldo is trying to convey, through its reflective luminosity, about her relationship with the actual source of the radiant light (glory). This might make a better case for interpreting the transfigured subject as the Virgin Mary. The argument here is that the "shawl's brilliance" was intended primarily as a reference to the Virgin Mary's role as counterpart to the sun and "the herald of the sun."⁹⁴

Mary Pardo notes that Jacobus de Voragine's entry in the *Golden Legend* for Mary Magdalene starts with the etymological significance of the name "Mary" as "light-giver" or "enlightened," and as a result Pardo considers the shawl to be a device conveying a "process of enlightenment" that might be associated with Mary Magdalene.⁹⁵ However, whilst the *Golden Legend* is without doubt an influential text for the interpretation of medieval and Renaissance art, the role of the Virgin Mary, rather than the Magdalene, as the light-bearer (*Lucifera*) is arguably more developed, and as Catherine Oakes has argued, finds expression in a number of medieval Marian titles such as *Aurora* (Dawn), *Ortus Solis* (Sunrise) and *Stella Solem* (Star to the Sun).⁹⁶ In some churches the spatial juxtaposition of the altar with images of the Virgin Mary on the building fabric, mentioned earlier in relation to the symbol of the jar, often incorporates a central window, said to symbolize Christ as the "rising sun" or "light of the world" (John 1:9; 8:12), as at Torcello in the Venetian lagoon, in its cathedral once dedicated to the Mother of God (fig. 13).⁹⁷ The versions of Savoldo's *Magdalene* that have been assumed by scholars to be set at dawn can be seen as demonstrating a correspondence with this conjunction of rising sun, Mary, and altar.



Fig. 13 Central Apse, Basilica of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello (Venice), eleventh to twelfth century, mosaic (photo: L'archivio fotografico dell'Ufficio Inventario della Curia patriarcale di Venezia)

The radiant “Mary,” in all versions of Savoldo’s painting, is depicted catching the light from an external source. The effect produced has parallels with the use of cloud symbolism in Christian art based on the Marian epithet of the cloud as a “shimmering covering” containing the brilliance of the sun.⁹⁸ Cloud symbolism features in Titian’s *Annunciation* altarpiece for Treviso Cathedral, ca. 1520 (fig. 14), which includes two levels of light, as in Savoldo’s *Magdalene* paintings, but in this case “natural” light floods in from the right, as if from the real window located to the side of the altar in the Cathedral, and “divine” light emerges from the clouds to enter Mary, the new container, “the tabernacle from which its divinity, incarnate, will shine forth.”⁹⁹ What is also striking about Titian’s painting is that the end of the chancel is shown completely open to the elements, somewhat similar to the setting in the London and Florence versions of Savoldo’s *Magdalene*, where the sun is emerging above the low ruined altar wall.

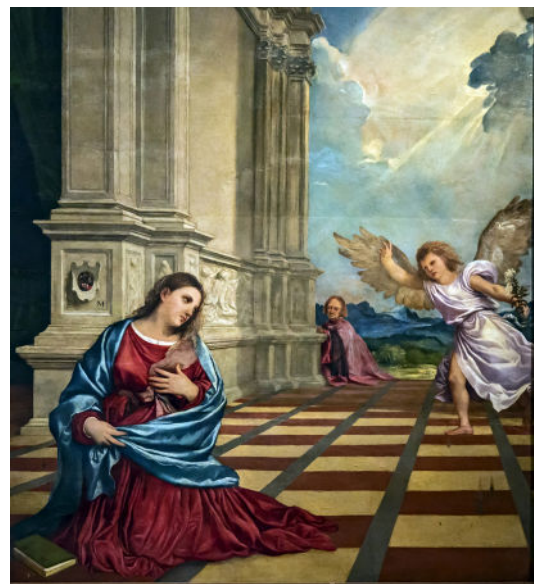


Fig. 14 Tiziano Vecellio, *Malchiostro Annunciation*, ca. 1520, oil on panel, 210 × 176 cm. Duomo Treviso (photo: Didier Descouens from Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of CC BY-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

Saint Ambrose compared the Church to the moon, because the Church shines with no light of its own, but with that of Christ.¹⁰⁰ The Virgin Mary, who came to be equated with the Church as the bride of Christ, principally from commentary on the Song of Songs,¹⁰¹ has similarly been compared to the moon:¹⁰² “Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?” (Song of Sol. 6:10)¹⁰³ Paolo Veneziano, possibly the most important Venetian painter of the fourteenth century, in his polyptych *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece for the Church of Santa Chiara in Venice, includes the symbol of a moon below the Virgin and a sun below Christ, which followed the use of this symbolism in the thirteenth-century *Coronation* mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. It has been suggested that this equation of Mary and the Church with the moon, reflecting the light of Christ, the sun, upon the world, is in line with Neoplatonic tradition “favoring reflection as metaphor for the indirect apprehension of truth,”¹⁰⁴ following Plato’s cave allegory, where light from an “invisible sun” is seen only by reflection.¹⁰⁵

In Savoldo’s London variant, where “Mary” has a silver-white sheen, she may resemble the moon,¹⁰⁶ as she acts as counterpart to the invisible sun, but whether her garments are gold or silver, she always forms a symbiotic relationship with the Son, one “glory” depending on the other, visual testament to Paul’s view that there were different glories:¹⁰⁷ “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory” (1 Cor. 15:41). In all of Savoldo’s variants “Mary’s” role resembles that of the prophets in the Transfiguration, where, according to Luke’s Gospel account (9:28–31) and patristic tradition, Moses and Elijah appeared “in glory” next to Christ,¹⁰⁸ but here the viewer might be said to play the role of the apostles who are normally on a “lower level” and are “indirectly invited to behold and participate in [Christ’s] glory.”¹⁰⁹

The emphasis placed on the shawl in the image, given its context within the symbolism of decay and renewal, and the symbolic associations to womb and tomb discussed earlier, might suggest Savoldo is making reference to the metaphorical “garment of glory.”

“[C]lothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 13:14)

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”
(Gal. 3:27)

Sebastian Brock has detailed how clothing imagery, specifically the “robe of glory” or “robe of light,” was used in the Syriac Christian tradition to express not only baptism, but also birth and deliverance from death, with all three central events of the Incarnation being seen as descents of the Divinity into successive wombs: the womb of Mary, the womb of the Jordan, and the womb of Sheol. Syrian Orthodox writers such as Ephrem in the fourth century, following the metaphor used above by Paul, equated the metaphorical garment which the Christian puts on with “Christ,” or more specifically his “Spirit”; through it the Christian might ultimately attain the status of divinity.¹¹⁰ Ephrem emphasized in particular that Christ’s mother put on his glory.¹¹¹

This is not to suggest that Savoldo would have made any direct link with early Syriac Christianity, but according to Brock such symbolism continued to be favored by the liturgical poets in the East and individual elements of this imagery are found in Greek and Latin writings.¹¹² Moretto, Savoldo's contemporary from Brescia, certainly appears to have made reference to the clothing metaphor used by Paul in Romans 13:14 in his *Christ with an Angel*, ca. 1550, painted for the Chapel of the Holy Crosses in the Duomo Vecchio in Brescia: a weeping angel, standing behind Christ, holds up a silvery robe in the center of the painting that acts as a backdrop to the slumped Christ, who looks directly at the beholder (fig. 15).¹¹³



Fig. 15 Moretto da Brescia, *Christ with an Angel*, ca. 1550, oil on canvas, 214 x 125 cm. Brescia, Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo (photo with permission of Civici Musei d'Arte e Storia di Brescia)

Comparisons might also be drawn here between the robe of glory and the more widely recognized motif of the “cloth of honor,” which was used in Christian iconography in the West to establish divine status and perhaps most frequently to honor the Virgin Mary.¹¹⁴ In the thirteenth century, many central Italian painters had applied gold leaf to Mary's garments, a technique known as chrysography, to indicate her role as Queen of Heaven. However, the cloth of honor, placed behind the Virgin Mary, became a standard device for Italian painters in the fourteenth century, including Paolo Veneziano in Venice in his *Coronation of the Virgin*, mentioned earlier, and in his tomb panel *Doge Francesco Dandolo and His Wife Presented to the Virgin* (fig. 16). The cloth of honor was used less frequently in Italy in the fifteenth century, but was often adopted by Giovanni Bellini in Venice, and was common in the Netherlands, in full-length paintings of the Virgin Mary and Child, such as Robert Campin's *Madonna and Child* (1430; Städel, Frankfurt am Main) and Jan van Eyck's *Madonna at the Fountain* (1439). By the early sixteenth century it was still in use in Italy in paintings of the Virgin Mary, especially by artists from Brescia, for example, in Vincenzo Foppa's *Madonna and Child between San Faustino and Santa Giovita*

(ca. 1501–09), Romanino's *Madonna Enthroned* altarpiece (ca. 1516, fig. 8), and Moretto's *Coronation of the Virgin* (ca. 1512–13).¹¹⁵ In such images Mary's garments were generally made of plain fabric, whilst the cloth behind her was often decorated, such as in the example by Campin, which featured a block-like pattern and symbols for the sun emanating gold light. Carol Purtle has suggested that the cloth of honor, when carried by angels, such as in the two Paolo Veneziano paintings referred to above, was consonant with heavenly light, often replacing the golden halo or mandorla.¹¹⁶ Rona Goffen has further argued that the cloth could denote the triumph of immortality,¹¹⁷ echoing the "garment of glory" motif with the clothing metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 and 2 Corinthians 5:4, where immortality is put on like a garment when "Death is swallowed up in victory."¹¹⁸



Fig. 16 Paolo Veneziano, *Doge Francesco Dandolo and His Wife Presented to the Virgin*, fourteenth century tomb panel. Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice (photo: Didier Descouens from Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of CC BY-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

