A Terracotta Relief of the Agony in the Garden by Massimiliano Soldani Benzi

KATE McCLUER

SINCE THE PUBLICATION of Klaus Lankheit's seminal *Florentinische Barockplastik* in 1962, the sculpture of Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (1656–1740) has been the subject of study both in the United States and abroad. Special attention has been paid to the small works in bronze, several high-quality examples of which can be found in American museums. The artist's relief sculpture, however, is perhaps less widely known, and a comprehensive study of his medals and pictorial reliefs has yet to appear, in spite of the fact that Soldani's earliest Roman training was in the art of *basso rilievo* and that by far the largest part of his extant works is in two dimensions.

Any discussion of the reliefs of Massimiliano Soldani should include the finely modeled terracotta relief of Christ's Agony in the Garden in the Metropolitan Museum.[1] In common with many of Soldani's works, the relief is not documented and has no firm date; recent attempts to place it in the period between 1695 and 1708 are to my mind stylistically unconvincing.[2] The piece has no established provenance before 1910 and no known patron, and the object's function and meaning and the way in which it was intended to be displayed have not been sufficiently explored. It is precisely the questions of dating, iconography, purpose, and style that I wish to address here. In the course of discussion, Soldani's position among the sculptors of the Florentine late Baroque may emerge with greater clarity.

The composition of the *Agony in the Garden*, which is modeled in a pale, buff-colored clay, consists of twelve figures set in a rocky landscape (Figure 1). The figure of Christ, slightly off center, is flanked by two adult angels. The angel on the right supports the limp body of Christ, while the one on the left, shown as if arriving on the scene, holds a chalice aloft in his right hand. These figures are modeled in very deep relief, and the gradated treatment of the clouds to the left makes a beautifully modulated transition from the back plane of the relief to the foreground; the clouds serve, too, as a kind of platform on which the angel on the left stands.

Also modeled in deep relief are the three putti flying above, the topmost of whom extends his partly draped right leg in exactly the same manner as the arriving angel below. The three putti in the bottom

1. This article developed from a report given in a seminar conducted by Olga Raggio at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the fall of 1985. The relief has been published in K. Lankheit, *Florentinische Barockplastik* (Munich, 1962) p. 135, pl. 90; *Florentine Baroque Art from American Collections*, exh. cat. (New York, 1969) p. 74, no. 83; J. Montagu in *The Twilight of the Medici: Late Baroque Art in Florence, 1670–1743*, exh. cat. (Detroit, 1974) p. 102, no. 64, col. pl. II; and H. Hibbard, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980) p. 296, fig. 561. The relief was purchased from the German dealer Böhler in 1910 as "in the manner of Bernini"; the attribution was changed by the Museum to Bernini. In 1935 the work was described as "Italian, XVIII–XIX century," and in 1961 it was attributed to Massimiliano Soldani Benzi, "XVII–XVIII century."

2. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, p. 135, admits some doubt as to whether the work is early or late, dating it between 1685 and 1730—this encompasses almost the whole of Soldani's documented career. He narrows the range to 1691–95 on the basis of the work's similarity to the bronze relief of the *Pietà* in Munich (fig. 89; see Figure 12). Montagu, *Twilight of the Medici*, p. 102, dates the terracotta to 1695–1708; it is at present exhibited with this date.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM JOURNAL 22

1, 2. Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (1656–1740), *The Agony in the Garden*. Terracotta relief, 23¾ × 16 in. (60.3 × 40.6 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 10.180

right corner of the composition (Figure 2) hold up a cloth decorated with the symbols of Christ's Passion: the column, scourge, three nails, pincers, lance, sponge with vinegar, and the crown of thorns.[3] The putto on the far right looks up and gestures toward the group of putti above, two of whom gaze downward to the central group with Christ. Immediately above the lower group of putti, and modeled in shallow *stiacciato*, are the three sleeping apostles, those who accompanied Christ to the Mount of Olives: Peter, James, and John.

The iconic nature of the work is emphasized by the arrangement of these twelve figures into four roughly triangular groups of three. This could refer

3. A similar group of three putti holding the instruments of the Passion can be found decorating a scroll on the base of a porcelain *Pietà* based on a model by Soldani and known today in several versions (see *Twilight of the Medici*, p. 420, no. 246). Their inclusion in a scene of the Agony in the Garden is a reference to Christ's vision of his coming death on the Cross. Putti or angels bearing the instruments of the Passion were part of the standard iconography of earlier representations of the scene; for an Italian example see Mantegna's *Agony in the Garden* (National Gallery, London).

2. Detail of Figure 1: putti with the instruments of the Passion

3. Soldani, *Spring*, 1708. Terracotta relief in original frame behind glass, 35⅜ × 28⅜ × 5½ in. (90 × 72 × 14 cm.). Florence, Museo degli Argenti (photo: Soprintendenza, Florence)

to the Trinity, as well as to the fact that in the Garden of Gethsemane Christ prayed three times to God the Father that the cup be removed from him and that he was presently to be denied three times by one of his own disciples. This emphasis on number symbolism, in addition to the small size of the piece, points to its probable function as an object for private devotion.

The work is not a *bozzetto* but a highly finished *modello*—as Jennifer Montagu points out, a model probably meant to be cast in bronze and then gilded or patinated as were, for example, the reliefs of the Four Seasons for Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm.[4] There is also the possibility that the relief was not just a model for a bronze now lost but was considered a work of art in its own right. The precedent for this lies in the terracotta *modelli* for the same *Four Seasons* reliefs, mentioned by Soldani in his autobiography of 1718 as "modelli de quali di terra cotta si ritrovano ancora dentro a' suoi Cristalli, nella Camera dell'Audienza del medesimo Sig.r Principe [Ferdinando de' Medici], essendosi adattato al di lui finissimo gusto."[5] Thus, Prince Ferdinando gave the finished bronzes as a royal gift and put the terracotta reliefs on display in his own palace, surrounded by decorative gilt frames and protected by glass (Figure 3). Something of a similar nature may have occurred with the terracotta *Agony in the Garden*.

The terracotta *Four Seasons* were not gilded or patinated in an attempt to disguise the fact that they were made from common clay, and neither is there any evidence for patination on the surface of the *Agony in the Garden*. The work was cleaned and restored in 1969. At that time earlier restorations, such as the raised right arm of the topmost putto visible in the photograph published by Lankheit in 1962, were removed. Most notable damage to the relief is the loss of this arm, a crack running across the bottom left corner which cuts through the right foot of the angel on the left and the knees of Christ, several small losses along the top and left edges of the relief, and the loss of most of the extended fingers of the putti. The terracotta has been mounted on a simple wooden board, which extends a few inches on all four sides. This is suggestive of the elaborate frame in which the work would have most probably been displayed.

