

CULTURES, BELIEFS & TRADITIONS * BRILL

Creating the “Divine” Artist

From Dante to Michelangelo

Patricia A. Emison



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CREATING THE “DIVINE” ARTIST

CULTURES, BELIEFS AND TRADITIONS

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PEOPLES

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CREATING THE “DIVINE” ARTIST

From Dante to Michelangelo

BY

PATRICIA A. EMISON



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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

to Linnea Allegra Astraea Alcyone

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
List of Illustrations	xi
Introduction.....	3
The Sponge of Protogenes	19
Not Quite the Liberal Artist	59
The Divine Poet, Twinned	111
<i>Idioti</i> or Angels	173
Listening for the Music of the Spheres	215
The Artist as <i>Huomo Famosissimo</i>	255
Epilogue: The Romantic Deluge	303
Appendix: The Historiography of <i>Ingegno</i>	321
Appendix: Fornari's Gloss on Ariosto's Canto XXXIII	349
 <i>Illustrations</i>	
Bibliography	355
Index	375

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I apologize in advance for certain deficiencies in the illustrations. These are mostly due to issues of expense, some of time, or a combina-

tion of the two. As it is, the photographs have cost the price of several trips to Europe or a “parva sed apta” print collection. Special thanks to those institutions, usually less bureaucratic ones as a bonus, who have kept the cost of photographs reasonable, and to the Hatch Fund of the College of Liberal Arts Annual Alumni Gifts Fund. My hope is that the illustrations will suffice to help the non-art historical readers follow the text, and will occasionally be of interest to the professionals. What I would have hoped to illustrate can for the most part be found in other publications, here cited.

Lee, New Hampshire
17 August 2003

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

1. Giorgio Ghisi after Michelangelo, *Jeremiah and Caryatid*, B. 17, engraving, Courtesy of the Warburg Institute.
2. Michelangelo, *David*, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
3. Dürer, *Cannon*, B. 99, etching, Courtesy of the Warburg Institute.
4. Anonymous, *Parnassus in Disarray*, etching, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
5. Master HFE, *Profane Parnassus* (B. XV, 4), etching, Courtesy of the Warburg Institute.
6. Domenico di Michelino, *Dante and his Poem*, Duomo, Florence, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
7. The Studiolo of Federico da Montefeltro, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
8. Pollaiuolo, *Tomb of Pope Sixtus IV*, Museo Petriano, St. Peter's Basilica, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
9. Master of the E-Series Tarocchi (Italian, active c. 1465), *Poesia*, H. E.I.27a, engraving with traces of gilding, Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery, Washington, 1943.3.9520.
10. Raphael, *School of Athens*, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
11. After Raphael and Marcantonio, *Poesia*, B. 382, Copy, Stanza della Segnatura, engraving, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
12. Niccolò Fiorentino, medal of Lorenzo de' Medici, verso, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ann and George Blumenthal Fund, 1950, 50.58.4.
13. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, *Alexander with the Works of Homer* (B. 207), Stanza della Segnatura, engraving, Courtesy of the Warburg Institute.
14. Benozzo Gozzoli, *Petrarch, Dante, Giotto*, S. Francesco, Montefalco, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
15. Signorelli, *Dante*, Chapel of San Brizio, Duomo, Orvieto, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
16. Michelangelo, *Drawing of grotesque heads*, Städelsches Kunstinstitut 392r, Frankfurt.
17. Michelangelo, *Ancestor of Christ*, Sistine Ceiling, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
18. Michelangelo, *Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino*, San Lorenzo, New Sacristy, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.

* The illustrations can be found between the pages 354 and 355.

19. Michelangelo, *Architectural drawing with grotesque*, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
20. Alessandro Vittoria, *Pietro Aretino saluted by Kings*, medal, verso, University Art Museum, University of California at Santa Barbara, 1964.317.
21. Anonymous, *Orlando*, woodcut, British Museum.
22. Michelangelo, *Faun head over Female head*, drawing, Louvre, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y.
23. Michelangelo, *Temptation and Expulsion*, Sistine Ceiling, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
24. Michelangelo, *Night*, from the Tomb of Giuliano de' Medici, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
25. After Michelangelo, attributed to Battista Franco, *Dawn*, etching, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
26. Leonardo, *Mona Lisa*, Louvre, Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.
27. Michelangelo, *Testa divina*, black chalk, British Museum.
28. Michelangelo, *Goldsmith's Designs*, black chalk, Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Bequest of Charles A. Loser.
29. After Michelangelo, *So-called Zenobia*, engraving.
30. Anonymous, *Beloved and Lover*, engraving, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
31. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait*, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
32. Palma Giovane, *Self-Portrait Painting the Resurrection*, Brera, Cameraphoto/Art Resource, N.Y.
33. Raphael, *Danae*, pen and wash drawing, Uffizi.
34. Raphael, Ceiling of Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
35. Raphael, *Freeing of St. Peter*, Stanza d'Eliodoro, Vatican, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
36. After Raphael, *St. Helen with Angel* (B. XIV, 460), engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1927 (27.78.2 leaf 63).
37. After Raphael, *Woman at Window* (B. 460,B), engraving, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1927 (27.78.1).
38. Master of the Name of Jesus, *St. Nicholas Delivering Dowries to Maidens*, etching, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1927 (27.78.2.(20)).
39. Veronese, *Vision of St. Helena*, London, National Gallery, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
40. Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam*, Sistine ceiling, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
41. Raphael, *Sibyls*, Santa Maria della Pace, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
42. P. Santi Bartoli, *Nova nupta* from *Admiranda Romanorum antiquitatum*, Rome, 1693.
43. Cornelius Visscher, *Minerva* (Hollstein 38), etching, Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray.
44. Michelangelo, *Ancestor*, Sistine Chapel lunette, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

45. Giovanni Bellini, *Woman with Mirror*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Nimtallah/Art Resource, N.Y.
46. Jacopino del Conte, *Michelangelo*, Casa Buonarroti, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
47. Giulio Bonasone, *Michelangelo* (B. 345), engraving, Courtesy of Warburg Institute.
48. Anonymous, *Michelangelo at 71*, engraving, British Museum.
49. Daniele da Volterra, *Bust of Michelangelo*, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
50. Giuliano Bugiardini, *Michelangelo*, Louvre, Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.
51. Anonymous, *Michelangelo*, etching, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
52. Anonymous (after Bonasone), *Michelangelo, 1545*, engraving, British Museum.
53. Léon Davent, attributed to, *Michelangelo at Window*, etching, British Museum.
54. Baccio Bandinelli, *Putative portrait of Michelangelo*, black chalk drawing, Formerly in the collection of the Earl of Leicester and the Trustees of the Holkham Estate. Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.
55. Dosso Dossi, *Jupiter Appealed to by Virtue*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y.
56. Anonymous, *Orpheus*, engraving, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo Joerg P. Anders.
57. Antonio da Trento, *Lutinst in Landscape* (B. XII, 76.3), chiaroscuro woodcut, Courtesy of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Bequest of Horace M. Swope, Class of 1905.
58. Anonymous book illustration, *Luigi Pulci at Recitation*, woodcut, Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.
59. Bonnart after Callot, *Fan with River Arno (Florence) Festival of St. James* (1619), collection of author.
60. Benvenuto Cellini, *Duke Cosimo I*, bronze, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
61. Michelangelo and others, *Arca di San Domenico*, S. Domenico, Bologna, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
62. Benedetto da Maiano, *Memorial to Giotto*, Duomo, Florence, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
63. Design attributed to Filippino Lippi, *Tomb of Fra Filippo Lippi*, Duomo, Spoleto, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
64. Vasari and others, *Michelangelo's tomb*, Santa Croce, Florence, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
65. Sometimes given to Agnolo Gaddi, *Triple Family Portrait, Agnolo, Taddeo, and Gaddo*, Uffizi, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
66. Sometimes attributed to Uccello, *Five Florentine Artists*, Louvre, Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y.
67. Sometimes attributed to Salviati, *Five Artists*, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

68. Buggiano, *Brunelleschi Monument*, Duomo, Florence, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
69. Anonymous, *Tomb of Fra Angelico*, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Rome, Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.
70. Perugino, *Self-Portrait*, Collegio del Cambio, Palazzo dei Priori, Perugia, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y.
71. Federico Zuccaro, *Michelangelo on Horseback Watching Taddeo Paint the Facade of the Palazzo Mattei*, Albertina, Vienna.