In terms of Renaissance imagery that more specifically recalls the "garment of light" or "garment of glory," of particular note is the association that developed in the West between Mary as Queen of Heaven and the "woman clothed with the sun" in the Book of Revelation 12:1,¹¹⁹ who often appears standing on a serpent or dragon, as in the *Glorification of the Virgin* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, ca. 1490–95 (fig. 17), also known as the *Maria in Sole*.¹²⁰ The combination of radiant clothing imagery with the motif of a triumphant figure trampling a defeated enemy has parallels with the depiction of the Resurrection in the icon known as the *Anastasis* or *Descent into Hell/Hades*, or later in the West, *Christ in Limbo*, as recounted in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and retold in the *Golden Legend*. Here demons are depicted in the shadows being defeated by the light coming from

Christ, or Hades is shown as a figure under Christ's foot, often squashed under the broken gates of hell, as in the *Anastasis* mosaic in the basilica of San Marco in Venice, where Christ wears a garment with golden chrysography that physically reflects the light. The defeated figure can be understood as a personification of "Death."¹²¹ Leena Mari Peltomaa has noted how clothing metaphors like those in the Syriac tradition, in particular the robe of glory as it relates to Sheol/Hades imagery, were used in the early Byzantine Akathistos Hymn, a composition in praise of the Virgin Mary that has exerted a strong influence on Marian poetry and literature in the East and the West.¹²²

Hail, through whom Hades was stripped bare
Hail, through whom we were clothed in glory
(Akathistos Hymn, extract from strophe 7)

According to Peltomaa's interpretation of the Akathistos Hymn, victory over death, like baptism, occurs in the womb of Mary, who is likened to the Church, as she is in interpretations of the woman in Revelation 12.¹²³



Fig. 17 Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *Glorification of the Virgin* (Maria in Sole) ca. 1490–95, oil on panel, 24.5 x 20.5 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (photo: Wikipedia Commons, www.google.com/culturalinstitute; artwork in the public domain)



Fig. 18 Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo, *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints*, Pesaro altarpiece, ca. 1525, oil on wood, 475 x 307 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera, inv. 148 (photo with permission of Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan)

In Savoldo's *Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints* altarpiece for Pesaro, ca. 1525 (fig. 18),¹²⁴ Mary is shown elevated to "heaven," emphasizing her role in connecting heaven and earth. Mary holds the Christ Child, surrounded by an aureole of light alive with Cherubim and Seraphim and fringed with dark clouds. The motif of angels framing an aureole of light appears earlier

in Titian's *Assumption* altarpiece for Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice, ca. 1515–18, in which Mary ascends to heaven in a radiant aureole; however, that altarpiece as a whole appears to carry a wider meaning of glorifying the Virgin. Among the heads of the angels are inscribed the initials “BE VI” (Blessed Virgin), on the left, and “GLO” (Glorious) on the right, and it is often remarked that the image recalls the “woman clothed with the sun” in Revelation 12:1.¹²⁵ As David Rosand has pointed out, the triumphal arch of the architectural frame is crowned with the resurrected Christ, thereby complementing Mary's ascent by Christ's own Resurrection, with “triumph over death” being “the guiding idea behind the altar.”¹²⁶

In all of Savoldo's *Magdalene* paintings “Mary” could be interpreted as being clothed in the “robe of glory,” and whilst this image is not combined with the motif of the trampling of a defeated enemy, it nonetheless can be read in the context of victory over death. The jar, as we have already seen, has an association with the mother's womb and, juxtaposed with the empty tomb, alludes to Christ's rebirth, with the dawn setting, when included, heralding victory over darkness.¹²⁷ The brilliant gold or silver highlights on the veil represent Christ's divinity as in the iconography of the Anastasis, where the flashing light coming from Christ represents his divinity.¹²⁸ At the same time, the motif of the “garment of glory” in Savoldo's paintings may function in a similar way to the cloth of honor, glorifying Mary as Queen of Heaven, where she acts as counterpart to Christ the sun. In Savoldo's Berlin variant (fig. 1), where there is no jar and the wall behind Mary is higher, the eye is particularly drawn to the opening to the blue sky beyond, against which the curved hood of Mary's golden veil is set, the color forming “the crucial complementary value.”¹²⁹ This is perhaps a visual metaphor for the hole in the roof of a cave as an opening allowing contact with heaven,¹³⁰ as well as a reference to Mary's role as Queen of Heaven,¹³¹ clothed in a “vesture of gold” (Ps. 45).¹³² A fifteenth-century poem by the humanist and Carmelite reformer Baptista Mantuanus (1447–1516), associated with Mantua in Lombardy, describes Mary uniting heaven and earth: “Her face was neither smiling nor sad, but a mixture of the two; her body dwelt on earth, her mind in heaven.”¹³³

The connection between the Virgin Mary and the container for the consecrated host, the tabernacle, has been mentioned already, but Mary was also linked with the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant, the gold-covered chest that contained the golden urn of manna. The Ark of the Covenant appears in the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews (9:4), but also in the Book of Revelation (11:19), where it is immediately followed by the chapter on the Woman of the Apocalypse (Rev. 12). As the Ark contained the golden urn, comparisons with Mary were frequently made, including in numerous hymns in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹³⁴ “Mary's” gold garment in Savoldo's paintings might therefore reference the gold-covered chest. Perhaps more importantly, though, Rona Goffen, in her discussion of the “cloth of honor” in relation to Giovanni Bellini's half-length Madonnas, drew attention to the idea of the cloth, or veil, being closely allied to honoring the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle of the Old Testament, which contained the Ark of the Covenant and according to Hebrews (9:3) was screened by a curtain or veil.¹³⁵ The “garment” as a “veil” in the sense of a curtain, as suggested above, may have been used

for identifying and honoring Mary as Queen of Heaven. Furthermore, Goffen notes, the veil may also have carried a theological reference to Hebrews (9:8; 9:11–12) where “the way into the sanctuary remains unrevealed” as long as the first tabernacle, or tent, remained, but Christ is then said to have come through the more perfect tabernacle and entered the sanctuary.¹³⁶

Mary Pardo suggested that the veil is lifted from “Magdalene’s” face to reveal the passing of sorrow,¹³⁷ but she also acknowledged Creighton Gilbert’s observation that in several other works by Savoldo a veil is lifted over the luminous infant Christ, sometimes by the infant Christ himself, or by a saint or donor as they look directly at the viewer.¹³⁸ This gesture is most commonly assigned to the Virgin Mary, a popular motif said to derive from Saint Bridget’s *Revelations* in the fourteenth century, in which Mary reveals the radiant, nude child to the shepherds.¹³⁹ However, in other contexts the “unveiling” can take on further meaning, the theological point, according to Gilbert, being that “the Old Law veiled what the New Law revealed.”¹⁴⁰ Whilst Hebrews refers to the curtain and the tent, or tabernacle, the Christological veil-motif also has a New Testament origin in Mark and Paul.¹⁴¹ The motif of a veil over Moses’s face, originating in Exodus 34:33–35, is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:12–18 with the suggestion that the veil is removed with the advent of Christ. Alexander Nagel has suggested that Italian reformers sought to restore a Christological emphasis associated with the early Church,¹⁴² therefore Savoldo’s focus on this motif in a number of his works might possibly have been seen by the supporters of the reform movement as promoting a move towards “re-establishing” all things in Christ, an illumination by faith (2 Cor. 4:4–6).¹⁴³ Some of the reformers, such as Juan de Valdés (ca. 1500–41), on whose thoughts the *Beneficio di Cristo* was largely based, held to the principal that hidden Christian truth can only be revealed internally by means of a “spiritual light,” the illumination of the spirit that comes from Christ.¹⁴⁴

Savoldo’s *Magdalene* paintings warrant further consideration in the context of 2 Corinthians 3, particularly verse 18, which follows the phrase “whenever one *turns* to the Lord, the veil is removed” in verse 16, and has been subject to considerable theological debate:

“And we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transfigured into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”¹⁴⁵

Second Corinthians 3:12–18, rather than expressing a contrast between Moses and Christ, has been considered by some, such as George Caird, to be a contrast between Moses, and Paul and his fellow Christians: “the one hiding with a veil the transitory nature of the radiance on his face, the others with unveiled face displaying a radiance which is becoming permanent under the creative influence of the Spirit.”¹⁴⁶ With this interpretation of the wider passage, it follows that in verse 18 Christ is not the one in whom God’s glory is seen mirrored, but rather is “the source of the glory.” Believers are therefore “beholding” indirectly that glory, as they themselves are being transformed.¹⁴⁷

This motif might possibly explain why in Savoldo's *Magdalene* series "Mary," unlike Moses, has the veil lifted from over her face, and why she displays radiance through her robe of glory, which, like "metal beaten to a shell-like thinness," as Pardo says, possesses the faculty of reflection, reflecting Christ's glory "as in a mirror" (2 Cor. 3:18). A metaphor used by Jacobus de Voragine, the compiler of the *Golden Legend* in the thirteenth century, in his *Sermones aurei de Beata Maria* (Sermons of the Blessed Virgin Mary) was: "Mary the mirror—Christ the image,"¹⁴⁸ with the "unspotted mirror" said to be one of the most frequent medieval epithets of the Virgin, deriving from the *Book of Wisdom*: "For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God."¹⁴⁹ A link between Mary and mirror is also potentially suggested by the Aachen pilgrim's mirror badge, of which numerous variations were produced in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for pilgrims traveling to Aachen, where the gown of the Virgin Mary was one of the cathedral's relics.¹⁵⁰ Pilgrims' mirror badges, which were made of a perforated plate of lead or pewter, are supposed to have functioned by collecting divine light from relics. In the Aachen case, the beholder looked upon Mary's garment, which was usually held above Mary by two angels, while divine light was reflected back, either by way of a small circular mirror above (fig. 19), or, as with Johannes Gutenberg's 1439 mass-produced version, by the mesh pattern of the metal gown itself.¹⁵¹



Fig. 19 Aachen pilgrim's mirror, 1400–50, pewter, 11 x 6.5 cm.