There is no mention of the relief during Soldani's lifetime, in spite of the fact that there are quite a few surviving documents relating to the artist. These include Soldani's own autobiography of September 18, 1718; the *Vite* by Gabburri and Conti; letters by and about Soldani concerning his academic training in Rome from 1678 to 1682; much of the artist's correspondence, among it his letters to Prince Johann Adam of Liechtenstein;[6] the artist's last will and testament;[7] and the inventories of the Medici Guardaroba. Montagu connects the piece to Soldani's letter of May 31, 1695, to the prince of Liechtenstein;[8] this mentions that the artist is sending a wax model for a relief, which "staria bene di Bronzo dorato, da collocarsi vicino ad un Letto, essendo cosa devota, e di maniera finita, proprio per tale effetto."[9] Although the reference could indeed be to a wax model of the

4. Ibid., p. 102.

5. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, doc. 47, p. 233.

6. Ibid., docs. 36, 47, 51, 128–185, 298–346.

7. G. Corti, "L'inventario dell'eredità di Massimiliano Soldani Benzi," in *Kunst des Barock in der Toskana: Studien zur Kunst unter den letzten Medici* (Munich, 1976) pp. 176–181.

8. *Twilight of the Medici*, p. 102.

9. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, doc. 641, p. 328. He connects the document with the bronze *Pietà* now in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (p. 129, fig. 89; see Figure 12).

terracotta now in the Metropolitan Museum, this seems to me unlikely.

While Soldani might have offered the prince a relief of a religious subject, the works that Johann Adam actually commissioned from the artist for his palace in Vienna seem to have been of a different sort: mythological subjects, or copies either after the antique or after famous sculptures from Renaissance and Baroque masters such as Michelangelo, Algardi, and Bernini. In fact, this offer to execute a devotional piece for the prince seems to have been unique. By 1702, Soldani fully understood his patron's taste for "belli nudi e belle idee."[10] Statues of dolphins, gladiators, Greek gods, and nude cupids appear on the list of available models that he sent to the prince on February 21 of that year, but not one religious subject is mentioned among them.[11]

4. Soldani, *The Agony in the Garden*. Wax cast of Figure 1, 25⅝ × 16⅞ in. (65 × 43 cm.). Sesto Fiorentino, Museo delle Porcellane di Doccia (photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)

In addition, Soldani's letter to the prince refers to a work of 1695, and this early date is incompatible with the style of the terracotta for reasons to be discussed. The letter does, however, suggest a suitable use for a work of the type represented by the *Agony in the Garden*. A "cosa devota" such as this would be pleasing in gilt bronze, hung in the bedroom of some wealthy patron, Soldani says, perhaps above a priedieu where private devotions could be said. The high degree of finish characteristic of all Soldani's reliefs is seen at its best advantage when viewed at close range in the intimacy of a domestic space. The continued popularity of the *Agony* relief was assured by Marchese Carlo Ginori's purchase of a number of plaster molds left by the artist in his house in the Borgo Santa Croce upon his death.[12] These were reproduced with great success in inexpensive porcelain copies. A wax cast of the *Agony in the Garden* (Figure 4) and its *forme* (piece-mold sections), as well as a written reference to it in the Ginori Archives, are still to be found in the Doccia porcelain factory near Florence.[13]

The Agony in the Garden represents the spiritual struggle between the human and divine sides of Christ's nature. It has traditionally formed part of large Passion cycles—for example, Duccio's *Maestà* for Siena Cathedral, Ghiberti's bronze doors for the Florentine Baptistery, and Pontormo's fresco cycle in the Certosa di Galluzzo near Florence; beginning with the Renaissance, it proved a popular subject for small-scale devotional pieces as well.[14] Less frequently, the Agony in the Garden appears as a subsidiary scene in the background of depictions of the

10. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections*, exh. cat. (New York, 1985) p. 65.

11. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, doc. 671, pp. 334–335.

12. Ibid., doc. 351, p. 284.

13. Listed in the "Inventario de' modelli" (ca. 1780) p. 38, no. 102: "un basso-rilievo rappresentante Gesù Cristo all'Orto, *di cera*. Del Soldani, con forme." Published by K. Lankheit, *Die Modellsammlung der Porzellanmanufaktur Doccia* (Munich, 1982) p. 137.

14. For example, the glazed earthenware "Hafner-ware" panel produced in Nuremberg ca. 1480 now in the Metropolitan Museum (1977.216.61), and the small, oval piece of lapis

Last Supper.[15] Its inclusion there underscores the continuity of action in time, the Agony occurring immediately after Christ's final meal with the apostles and directly before his arrest, and gives it a visual connection to the Last Supper as a model for the rite of Holy Communion.

The relative conservatism of most Tuscan versions of the scene, which derive from Duccio and ultimately from Byzantine art, contrasts with the approach of Northern and North Italian artists such as Dürer, Tintoretto, and Palma il Giovane, for whom the human drama of Christ's nocturnal entreaties to the Father at Gethsemane provided the source material for multiple reworkings of the scene. The result was often the perfect marriage of subject matter and style. When Vasari praises the realism of Correggio's little *Agony* of 1526–28 for Reggio Emilia—"pittura finta di notte . . . che è tanto simile al vero, che non si può nè immaginare nè esprimere meglio"[16]—he recognizes in it qualities of naturalistic lighting and landscape that are conspicuously absent from most of the complex religious paintings of the Florentine *maniera*.[17]

Correggio's much-copied work depicts a pleading Christ with arms outstretched in supplication; the final quarter of the sixteenth century saw the development of a more accepting Christ as well. Characteristic of these post-Tridentine images, which seem to have enjoyed special popularity in the Veneto,[18] is the

5. Jacopo Ligozzi (ca. 1547–1626), *Christ on the Mount of Olives Supported by an Angel*, 1608. Oil on copper set into portable altar in wood with pietra dura inlay; painting, 10½ × 6¼ in. (26.7 × 15.9 cm.); altar, 23 × 13¼ × 3¼ in. (58.4 × 33.7 × 8.3 cm.). Oberlin, Ohio, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, R. T. Miller, Jr. Fund, 58.1 (photo: Allen Memorial Art Museum)

lazuli, now lost, painted with a "Cristo nel orto" for which Il Cigoli is documented as having asked the Medici Guardaroba for payment on July 12, 1602; Matteoli says that the work was possibly intended as a grand-ducal gift to a relative or foreign prince (document reprinted by A. Matteoli in *Ludovico Cardo-Cigoli, pittore e architetto* [Pisa, 1980] p. 309; see also p. 436). In addition, Michelangelo provided Marcello Venusti, a painter of small devotional panels, with a cartoon of the Agony in the Garden of which H. Thode (*Michelangelo: Kritische Untersuchungen über seine Werke* II [Berlin, 1908] p. 462) located seven painted versions.