I myself have many times considered in the same vein what you are now saying, and how great may be the acuteness of the human mind. And when I run over the many and marvelous inventions men have discovered in the arts as in letters, and then reflect upon my own knowledge, I count myself little better than miserable. I am so far from being able to promise myself, not indeed the finding out of anything new, but even the learning of what has already been discovered, that I feel stupid and confused, and am goaded by despair. If I look at some excellent statue, I say within my heart: 'When will you be able to remove the excess from a block of marble and reveal so lovely a figure hidden therein? When will you know how to mix different colors and spread them over a canvas or a wall and represent all visible objects by their means, like a Michelangelo, a Raphael, or a Titian?' Looking at what men have found out about arranging the musical intervals and forming precepts and rules in order to control them for the wonderful delight of the ear, when shall I be able to cease my amazement? What shall I say of so many and such diverse instruments? With what admiration the reading of excellent poets fills anyone who attentively studies the invention and interpretation of concepts! And what shall I say of architecture? What of the art of navigation? But surpassing all stupendous inventions, what sublimity of mind was his who dreamed of finding the means to communicate his deepest thoughts to any other person, though distant by mighty intervals of place and time! Of talking with those who are in India; of speaking to those who are not yet born and will not be born for a thousand or ten thousand years? And with what facility, by the different arrangements of twenty characters upon a page!¹

¹ *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, tr. Stillman Drake, Berkeley, 1967, 104–05. Sagredo, in Galileo Galilei's *Dialogo de' massimi sistemi*, end of the First Day: "Io son molte volte andato meco medesimo considerando, in proposito di questo che di presente dite, quanto grande sia l'acutezza dell'ingegno umano; e mentre io discorro per tante e tanto maravigliose invenzioni trovate da gli uomini, sì nelle arti come nelle lettere, e poi fo riflessione sopra il saper mio, tanto lontano dal potersi promettere non solo di ritrovarne alcuna di nuovo, ma anco di apprendere delle già ritrovate, confuso dallo stupore ed afflitto dalla disperazione, mi reputo poco meno che infelice. S'io guardo alcuna statua delle eccellenti, dico a me medesimo: 'E quando sapresti levare il soverchio da un pezzo di marmo, e scoprire sì bella figura che vi era nascosta? quando mescolare e distendere sopra una tela o parete colori diversi, e con essi rappresentare tutti gli oggetti visibili, come un Michelagnolo, un Raffaello, un Tiziano?' S'io guardo quel che hanno ritrovato gli uomini nel compartir gl'intervalli musici, nello stabilir precetti e regole per potergli maneggiar con diletto mirabile dell'udito, quando potrò io finir di stupire? Che dirò de i tanti e sì diversi strumenti? La lettura de i poeti eccellenti di qual meraviglia riempie chi attentamente considera l'invenzion de' concetti e la spiegatura loro? Che diremo dell'architettura? che dell'arte navigatoria? Ma sopra tutte le invenzione stupende, qual eminenza di mente fu quella di colui che s'immaginò di trovar modo di comunicare i suoi più reconditi pensieri a qualsivoglia altra persona, benché distante per lunghissimo intervallo di luogo e di tempo? parlare con quelli che son nell'Indie, parlare a quelli che non sono ancora nati né saranno se non di qua a mille e dieci mila anni? e con qual facilità? con i vari accozzamenti di venti caratteruzzi sopra una carta."

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INTRODUCTION

*There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality.*¹

The Italian Renaissance marked the beginning of a general respect for artistic genius. Michelangelo serves as the premier example, or at least as one of the principal types, of that artistic genius. He was the linchpin of Vasari's *Lives of the Most Famous Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, published in 1550, when the artist was seventy-five.² In 1975, the five hundredth anniversary of the artist's birth, Howard Hibbard's popularizing biography claimed: "Michelangelo is the most famous artist who ever lived and many would say the greatest."³ Vasari, however, had made a stronger and less circumspect claim. In his account, Michelangelo was sent by a merciful God, to be for us:

a spirit who, working alone, was able to demonstrate in every art and every profession the meaning of perfection in the art of design, how to give relief to the details in paintings by means of proper drawing, tracing, shading, and casting light, how to work with good judgement in sculpture, and how to make buildings comfortable and secure, healthy, cheerful, well proportioned, and richly adorned with various decorations in architecture. Moreover, He wanted to join to this spirit true moral philosophy and the gift of sweet poetry, so that the world would admire and prefer him for the wholly singular example of his life, his work, the holiness of his habits, and all his human undertakings, so that we would call him something divine [heavenly] rather than mortal.⁴

¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapter 3.

² Followed by a second, expanded edition in 1568 and a separate edition, also in 1568, of Vasari's *Vita di Michelangelo Buonarroti*, dedicated to the son of Ottaviano de' Medici; J. Wilde, *Michelangelo: Six Lectures*, Oxford, 1978, 2.

³ H. Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, Boulder, Co., 1998 (1974).

⁴ Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, J. and P. Bonadella, tr., 1991, 414; "uno spirito che universalmente in ciaschuna arte et in ogni professione fusse abile, operando per sé solo, a mostrare che cosa sia la perfezzione dell'arte del disegno nel lineare, dintornare, ombrare e lumeggiare, per dare rilievo alle cose della pittura, e con retto giudizio operare nella scultura, e rendere le abitazioni commode e sicure, sane, allegre, proporzionate e ricche di varii ornamenti nell'architettura. Volle oltra ciò accompagnarlo della vera filosofia morale, con l'ornamento della dolce poesia, acciò che il mondo

Vasari's *Lives* inaugurated a new rhetoric and ended artistic naiveté. Michelangelo or his works were dubbed divine more than twenty times in the *Life* of 1550, nearly forty times in the *Life* of 1568—as were Dante, Vittoria Colonna, and even Giovanni da Udine's garlands. The states of mind of the Sistine Prophets and Sibyls were called divine, and the hands of the artist, no less the drapery of the Virgin in the *Pietà* of 1500 and *David's* thighs. With regard to the *Moses*, Vasari memorably credits Michelangelo with having “portrayed so well in the marble the divinity which God had put in the most holy face of that one” (“si bene ritratto nel marmo la divinità che Dio aveva messo nel santissimo volto di quello”). Michelangelo himself is called “divino” as a simple epithet only toward the close of the 1568 *Vita*.

The new rhetoric was remembered long after Michelangelo was dead, sometimes more clearly than the works themselves. Delacroix recalled seeing a Michelangelo cartoon: “O sublime genius! How stamped with majesty are the features, though almost effaced by time! I felt a passion for great things aroused in me once more. Let us, from time to time, gain renewed strength from great and beautiful creations.”⁵ Whether, three centuries earlier, the verbal fuss ever meant much to a much-occupied Michelangelo already well into middle age is another matter.