Private collection (photo with permission of numisantica.com)

Review: The "Icon" and the Mirror

Having considered the vase and the garment of glory as central motifs allowing for a deeper understanding of the possible intentions behind the paintings and pointing to a reading of the central subject as the Virgin Mary, it is necessary to now consider how the paintings may have functioned for a contemporary viewer, in the context of iconographic developments during a period of changing religious practices.

Creighton Gilbert observed that Savoldo's saints sometimes seem portrait-like, but portraits transformed by a narrative.¹⁵² In interpreting Savoldo's *Magdalene* series, one of the consequences of working on the assumption that the vase is an ointment jar, besides it functioning as an attribute, is that in the context of the scene it imports a narrative implication. For Mary Pardo, "it is precisely this 'narrative implication'—already fully acknowledged in Ridolfi's seventeenth-century remarks on the *Magdalene*—that [is] taken . . . as a guide to the subject of Savoldo's invention."¹⁵³ However, in questioning the assumption that the vase is an ointment jar, this article has raised questions about the identity of the subject, and so it is necessary to review the extent to which there may have been a narrative.

Pardo considered Savoldo's *Magdalene* within the contexts of the "holy portrait" and of specific developments in northern Italy in the last quarter of the fifteenth century associated with the half-length picture, which is widely recognized as an appropriate format for devotional pictures.¹⁵⁴ It is important to mention here, though, that Pardo focused her analysis of Savoldo's *Magdalene* on the two paintings where the composition is cropped, as a result of which they are closer to a "half-length" format, whereas the others, particularly the Berlin version, approach three-quarter length, a less common form for devotional pictures at the time.¹⁵⁵ Pardo drew attention to the portrait-like iconography associated with the half-length *Magdalene*, and focused particularly on the over-the-shoulder "turning pose," where sometimes, such as in the version by Luini, ca. 1525 (Washington DC, National Gallery of Art), her head is turned to face the viewer.¹⁵⁶ However, as Pardo noted, after 1400 the preference in paintings of Mary *Magdalene* was to show her fashionably clothed in contemporary dress, whereas Savoldo's figure "in contrast to those typical of his day, is cloaked like a mourner in a 'scenic' representation of the Entombment [. . .] in Renaissance paintings this garb is more usual for the Virgin than the *Magdalene*." The Virgin Mary in Titian's *Entombment*, ca. 1520 (fig. 20) is cited as an example. It should also be noted that in the half-length *Magdalene* Pardo referred to, where the ointment jar was used for identification, the jar, following the convention discussed earlier, was shown with a lid.



Fig. 20 Tiziano Vecellio, detail of *The Entombment of Christ*, ca. 1520, oil on canvas, 148 × 212 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: The Yorck Project from Wikimedia Commons; artwork in the public domain)

In the Italian Quattrocento the half-length single Madonna was more common, and has indeed been said to be omnipresent.¹⁵⁷ Giovanni Bellini along with other Venetian painters used the portrait motif consistently for paintings of the Virgin Mary and Child.¹⁵⁸ As Rona Goffen argued in her study of Bellini's half-length Madonnas, the format would have been appropriate for the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, given the ancient association of the bust motif with kingship, and Goffen suggested it would have also been used to express the inexplicable nature of divinity.¹⁵⁹ Bellini avoided using overt material symbols such as the crown, and along with the half-length format, the only other indicator of divine royalty identified by Goffen was the cloth of honor placed behind the subject, as discussed previously.

Pardo, although keeping to the narrative of Mary Magdalene at the tomb, suggested Antonello da Messina's half-length *Annunciate* Virgin Mary in Palermo, ca. 1476 (Palazzo Abatellis), as a possible forerunner to Savoldo's *Magdalene* in terms of the painting's "narrative quality" and the reaction of the subject to a light source outside the image.¹⁶⁰ It is worth reiterating here that, besides John's Gospel account of Mary Magdalene meeting the resurrected Christ, in both the East and the West there existed a line of textual sources, which stated that Christ after his Resurrection meets his mother.¹⁶¹ From the fourteenth century, in the West,¹⁶² a new visual motif developed to represent Christ's appearance to his mother, using existing imagery as prototypes. Erwin Panofsky pointed out that, as Christ was believed to have either met the Virgin Mary near the sepulcher or to have visited her in her house, most depictions in the West drew either upon the *Noli me tangere* motif for the first scenario or upon Annunciation imagery for the latter.¹⁶³ The more common images are of Mary at home, especially ones of Christ approaching a seated Mary (fig. 21), which have a clear iconographic parallelism with the heralding of the Incarnation by the Archangel, where Christ's announcement to his mother of his Resurrection is seen as "the fulfillment of that Incarnation."¹⁶⁴ Savoldo's *Magdalene* "Mary," whilst not set in the context of her home, still shows some signs of mimicking an Annunciation scene. "Mary" in Savoldo's paintings has her right hand veiled and lifted. Whilst this gesture may relate to a convention for weeping mourners at the scene of Christ's death, the Virgin Mary is often shown in an Annunciation pose with her right hand raised to acknowledge that something is happening before her, particularly in Byzantine art and, like Savoldo's "Mary," her head is often bent.¹⁶⁵ However, as Mary Pardo noted, there are particularly strong parallels with Antonello Da Messina's *Annunciate* Virgin Mary in Palermo, a copy of which, attributed to Antonello's nephew, appears to have been in Venice since the time that he is believed to have lived there at the end of the fifteenth century (fig. 22).¹⁶⁶ Both Savoldo and Antonello appear to "zoom in" on "Mary," providing a close-up of the subject that largely isolates her from any assumed narrative context, whilst playing on the effects of a light source outside the image frame that illuminates the scene.¹⁶⁷ The sense of drama is muted, the facial expressions of both "Marys" being hard to read; instead, their body gestures read as a reaction to the very moment they become aware of the source of the light.



Fig. 21 “Annunciation” type: Albrecht Dürer, *Christ Appearing to His Mother* (from *The Little Passion*), ca. 1509–10, woodcut, 12.7 x 9.5 cm. Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.3662 (photo: National Gallery of Art)



Fig. 22 Antonello De Saliba (after Antonello da Messina), *The Virgin Annunciate*, late 15th century, oil on panel, 47 x 34 cm. Venice, Accademia, cat. 590 (photo: Architas from Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of CC BY-SA 4.0, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>)

According to Hans Belting, in both of the known versions of Antonello’s *Annunciate*, the one in Palermo, and the other in Munich (Alte Pinakothek), the annunciate angel is not included in the image, because it would have disturbed the intimate “face-to-face” relation of viewer and icon.¹⁶⁸ The absence of the angel certainly directs attention to the figure of Mary and to her centrality.¹⁶⁹ The devotional function of the image is widely accepted and Claudia Cieri Via has recently argued that the Palermo *Annunciate* concentrates on the moment of the incarnation through non-representative and therefore non-narrative elements.¹⁷⁰ Savoldo’s *Magdalene* could also be said to focus on symbolic rather than narrative elements—the luminosity of the robe, the ruined buildings, the opening to the sky, the dark niche, the form of the unsealed vase, and the dawn breaking—in an image of what is essentially an abstract concept: victory over death and resurrection.

Focusing on Antonello’s Munich *Annunciate*, where Mary has her arms crossed in front of her chest, Belting has pointed to the Icon of the Virgin in Fermo Cathedral as a possible prototype, which is also of the Virgin alone in an enclosing veil and may have originally been a Lamenting Virgin.¹⁷¹ Charlotte Nichols has similarly argued that Savoldo’s *Magdalenes* recall icons of the veiled Lamenting Virgin but with one hand raised to the face in the more typical lamenting gesture, such as in the example from the Pala d’Oro by Paolo Veneziano (see fig. 6). Savoldo’s lone veiled figure of “Mary,” like Antonello’s, is centrally placed. However, in contrast to Antonello’s *Annunciate* Mary, Savoldo’s “Mary” is not frontally posed but is instead depicted in the process of

turning, and critically is observed facing the viewer. As a result, the face-to-face relation between viewer and subject extends to the subject directly engaging the beholder, which is not the case with Antonello's *Annunciate Mary* in either of the two versions. The standard Renaissance pictorial model is of a window opening onto a vista, or occasionally a "neutral zone" or "shared space" created between viewer and viewed, in which the window might function as a two-way mirror with one or more subjects looking outwards, potentially aware of a presence beyond. However, here the space that opens in front of the pictorial field is actually "activated" by the exchange of gaze between the beholder and the subject, as it is with an icon when an image becomes "animated" by the viewer.¹⁷² Savoldo's "Mary" acts as if the viewer is involved, turning the beholder from external witness to active participant.¹⁷³ She returns the look of the viewer who is invited to behold "as in a mirror" the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). The writer and leading pro-reformer, Vittoria Colonna, mentioned earlier, in her writing on the Passion in the text *Pianto sopra la Passione di Cristo*, which focuses on the lamentation episode, argued that divine grace is transmitted first to the Virgin by means of the faith sustained at the death of Christ, and then to humankind.¹⁷⁴

The *Beneficio di Cristo*, which reflected Italian religious reform thinking, expounded the doctrine of salvation by faith alone (*sola fide*), as Luther did through his translation of Romans 3:28.¹⁷⁵ Unlike Protestantism, though, the reform movement in Italy was not a protest movement; instead, it merely proposed change within the Church through a spiritual renewal and internalization of faith by each individual, stressing the need for an "inner experience" of "Christ within."¹⁷⁶ As Eva-Maria Jung has noted, it "could offer nothing but . . . an introverted mysticism, a 'beautiful inwardness.'"¹⁷⁷ A number of other scholars have also noted that it was a culture based on the individual and not a coordinated movement that was deeply rooted.¹⁷⁸ It has already been mentioned that it sought to restore a Christocentric focus, and Alexander Nagel has highlighted that Christ's resurrection was a "topos of reform rhetoric" and a metaphor for "purification and restoration after abuse and exposure."¹⁷⁹ With the reform movement centered primarily on the experience of the individual, practitioners may have been attracted by Savoldo's introspective approach to this subject, which sought to engage the beholder in developing a personal relationship with the divine.