15. Pietro Perugino (Cenacolo di Foligno, Convent of Sant'Onofrio, Florence), Cosimo Roselli (Sistine Chapel, Vatican), and the tapestry for the Compagnia del Sacramento, Camaiore, dated 1516; this last is a *Communion of the Apostles* based on that by Justus of Ghent in Urbino, and the Agony in the Garden in the background is quite close to the one designed by Raphael for the Colonna Altarpiece (see Figure 7).

16. G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi (Florence, 1906) IV, pp. 117–118. Correggio's small devotional panel is now in the Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London. Among the works influenced by it are those by Titian (Monastery of S. Lorenzo, El Escorial), Bartolomeo Cesi (S. Girolamo alla Certosa, Bologna), and a follower of Poussin (formerly Collection Anthony Blunt, London).

17. For Correggio as a precursor of the art of the Counter-Reformation see E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux après le Concile de Trente: Etude sur l'iconographie de la fin du XVIe siècle, du XVIIe siècle, du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1932) chap. VI, pp. 229–295. M. Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation* (Oxford, 1979), discusses the differing approaches of Florentine and Emilian painters to the requirements of religious art during the cinquecento; see esp. pp. 35, 85–87.

18. The Agony in the Garden with Christ supported by the angel seems to be a Venetian invention. It was seen first either

emphasis on submission rather than prayer. At the same moment that Christ mentally accepts his coming death on the cross, he accepts the physical embrace of the consoling angel, who appears only in the Gospel of Luke. These two opposing types of Christ are perhaps indicative of the inherent contradiction in the Agony in the Garden, mentioned by St. Francis of Sales in his *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* of 1616: he describes the nature of Christ's Agony as a desire for death caused by love and a horror of death caused by sorrow.[19]

The intimacy of this most private of moments in Christ's last hours on earth is beautifully rendered by the Veronese artist Jacopo Ligozzi in his tiny *Agony in the Garden* of 1608 (Figure 5), painted in jewel-like colors on copper. The subject of this portable altar has been identified by Bacci as the "swooning of Christ."[20] Only Christ and the angel are depicted, and a ray of light falls on the chalice in the upper left-hand corner to highlight its importance. The chalice is the artist's visualization of the metaphorical cup mentioned in the Gospels (Matt. 26:39, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42). Although totally without textual sanction, Christ's acceptance of this cup of bitterness, which represents his fate or lot in life, came to have eucharistic significance.

The angel who ministers to Christ on Donatello's bronze pulpit relief in S. Lorenzo in Florence, for example, holds the chalice in the corporal in the same way as does the priest during Mass. And Raphael's Christ from the *Agony* predella panel of the Colonna Altarpiece, shown kneeling in profile with hands folded in prayer, is the perfect model of the communicant before the altar (Figure 6).[21] This image was all the stronger in the original composition, visible in X-rays and in the cartoon in the Pierpont Morgan Library (Figure 7), where the chalice is not carried by an angel but stands atop the rocky mass on the right. The panel has been linked to Umbrian and Florentine painting, although not always convincingly.[22] In fact, Raphael's decision to place the chalice on the mound before which Christ kneels instead of putting it in the hands of an angel has no real parallels in Central Italian art but seems to derive from German

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in drawing no. 3070 in the Fitzwilliam Museum by Palma il Giovane (inscribed *giovane 1575*, a date accepted as autograph by J. W. Goodison and G. H. Robertson, *Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge: Catalogue of Paintings* II [Cambridge, 1967] pp. 118–119, and by D. Scrase, *The Genius of Venice: 1500–1600*, exh. cat. [London, 1983] p. 264; but rejected by H. Tietze and E. Tietze-Conrat, *The Drawings of the Venetian Painters in the XVth and XVIth Centuries* [New York, 1944] p. 201, and by S. Mason Rinaldi, *Palma il Giovane: L'opera completa* [Milan, 1984] p. 103, both of whom date the work to after 1600), or in Veronese's oil painting no. 241 in the Brera, Milan (dated ca. 1570 by L. Coletti, "Risposta alla recensione della Brizio," *L'arte* 31 [1928] p. 45, and to the 1580s by T. Pignatti, *Veronese: L'opera completa* [Venice, 1976] I, p. 167). Other examples of this type include: Palma il Giovane (Albertina, Vienna, ca. 1590; Tempio Canoviano, Possagno, 1600–04; and Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, 1600–04); Ludovico Carracci (Matthiesen Gallery, London, ca. 1600); school of Veronese (Palazzo Ducale, Venice, before 1587); Leandro Bassano (S. Cassiano, Venice, after 1600); Jacopo Ligozzi (Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, 1608); Cecco Bravo (private coll., Florence, 1650s); Rembrandt (Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 1650–55); Giuseppe Lonardi (Parrocchiale, Arzare, 1690); Francesco Trevisani (S. Silvestro in Capite, Rome, 1695–96); Antonio Balestra (private coll., London, after 1695); and the painting attributed to Carlo Maratta (Burghley House, England, after 1696). See also P. Askew, "The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969) p. 293 and n. 55.

19. F. de Sales, *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* (Paris, 1934) II, pp. 271–272.

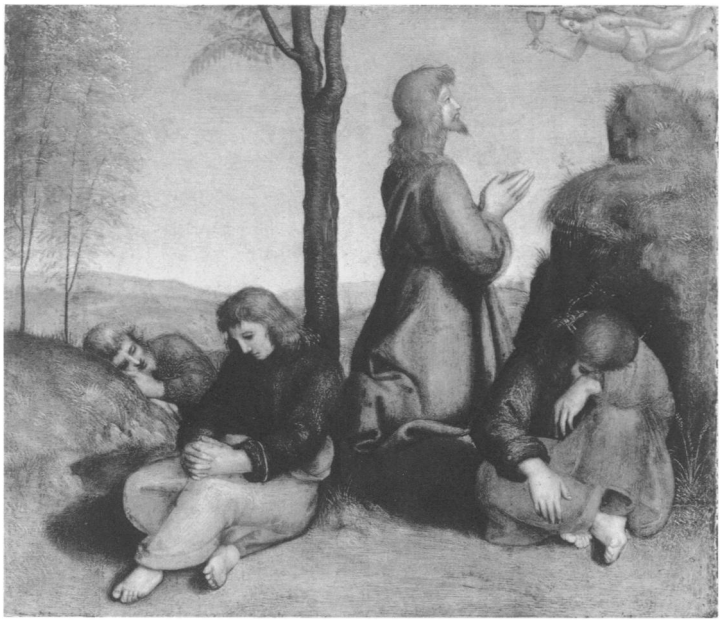
20. M. Bacci, "A Portable Altar by Ligozzi," *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 20 (1962–63) p. 47.