It was never principally as makers of objects that Renaissance artists were esteemed; instead, they were assimilated to pre-existent categories of respect. Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* had held out the promise that anyone could become “an angel and a son of God.”⁶ Artists floated on a tide of compliment devised by humanists and poets for themselves, for the female objects of their love poetry, and for the obliging patrons they were willing to celebrate in equally exalted terms. Leonardo played the lyre appealingly; he was himself exquisite of person. In these respects, he personified his own art's *grazia*, and *grazia* is a divine quality. But that Vasari termed some of his works divine did not imply that they were like relics,⁷ so much as

lo eleggesse et amirasse per suo singularissimo specchio nella vita, nell'opere, nella santità dei costumi et in tutte l'azioni umane, e perché da noi più tosto celeste che terrena cosa si nominasse;” Vasari/Bettarini-Barocchi, VI, 3–4.

⁵ In 1823; *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, tr. W. Pach, New York, 1937, 55.

⁶ “angelus erit et dei filius,” Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitatis*, ed. E. Garin, Florence, 1942 [c. 1487], 106; God is called an architect, 104.

⁷ Cf. Julius Held, “The Early Appreciation of Drawings,” in *Latin American Art, and the Baroque Period in Europe, Studies in Western Art, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of*

that compliment had exceeded well beyond the bounds of the literal. One could believe that an artist possessed *ingegno*, even that he displayed *grazia*, but not that he was actually divine. An artist was divine, as he was ingenious, on the coattails of others, principally poets and women, the primary purveyors of fiction in Renaissance culture.

It might be more accurate to say that artists' reputations became a complicated phenomenon during the Renaissance, than that they rose. The fact that occasionally an artist effected such an extraordinary change in status did not uniformly shift the status of their comrades. Nor did the enhanced status entirely eliminate the more menial or ephemeral aspects of artists' assignments. In 1550, the very year Vasari was writing the biography in which Michelangelo appeared as the pinnacle of artistic achievement for all of human history, "il divino" was paid six *scudi* to gild eight bedknobs on Julius III's beds.⁸

Leaving behind routine tasks for a more aggrandized schedule had its difficulties. Just as the courtier's life was notoriously subject to envy, so for the successful artist's. Increasingly the overly popular appeal and base monetary motivations of artists came under attack. Often the increasing sensuality of art played a part in fomenting controversy. Paolo Pino cited the avarice of both painters and patrons in his *Dialogo di pittura*, 1548,⁹ Michelangelo Biondo (1549) cautioned that painters needed to exercise more diligence if they were to maintain the reputation and hope of eternal praise that was worth more than mere money.¹⁰ Vasari cautioned in the Life of Marcantonio Raimondi against both greed and indiscretion, the latter in the following terms:

the History of Art, III, Princeton, 1963, 72–95, esp. 80–81, where he cites Pietro Aretino's use of the word "reliquia" of a drawing. It is more because it is an image of Christ and he is writing a monk that he calls it a relic than because Titian is divine; cf. Aretino/Camesasca, *Lettere*, II, 237, 1548 "lo esempio di Cristo, vivo e vero ne l'arte, che di mano di Tiziano tengo come reliquia in camera."

⁸ W. Wallace, *Michelangelo at San Lorenzo: The Artist as Entrepreneur*, Cambridge, 1994, 2; Wallace supposes that Michelangelo oversaw rather than executed this commission.

⁹ "L'arte in sé non mai digraderà dalla prima dignità, come arte liberale e virtù rara, ma noi artefici siamo disuguali a quel onore e utilità convenevole a tal arte per tre cagioni. La prima è che noi vogliamo prima esser maestri che discepoli, la seconda per la molta ignoranza di chi fa operare, la terza per l'avarizia de' pittori e di chi compera," P. Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, ed. E. Camesasca, Milan, 1954, 34.

¹⁰ "perciò che la pittura gli è prestantissima delle arti; imperò il vostro nome e la vostra fama supera ciascun guadagno di qual si voglia bellissima arte. Non siate avari in cose che aspetta alla vostra arte, perciò che la avarizia gli è stata sempre contraria alla virtù, imperò che l'animo dato al guadagno rare volte, o mai, acquista il frutto della posterità," *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi, Milan, 1971, I, 775.

They oughtn't use the gifts of God, as is often done, in despite of the world and in things abhorrent to all.¹¹

Giovanni Battista Armenini denounced in 1586 the “disastrous hacks [who] insinuate themselves as practitioners of such venerable arts,” who “think only of creating an effect among the common people.”¹² As artists' reputations rose, they also fell.

“Ingegno” was from the start a complex word, various of connotations. Etymologically it implies that which is born in one (“in-gigno”), but as a word it designates that complex concept, intelligence. Compacted into the word is that basic metaphysical dilemma for a Renaissance Christian, of free will versus the grace of God. The theme of artistic *ingegno*, sometimes routinely dubbed divine and sometimes regularly not, tended to be framed in terms either of its being a liberal art, or as a twin of poetry. Both of these realms were associated with kinds of freedom, that of a free citizen with *otium* in the one case, and of a creative imagination, delving often in what is at least literally fiction, on the other. As a consequence, the pictorial arts in the Renaissance were shaped not only as a stylistic evolution with lifelikeness the avowed aim, but as a field of endeavor in which it was fundamental to emphasize the discretionary, if not also the arbitrary. These two strands were sometimes woven together only with awkwardness.

In particular, once *ingegno* was called divine, the question arose whether it was so as an extreme example of human freedom, in analogy to divine freedom, or as the recipient of divine grace and thereby an instrument rather than a free agent. This ambiguity was crucial, for in the one case the artist was more than usually liable to the possibility of failure (a fledgling notion before the Sistine *Last Judgment*) and in the other was utterly exonerated. Michelangelo lived this ambiguity, being both the artist of the “tragedy of the tomb” and, in old age, the architect of God's most important temple, a work he advertised himself as having done without material recompense (hence redeeming his

¹¹ “non si dovrebbero i doni di Dio adoperare, come molte volte si fa, in vituperio del mondo et in cose abominevoli del tutto;” Vasari/Marini, 846.

¹² Giovanni Battista Armeninini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, ed. and tr. E. Olszewski, n.l., 1977, Book One, Ch. VI, 118; “quella turba di dozzinali, la quale senza il lume del buon disegno si offeriscono di por mano a fare di queste professioni in tante onorate imprese, conciossiachè seguendo essi tuttavia solo la parte dell'occhio del volgo,” Armenini/Ticozzi, 55–56.

“freedom” in the midst of this otherwise most restrictive opus).¹³ The economy of the gift of art, the analogue to God’s grace and at the same time the descendent of Pliny’s Zeuxis, who had to give away his works since they were deemed priceless, was integral to the divine Michelangelo’s late career as it was to no other. One cannot be both divine and mercenary; the adjective thus served ends useful not only to the artist but also to the patron.

The compliment, “divine,” of artistic *ingegno* tended either to collapse back to meaning little more than that the artist was analgous to God, creating an imitation of nature;¹⁴ or, if used to imply the stronger claim that the artist outdid nature with her faults and was a free inventor, a confrère one might say of God rather than a dependent, this rendered the artist vulnerable to attacks as proud. Brunelleschi, the first visual artist deemed publicly to possess *ingegno*, was a controversial public figure, whose pioneering biography was written in his defense;¹⁵ despite Vasari’s presentation of Michelangelo as saintly, his personal reputation was even more fraught.¹⁶ The heightened praise he received was published and survived; but it is not hard to imagine that these upstart artists excited insult as well, though that was predominantly oral and so lost to history, except for the implicit defenses in the biographies.

The potentially troubling indeterminateness on the philosophical level as to what claim was being made about an artist’s intellectual prestige correlates with the artist’s anomalous social position, as one who lives the life of a courtier or distinguished citizen, but without

¹³ On Michelangelo’s salary during these years, see Rab Hatfield, *The Wealth of Michelangelo*, Rome, 2002, 162–66.

¹⁴ See also Walter Cahn, *Masterpieces: Chapters on the History of an Idea*, Princeton, 1979, Ch. 2.

¹⁵ The chief attacker was Giovanni da Prato; see Eugenio Battisti, *Filippo Brunelleschi: The Complete Work*, New York, 1981, 321–26.