By the early sixteenth century, devotion without images appears often to have been seen as a higher form of meditation, although private devotional images were still commonly regarded as practicable instruments to lead from the visible to the invisible.¹⁸⁰ In Renaissance spiritual literature, a recurring theme was the "mirror" and the Pauline notion of the indirect apprehension of truth (1 Cor. 13:12). The theologian and humanist Nicholas of Cusa, an advocate of Church reform, adopted Pauline theology in his *On the Vision of God* (1453) and argued that beholding a painted icon of Christ was like observing oneself in a mirror, so that "the beholder is the image."¹⁸¹ Luther is widely known for arguing that the text of the Bible, the Word of God, revealed the true path to salvation, but in a statement actually against iconoclasm, in 1525, he likened our inner portrait of Christ to a reflection, where Christ's "image" projects itself and is

formed in one's heart.¹⁸² The anonymous author of *Die Grote evangelische Peerle* (The Great Evangelical Pearl), published in Antwerp in 1538, following a shorter version in 1535, discussed the mirroring of Christ, where the "mirror" is used as a metaphor for the soul's image of Christ, and we are mirrored in an image of Christ's divinity: his "humanized divinity."¹⁸³

Between 1520 and the early 1540s, contemporaneous with the development of the above Pauline ideas on the imaging of Christ in oneself, a small number of painters from Brescia, including Romanino, Moretto and Savoldo, were developing what Stephen Campbell has termed a "sacred naturalism": whilst adopting a restrained emotional character in the direct representation of Christian doctrine in the everyday world, they sought to place the sacred within the realm of immediate sensory experience, closer to the ideal of the Eucharist as the highest mode of representation of Christ's body, in an attempt to make the divine more directly available to the beholder.¹⁸⁴ Savoldo's *Magdalene* paintings, which are believed to date from the mid-1520s to ca. 1540, can be seen as being highly experimental, not only in terms of providing access to the divine, but also in their means of representing the concept of the Resurrection and specifically Christ's "spiritual" body following a process of transmutation.¹⁸⁵ Christ's resurrected spiritual body is "there and not there,"¹⁸⁶ so is in essence unrepresentable, and as the Gospel of John reminds us, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). Savoldo's *Magdalene* paintings allowed the beholder to experience through Mary, the one who humanizes Christ's divinity, that divinity mirrored in themselves, so that one could be said to be "in Christ," where through "faith," as Augustine says, Christ is formed in the inner self of the believer.

However, the Counter-Reformation Church sought to establish authoritative control over religious images, following prescriptions in the Council of Trent's 1563 decree, with a return to more traditional modes of sacred depiction while, as Klaus Krüger says, "simultaneously establishing control and canalization of the religious gaze and imagination, and over the powers of inner experience activated thereby."¹⁸⁷ The Council of Trent reemphasized the value of collective worship. As a result, direct forms of communication between the sacred and the individual without the mediation of priests, such as those that might be fostered by "sacred naturalism," came to be seen as too closely associated with Protestant ideas.¹⁸⁸ As for the specific subject of the resurrected Christ's appearance to his mother, which James Breckenridge suggests symbolized "the direct personal contact possible between the individual and the Godhead," with a move towards a more impersonal message about the Redemption after Trent, the "intense personal significance" associated with it became lost.¹⁸⁹

Seen in this context, it becomes more explicable that Savoldo's highly unusual interpretation of the Resurrection theme could have been misinterpreted as early as the seventeenth century by both Ridolfi and Rossi. From the mid-nineteenth century, when the paintings re-emerged from obscurity, to the present, perhaps too much weight has been placed on that seventeenth-century interpretation.

Conclusion

In the Berlin version of Savoldo's *Magdalene*, which does not include the vase and is considered here to be the first in the series, Savoldo renders the subject's identity particularly ambiguous. It includes no background setting, simply an enveiling wall behind "Mary," producing a scene that Crowe and Cavalcaselle described as "full of mystery."¹⁹⁰ At first sight, and without reference to the other later paintings, this three-quarter-length portrait-like subject does not obviously recall a devotional image or have a story. However, that surface reading belies what I believe is an underlying Christological devotional purpose that locates the mystical in the psychological realm of personal experience, and where narrative function is subordinate, making Savoldo's painting more akin to an "icon." The intense radiance manifested in the "garment of glory" that is central to the composition encodes a process of transformation in relation to the absent Christ, who, in resurrected rather than earthly form, is now a "spiritual body."¹⁹¹ Furthermore, not only do the brilliant gold highlights of the veil represent Christ's divinity, but by a form of osmosis the garment also comes to symbolize the Virgin Mary's own glory, serving to both identify and honor her as Queen of Heaven, the herald of the sun. Set against the blue sky her golden hood emphasizes her connection between heaven and earth, while her associations with motherhood and the source of life amplify the notion of a rebirth.¹⁹²

It is contended here that after painting the Berlin original, Savoldo added the open vase to subsequent versions of the painting, no doubt anticipating that many viewers would interpret this as an ointment jar, but introducing this symbol at a time when a container placed prominently on what could be taken to represent an altar table would have been seen by many reform-minded viewers as ideologically emblematic. The traditional association of a liturgical container with the mother's womb, combined with the fact that the container in this case is unsealed, echoing the *elevatio* liturgical ritual, would have in itself implied a renewal of life. However, when these symbolic elements are read alongside the "garment of glory" motif where the Virgin Mary, cloaked like a mourner, brilliantly reflects the light, they would have reinforced the idea of the triumph of immortality, with the rising sun, when included, heralding victory over darkness.

Mary, with unveiled face, not hiding her radiance as Moses did, but rather displaying it through the outward symbol of the garment, "reveals" the way through a mirror function that enables the believer to behold the glory (2 Cor. 3:18). Looking at the veil the devout beholder might in effect experience Christ's divinity mirrored in him- or herself: "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). The realization for beholders is that they, through Mary, are also participating in the process of being changed, a transformation which will ultimately lead from one glory to the other, from an earthly glory to a heavenly one.¹⁹³ The Italian reform movement was focused primarily on the inner experience of the individual and so practitioners may have been attracted by Savoldo's idiosyncratic and introspective approach to this Resurrection theme, which required an experiential faith to fully envision its intended purpose; reserving a special role for the Virgin Mary, but one set within a Christocentric work.¹⁹⁴

However, in Italy, both the movement for reform and attempts through the visual arts to make the divine more directly accessible were short-lived. Due to wider cultural changes, in particular the success of the Counter-Reformation in establishing authoritative control over religious images as well as the religious imagination, the deeper functional significance of Savoldo's paintings was soon lost, together with the meaning behind the symbolism. The artist's act of concealment was indeed so effective, and the images so unorthodox that, with the changes in both spiritual practice and visual expectations after the Council of Trent, in less than a century after the images were painted their meaning was reduced to a single one-dimensional interpretation as Saint Mary Magdalene. When the Berlin painting resurfaced, at the start of the nineteenth century, any religious significance that version might once have had was lost altogether and a secular interpretation stubbornly persisted throughout most of the twentieth century.

Acknowledgements: With thanks to Sarah Jane Boss, Lisa Rafanelli and Robert Skwirbli for their generosity of spirit; to Lisa Rafanelli for commenting on an early draft; to Robert Skwirbli for information on Edward Solly in relation to the provenance of the Berlin variant; and to Sarah Jane Boss for her thoughts and encouragement. I am also indebted to the reviewers for their invaluable recommendations and the editor for her considered editing suggestions.

About the Author

Michael Calder is an independent scholar who between 2006 and 2018 was employed by the National Trust in England as a consultant adviser. He has previously published on the early Christian landscape, but after studying Early Christian and Byzantine Art at Exeter University, he has specialized in Marian iconography.

michael_calder@btinternet.com



The text of this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). All images are reproduced with the permission of the rights holders acknowledged in captions, or are reproduced under license, and are expressly excluded from the CC BY license covering the rest of this publication. These images may not be reproduced, copied, transmitted, or manipulated without consent from the owners, who reserve all rights, and outside the terms of any specified license.

Notes

- ¹ The quote “Queste sono le vere riformatione interiore” is from a letter from Gasparo Contarini (1483–1542) to Alfonso Avalos, the Spanish governor of Lombardy, dated March 29, 1542, cited in William Bouwsma, *Venice and the Defense of the Republican Liberty* (1968; repr. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 126. Bouwsma translates as “True reformations are internal,” whereas Elizabeth Gleason, in *Gasparo Contarini* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 279, translates more literally as “These are the true interior reformations.”
- ² Sebastian Brock, “Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses,” *Sobornost* 3, no. 1 (1981): 70–85, 75.
- ³ Charlotte Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*: A ‘Muddle of Maries’?” *California Italian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 175–203, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1n76034t>.
- ⁴ Mary Pardo, “The Subject of Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 1 (March 1989): 71.
- ⁵ Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 2–14.
- ⁶ E. P. Sanders, *Paul: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 81–90; Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis, The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), 256n4.
- ⁷ Quote from Eric Plumer, trans., *Augustine’s Commentary on Galatians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 191.
- ⁸ The engraving ca. 1750 by Lorenzo Lorenzi, after a drawing by Giuseppe Zocchi (d.1767), made when the painting, now untraced, was in the Gerini collection in Florence. See Nicholas Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Sixteenth Century Italian Paintings*, vol. 1 (London: National Gallery Company, 2004), 351; Renata Stradiotti, “L’Opera del Savoldo Attraverso la Grafica,” in *Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo Pittore Bresciano: Ateneo di Brescia: atti del convegno, Brescia 21–22 maggio 1983*, (Brescia: Edizioni Del Moretto, 1985), 132–3.
- ⁹ See Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 351; Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 68; Creighton Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo* (New York: Garland, 1986), 555. See also Renata Stradiotti, entry in *Giovanni Gerolamo Savoldo* (exh. cat.), Redona Begni, Pier Virgilio, Elena Lucchesi Ragni, Renata Stradiotti, et al. (Milan: Electa, 1990), 150–2.
- ¹⁰ Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 351. Closer framing heightens the effect of a suspense close-up. See Lorenzo Pericolo, “The Invisible Presence: Cut-In, Close-Up, and Off-Scene in Antonello da Messina’s Palermo *Annunciate*,” *Representations* 17 (2009): 1–29, 3–4.
- ¹¹ Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 351–2, 337.
- ¹² With variations. Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 337; Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo*, 46–49.
- ¹³ Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 337–8; Andaleeb Badiee Banta, artists’ biographies in *Painters of Reality*, ed. Andrea Bayer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 242.
- ¹⁴ Andrea Bayer, “Bergamo and Brescia,” in *Venice and the Veneto*, ed. Peter Humfrey (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 318; Bayer, *Painters of Reality*, 24, 106; Francesco Frangi, “Tiziano e Brescia. Esperienze pittoriche al bivio tra colorismo e naturalismo,” in *Tiziano e la pittura del Cinquecento tra Venezia e Brescia*, ed. Francesco Frangi (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2018), 11–27.
- ¹⁵ Kenneth Gouwens, “Clement and Calamity: The Case for Re-evaluation,” in *The Pontificate of Clement VII*, eds. Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E. Reiss (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005), 3–19; and Alexander Nagel, “Experiments in Art and Reform in Italy,” in *The Pontificate of Clement VII*, 385–411. See also Elizabeth Gleason, “Confronting New Realities,” in *Venice Reconsidered*, eds. Jeffries, Martin and Romano (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 168–80.
- ¹⁶ See Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143–47, 178–79; Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience*, 13–14. On experimentation, see Quercolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender and the Self in Renaissance Italy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 137–9.