21. First noticed by Lady Eastlake in Mrs. Jameson and Lady Eastlake, *The History of Our Lord as Exemplified in Works of Art* (London, 1864) II, pp. 30–31, but not emphasized in the subsequent literature on the piece. For a summary of the literature see F. Zeri and E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings. A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art: Sienese and Central Italian Schools* (New York, 1980) pp. 76–78.

22. Ibid., p. 76, where it is related to the Agony Perugino painted in the background of his *Last Supper* for the convent of Sant'Onofrio, Florence, and to the scene on the embroidered cope in Piero della Francesca's *St. Augustine* (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon). The Perugino resembles the repainted panel, not Raphael's original design, while the scene on St. Augustine's cope can be related to scenes decorating actual liturgical garments of the late quattrocento, such as the richly embroidered cope designed by Justus of Ghent in Gubbio Cathedral (see A. Venturi, "Paramenti istoriati su disegno di Justus di Gand e Luca Signorelli," *L'arte* 15 [1912] pp. 299–304, fig. 1). Piero did not invent the scheme of Christ facing right in profile with hands clasped in prayer, as Zeri suggests (Zeri and Gardner, *Italian Paintings*, p. 76). This is the traditional manner of depicting Christ's Agony in the Garden and can be seen in the earliest extant examples; see the 6th-century Italian Gospels of St. Augustine (MS 286, fol. 125r), in which even the familiar details of landscape—the incline on which Christ kneels and the tree behind him—have been established (F. Wormald, *The Miniatures in the Gospels of St. Augustine, Corpus Christi College ms. 286* [Cambridge, 1954] pl. IV).

and Flemish tradition.[23] In this context one might remember the presence of Justus of Ghent at the court of Urbino from 1472 to 1475 and his influence on Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi. The unknown Umbrian artist who painted in the cup-bearing angel, possibly after completion of the altarpiece, did so in order to conform to the iconography more common in Italy.

6. Raphael (1483–1520), *The Agony in the Garden*, predella panel from the Colonna Altarpiece, 1502–05. Tempera and oil on wood, 9½ × 11⅜ in. (24.1 × 28.9 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Funds from various donors, 32.130.1



7. Raphael, cartoon for *The Agony in the Garden*, pricked for transfer. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library (photo: Pierpont Morgan Library)

The figure of Christ in prayer before a chalice standing on a rocky "altar" continued to be a feature of Northern scenes of the Agony in the Garden well into the sixteenth century, and its persistence there can perhaps be related in part to the *Kelchstreit* (chalice controversy). The Protestant reformers claimed the layman's right to receive communion under two kinds, the wine and the bread, insisting, in Luther's words, that the Mass was not a sacrifice but a mere "testament and sacrament wherein, under the seal of a symbol, a promise is made of the redemption of sin."[24] Catholics considered this heretical. In chapter 6 of his *De missae sacrificio et ritu adversus Lutheranos* of 1531, the Dominican Cardinal Cajetan stated unequivocally: "the victim by bloodshed [Christ on Calvary] and the unbloody victim [Christ's body and blood under the appearance of the bread and wine] are not two, but one victim."[25]

23. An early instance of the visual equation of Christ's prayer in the garden with the sacrament of Holy Communion is the 10th-century ivory book cover from the Rhineland now in London, where Christ kneels before an actual cloth-covered altar, on which lies a cross. The cross is replaced by the chalice and the altar by the rocky mound in works by a Central Rhenish master, ca. 1410 (Aartsbisschoppelijk Museum, Utrecht), the Master of the Golden Panel from Lüneburg, ca. 1418 (Niedersächsische Landesgalerie, Hanover), Jan Gossaert, ca. 1500–12 (Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin), an artist painting in the style of Bernaert van Orley, ca. 1510 (MMA acc. no. 41.190.14), Albrecht Dürer, 1515, etching (Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg), and Hendrick Goltzius, 1597 (Prentenkabinet, Leiden). The Venetian Jacopo Bellini experimented with this sacramental imagery in a drawing (ca. 1450) now in London (British Museum sketchbook, fol. 44a); however, the motif of the chalice atop the rocky "altar" was not picked up by his son Giovanni Bellini or by his son-in-law Andrea Mantegna in their versions of the scene (both National Gallery, London), which otherwise seem to depend on Jacopo's drawing.

24. Quoted in E. Panofsky, *Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton, 1945) I, p. 222, who notes that in Dürer's later drawings and woodcuts of the Last Supper the artist conspicuously emphasizes the sacramental chalice while eliminating the sacrificial lamb present in his earlier versions of the scene, thus appearing to profess Luther's point of view. A similar shift seems to take place in Dürer's depictions of the Agony in the Garden, which, around 1515, change from dramatic and impassioned to calm and communionlike.

25. Cited by F. Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1967) p. 88.

It is the "unbloody victim" that is presented in Ligozzi's little altarpiece (Figure 5); Christ's sacrifice is further emphasized in the small pietra dura scene of the Sacrifice of Isaac on the predella below. Both concern a father's sacrifice of his son in the presence of an angel. Moreover, the artist's decision to link the two can perhaps be understood in terms of St. Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (X.20). Augustine says that although Christ in his divine nature accepts the sacrifice in unity with his Father, with whom he is one God, yet serving in his human nature he chooses rather to be the sacrifice than to accept it, lest anyone should think that the sacrifice may instead be offered to a creature. In this way the New Testament sacrifice on Calvary differs from its Old Testament prototype where, at the last moment, a ram is offered to God in place of Isaac. The role played by the angel in these scenes may have been suggested by the prayer found in almost all ancient liturgies, that the sacrifice of the earthly altar should have its mystical counterpart or be made effective on high through the ministry of angels.[26] Both ideas were current in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in sermons and theological writings on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.[27]

Visual reference to the Passion is also intended by the sorrowful gesture of the angel in Ligozzi's painting, who, raising his arms in dismay, recalls the gesture of the Marys in scenes of the Lamentation over the Dead Christ. The combination of a reclining figure with a supporting figure behind is familiar from countless renderings of the Deposition from the Cross, the Bearing of the Body, and the Pietà.[28] For the Agony in the Garden this pose suggests the literal interpretation of the Gospel of Luke: "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (22:43). Ligozzi's straightforward composition makes these analogical relationships quite evident to the pious viewer and thereby provides a visual aid to devotion in the tradition of St. Bonaventure and the *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*.