¹⁶ Paolo Giovio, a man of not unblemished reputation himself, famously accused him of indecorous behavior (“agrestis ac ferus,” “incredibiles domesticae vitae sordes,” 230); Lomazzo, who had ties to Giovio, puts Michelangelo with the sodomites; *Libro dei sogni*, Ragionamento terza, featuring Euclid and Ariosto. See also Francesco Sansovino, Proemio, *Dante*, 1564, “tra le sue disgratie fu tenuta questa una principale, ch’egli non volle, nè si diletto di lasciar dopo se discepoli, nella virtù de’ quali si ritrovasse il suo nome, tanto gli parve d’esser fatto immortale col suo proprio valore.” The Magliabechiano refers to Michelangelo in 1549 as “lo inventor delle porcherie, salvandogli l’arte ma non devotone... Che tutte i moderni pittori e scultori per imitare simili caprici luterani, alto oggi per le sante chiese non si dipigne o scarpella altro che figure da sotterrare la fede et la devotione; ma spero che un giorno Iddio manderà e sua santi a battere per terra simile idolatre come queste,” Giovanni Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d’artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, II, Florence, 1840, 500.

the requisite family background. The more the Renaissance artist was singled out for praise and social prestige, the more vulnerable he was. Pride of place easily led to envy. An artist's cultural status was a kind of foreign currency whose equivalence to social or intellectual status was always in flux. It was only in the case of exceptional conditions that an artist escaped the category of mascot to the powerful, an extraordinary servant, akin to the jestor Gonella or the court dwarfs. These cases were few. In a world riddled by dictates of decorum, even such masters as Donatello and Mantegna were sometimes closer to troublesome pets than icons of personal freedom. The divine artist a century later was acknowledged to be unpredictable, but even he was not lauded by his contemporaries as that icon of individual freedom he later became for modern art historians. The divine artist was but early modern; the romantic genius of the nineteenth century was but warmed-over revolutionary.

For the artist to be "divine" says more about the relationship to patron, or prospective patron, than to the natural world. That is, it serves as a declaration of power relative to patron rather than of lack of power over the material world. The epithet "divino" was promoted for the most part by writers less educated and less well-placed than humanists, more hacks of the printing industry than courtiers, men for whom the humanists' booklearning was devalued, for whom even the need for a nobility not determined by birthright but by virtue and *virtù* had been displaced by a much more contentious relationship to vested status and power. Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) gloried in his gold chain and fine dinners as only the son of a shoemaker could. So not only do the compliments made of artists change, but the status of the complimenters too. The compliment "divino" tended to be extended by complimenters themselves in need of compliments, Aretino chief among them. A more moderate encomium, that of parity with the ancients, tended to be offered by more distant superiors.

Artists had the incentive to promote the distinctively modern idea of *maniera*, a modest encoding of the concept of *ingegno*. If beauty was not reliably unitary, collecting antique art alone would not suffice. It is no mere coincidence that the artist who licensed the whole idea of license, that is, of *maniera*, was also a founding but failed forger, namely, Michelangelo, who as a young artist had tried to make an antique *Sleeping Cupid*. There was more than one way to compete with antiquity.

Both artists and patrons had an interest in augmenting artistic reputation, though the patron's interest had a degree of ambivalence. He

wanted to own art by famed men, without creating a rival in prestige—a problem only conceivable after the successes of Michelangelo, and inconceivable after his death. Hence at least a part of the value of antiquities in the eyes of patrons, as reputable art made by anonymous, or in any case dead, artists. As for modern art, the *studiolo* was essentially a little shrine-in-the-making to the collector, akin to the gentleman's library or *Wunderkammer*, rather than to the diverse *ingegni* of artists. Had the fashion been for rooms dedicated to the works of single artists, the case would have been quite different. The collector who assembled various artists' works maintained hegemony over his painters, like provinces in his state.

The complication of issues of style that is acknowledged by the term *maniera* opened patrons to doubts about their taste—was it overly ostentatious or licentious; was it good taste? A divine artist could function as insurance for his powerful patrons, who the farther they got from exclusive patronage of altarpieces, the more exposed were they to criticism rather than praise for their expenditures on art. Employing an artist who was divine might seem risk free in this regard; using a lesser light such as Pordenone or Vasari or Veronese laid one open to criticisms that that artist worked too fast, or didn't study nature, or had Lutheran leanings.

Twentieth-century study of the Renaissance emphasized the value placed on magnificence, that Aristotelian virtue by which artistic patronage was construed as a good work. Yet as Clive Bell warned long ago in his essay "The Classical Renaissance and its Diseases," following in the footsteps of Leo Tolstoy, among others, there was another, self-indulgent side to princely patronage, "a new world of ideas and refined sensuality":

Popular art pursued the downhill road sedately while plutocratic art went with a run...the outstanding fact is that with the Renaissance Europe definitely turns her back on the spiritual view of life. With that renunciation the power of creating significant form becomes the inexplicable gift of occasional genius.¹⁷

Most of the official pronouncements of the period praise what powerful men did, predictably enough, but every now and then a foretaste of Bell's assessment can be uncovered. The pastoral aesthetic was the leading example of an attempt to insulate art from charges of lux-

¹⁷ Clive Bell, *Art*, [1913], 160.

ury and vanity. Michelangelo was not alone in being called divine; he was also not alone in espousing an aesthetic of lowliness as a defense against decadence—an aesthetic option which the courtly Vasari steadfastly disallowed. Michelangelo spoke of himself as abject, weak, and tormented. He portrayed figures more akin to the Belvedere Torso and the Laocoön than to the Apollo Belvedere, that is, to antiquities which, though by no means pastoral, exemplified exhaustion and anguish rather than triumph.

Praise of the pastoral life, with implicit or explicit renunciation of the corrupt court and city, was one strategy working against the art of magnificence. Another important aesthetic initiative was directed toward the beloved, whose purity is associated with the modest habits of a simple, often rural, life. As Ortensio Landi put it straightforwardly in the mid-sixteenth century:

Why is poverty praised by wise men? Because it is the mistress of good mores, the spur of the mind, and the donor of perfect good manners.¹⁸

And further:

Already some very refined minds have written that poverty in ancient times was the builder of all cities deviser of all the fine arts, and only it reveals itself as without defect, entirely admirable, and full of every true worthiness.¹⁹

Or as Bartolomeo Taegio warned conversely in 1564, the year of Michelangelo's death, wealth led to corruption:

O Roman people, misled by wealth, you are ruined, and you who were conquerer of the world live in poverty.²⁰

Magnificence had been a more unassailable quality during better times, in the fifteenth century. Then the pre-eminence of magnificence had simplified matters of taste. The history of the epithet "divino" implicates this newly vulnerable patron in a world in which wealth is actively (if quietly) mistrusted.

¹⁸ "Perche lodasi da savi huomini la poverta? Percioche ella è maestra dei buoni costumi, fomento del l'ingegno, & donatrice di perfetta creanza;" Ortensio Landi, *Paradossi*, Pisa, 1999 (1543), 102.

¹⁹ "Scrissero già alcuni nobilissimi ingegni che la povertà negli antichi secoli fusse disficatrice di tutte le città inventrice di tutte le buone arti, & essa sola ritrovarsi senza difetto, tutto gloriosa, & piena d'ogni vera lode;" Landi, *Paradossi*, 8.

²⁰ "O popolo Romano, ingannato dalle ricchezze, andò in rovina, & vivendo in povertà fu vicitore del mondo," Taegio, *L'officioso*, Milan, 1572, 7v.