¹⁷ Margaret Morse, "From 'Chiesa to Casa' and Back: The Exchange of Public and Private in Domestic Devotional Art," in *Reflections on Renaissance Venice*, eds. Mary Frank and Blake de Maria (Milan: 5 Continents, 2013), 143–54, 146.

¹⁸ John Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 73–96; Massimo Firpo, *Juan de Valdes and the Italian Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 1–58.

¹⁹ Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 145–6.

²⁰ Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience*, 6–14. Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*, 27, 35, 73–96. See also Eva-Maria Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of History of Ideas* 14, no. 4 (1953): 511–27, 513. *Evangelism* was only used as a term from the twentieth century. Associates of the movement for reform were known as *Spirituali*, but even that term appears relatively late, in 1540 (see Stephen Bowd, *Reform Before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy* [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 219.) It may be more helpful to think of its supporters as the practitioners of a culture (see later discussion).

²¹ From a letter by Bernardino Ochino (1487–1564), cited in Firpo, *Italian Reformation*, 71 and Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*, 25–26 (the source being an article by Paolo Piccolomini published in 1905).

²² Unless otherwise indicated quotes from the Bible are from the New International Version.

²³ Firpo, *Italian Reformation*, 1–67.

²⁴ Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*, 26–28; Firpo, "Lorenzo Lotto and the Reformation in Venice," in *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Ronald Delph, Michelle Fontaine and John Martin (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006), 26–27; Firpo, *Italian Reformation*, 67–78. "Evangelism" was also strong in Brescia.

²⁵ Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong, eds., introduction to *Bellini and the East* (London: National Gallery Company, 2005), 7–8.

²⁶ In the fifteenth century the exile from Constantinople Cardinal Bessarion declared that Venice seemed "almost another Byzantium." Cited by Caroline Campbell in "The Bellini, Bessarion and Byzantium," in *Bellini and the East*, 36–65, 44, 48–9, 54. Rona Goffen, "Icon and Vision: Giovanni Bellini's Half-Length Madonnas," *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 4 (Dec. 1975), 487–8, and William McNeil, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 97, on Greek learning and printing. Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 197n83, citing Giorgio Fedalto, *Ricerche storiche sulla posizione giuridica ed ecclesiastica dei greci a Venezia nei secoli XVI e XVII* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, Editore, 1967).

²⁷ Ottavio Rossi, *Elogi Historica di Bresciani Illustri* (Brescia: Forni, 1620), 502.

²⁸ For the provenance of the London version see Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 352, 356–8.

²⁹ Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie Dell'Arte*, 1648 (Padova: Tipografia e Fanderia Cartallier, 1835), 354–5.

³⁰ The provenance of the Berlin version before the nineteenth century is unknown, but the presence on the frame of the seal of the new Accademia in Venice, established by Napoleonic Decree in 1807, was noted by Erich Schleier, "Savoldos 'Magdalena' in der Berliner Gemäldegalerie. Zur Wiederherstellung eines Meisterwerks der Brescianer Cinquecentomalerei," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 33 (1991): 136. The painting was certainly in Edward Solly's collection in Berlin by late 1818, as it appears in inventories made then (Dr. Robert Skwirblies, pers. comm., 2015). It was recorded as a work of Caroto: *Verhüllte junge Frau, Kniestück* (cloaked young woman, kneepiece). In the nineteenth-century Königliche museum catalogues, it was attributed to Savoldo and was recorded simply as a "female figure," but by the 1870s it was commonly referred to as a "Venetian" woman after the link with the London painting, which was interpreted as being set in Venice, had been established: *Eine Venezianerin*, "Venetian Lady" (Giovanni Morelli, *Italian Masters in German Galleries*, trans. Louise M. Richter [London: George Bell & Sons, 1883], 408), or "Venetian Girl" (J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, *History of Painting in North Italy*, 1871 [London: John Murray, 1912], 317).

³¹ On restoration see Schleier, "Savoldos 'Magdalena,'" 135–47.

- ³² *Gemäldegalerie Berlin*, Museum Guide (Munich: Prestel, 1998), entry by Matthias Weniger, 140–1.
- ³³ Odorici, 1853 (cited by Stradiotti, *Savoldo*, 150), and Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Painting in North Italy*, 318.
- ³⁴ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 72. The London and Florence versions are noted as including the “sunrise.” Note: The Los Angeles version, at that time, was not generally accepted as by Savoldo, and the Berlin version was restored in 1989.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 73–75.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.
- ³⁷ Monika Ingenhoff-Danhäuser, *Maria Magdalena: Heilige und Sünderin* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1984), 59–61, is most often cited in relation to the interpretation as a Venetian courtesan, with discussion in Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348; and Tawny Sherrill, “Who was Cesare Vecellio?” in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 5, eds. Robin Netherton and Gale Owen-Crocker (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), 185–7. Nichols, “Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 198, also suggests that a multivalent interpretation also allows the viewer to interpret as a portrait of a former prostitute.
- ³⁸ Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348.
- ³⁹ Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 180–9. Nichols notes that Byzantine influences may have come in part via Northern painting.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.
- ⁴¹ Textual sources cited include Pseudo-Bonaventura and Aretino, as well as the *Golden Legend*, where Jacobus de Voragine cites two important early Western authors, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (340–97), and Sedulius, the fifth-century poet (Nichols, “Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 191–5). As Nichols notes, the *Golden Legend* gives conflicting accounts of whether it was Mary Magdalene or the Virgin Mary who first met the risen Christ.
- ⁴² Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 178, 195. Note: The interchangeable identities of the Virgin Mary herself, as mother, or, stemming from commentary on the Song of Songs, as “bride,” might plausibly explain why in Savoldo’s *Magdalene*, the age of his “Mary” is not rendered consistently in all versions, and, as Nichols notes (“Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 178), in the London version she appears more “youthful.” (I thank Dr Sarah Jane Boss for pointing me to Leo Steinberg’s discussion in his article “The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo’s *Pietàs*,” in *Studies in Erotic Art*, ed. Theodore Bowie and Cornelia Christenson [New York: Basic Books, 1970], 236–9).
- ⁴³ Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 195; Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348.
- ⁴⁴ Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 195.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 198: Nichols describes the result as a “fusion” of the two Marys, allowing a “wide-ranging commentary by a variety of viewers,” including referencing contemporary debate over Mary Magdalene’s identity, making intimations to an alternate Marian identity, and possibly even viewing as a secular portrait of a specific individual. Nichols believes the different detailing of the theme, including the background, was influenced by the “tastes and budgets” of patrons (*Ibid.*, 178).
- ⁴⁶ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 72n20. See also Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), on ruins as a metaphor for loss, 138; process and change, 141. Nichols notes use of ruins in Savoldo’s earlier variations on *Flight into Egypt* (“Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 178.)
- ⁴⁷ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 73n24; Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348.
- ⁴⁸ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 72n16; Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348.
- ⁴⁹ Weniger, *Gemäldegalerie Berlin*, 140–1.