Ligozzi, like Soldani, worked in the service of the Medici court, and although a century separates their careers there are similarities between the two representations of Christ that suggest some memory of Ligozzi's version may have influenced Soldani: for example, the way in which the drapery with its several deeply cut, diagonal folds is wrapped around Christ's left thigh, or the way in which the neckline of his gown gaps at the top to form one vertical fold. In both scenes Christ is supported on one side—his right in Ligozzi, his left in Soldani—by the angel's knee pushed up under his armpit, while his arm on that side hangs limply against the angel's lower leg.

8. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573–1610), *Ecstasy of St. Francis*, ca. 1595. Oil on canvas, 36⅜ × 50¼ in (92.4 × 127.6 cm.). Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection (photo: Joseph Szaszfai)

Another painting in which an angel is shown giving support to a reclining figure from behind is Caravaggio's *Ecstasy of St. Francis* (Figure 8). Although

26. Ibid., pp. 422–423, notes that the liturgy of St. Cyril of Alexandria specifically links the angelic ministry to the Sacrifice of Isaac, a scene that is often sited directly over the high altar in Byzantine churches. The continuation of this tradition into the late 17th century is represented by the bronze tondo of the Sacrifice of Isaac designed by Gian Battista Foggini, which decorates the left side of the high altar itself in Santissima Annunziata, Florence (see Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, pl. 49). In this context, it is possible that the flat stone ledge on which Christ's body rests in both Ligozzi's painting and Soldani's relief is meant to suggest the altar of angelic sacrifice or, alternately, the stone of unction.

27. See the *Sermones discipuli de tempore et sanctis* by the Dominican preacher John Herolt, which was a best-seller throughout Europe, and the *De quibusdam in Ecclesia controversiis opusculum* by James Latomus, rector of the University of Louvain; cited by Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 547, 539.

28. Askew, "Angelic Consolation," p. 290, who also relates this combination of reclining and supporting figures to scenes of the Trinity, the Dead Christ Supported by Angels, and St. Francis in Ecstasy. For other images of the sacramental Christ and the Eucharistic Pietà in context see M. E. Cope, *The Venetian Chapel of the Sacrament in the Sixteenth Century* (New York/London, 1979) pp. 26–65, 144–163.

9. Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669), *Pietà*, 1635. Fresco. Vatican Palace, altar of the Chapel of Urban VIII (photo: Vatican Museums)

there is no certainty that Soldani ever saw this work, the way in which a youthful, athletic angel is shown, one muscular arm left undraped as if to emphasize its physical function, is similar in both. Parallels between the two stories, literary as well as visual, have been drawn before: St. Francis on Monte La Verna as *imitator Christi* on the Mount of Olives.[29] Caravaggio's composition differs from Soldani's in his invention of the scene of St. Francis supported by a single angel. Pamela Askew proposes that it was in the circle of Annibale Carracci in Rome that the theme of St. Francis supported by two angels of human scale was adopted and developed.[30] The fact that representations of the Agony in the Garden with two adult angels flanking Christ are extremely rare indicates that Soldani's composition is an outgrowth of this Franciscan tradition.

29. Ibid., p. 293, and de Sales, *Traité*, I, pp. 293–295. See also L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* (Paris, 1955–59) III:1, p. 527.

30. Askew, "Angelic Consolation," p. 296; an example by Giovan Francesco Gessi can be seen in the Pinacoteca, Bologna. According to Askew, Caravaggio's Hartford *St. Francis* specifically recalls Veronese's *Agony in the Garden* in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, in which Christ is shown receiving physical support from one angel of human scale. Conversely, I could find no scenes of the Agony in the Garden in which Christ is shown flanked by two angels, with the exception of Francesco Trevisani's lunette in S. Silvestro in Capite in Rome (see Figure 11), the painting attributed to Carlo Maratta in Burghley House, England, and Soldani's terracotta; thus, these scenes seem to be a retranslation of the two-angel Ecstasy composition, developed in the Carracci circle, back into a scene of the Agony in the Garden.

10. Alessandro Algardi (1598–1654), *The Beheading of St. Paul*, 1648. Bronze relief, diam. 19¼ in. (49 cm.). Bologna, S. Paolo Maggiore (photo: Villani, Bologna)

11. Francesco Trevisani (1656–1746), *The Agony in the Garden*, 1695–96. Oil on canvas, approx. 84⅝ × 133⅞ in. (215 × 340 cm.). Rome, S. Silvestro in Capite, Crucifixion Chapel (photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catologo e la Documentazione, Rome)

Soldani spent four years in Rome as a student (1678–82) and could well have been influenced by work done there earlier in the century. The Christ from Pietro da Cortona's *Pietà* in the chapel of Urban VIII in the Vatican (Figure 9) is a very compelling source for the facial type of Soldani's Christ, with his heavy-lidded eyes, sharply contoured nose seen in profile, and stringy strands of hair that fall across his neck, while the snub-nosed little faces of the putti are pure Algardi. And it was surely Algardi's *Beheading of St. Paul* for Bologna (Figure 10) that provided the model for Soldani's low-relief treatment of the landscape and trees, as well as for the characteristic physiognomy of the bearded apostles in the background.[31]

The one work, however, which is closest to Soldani's in both composition and mood and which can thus be singled out as the prototype for the relief is Francesco Trevisani's oil painting of the Agony in the Garden executed in 1695–96 for a lunette in the Crucifixion Chapel of S. Silvestro in Capite in Rome (Figure 11). Soldani's composition conforms to Trevisani's in all the particulars. Both follow the "St. Francis tradition" described above by depicting the reclining Christ flanked by two angels of human scale instead of the one mentioned in the Gospel of Luke; I could find no earlier scenes of the Agony in the Garden where this was the case. The disposition of the angels in relation to the body of Christ is similar, as is the fact that both adult and child angels are present. A strong diagonal running from the upper left through the outstretched arm of the angel and down through Christ's limply hanging left arm to the bottom right side of the composition is a feature of both. In addition, both representations locate a smaller, secondary scene in the background at the bottom right: in Soldani's work the sleeping apostles and in Trevisani's the arrival of the guards to arrest Christ. The putto in the relief who holds the cloth with the symbols of the Passion recalls the flying putti

31. Terracotta and gesso *modelli* from Algardi's studio passed via Ercole Ferrata into the Florentine Academy in Rome, where they were used as teaching tools for several generations of students, Soldani among them; in fact, Grand Duke Cosimo III is documented as having singled out Algardi's *Beheading of St. Paul* as the best example that these sculptors-in-training could follow for the technique of low relief (Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, doc. 212, p. 263).

with Passion symbols painted in the pendentives of Trevisani's chapel.