An artist's reputation as divine insured the patron's exposed taste. The fragility of works of art was known not only from the example of antiquity, but from the almost immediate deterioration of Leonardo's murals in Milan and Florence and the provisional state in which Michelangelo had left the *Battle of Cascina*, as a ruin in the making, a mere cartoon. Leonardo praised painting for the uniqueness of its objects, and tried thereby to vaunt painting above literature, which existed in many equivalent exemplars:

It [painting] does not produce infinite children, as do printed books. Painting alone remains noble, it alone honors its author and remains precious and unique and never bears children equal to itself. This singularity makes painting more excellent than those [sciences] which are made public everywhere.²¹

Nevertheless, it was all too obvious that uniqueness' downfall was its weak prayer for permanence. What had lasted from antiquity were multiples, e.g., sarcophagi produced in large numbers rather than monumental statuary, particularly in bronze. It was acknowledged in the writing about medals that cheaper materials were more likely to survive; the revolutionary idea was that, paradoxically, this lesser material cost gave them greater value.²² Even the valuation of gems is subject to fashion, as Landi pointed out, claiming that agates, pyrites, sapphires, topaz, and emeralds used to be prized, and diamonds not.²³

This complication to the concept of value had repercussions in the world of visual art. In literary pastoral, as in some visual art, that which is grand and magnificent is eschewed. The stylistic flavor is one of modesty and understatement rather than pride and overt ambitiousness, but this is attributed to the lowliness of the author/artist and his themes, rather than to the metaphysics of an unsuccessful struggle with the material world. It is the posture of "*basso*" not of "*divino ingegno*," of one too much in the world rather than of someone avoiding contamination by the same: an apology for one's failures of expression rather than a

²¹ "Questo no' fa infiniti figlioi, come fa li libri stampati. Questa sola si resta pretiosa e unica e non partorisce mai figlioli eguali a sè. E tal singularita la fa più eccellente che quelle che per tutto sonno publicate;" (c. 1492), *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone': A Critical Interpretation with a New Edition of the Text in the 'Codex Urbinas'*, ed. C. Farago, Leiden, 1992, 188–89.

²² E. Vico, *Discorsi sopra la medaglia e de gli antichi*, Venice, 1555, 48–50, citing Pliny on greater art when lesser material (Book XXXIII, i).

²³ Landi, *Paradossi*, 13.

boast about the inexpressibility of the ideas. To adopt the modality of low style constitutes a defensive maneuver; it is a sophisticated denial of ambition. Often the lowliness of the speaker is contrasted with the loftiness of the patron or dedicatee, so that the divine is implicated in the self-abasing. This absent other, lofty and often divine, is a crucial element in the mental constellation of artists.

Vasari has been instrumental in our image of the Renaissance artist as a creature of the Establishment, dedicated to decorum, magnificence, and the heroic, without class identity or opinions on matters other than professional issues. *Pace* Vasari, the willingness to be indecorous—if only to the extent of pursuing a low style—was pivotal in the development of Italian fifteenth- and particularly of sixteenth-century art. It is a role that certain artists were ripened for by their difficult social definition as the associate of the highest ranks, though born to much lower ones. Michelangelo, with his soiled boots and humble cap, was not aspiring to Vasari's type. No less canny flatterers than Ariosto, Aretino, and Pietro Bembo wrote denunciations of the life of the flatterer at court, so Michelangelo was at least in rapport with good company, even as he decried "good company." Michelangelo was, however, basically a loner, someone whose isolation from the norms of his own time has greatly affected subsequent efforts to conceptualize artist genius.

Vasari described Michelangelo's autonomy, his incorrigible and cantankerous removal from the practices and constraints of more ordinary artists, in the most flattering terms possible:

in all his inimitable works, both with brush and chisel, he has displayed such art, grace and vivacity that I may say with due respect that he has surpassed the ancients, making difficulties appear easy, though they are found by those who copy them.²⁴

Michelangelo's preferred biographer, Condivi, explained how, "there is such a concentration of art and learning that they [the works] are

²⁴ G. Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, tr. A.B. Hinds, London, 1927, 170–71; "ha condotto le cose sue, così col pennello come con lo scarpello, che son quasi inimitabili, et ha dato, come s'è detto, tanta arte, grazia et una certa vivacità alle cose sue—e ciò sia detto con pace di tutti—che ha passato e vinto gli antichi, avendo saputo cavare della difficoltà tanto facilmente le cose, che non paion fatte con fatica, quantunque, chi disegna poi le cose sue, la vi si trovi per imitarla;" Vasari, Bettarini/Barocchi, VI, 108 (1568).

almost impossible for any painter whatever to imitate.”²⁵ A third sixteenth-century voice adds a similar note:

those who attempt to imitate the way of Michelangelo Buonarroti ... have succeeded only in appearing awkward. The reason is that since his style is very difficult, as is known and indeed manifest, few wish to imitate him in all respects... Nor do they see how in many ways Michelangelo's style diverges from all others.²⁶

Michelangelo's inimitability remained an important tenet. Sir Joshua Reynolds, speaking in his farewell to the Royal Academy in 1790, paid tribute to the artist he most admired, whose bust he had placed in his self-portrait—as being someone he admired without pretending to imitate:

I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect not without vanity, that these Discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man, and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy, and from this place, might be the name of—MICHAELANGELO.²⁷

Michelangelo's style Sir Joshua deemed in the same discourse, “the language of the Gods:”

It must be remembered, that as this great style itself is artificial in the highest degree, it presupposes in the spectator, a cultivated and prepared artificial state of mind. It is an absurdity therefore to suppose that we are born with this taste, though we are with the seeds of it, which, by the heat and kindly influence of his genius, may be ripened in us.²⁸

By contrast, Jules Michelet (1798–1854) found in Michelangelo's style an opposite to the “language of the gods.” His scorching vituperation of Michelangelo's caryatid beneath Jeremiah [fig. 1] runs as follows:

That sorry caryatid, which he put beneath Jeremiah, is without doubt the most paltry of his oeuvre, and he must have thought it up in his most deep despair; perhaps on the day in which he comprehended his mortality. Shallow, squat, and corpulent, she is not lofty; she is rather

²⁵ Condivi/Wohl, 93: “nelle quali tant'arte e dottrina si ritruova, che quasi sono inimitabili da qualsivoglia pittore,” Condivi/Nencioni, 52.

²⁶ Armenini/Olszewski, 136; “nel cercar questa [imitating Michelangelo] di solennissimi goffi ci riescono, imperocchè essendo difficilissima, come si sa e si vede, pochi ci sono che la vogliono imitare a pieno... nè essi si accorgono in quanti modi questa maniera sia difficile e diversa da tutte le altre;” Ticozzi, 84.

²⁷ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. R. Wark, New Haven, 1997, 282.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

crude, under the burden which since its birth has always weighed on her head. And yet that imperfect and unhappy being ought to remain sterile, die without leaving a trace! But, sad to say, it is a woman, a fertile woman; her short and strong figure projects full breasts. Slavery is fertile, very fertile; the monster will copulate, it will have offspring, a race, to make athletes laugh, and to make them cry, "Where then is God?"²⁹

In the hands of Michelet, "il divino" himself is denounced as ungodly. His greatness is acknowledged, but as repulsiveness.