- ⁵⁰ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Painting in North Italy*, 318.
- ⁵¹ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*", 70.
- ⁵² Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348.
- ⁵³ The London and Florence paintings have been interpreted as having a dawn setting by both Pardo ("Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 72) and Penny (*National Gallery Catalogues*, 348). The background in the Gerini engraving resembles the Florence painting (Stradiotti, *Savoldo Pittore Bresciano*, 133), which Pardo also interprets as a dawn sky (Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 72n16). There is no fundamental optical difference between a sunset and a sunrise, although the sun rises at an angle and to the right, which does appear suggested by the Florence version.
- ⁵⁴ Yrjö Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 69, 492n9; Ilene Haering Forsyth, "Magi and Majesty: A Study of Romanesque Sculpture and Liturgical Drama," *The Art Bulletin* 50, no. 3 (Sept. 1968): 222; Barbara G. Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece: Sacramental Themes in Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 100.
- ⁵⁵ Karl Young, "The Origin of the Easter Play," in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 29, no. 1 (1914): 49; Neil Brooks, *The Sepulcher of Christ in Art and Liturgy* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1921), 59–61; Karl Young, *The Drama of the English Church*, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), Appendix A on "The Easter Sepulcher."
- ⁵⁶ In Venice traditional themes for altarpieces at the start of the sixteenth century were the Virgin and Child enthroned, or airborne, and the Coronation. See Peter Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 224, 304–8.
- ⁵⁷ Timothy Verdon, *Mary in Western Art* (2004; Manchester, VT: Hudson Hills Press, 2005), 19, 56–9. On altarpieces see also John Shearman, *Only Connect . . . : Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 71–72. On the Virgin and the Eucharist see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 142–7.
- ⁵⁸ Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece*, 13–35. Whilst Craig Harbison, *Jan van Eyck: The Play of Realism* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 1991), 91, has questioned whether Mary actually stands *for* the altar, in that Mary was the original support for the Christ-Child symbolised *by* the altar: that there exists an association between Mary and altar and tabernacle is nevertheless clear. On the association with the tabernacle, Lane cites twelfth- to fourteenth-century literary sources. See also Carol Purtle, *The Marian Paintings of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 6–8.
- ⁵⁹ Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, 74–76, points to the traditional metaphors for the Virgin, which include Ara Coeli (Altar of Heaven).
- ⁶⁰ Keith Christiansen, "Giovanni Bellini and the Practice of Devotional Painting," in *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion*, ed. Ronda Kasl (Indiana: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2004), 38.
- ⁶¹ Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 182n24: "Savoldo married a widow from Tiel, to which he may have travelled." Beverly Louise Brown, "From Hell to Paradise: Landscape and Figure in Early Sixteenth-Century Venice," in *Renaissance Venice and the North*, eds. Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 428–9, 444, 474. Cited in Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 182, 187.
- ⁶² Michael Jacobsen, "Savoldo and Northern Art," in *The Art Bulletin* 56, no. 4 (Dec. 1974): 534.
- ⁶³ Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, 74–76, 206. Rona Goffen, *Piety and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 53, has also argued in relation to Bellini's *Frari Triptych* in the Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice (ca. 1485) that Mary actually occupies the place of the altar and the Child is meant to be identified with the Eucharist.

⁶⁴ Katherine Brown, *Mary of Mercy in Medieval and Renaissance Italian Art* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 98; Catherine Oakes, *Ora Pro Nobis: The Virgin as Intercessor in Medieval Art and Devotion* (Turnhout: Harvey Millar, 2008), 219–21; and Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 454. Also, see Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 86, on the “illusionistic stone tabernacle” on the frame of Titian’s altarpiece for Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari in Venice (ca. 1515–18).

⁶⁵ Nagel, “Experiments in Art and Reform,” 403–9. See also Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, 52–53; and Stephen Campbell, “Renaissance Naturalism and the Jewish Bible,” in *Judaism and Christian Art*, eds. Herbert Kessler and David Nirenberg (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 295–300 in relation to Brescia and the increase in devotional focus on the Eucharist.

⁶⁶ Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, 52, 291.

⁶⁷ Verdon, *Mary in Western Art*, 166–168, 217; Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 337–8.

⁶⁸ Susan Haskins, *Vittoria Colona, Chiara Matraini and Lucrezia Marinella: Who is Mary?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 19.

⁶⁹ Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 170, 180, 184–5.

⁷⁰ Steinberg, “Michelangelo’s *Pietà*,” 265–8.

⁷¹ Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 184–5.

⁷² Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 280–1.

⁷³ When the vase of ointment acts as an attribute of Mary Magdalene it is generally shown with a lid. See James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art*, rev. ed. (1974; London: Murray, 1996), 318.

⁷⁴ The analogy of a woman to a container is found in classical mythology. See Ellen Reeder, “Women as Containers,” in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. Ellen Reeder, (Baltimore, MD: Walters Art Gallery, 1995), 195–9. The second-century Greek physician Soranus noted that “a woman’s body is closed when she is a virgin, but once she has first engaged in sexual intercourse, she becomes like an unstopped jar” (Lorenzo Garcia Jr, “G. W. Pabst’s Hesiodic Myth of Sex in *Die Büchse der Pandora* (1929),” in *Screening Love and Sex in the Ancient World*, ed. Monica Cyrino [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 17–18). The “alchemical vase” is also said to be “the mother’s womb, in which new birth takes shape, hence the belief that the vase holds the secret of transmutation” (Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, eds., *Dictionary of Symbols*, rev. ed. [1982; London: Penguin, 1996], 1061). The interment of bodies in all types of ceramic vessels, known as pot burials or jar burials, was a widespread practice in the ancient world, and a number of scholars have proposed the analogy with the womb, with the possible implication being that the practice assisted in a metaphorical rebirth (R. Power and Y. Tristant, “From Refuse to Rebirth: Repositioning the Pot Burial in the Egyptian Archaeological Record,” *Antiquity* 90, no. 354 [2016]: 1474–88.)

⁷⁵ Francesco Frangi, *Savoldo: Catalogo completo* (Firenze: Cantini, 1992), 86, observes “some books and a vase of flowers” on the shelf. However, the vase appears sealed with its lid on. Two books, one either side of the vase, stand upright, which may represent the Old and New Testaments, with the Annunciation marking the transition from one era to the next. See discussion on two books on the shelf in Jan van Eyck’s fifteenth century Ghent Altarpiece *Annunciation* in Purtle, *Jan van Eyck*, 26n41.

⁷⁶ Quoted by Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 339.

⁷⁷ Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 336–41.

⁷⁸ Hall, *Subjects & Symbols in Art*, 263, argues that after the Council of Trent it became more usual to see Christ standing before a closed tomb. See also Stefano Zuffi, *Gospel Figures in Art*, 2002, trans. Thomas Hartmann (Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 2003), 338–42.

⁷⁹ Elly Cassee and Kees Berserik, “The Iconography of the Resurrection: A Re-Examination of the Risen Christ Hovering above the Tomb,” *The Burlington Magazine* 126, no. 970 (Jan. 1984): 20–24.

⁸⁰ The angel appeared radiant with light in a similar fashion to how the transfigured Christ is described in Matthew (17:2).

⁸¹ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 294–7; Natalia Teteriatnikov, “When Art Depicts Ritual: The Salerno Plaque with The Women at the Tomb,” in *The Salerno Ivories*, eds. Francesca Dell’Acqua, Anthony Cutler, Herbert L. Kessler, Avinoam Shalem, and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2016), 167–78, 176–7. See also Colin Morris, *The Sepulcher of Christ and the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113–4; and Barbara G. Lane, “‘Depositio et Elevatio’: The Symbolism of the Seilern Triptych,” *The Art Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (Mar. 1975): 21–30.

⁸² Teteriatnikov, “When Art Depicts Ritual,” 175; Young, *Drama of the English Church*, vol. 2, 510, on the sepulcher as “a small structure or receptacle upon the altar-table”; also see vol. 1, 115. Mention in Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 69.

⁸³ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 81–83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸⁵ David Rosand, *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto*, 2nd revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 51–57. The main attribute of divine light in Byzantine and early Christian art has been said to relate less to its hue than to its luminosity; see Gage, *Colour and Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 58; Dominic Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 147–8. Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 183, highlights that with new oil-based paints Savoldo is able to achieve effects analogous to Venetian mosaics. For the influence of Byzantine mosaic arts upon Renaissance Venice, see Caroline Campbell, “The Bellini, Bessarion and Byzantium,” 54; and Paul Hills, *Venetian Colour: Marble, Mosaic, Painting and Glass 1250–1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 47–55.

⁸⁶ Frangi, “Tiziano e Brescia,” 22.

⁸⁷ Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 351.

⁸⁸ Dorothy Lee, *Transfiguration* (London: Continuum, 2004), 2; Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 164.

⁸⁹ Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions*, 3rd edition 1926, trans. John Steely (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Publications, 1978), 334.

⁹⁰ Stradiotti, *Savoldo*, 146.

⁹¹ Frangi, “Tiziano e Brescia,” 22.

⁹² Nichols, “Rethinking Savoldo’s *Magdalenes*,” 183–5.

⁹³ Nichols highlighted Savoldo’s use of red dresses in his paintings of the Virgin. *Ibid.*, 183.

⁹⁴ Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 467–8. For early textual references to Christ as the divine Sun see Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 85.

⁹⁵ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 75.

⁹⁶ Oakes, *Ora Pro Nobis*, 169–72. See also Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 465. Aurora was the Roman goddess of the dawn, corresponding with the Greek goddess Eos, who renews herself every morning announcing the arrival of the sun, and in Homer’s *Iliad* she wears a “robe of saffron” to “bring light to mortals and immortals” (19.1).

⁹⁷ Verdon, *Mary in Western Art*, 9 and 19. See also Patrick Reuterswärd, *The Visible and Invisible in Art* (Vienna: IRSA, 1991), 45–56; Herbert Kessler and Johanna Zacharias, *Rome 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 118–24; also see Claudia Cieri Via, “The Invisible in the Visible: The ‘Annunciation’ by Antonello da Messina from Narrative to Icon,” *IKON* 9 (2016): 263.

⁹⁸ Rosand, *Sixteenth-Century Venice*, 53; Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 467; Loren Partridge, *Art of Renaissance Venice 1400–1600* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 137–41 suggests radiance contained within a cloud evoking Ecclesiasticus chapter 24:6–7, which alludes to the “Virgin as the vessel of the incarnate divine light and as the universal Church.”