That Soldani knew this work is not at issue. All of Rome knew it: the *Avviso di Roma* of January 5, 1697, records that Trevisani's Crucifixion Chapel was much admired by the citizens of Rome, who crowded in to see it when it was unveiled.[32] In addition, Trevisani made several studies and drawings for his *Agony in the Garden*. These include a *modello* formerly in Dresden, which, because of the greater emphasis on the landscape to the right, was perhaps closest to Soldani's relief; a *bozzetto* in Marseilles; and a drawing after the composition now in Düsseldorf.[33] These sketches further record what was, for Roman painting at this time, a very modern composition. With the *Agony in the Garden* the artist disassociated himself from the charged emotionalism and epic seriousness of his own century and anticipated instead the gentler, more empathetic vision of the eighteenth century.[34] Trevisani's Christ is not a character in an evolving drama but is presented at the very moment he embraces the inevitability of his Crucifixion. Static and sculptural, his languid pose is modeled on that of the Pietà; in this way acceptance of death is presented in the guise of death itself.

The fact that Soldani looked to Trevisani for a visual source is not in itself unusual. The two artists were contemporaries, Trevisani leaving Venice to come to Rome in 1678, the year of Soldani's arrival in the city. (They may even have known each other as students there.) The very lack of a strongly innovative visual tradition in Florence for representing the Agony in the Garden, coupled with the fact that Northern examples are so plentiful, would have made the north of Italy a logical place to turn. A specifically Venetian source for Soldani's work is consistent with the high regard shown for Venetian art by certain members of the Medici court. Prince Ferdinando, an important patron for Soldani, was enamored of Venice and what he called the "gran gusto" of Venetian art. He was especially fond of the paintings of the Venetian cinquecento, but he is also documented as having owned a *modello* of Trevisani's *Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra*, painted for Cardinal Fabrizio Spada-Varallo.[35] In light of the prince's avowed passion for collecting *modelli* of pictures painted for other patrons, it would be interesting to know more about the early history of Trevisani's *modello* for the *Agony in the Garden*, formerly in Dresden, which was so close in composition to Soldani's relief.

Differences between the two compositions probably derive from differences in function. Trevisani's *Agony in the Garden* for S. Silvestro in Capite is part of a series of five large-scale Passion scenes and, as such, is organized so that it helps to advance the narrative as one looks from scene to scene around the chapel walls. Despite the quiet mood of the lunette, there is action indicated by the glance the two angels exchange, and by the way in which the angel on the left gestures excitedly as if to alert the other to the fact that the guards of the Sanhedrin are fast approaching. This contrasts with what can only be called the non-narrative quality of Soldani's small relief; the scene seems frozen in time. This may well reflect the private devotional purpose for which the relief would have been intended. As an aid to prayer, Soldani's scene would be ideal, providing as it does a neutral starting point for the worshiper's meditations on the life and death of Christ.

The specific iconography of the piece indicates a further meaning. Montagu notes that the cloth held by the putti suggests a connection with a confraternity of the Passion,[36] but she does not pursue this thought. A possible candidate for such a confraternity in Florence would be the Oratorio della Meditazione della Passione di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo, founded at the end of the sixteenth century in the

32. F. R. DiFederico, "Studies in the Art of Francesco Trevisani: A Contribution to the History of Roman Painting," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1970) I, p. 149.

33. Ibid., II, figs. 146, 149; the drawing in the Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf (FP 10030), is by a follower of Trevisani.

34. F. R. DiFederico, *Francesco Trevisani—Eighteenth-Century Painter in Rome* (Washington, D.C., 1977) pp. 14–16. DiFederico sees Trevisani's *Agony* lunette as a visualization of the ideals of the classicizing, anti-Baroque Accademia degli Arcadi, a literary movement in Rome to which Trevisani belonged. Soldani himself had some contact with Arcadian ideas during the period Feb.–Aug. 1681, when he is documented as having worked for Queen Christina of Sweden in Rome (Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, docs. 167–179, pp. 259–261); the queen's Accademia Reale was the literary group upon which the later Accademia d'Arcadia was modeled.

35. F. Haskell, *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque* (London, 1963) p. 233, n. 1.

36. *Twilight of the Medici*, p. 102.

wake of the Counter-Reformation by members of the Florentine nobility. Of the almost one hundred confraternal orders mentioned by Ronald Weissman,[37] many of which are dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, only this one makes specific reference to the meditation on Christ's Passion. The 1590 *Capitoli* of the order stress the hierarchical obedience, both to God and to one's earthly superiors, which according to Weissman was central to the nature of ritual experience in post-Tridentine confraternities. Chapter 10 of the *Capitoli* defines disobedience as the worst sin, the sin that is at the root of all others. Conversely, obedience is the greatest virtue, and no other stands us in such good stead "when we negotiate with God about our deeds."[38] God uses neither humility, chastity, patience, nor abstinence as a test of human worth but only obedience. This, of course, is the main thrust of the visual message inherent in Soldani's relief: Christ's obedient acceptance of the bitter cup offered to him by his Father's angelic messengers. There is no room for negotiation in the statutes published by the Oratorio, nor does Soldani's Christ negotiate with the Father concerning his imminent death: "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39).[39]

Obedience to a higher authority could also mean, in a political sense, obedience to the ruling power. The Medici began to patronize local confraternities as early as the end of the fifteenth century when they came to view them not as threats to the civic order but as potential sources of political support for the Medici regime. The family also supported the confraternities' shift in the sixteenth century from public ceremonies to a more private type of devotion that put a renewed emphasis on the celebration of the Mass. Communion became the central rite of the confraternities: the brothers of the Oratorio accepted as members only those applicants who had taken communion regularly for the past six months.[40]

This emphasis on the body and blood of Christ is surely intentional in the central placement of the Lord's body and the emphasis given to the chalice in Ligozzi's 1608 painting, which, because of its date, can be taken as a visualization of post–Counter-Reformation eucharistic piety. There is every indication that personal devotion to the Eucharist and to the Holy Office was strengthened under the pious Cosimo III, Soldani's patron. And while there is no published document linking Soldani's relief to any specific confraternity, its iconography is certainly in keeping with the documented aims and philosophy of the Oratorio.