For John Addington Symonds (1840–93), Michelangelo's art is also at least partly offputting. It tests its viewers:

The world of thoughts and forms in which he lived habitually is too arid, like an extinct planet, tenanted by mighty elemental beings with little human left to them but visionary Titan-shapes too vast and void for common minds to dwell in pleasurably.³⁰

For these writers, the Renaissance is a glorious and renowned era, a favorite among all who take an interest in history, whereas Michelangelo, like a core of anti-matter, is acknowledged as both fundamental and, in large part, repellent. He is held to be all the greater because, in the midst of what is generally admired, he is easily disliked. Both Michelet and Jacob Burckhardt, the great dual founders of modern Renaissance history, said disparaging things of the art of Michelangelo. An article in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* of 1859 expressed a similar sentiment:

Michelangelo removes himself from the crowd, putting himself apart; he is characterized by isolation; Raphael, on the contrary, puts himself at the center of art and he reintegrates the various modes of beauty in the unity of his nature.³¹

²⁹ "Cette misérable cariatide, qu'il a posée sous Jérémie, est sans comparaison son oeuvre la plus triste, et elle a été conçue par lui certainement dans son plus sombre désespoir, le jour peut-être où il s'était enfermé pour mourir. Basse, trapue et grosse, elle n'a pas grandi, elle a décréu plutôt, sous les fardeaux qui depuis sa naissance ont toujours écrasé sa tête. Et encore si cet être informe et malheureux devait rester stérile, mourir sans laisser trace! Mais, chose lamentable à dire, c'est une femme, une femme féconde; sa court et forte taille déborde de mamelles pleines. L'esclavage est fécond, très-fécond; le monstre s'accouplera, il aura des petits, une race, pour faire rire les athlètes, et leur faire dire: "Où donc est Dieu?" Michelet, *Histoire de France*, IX, Paris, 1879, 325.

³⁰ Symonds, John Addington, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, 2 vols., London, 1901, 373.

³¹ "Michel-Ange se détache de la foule en se mettant à l'écart; il se caractérise par

Michelangelo's art cannot be smoothly assimilated to the antique. Although the antique had always been supremely imitable, Michelangelo's art was thought of as being as aloof as the person. The Academy could teach artists how to please, like Raphael; it could not teach genius like Michelangelo's. Such mastery is said to consist not in doing what others do better, but in a more essential difference, implied by inimitability, which is, arguably, a more stringent criterion than mere originality.

From the time Vasari wrote his *Vite*, the first version in 1550, through 1963, when Rudolf Wittkower wrote *Born Under Saturn*, Michelangelo set the paradigm for artistic genius, which, like the set of prime numbers, appears across history always unpredictable and always indisputable. At the same time, the historical background against which that concept of artistic genius has been construed has varied widely. Already for Bellori in the early seventeenth century, Michelangelo's lack of classicism constituted a flaw in his artistic character, a criticism which lingered and recurred until the historians of Mannerism raised the banner of the anti-classical in the 1920s. At that point Michelangelo's incomparability ceased to be routinely proclaimed. Mannerism could be recognized when Michelangelo's inimitability was no longer a cardinal tenet. That in turn hinged on a redefinition of the classical, which since the beginning of the Neo-Gothic movement had lost its prestige as the imitable style par excellence.

As the struggling heirs to exaggerated claims on behalf of Renaissance artistic genius, we need to find some middle ground between the traditional uncritical adulation of Renaissance artists, without pursuing revisionary social history to the point of reductionism. Neither biography verging into hagiography nor the trivialization of artists into mere businessmen will answer the basic question, why the status of art changed so. Our goal here is to describe a history of thought about art and artists, critical and complementary, with particular attention to the fact that the talk about art was as epoch-making as the art itself. The language, spoken and written, which responded to the *maniera moderna* was not conventional in its application to visual art. In that it was quite new. In the present book, I seek to balance a sense of the ritual of compliment with a sense of the innovation of the visual art, the compliment

l'isolement; Raphaël, au contraire, se place au centre de l'art et il ramène à l'unité de sa nature les différents modes de la beauté," Charles Blanc, "Les dessins de Raphael," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, IV, 1859, 200.

being found to involve real innovation, and the innovation being found to depend importantly upon convention.

The Renaissance, though an epoch of great change, was a period in love with the idea of permanence. Reputation itself was a multiple existing in speech, behavior, and writing. Reputation might prove more durable than works, a fact writers were happy to point out even as they wrote what were ostensibly tributes to artists. Poets saluting lovely ladies had long done the same. Vasari's *Lives* itself was designed to ensure permanence: the *maniera moderna* would triumph over the ancients—Vasari would best Pliny—in the consciousness of posterity, no matter what happened to the works of art.

* * *

Frederick Antal's thesis that the mentality of the market economy catalyzed a more rationalistic art based in geometry and anatomy rather than in fairy tale is perhaps overdrawn as a history of taste: but the recognition he shares with Jacob Burckhardt that a fundamentally more analytical age had begun by the fifteenth century remains convincing, and its consequences for the theory and practice of art were vast. The answers to the question of what one could do with a combination of mind, will, and education challenged every premise of feudal society and bolstered certain tenets of a capitalistic one. While it is not necessarily the case that the bourgeoisie in particular preferred art *all'antica*, it did tend to be true that as consumers of art thought more about the product, as opposed to simply praying to it, they expected to find more intellectual content, and vice versa. The crediting of artists with *ingegno* is integral to this shift, whereas, their acclaim as *divino* belongs to a different phase, in which the patronage of art was no longer the clearcut exercise of virtuous magnificence for the good of church or state. It is not only the artist's virtue that is no longer taken for granted as stories of eccentricity and even vice accumulate, but also the patron's, as paintings move from chapels to bedrooms. Long before James Joyce made art by following the imaginary footsteps of the prurient Mr. Bloom on his way to examine the backside of Greek statuary, Leonardo told the tale of a patron who could not keep the portrait of his beloved in his house for fear of exciting his lust; and even the decorous Vasari told of Fra Bartolommeo's *St. Sebastian*, which had for the female congregation the effect of a bedroom painting though placed, initially, on an altar. By the time the artist is deemed divine, "divine" no longer needed connote holy.

One lasting heritage of the nineteenth-century's view of the Renaissance was its serious and uplifting tone. Much of it admittedly was true to the humanists' project. Yet the comic and the erotic aspects of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art, as well as those which implicitly or explicitly supported nascent absolutism, were incompatible with the projects of Michelet and Burckhardt, let alone Panofsky, and so were systematically ignored. Aby Warburg, by contrast, was highly sensitive to aspects of a style *all'antica* which could not be described as symptoms of bourgeois naturalism, though he was not particularly inclined by temperament to dwell on the full range of the less idealizing parts of Renaissance artistic production. If the present study of reputation and of reputation's reputation is to satisfy us, this will be measured at least in part by a revised and more various understanding of the connotations of the phrase, "Italian Renaissance art."

The present study focusses on artistic fame and reputation during the Renaissance itself, without dwelling on the metareputation of subsequent centuries. My basic project consists in tracing the topography of esteem for artists both in itself and in relation to an overall economy of compliment during the period customarily called the Renaissance. Michelangelo's reputation looms high, obviously demanding attention yet often only indirectly perceptible, and, once we escape the confines of art history, but one exceptional reputation among many. As the topic is a large one, and diffuse as well, the hope is not to achieve absolute comprehensiveness, but instead to open an alternative avenue of study, in which the reputation itself may be analyzed, rather than merely enjoined.

My aim is not to reconstruct the vast historiography of the Renaissance,³² nor even of that particular slice of Renaissance art that adheres in issues of artists' fame, but instead, to investigate, on the one hand, the early modern application of words of praise to artists and works, and, on the other inextricable but subordinate hand, our own practices of applying verbal labels to and descriptions of artists and works. From this peeling away of some of the veneer of objectivity in the analysis of that famous art which was in its own time, and long afterward, so passionately espoused, we may discover an enhanced sympathy toward that fervor and its history. We will understand that *maniera moderna* bet-

³² On which, see not only the standard Wallace Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation*, Boston, 1948, but also J.B. Bullen, *The Myth of the Renaissance in Nineteenth-Century Writing*, Oxford, 1994.

ter when we can give up the effort of actively distancing ourselves from Vasari-inspired habits of praise, not because we have reassumed them, or Symonds' tropes either, but because we no longer feel implicated in them. We need now our own historical and cognitive distance from the Renaissance, so that it becomes a "past...looked upon, for the first time, as a totality cut off from the present."³³

³³ Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, New York, 1960, 113, referring to the classical past.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SPONGE OF PROTOGENES

*for people very generally owe their reputation
to the talent of others, rather than their own.*¹

Merely the precedent of antiquity could never have produced the Renaissance cult of the artist. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers who discussed the visual arts took up many of the same themes as the ancients, but often in a different language, with new emphases, and juxtaposing ideas which had been discrete in ancient times.² Pliny, for instance, discusses the quality of being *nobilis* or famous with regard to the patron, but not with regard to the artist. He mentions in passing Theophrastus, “a mortal whose eminence as an orator won him the title of ‘the divine,’”³ but has nothing comparable to say of the artists he discusses. Cicero in his discussion of the soul might credit Archimedes with *divinum ingenium*, and extend the idea to poets;⁴ he might also compare sculptors and poets, yet the idea that an artist might have *divinum ingenium* remained highly exceptional. It hovered on the tip on the antique tongue, only to be spoken in the Renaissance.