- ⁹⁹ Rosand, *Sixteenth-Century Venice*, 53. See also Purtle, *Jan van Eyck*, 31.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ambrose, “Fulget Ecclesia non suo sed Christi lumine,” cited in *30 Days: In the Church and in the World* (2009), http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_21714_l3.htm.
- ¹⁰¹ Early Syriac Christian writings interwove the “Church” and “Mary” as types (Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* [London: Cambridge University Press, 1975], 142–7, 334). In the West, Ambrose connected Mary with certain verses in the Song of Songs (Michael O’Carroll, *Theotokos: A Theological Encyclopaedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 1982 [Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986], 327–8), but it was only after commentary on the Canticum in the twelfth century that the Church and Mary were more widely equated. Following Ephesians 5:24–33, Christ was identified with the “bridegroom,” as he was in relation to the nineteenth Psalm, and the “bride” was identified with the “church,” who was later equated with Mary. See Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 1 (New York: Icon Editions, 1971), 145; Marilyn A. Lavin and Irving Lavin, *The Liturgy of Love: Images from the Song of Songs* (Lawrence, KN: Spencer Museum of Art, 2001), 1–2; Oakes, *Ora Pro Nobis*, 31 and 213–9.
- ¹⁰² Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*, 465; Paul Hills, *The Light of Early Italian Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 14. The thirteenth-century *Coronation of the Virgin* mosaic in the apse of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome includes a sun below Christ’s feet and a moon beneath Mary’s (see Kessler and Zacharias, *Rome 1300*, 142; Verdon, *Mary in Western Art*, 16, 40 and Fig. 33.).
- ¹⁰³ Haskins, *Who is Mary?*, 19.
- ¹⁰⁴ Hills, *Early Italian Painting*, 14.
- ¹⁰⁵ Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols*, 167; Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15. Also 1 Cor.13:12: “Now we see in a glass darkly, then we shall see face to face.”
- ¹⁰⁶ The London version was described by Adolfo Venturi, *Storia Dell’Arte Italiana* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, 1928), 764–5, as moonlight reflected on water. While S.J. Freedburg, *Painting in Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 343, describes Mary in the London variant as having a “shining moonlit mantle” which “reflects, as from a counter-moon.”
- ¹⁰⁷ Sanders, *Paul*, 82–83.
- ¹⁰⁸ Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 108–11, highlights that as a result the prophets are occasionally depicted inside a mandorla.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.
- ¹¹⁰ Sebastian Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” 1982, in *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology*, ed. Sebastian Brock (Hampshire UK: Variorum; Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1992), 15–16.
- ¹¹¹ Ephrem, “His mother, whose body he had put on, put on his glory,” cited in Brock, “Clothing metaphors,” 24.
- ¹¹² Brock, “Clothing metaphors,” 11, 22.
- ¹¹³ See discussion on the painting in Bayer, “Brescia and Bergamo”, 111–2. When in the Duomo Vecchio the painting is said to have been the object of great popular devotion. The painting may also reference the seamless robe referred to in the Gospel of John (19:23).
- ¹¹⁴ Goffen, “Icon and Vision,” 496–8.
- ¹¹⁵ See Stefania Buganza, “La Formazione di Romanino e Moretto e l’Esempio Di Tiziano,” in *Tiziano e la pittura del Cinquecento tra Venezia e Brescia*, ed. Francesco Frangi (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2018), 52–57. Also on Moretto’s *Holy Family with Saint Anthony of Padua* (ca. 1522–26) see Andrea Bayer “Cose bresciane de Cinquecento: A new devotional Painting by Moretto da Brescia,” in *Coming About... A Festschrift for John Shearman*, eds. Lars R. Jones and Louisa C. Matthew (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums, 2001), 123–6.

- ¹¹⁶ Purtle, *Jan van Eyck*, 159.
- ¹¹⁷ Goffen, "Icon and Vision," 496–8.
- ¹¹⁸ Sanders, *Paul*, 36.
- ¹¹⁹ Stephen Benko, *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 107, 135–6.
- ¹²⁰ Haskins, *Who is Mary?*, 19. On the *Maria in Sole* motif see Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 1965 (Doornspijk, Netherlands: Davaco, 1984), 27 and John Decker, *The Technology of Salvation and the Art of Geetgen tot Sint Jans* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 37–65; Geertgen tot Sint Jans' *Maria in Sole* once formed part of a diptych.
- ¹²¹ Anna Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of An Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1986), 73–74; Leena Mari Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 158–60,
- ¹²² Ibid., 158–60. See also O'Carroll, *Theotokos*, 8–9.
- ¹²³ Peltomaa, *The Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, 159–60, 133–4. Peltomaa dates the Akathistos Hymn to between 431 and 451.
- ¹²⁴ The Virgin and Child altarpiece is of the *in aria* type: see Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 163–5. Also, see Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, 139–40, 308.
- ¹²⁵ For example Partridge, *Art of Renaissance Venice*, 140.
- ¹²⁶ Rosand, *Sixteenth-Century Venice*, 43.
- ¹²⁷ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 72, argues that the sunrise "can be broadly taken as a conventional allusion to the Resurrection." A dark background with dawn breaking notably features in Titian's *Resurrection*, Averoldi Altarpiece, 1521 (San Nazaro e Celso, Brescia). It is also worth noting that scholars have highlighted the use of the Virgin Mary's veil in Byzantine and early medieval Western art to reference Christ's birth. See Henry Maguire, "Body, Clothing, Metaphor: The Virgin in Early Byzantine Art," in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Mary B. Cunningham (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 46; Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Threads of Authority: The Virgin Mary's Veil in the Middle Ages," in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Stewart Gordon (New York, Palgrave, 2001), 64.
- ¹²⁸ Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 71.
- ¹²⁹ Schleier, "Savoldo's 'Magdalena,'" 138.
- ¹³⁰ Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Dictionary of Symbols*, 169–70. The cave is the archetype of the maternal womb and the place of rebirth. There is a cave opening in Leonardo da Vinci's *The Virgin of the Rocks*, 1483–86 (Paris, Louvre).
- ¹³¹ In Christian art the color blue has been used to denote the boundary between earth and heaven, or as symbolic of heaven itself (Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing* [Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000], 204; Hall, *Subjects & Symbols in Art*, 324). Ultramarine is seen as a fitting pigment for the robe of the Queen of Heaven (Hills, *Early Italian Painting*, 26).
- ¹³² "Upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen, in a vesture of gold," Psalm XLV, ver. 9 (from Saint Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms Vol.1.*, ed. and trans. Arthur Cleveland Coxe, (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1886), 240; para. 22. Nichols, "Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 184–5, cites Atwater (1956).
- ¹³³ Cited by Verdon, *Mary in Western Art*, 217. The reformer Savonarola also pointed to the paradox of the Virgin's lament: "She did not appear entirely sad, but happy and sad" (cited by Alexander Nagel, "Christ in Ecstasy: The Passion According to Michelangelo & Rosso," in *Coming About . . . A Festschrift for John Shearman*, 243–50, 243.)

- ¹³⁴ Lane, *The Altar and the Altarpiece*, 27, cites *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (ca. 1324) and refers to numerous hymns of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Also see Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 87, citing Petrus Thomae from ca. 1316–27.
- ¹³⁵ Goffen, “Icon and Vision”, 497–8, cites letter to Hebrews.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid.
- ¹³⁷ Pardo, “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 88; see also Penny, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 348–50.
- ¹³⁸ Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo*, 533.
- ¹³⁹ Vida J. Hull, “The Sex of the Saviour in Renaissance Art: The *Revelations* of Saint Bridget and the Nude Christ Child in Renaissance Art,” in *Studies in Iconography* 15 (1993): 77–112. Also see Brown, “From Hell to Paradise,” 428, 474.
- ¹⁴⁰ Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo*, 533; Pardo “Savoldo’s *Magdalene*,” 86n70. See also John Moffitt, “The Veiled Metaphor in Hugo van der Goes’ Berlin *Nativity*: Isaiah and Jeremiah, or Mark and Paul?” *Oud Holland* 100, no. 3/4 (1986): 157–64.
- ¹⁴¹ Moffitt, “The Veiled Metaphor,” 158–60. With reference also to Exodus 34:33–35, see Brock, “Jacob of Serugh,” 70–85. *Velatio/revelatio* has separately been identified as a word play that derives from Augustine: Catherine Tkacz, “Velatio,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1999), 864; Catherine Tkacz, *The Key to the Brescia Casket: Typology and the Early Christian Imagination* (Paris: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 96–98.
- ¹⁴² Nagel, “Experiments in Art and Reform,” 182, 295.
- ¹⁴³ Lucas Cranach the Elder, who is known for the illustration of Lutheran doctrine, in his *Allegory of the Law and the New Testament* etching (ca. 1530), stresses the distinction between the Old and New Testaments, between Moses’ Commandments and Christ’s Gospel, which was a “fundamental dialectic in Luther’s thought.” See Chrysa Dami-anaki, “Pontormo’s Lost Frescoes in San Lorenzo, Florence: A Reappraisal of their Religious Content,” in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Abigail Brundin and Mathew Treherne (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 91–93. See also Sergiusz Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 22–23: Luther wrote: “Moses does not concern us” in the treatise *Instruction on how the Christians should use Moses*, published in 1527. On the Christological veil motif see John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 122–3, 267.
- ¹⁴⁴ Firpo, *Italian Reformation*, 41–47.
- ¹⁴⁵ Translation here is that of Dorothy Lee as given in: Lee, *Transfiguration*, 112–13 (with emphasis added to 3:16).
- ¹⁴⁶ George Caird, “Everything to Everyone: The Theology of the Corinthian Epistles,” in *Interpretations* 13 (1959): 391–2.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 391–2. See also N. T. Wright, “Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 144–5. Wright favors the translation “*behold* as in a mirror,” but some, e.g. Sanders, *Paul*, 39, 82, still prefer “*reflect*.” Whilst the gospel accounts of the Transfiguration, in Matthew and Mark, are of an external visible transformation of Christ, the “transfiguration” in 2 Cor. 3:18 is generally seen as an internal transformation of believers.
- ¹⁴⁸ Heinrich Schwarz, “The Mirror of the Artist and the Mirror of the Devout,” in *Studies in the History of Art Dedicated to William E Suida on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Rush H. Kress (London: Phaidon Press, 1959), 104. Also in the thirteenth century Mary is described as the mirror reflecting the sun by Conrad of Saxony in *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis* (Jeffrey F. Hamburger, “Speculations on Speculation,” in *Deutsche Mystic im abendländischen Zusammenhang*, ed. Walter Haug and Wolfram Schneider-Lastin [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000], 368). See also the earlier discussion on the equation of Mary with the moon.

¹⁴⁹ *Book of Wisdom* 7:26; Schwarz, "The Mirror of the Artist," 99; Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, 148; Purtle, *Jan van Eyck*, 124.