Dating of Soldani's *Agony in the Garden* is something of an open question. The tendency has been to date it fairly early. Lankheit perceives a similarity in style between the terracotta and the Munich *Pietà* of 1691–95 (Figure 12); he also sees the *Agony* as one of a series of four Passion scenes of similar size known today from wax models in the Museo delle Porcellane.[41] In his opinion, all these works share a certain spacelessness and awkwardness of composition, and thus belong to Soldani's early period. Montagu follows Lankheit in noting the remarkable consistency of Soldani's physical types and formal vocabulary throughout his career. She justifies her date of about 1695–1708 by stating that it would be hard to imagine the piece as earlier than the *Peace and Justice* for the prince of Liechtenstein or as later than the *Four Seasons* reliefs.[42]

Neither theory is wholly convincing. Lankheit seems to confuse similarities of subject matter and function with similarities of style. Both the Munich *Pietà* and the *Agony in the Garden* are devotional in purpose; in addition, they are similar in size and theme, the *Pietà* being iconographically and compositionally related to the *Agony in the Garden* for reasons already discussed. There is even a certain resemblance in the way in which the angel on the right supports the swooning figure in each. For me, the

37. R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1982) pp. 237–241. The Florentine Archivio di Stato contains chapter books of the order dating from 1590 to 1748.

38. *Capitoli* 793, chap. 10, fol. 11r/v. Reprinted in part in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 219.

39. Heb. 5:7–8 also stresses Christ's obedience to his Father's will at Gethsemane: "in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

40. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 224; see also pp. 229–235 for a discussion of the Quarantore, or Forty Hours, a related eucharistic devotion that became popular in the mid-16th century and was heavily supported by the Medici.

41. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, pp. 135–136.

42. Montagu, *Twilight of the Medici*, p. 102.

similarities end there; furthermore, they are outweighed by quite noticeable differences between the two reliefs.

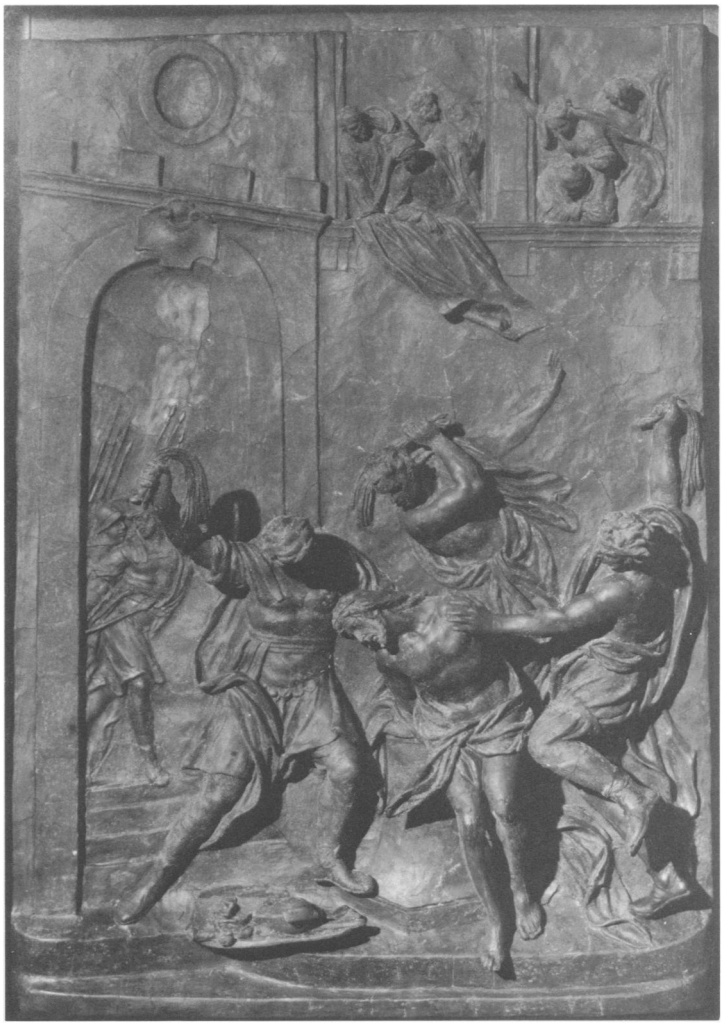
The *Pietà* is organized with the emphasis on the horizontal and all the figures are located in the bottom half of the field. The *Agony* features several roughly triangular groups of figures placed at diagonals to one another; this is also a characteristic of the 1729 relief for the Vilhena monument in Malta.[43] The treatment of the leafy branches of the trees is different in each; both the trees and the awkward way in which the tomb is located in space in the *Pietà* are similar to the way in which the trees and the temple are handled in the 1694 bronze relief for the prince of Liechtenstein.[44] Soldani's habit of putting a kind of still-life arrangement of objects in the foreground is typical of his early reliefs and is a feature of both the *Pietà* and the *Truth and Justice*. In the *Agony in the Garden*, however, the main group of figures is located farther towards the center of the relief and the landscape forms a rocky platform for them to rest upon; compare this to the way in which the bed is used in the 1720 relief of the Death of St. Joseph (Figure 13). The unresolved treatment of Christ's leg noticed by Lankheit in the *Pietà* is not present in the similar treatment of the reclining figure in the *Agony*; moreover, there is an almost rhetorical presentation of the story in the *Pietà* that recalls the dramatic gestures and episodic narrative style of the Sansedoni reliefs in Siena of about 1692–1700.[45] This is in direct contrast to the dreamy, self-contained quality of the terracotta.