Ancient Romans could gush with enthusiasm comparable to Vasari’s most enraptured admiration, though characteristically one orator praising another, rather than anyone eulogizing individual artists at length. The artists of antiquity left us scant verbal record of their mutual

¹ Pliny/Jex-Blake, XXXIV, 57: “quando alieno plerique ingenio magis quam suo commendantur.”

² See, in particular, Rensselaer W. Lee, *‘Ut Pictor Poesis:’ The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York, 1967 (1940); Erwin Panofsky, “Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the ‘Renaissance-Dämmerung,’” *The Renaissance*, New York, 1962 (revised from 1953), 121–82; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “The Sovereignty of the Artist, A Note on Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art,” *Selected Studies*, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1965 (1961), 352–65; André Chastel, “The Artist,” *Renaissance Characters*, ed. E. Garin, tr. L. Cochrane, Chicago, 1991 (1988), 180–206; Martin Kemp, “The ‘Super-Artist’ as Genius: The Sixteenth-Century View,” *Genius: The History of an Idea*, ed. Penelope Murray, Oxford, 1989, 32–53.

³ Pliny, *Natural History*, Preface, 29, tr. H. Rackham, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1938: “hominem in eloquentia tantum ut nomen divinum inde invenerit.”

⁴ Cicero, *Tusculanarum Disputationum*, I, xxv.

esteem. Pliny provided anecdotes such as that of Apelles' and Protagoras' vying to produce the finest line, but only rarely. Virgil wrote of the work of the divine Alcimedon, two cups of beech wood, but in the special context of Arcady.⁵ Such references were unusual. The ancients' near-silence about individual artists was felt during the Renaissance as a fault, and generously corrected.

Vitruvius' ten books on architecture, the sole treatise on art to survive until the Renaissance, was not a particularly rich source for the painter. Vitruvius, who was born about the time Pliny died, did strenuously recommend a wide-ranging education for the architect, whom he urged to rely exclusively neither on *ingenium* nor on *diligentia*. The architect, and by extension the artist, was to use both to mutual advantage:

He must have both a natural gift and also readiness to learn. (For neither talent without instruction nor instruction without talent can produce the perfect artisan).⁶

The rest of the text was overwhelmingly practical: of great interest to architects, skippable by a painter or sculptor.

Despite the fact that the arts had been but a peripheral interest of his, the Elder Pliny produced writings crucial to Renaissance connoisseurship. Pliny loved quality, he had a knack for anecdote, and he had a historical thesis. No mere antiquarian, he explicated a personal point of view as well as reporting both public opinion and the sayings of famous persons. To read his chapters on painting and sculpture with the Italian Renaissance writings on art in mind is to find a remarkable anticipation in both language and themes of the major writers of the sixteenth century, Vasari prime among them.

Both Roman and Renaissance writers were exercised about the balance between innate gift and education. However, for ancient writers the question of balance is moderated by the unassailable importance of

⁵ Virgil, Eclogue III, "pocula ponam/fagina, caelatum divini opus Alcimedontis," a prize in a poetry contest. J.J. Winckelmann remembered this: "Superior artists were distinguished by the name of Godlike,—as Alcimedon, for instance, by Virgil: this was the highest praise among the Spartans," *History of Ancient Art*, tr. G.H. Lodge, Cambridge, Ma., 1880, 297. See also, e.g., Quintilian, *I.O.*, XII, x, 3–10, for praise of particular artists.

⁶ *De architectura*, tr. Frank Granger, Loeb, London, 1931, I,1,3: "Itaque eum etiam ingeniosum oportet esse et ad disciplinam docilem. Neque enim ingenium sine disciplina aut disciplina sine ingenio perfectum artificem potest efficere." See also J.J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology*, New Haven, 1974, esp. 201–16.

the faithful imitation of nature, whereas for early modern writers the focus is instead on finding standards with which to assess individual artists: state paganism has given way to the crises of individual souls. This latter was the path which led to curbs on the project of mimesis: the grotesque, the *capriccio*, and the uninhibited display of *maniera*. Art for Pliny pertained to the state and its morality, to a communal notion of ethos; for Vasari it was, on the one hand, a history of the science of *disegno*, and on the other hand, a barometer of individual destinies that conveniently happened to have geographical and chronological coherence. Both authors react to the specter of decadence, but for Pliny the threat is real and present; for Vasari, ostensibly at least, the challenge lies in the future. At rare moments he unleashes a certain resentment against, or at least a querulousness toward, the present:

the daily sight of marvels, wonders, and impossible feats by the workmen in this art has now brought us to the point that no matter what men may do, though it may seem more godlike than human, no one is amazed by it at all.⁷

The manifold similarities between Pliny's thought and that of his modern imitators, particularly Vasari, make their differences all the more significant. In renewing the effort to write about the *scientia* of art, Renaissance writers helped to precipitate not only early modern art but early modern science as well. The confidence to gainsay ancient texts was crucial to both endeavors. Alberti, writing as a theorist rather than a historian, explicitly distanced himself from Pliny, protesting like a rebellious child: "we are not writing a history of painting like Pliny, but treating of the art in an entirely new way."⁸ Two centuries later, Galileo, a liberal artist in the best sense of the term, became attuned to the rights of modernity by his interests in poetry, music, and painting. His love of Ariosto, for instance, fed a taste for the non-antique. Renaissance theorists as well as practitioners deliberately modified precedent, not just in niceties of style but in content. The medieval practice of repeating according to visual or verbal pattern was replaced by a new

⁷ Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, tr. J. and P. Bondanella, Oxford, 1991, 13–14; Vasari/Marini, *Life of Cimabue*, 117: "il quale [il secolo nostro], avezzo ogni dì a vedere le maraviglie, i miracoli, e l'impossibilità degli artefici in quest'arte, è condotto oggimai a tale, che di cosa che facciano gli uomini, benché più divina che umana sia, punto non si maraviglia."

⁸ Grayson, 1972, 62–3: "quidem non historiam picturae ut Plinius sed artem novissime recenseamus;" "non come Plinio recitiamo storie, ma di nuovo fabbrichiamo un'arte de pittura," Grayson, 1973, 46.

era of deliberately complicating one's patterns, even the recently discovered and greatly admired ones, to the point of their virtual erasure. The change was gradual—no dramatic ripping off of a veil, as Burckhardt had it—but nevertheless real.