¹⁵⁰ Schwarz, "The Mirror of the Artist," 101–5; Read Mercer Schuchardt, "The Reformation as Media Event," in *The People's Book*, ed. Jennifer Powell McNutt and David Lauber (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 91–5. For examples of variants see H.J.E. van Beuningen, A.M. Koldeweij and D. Kicken, *Heilig en Profaan 2: 1200 Laatmiddeleeuwse insigne suit openbare en particuliere collecties* (Cothen: Stichting Middeleeuwse Religieuze en Profane Insignes, 2001), 310–25.

¹⁵¹ The Aachen pilgrim's mirror usually contained three interconnecting circles, or mandorla, with Christ at the top and the Virgin Mary, or occasionally the enthroned Emperor, in the bottom circle. The small central connecting circle is believed to have contained a small glass mirror. However, Gutenberg's 1439 version does not appear to have contained a glass mirror as such; rather, the gown itself, part of the metal plate with a mesh pattern, may have functioned metaphorically as the mirror (see Schuchardt, "The Reformation as Media Event," 91–95).

¹⁵² Gilbert, *The Works of Girolamo Savoldo*, 323, 376, 444.

¹⁵³ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 72.

¹⁵⁴ Sixten Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-Up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 1965 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1984), 39–71. The fifteenth-century development of the visual aid to private piety is termed by Ringbom the "dramatic close-up." On the half-length, which has been seen as closely associated with portraiture, and holy images, see also Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 25–27.

¹⁵⁵ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 72. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 59 refers to three-quarter length in the fifteenth century.

¹⁵⁶ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 80–81. Besides the clothed type there was a nude type, which was represented primarily by Titan's *Mary Magdalene Repentant* (Palazzo Pitti, Florence, ca. 1531–55).

¹⁵⁷ Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 93–106.

¹⁵⁸ Goffen, "Icon and Vision," 496.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 496–8. See also Christiansen, "Giovanni Bellini and the Practice of Devotional Painting," in *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion*, ed. Ronda Kasl (Indiana: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 2004), 32.

¹⁶⁰ Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 77. Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," (190n51 and 195n73) also considers the painting in her discussion on Savoldo's *Magdalene*.

¹⁶¹ James Breckenridge, "Et Prima Vidit': The Iconography of the Appearance of Christ to His Mother," in *The Art Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (Mar. 1957): 15–18; Euthymios Tsigaridas, "The Mother of God in Wall-Paintings," in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan: Skira, 2000), 133. The origins of the tradition date back in textual sources to at least the second century (Stephen Shoemaker, *Mary In Early Christian Faith and Devotion* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016], 84–86).

¹⁶² For the narrative scheme of the Resurrection of Christ, in the East after the sixth century, scholars have identified the Virgin Mary as being included in versions of the Holy Women at the Tomb, as well as in the Chairete motif where two Marys are depicted meeting the risen Christ based on Matthew 28:9. See Tsigaridas, "The Mother of God," 133; Haskins, *Who is Mary?*, 9; and Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 190.

¹⁶³ Erwin Panofsky, *Problems in Titian: Mostly Iconographic* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 39–41. Depictions in an interior setting are considered to be based on the fourteenth-century Pseudo-Bonaventura's account of Mary being at home (see Nichols, "Rethinking Savoldo's *Magdalenes*," 193).

¹⁶⁴ Breckenridge, "Et Prima Vidit'," 26–27. The most frequently cited example of this is a panel from Rogier van der Weyden's *Miraflores Altarpiece* (1440–44), which has been suggested became a model for the Annunciation type. Dirk De Vos, *Rogier van der Weyden: The Complete Works* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1999), 230.

- ¹⁶⁵ In early Christian iconography the raising of the right hand is also a more general gesture of worship (Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "On the Visual and the Vision: The Magdalene in Early Christian and Byzantine Art and Culture," in *Mariam, the Magdalen and the Mother*, ed. Deirdre Good [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005], 141).
- ¹⁶⁶ Antonello de Saliba is believed to have lived in Venice between 1480 and 1497.
- ¹⁶⁷ Pericolo, "The Invisible Presence," 3–4; Pardo, "Savoldo's *Magdalene*," 76–77.
- ¹⁶⁸ Hans Belting, "The Invisible Icon and the Icon of the Invisible: Antonello and New Paradigms in Renaissance Painting," in *Watching Art: Writings in Honour of James Beck*, ed. Lynn Catterson and Mark Zucker (Perugia: Edart, 2006), 77.
- ¹⁶⁹ In relation to icons from the East, Annemarie Weyl Carr has pointed to the centrality of the Mother, and to a need in understanding such icons to associate the iconic with Mary herself. Annemarie Weyl Carr, "The 'Virgin Veiled by God': The Presentation of an Icon," in *Reading Medieval Images*, ed. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Tomas (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 215–27.
- ¹⁷⁰ Cieri Via, "The Invisible in the Visible," 261–8. The formal classification as an "icon" is challenged by Pericolo, "The Invisible Presence," 24.
- ¹⁷¹ Belting, "The Invisible Icon and the Icon of the Invisible," 75–6. See also Giuseppe Capriotti, "Defining the Boundaries of the Lawful Cult: History of an Adriatic Icon," *IKON* 9 (2016): 243–6. It has recently been suggested that the Fermo icon, which is generally assumed to be an image of the Virgin Annunciate rather than a Lamenting Virgin, was a depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin emulating a Byzantine icon. See Elizabeth Yoder Ross, "Framing the Holy: Revetments on Late Byzantine Icons" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2016), <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/82410>.
- ¹⁷² Shearman, *Only Connect*, 33–107; Robert Nelson, "To Say and to See," in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, ed. Robert Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 158–9; Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 3–7.
- ¹⁷³ In relation to Antonello's *Annunciate*, Pericolo ("The Invisible Presence," 9–10) argues that the beholder only attends as a witness.
- ¹⁷⁴ Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 182, 184, 274n60: "Colonna thus preserved a role for the Virgin but subsumed it firmly within a Christocentric orientation." According to Nagel, Colonna, whose text *Pianto* may have been composed between 1539 and 1542, offered a "reformed" version of the Catholic tradition of Marian piety, but she nonetheless gave a special role to the Virgin. Furthermore, as regards Savoldo's paintings, these need to be seen in the context of the particular importance of the Virgin Mary in Venice, in what has been called a "Cult of the Madonna" (Goffen, *Piety and Patronage*, 138–54). It may also be noted here that Martin Luther was relatively tolerant of Marian images provided they did not deny the primacy of Christ (Michalski, *The Reformation and the Visual Arts*, 36).
- ¹⁷⁵ Bowd, *Reform Before the Reformation*, 218; Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies*, chap. 3. For interpretation of Rom 3:28 see Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1996), 250–1.
- ¹⁷⁶ Firpo, *Italian Reformation*, 44, citing Juan de Valdés (c.1500–1541), on whose thoughts the *Beneficio di Cristo* was largely based.
- ¹⁷⁷ Jung, "On the Nature of Evangelism," 523; Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience*, 14; Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 179n43.
- ¹⁷⁸ Nagel, *Reform of Art*, 179, 271n45.
- ¹⁷⁹ Nagel, "Experiments in Art and Reform," 395–7. See also Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 39 and 88–95.

¹⁸⁰ Sixten Ringbom, "Maria In Sole and the Virgin of the Rosary," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 25, no. 3-4 (1962): 326–30, 328; Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative*, 19–22; Decker, *The Technology of Salvation*, 135; Klaus Krüger, "Authenticity and Fiction: On the Pictorial Construction of Inner Presence in Early Modern Italy," in *Image and Imagination*, eds. Reindert L. Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 37 ("per visibilia ad invisibilia").

¹⁸¹ Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2004), 161; Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 544–5, quoting Nicholas of Cusa: "I presently only contemplate eternal life as in a mirror, an icon, a symbolism," . . . The one who looks unto You does not bestow form upon You; rather, he beholds himself in You . . . the beholder is the image."

¹⁸² Koerner, *Reformation of the Image*, 159–61.

¹⁸³ Walter S. Melion, "Introduction," in *Image and Imagination*, eds. Reindert L. Falkenburg, Walter S. Melion and Todd M. Richardson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3–11. The author of *Die Grote evangelische Peerle* stated that "Any approach to the formless image of divinity is solely by way of this mirror of and in the soul."

¹⁸⁴ Campbell, "Renaissance Naturalism," 295–316: The Brescians sought to go beyond the model of "poetic invention" adopted by Titian amongst others. Also see Bayer, "Brescia and Bergamo," 111–2, citing various works by Valerio Guazzoni published in the 1980s.

¹⁸⁵ Following the resurrection the transformed body would not be a "natural" body (i.e. a walking corpse), but it would be a "spiritual" body (1 Cor. 15:44, 46). For a Pauline overview see "the nature of the resurrection" in Sanders, *Paul*, 35–37.

¹⁸⁶ Nagel, "Experiments in Art and Reform", 394: describes Rosso Fiorentino's *Dead Christ (with Angels)* of 1527 (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts), as having undergone a process of transmutation, which Platonizing humanists at the time called *immutatio*, into "subtler spiritual form" to become a "body that is there and not there": the resurrected "body that can pass through walls, the body that Mary Magdalene is allowed to see but not touch, or, conversely, the body that the apostle Thomas can probe forensically and yet, at Emmaus, disappears from one moment to the next."

¹⁸⁷ Krüger, "Authenticity and Fiction," 48–49.

¹⁸⁸ Stephen Campbell and Michael Cole, *A New History of Italian Renaissance Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), 525.

¹⁸⁹ Breckenridge, "Et Prima Vidit," 28–32.

¹⁹⁰ Crowe and Cavalcaselle, *Painting in North Italy*, 318.

¹⁹¹ 1 Cor. 15:44, 46.

¹⁹² I thank Dr Sarah Jane Boss for pointing me to Julia Kristeva's 1977 essay "Stabat Mater," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1-2 (1985), 144.

¹⁹³ Sanders, *Paul*, 82, suggests Christians being changed from one glory to another in 2 Cor. 3:18 recalls 1 Cor. 15:40.

¹⁹⁴ See note 174 above.