12. Soldani, *Pietà*, 1691–95. Bronze relief, 22¼ × 14⅝ in. (56.5 × 37 cm.). Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (photo: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum)

Lankheit's theory that the *Agony in the Garden* is part of a Passion cycle represented by the reliefs in the Museo delle Porcellane is even more difficult to sustain. He is correct in pointing out that the four wax models are of similar size (roughly 64 by 44 centimeters) and that the "Cristo nel orto" is listed directly after the "Flagellazione alla colonna" on page 38 of the Ginori inventory of about 1780.[46] These two reliefs share at least a superficial similarity in the positioning of the raised right arm and draped right leg of the figure on the extreme left of each—the angel in the *Agony*, the soldier in the *Flagellation* (compare Figures 4 and 14). Lankheit relates all four reliefs to the pictorial style of Pietro da Cortona and to the relief style of Gian Battista Foggini. Actually, the *Flagellation*, the *Crowning with Thorns*, and the *Carrying of the Cross* in the series of wax reliefs resemble more closely Giambologna's 1584 bronze reliefs for the Grimaldi Chapel in Genoa,[47] both in the treatment of the architecture with its characteristic crenellations and oculus windows and in the way in which small-scale figures located on ledges, parapets, or behind columns are cast as onlookers in the scenes. Soldani could have studied the original reliefs during his trip to Genoa in 1699 for work in S. Maria del Carignano, or closer to home, the copies in Santissima Annunziata in Florence. Further stylistic simi-

43. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, fig. 102.
44. Ibid., fig. 93.
45. Ibid., figs. 38–43.
46. Published by Lankheit, *Doccia*, nos. 101, 102, pls. 63 and 62, along with the *Crowning with Thorns* (no. 78, pl. 64) and the *Carrying of the Cross to Calvary* (no. 80, pl. 65).
47. See *Giambologna 1529–1608: Sculptor to the Medici*, exh. cat. (Edinburgh/London/Vienna, 1978) figs. 122–127.

13. Soldani, *The Death of St. Joseph*, ca. 1720. Bronze relief, 25½ × 17¼ in. (65 × 44 cm.). Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello (photo: Soprintendenza, Florence)



14. Soldani, *The Flagellation of Christ*, ca. 1700. Wax cast, 25¼ × 17¼ in. (64 × 44 cm.). Sesto Fiorentino, Museo delle Porcellane di Doccia (photo: Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence)

larities between Soldani's three Passion scenes and his Sansedoni reliefs for Siena would make a date of around 1700 seem reasonable for the wax reliefs. Their complex figure groupings and almost violent pictorial style are, in fact, not at all typical of the refined, medallic relief style usually adopted by the artist and certainly have nothing in common with the *Agony in the Garden*. Furthermore, the inclusion of the clearly symbolic group of putti in the lower right-hand corner of the terracotta should be indication enough that this relief was not meant to be part of a narrative cycle.

Similarly, Montagu's theory that the work could not have been executed after the *Four Seasons* reliefs is not upheld by stylistic comparison. She rightly observes that the *Agony in the Garden* is not contemporary with the *Four Seasons* reliefs and is not of the period 1708–11; however, in spite of what she terms the artist's "remarkably constant" formal vocabulary, Soldani continued to experiment and change during the remaining twenty-five years of his career.

What is apparent to me is the move away from the crowded and more spatially complicated compositions of Soldani's middle period, characterized by the Bacchus relief (1697)[48] and the *Four Seasons*, towards

48. Lankheit, *Barockplastik*, fig. 104.

15. Soldani, *Christ Mourned by the Virgin and an Angel*, ca. 1715. Bronze, H. excl. base 19⅞ in. (50.5 cm.). Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery (photo: Walters Art Gallery)

a reductive style of almost classical restraint. This is true for the reliefs as well as for the three-dimensional bronzes. The Walters Art Gallery *Christ Mourned by the Virgin and an Angel* of 1715 (Figure 15) beautifully combines the exquisite chasing and surface treatment of Soldani the medalist with the tableaulike three-figure grouping of Soldani the emerging classicist. Notable is his emphasis on symbolic gesture: the diagonal movement from left to right allows the eye to rest for a moment on the cup held by the angel in the *Agony in the Garden* and on the crown of thorns held between the angel and the Virgin in the bronze. In a similar manner Soldani highlights the knife once brandished by Jephthah in the *Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter* in the Metropolitan Museum, one of a series of twelve bronze groups made for Electress Palatine Anna Maria Luisa in 1722.[49] These inanimate objects, like props in a stage play, are necessary elements in the drama.[50]

The stepped-back platform of the rocky ledge in the *Agony in the Garden* is the stage on which the action takes place, just as the raised bed in Soldani's *Death of St. Joseph* (Figure 13) provides the setting for a comparable cast of characters. It is perhaps the similarity to this relief, dated by Lankheit to 1720, that makes the strongest case for a later date for the *Agony* terracotta. In both, pictorial values are suppressed in favor of sculptural ones. The figures are arranged parallel to the relief plane, and there is very little integration between background and foreground, giving the impression that even if the backdrop against which the central figures are seen were to be removed, they could exist without it, in isolation. For this reason the terracotta relief merits comparison with the documented series of bronze groups for the electress palatine mentioned above, as well as with the three-dimensional gesso group of the *Crucifixion with the Magdalene and an Angel* (Figure 16) for the Benedictine convent of S. Maria degli Angeli at Pistoia. Paolucci was the first to notice similarities of style between this impressive group and the *Agony in the Garden*, on the basis of which he dates both to the second decade of the eighteenth century.[51] A date just preceding 1720 seems to me justified for Soldani's terracotta relief of the Agony in the Garden. The profundity of religious feeling of these late works is a telling reminder of those devotional exercises fostered by the Medici throughout settecento Tuscany.

16. Soldani, *The Magdalene and an Angel*, detail of *The Crucifixion*, 1710–20. Gesso, overall 70⅞ × 21¼ in. (180 × 54 cm.). Pistoia, Convent of S. Maria degli Angeli (photo: Soprintendenza, Florence)

49. For the bronzes see S. Casciu, "Due episodi della scultura fiorentina del settecento nel mecenatismo di Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici," *Paragone* 435 (1986) pp. 83–100, including Soldani's receipt of payment for *Jephthah's Daughter*, Dec. 29, 1722, doc. 5, p. 97; O. Raggio in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Recent Acquisitions: A Selection 1985–1986* (New York, 1986) pp. 22–23; J. Montagu, "The Bronze Groups Made for the Electress Palatine," in *Kunst des Barock in der Toskana*; pp. 126–136; and K. Lankheit, "Two Bronzes by Massimiliano Soldani Benzi," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 19 (1956) pp. 9–17, figs. 1, 3, 5.

50. Theatrical allusions are perhaps not out of place since the stage might have had some influence on how these little scenarios were conceived; it certainly seems to have had an influence on how they were displayed. One of the few instances in which the original 18th-century setting has survived is the elegant carved and gilded wooden "shadowbox" that houses the *Pietà* group in the Villa La Quiete in Florence (see A. Paolucci, "Contributi per la scultura fiorentina del Settecento," *Paragone* 339 [1978] fig. 36), a construction which gives the effect of a miniature stage set.

51. Ibid., p. 70. Most recent publication of the piece is *La Maddalena tra sacro e profano*, exh. cat. (Florence, 1986) pp. 113–114, no. 34.