Pliny's study encompassed all of natural history, and so he organized his books according to the natural materials used, rather than according to biography as would be the case for Vasari in the sixteenth century. Decline into decadence as simplicity was sacrificed to ostentation constitutes his theme; Vasari traces instead a gradual upward climb to the acme of Michelangelo's career, from Gothic and Greek (i.e. Byzantine) barbarism to the utmost in artistic sophistication. Pliny (d. 79), an *eques*, socially beneath the aristocracy and senators, dedicated his work to Titus, son of his employer the Emperor Vespasian. He used it as a prod against the current of the times, hoping presumably for reform, but reform of the populace rather than of either emperor or his son and heir. Vasari merely intimates the theme of reform, or more nearly, caution, indicating that Michelangelo might represent the acme of art without providing an example to potential successors. He does so delicately and subtly, in order not to distract from his celebration of the present. Both the 1550 and the 1568 editions of his *Vite* he dedicated to Duke Cosimo de' Medici (1519–74). He was forebearingly critical of earlier and cruder times, and unabashedly impressed both with lavish material rewards given to artists and the resultant gentlemanly dignity they were able to assume. He flattered his dedicatee, not only in the routine ways, but by reassuring him that he presided over the best of artistic times:

I rejoice to see these arts having achieved in your time the highest degree of perfection.⁹

Pliny most admired art which was either from such early and simple times that it was *avant commerce*, or art which was so marvelously above the norm that it was above price, *hors commerce*—though he was not above naming impressive prices paid as testifying to the greatness of art. Nevertheless he consistently agitated against greed or love of ostentation on the part of either the artisan or the patron. He tells how the Emperor Nero ordered a bronze portrait of the young Alexander the

⁹ “mi rallegrò di vedere queste arti arrivate nel Suo tempo al supremo grado della lor perfezzione,” Vasari, Letter of dedication of the first edition, *Vite*, Florence, 1550 (Bettarini/Barocchi, 4).

Great to be gilded, thus spoiling it (“cum pretio perisset gratis artis”).¹⁰ The gold was subsequently removed, and the work judged more precious without it. If this is reminiscent for us of Alberti’s fifteenth-century advice to avoid excessive use of gold, and thereby earn *admiratio et laus*,¹¹ it is only superficially similar. Alberti means to dignify the artist as an intellectual; Pliny to dignify the connoisseur.

Pliny had fairly straightforwardly presented the idea that professional success and estimable art were separate if not incompatible. An esprit de corps among artists he took to be unhealthy. Of Nikophanes he says, damning with faint praise, that he “is admired by a small circle for an industry (*diligentia*) which painters alone can really appreciate.”¹² There is a potential ambivalence to the story of Protogenes and Apelles and the ever-thinner line, which produced the famous *opera inanis*, the “empty” or even “worthless” work, which consisted in the thinnest line possible. Certainly the idea of a professional pride correlating with the existence of what we might call high art, an art which required initiation, is central to Vasari and alien to Pliny. Vasari uses the Greek adage, “dell’unga un leone,”¹³ according to which a minor part suffices to imply an absent whole, to affirm the intellectual integrity of *disegno*. Pliny, by contrast, approves of the shoemaker who can correct the painted shoes by Apelles, and he admires the old clay statues:

The admirable execution of these figures, their artistic merits and their durability make them more worthy of honour than gold, and they are at any rate more innocent.¹⁴

He bemoans, portentously, the modern tendency to attend to “the objects, not the spiritual rewards.”¹⁵

Art, for Pliny, is twinned with the very idea of renown; a fine work is routinely called *nobilis* or *nobilissimis*. Moreover, at least in the case of the art of Alkamanes, he claims not only that *nobile* or celebrated men admire art, but that art (portraiture, specifically) actually renders them more “nobilis”:

¹⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXIV, 63; *Chapters*, 51 (XXXIV, 63).

¹¹ Grayson, 1972, 92.

¹² *Chapters*, 160–63 (XXXV, 137).

¹³ G. Vasari, “Della pittura,” XV, *Vite*, Bettarini, /Barocchi, I, 111.

¹⁴ “mira caelatura et arte suique firmitate, sanctiora auro, certe innocentiora,” *Chapters*, 181 (XXXV, 158).

¹⁵ “rerum, non animi pretiis excubatur,” *Chapters*, 96 (XXXV, 50), but translated, “we are alive only to the worth of the material and not to the genius of the artist.”

The marvel of his art is that it made famous men yet more famous.¹⁶

Vasari, by contrast, is a sort of union agitator who uses the status of patrons as a kind of code for monetary values. His artists are idealized by emphasizing the power of the men who ask them for works. Of Julius II and Michelangelo he reported:

The Pope, being thus encouraged to greater designs, richly rewarded Michelagnolo, who sometimes said in speaking of the great favours showered upon him by the Pope that he fully recognized his powers, and if he sometimes used hard words, he healed them by signal gifts and favours.¹⁷

A similar theme is sounded by Benvenuto Cellini when, as a young man copying at the Villa Farnesina, he is entrusted with the commission to set a jewel, and, by refusing to set a fee for the job, is rewarded with fifty gold pieces—much more than could have reasonably been expected—and the compliment that he deserved even more than the lady could give him. The exchange is highly complimentary to both patron and artist, and not a little reminiscent of the days of chivalry. Such rewards, in turn, guarantee the “nobility of the art,” as though siphoned from those noble patrons in the form of gold. Munificence raises art out of commerce. So whereas Pliny describes the benefit the patron gets from the work of art, Vasari substitutes the glory the artist receives from his patron—a bit of a paradox since it is Vasari who believes in the divinity of art, and Pliny who follows custom in believing that imperial patrons themselves have a claim to divine status.¹⁸ Both remarks are addressed to prospective consumers, but whereas Pliny’s are meant to encourage enlightened viewing, Vasari’s are intended to flatter prospective patrons.

Vasari wraps the specific works of art in the significance of a *Vita*; the career is the quantum of contribution, and therefore marketable in each and every work by that master. Pliny seeks to isolate the *opus eximium*, the exceptional work, and he reduces artists to their best known and/or finest effort. His is a collector’s point of view; Vasari’s anticipates that of a dealer.

¹⁶ *Chapters*, 61 (XXXIV, 74), “mirumque in hac arte est quod nobiles viros nobiles fecit;” Pliny/Landino, “E maravigliosa chosa in questa arte che lui fece glhuomini nobili piu nobili.”

¹⁷ *Lives*, IV, 130; “il Papa, di tal cosa ingrandito e dato animo a sé di far maggior impresa, con danari e ricchi doni rimunerò molto Michelagnolo, il quale diceva alle volte de’ favori, che gli faceva quel Papa, tanto grandi che mostrava di conoscere grandemente la virtù sua; e se talvolta per una sua cotale amorevolezza gli faceva villania la medicava con doni e favori segnalati,” 1221.

¹⁸ *Chapters*, 88, 131 (XXXV, 21, 94), *divus Augustus*; Pliny/Landino: “divo Augusto.”

Vasari's descriptive vocabulary is repetitive enough that one work sounds much like another—many in the later lives are *divine*, myriad are *belle*. Pliny's reformist theme encourages him to be something of a cultural historian, whereas Vasari takes it for granted that the Duchy of Tuscany is beyond reproach, beyond examination, and the same may be said of the patron class, at least when it is generous. Biography frames judgment on the artist, and Vasari's bent is toward approval; whereas Pliny's history of media lends itself instead to a concatenation of outstanding examples. Many artists are mentioned by Pliny for a single achievement, many works without a named artist.

The reader of Pliny will long remember particular works, such as Protogenes' painting of the hero Ialysos with his dog. The artist lived on lupins while painting it, in order not to dull his senses with too much food, and could not be satisfied because his own skill looked to him to be mere art, and not truth: "it was the very skill which displeased him and which could not be concealed, but obtruded itself too much, thus making the effect unnatural."¹⁹ Finally, in disgust, he threw a sponge at the picture. The dog's foaming mouth was then formed perfectly by chance:

the dog in this picture is the outcome as it were of miracle, since chance, and not art alone, went to the painting of it.²⁰

Made by chance ("*Ita Protogenes monstravit et fortunam*") or miraculously (*mire*): Pliny offers alternative explanations. He uses the word *miraculum* more than once of works of art, though in a casual sense, meaning simply that it is beyond *ars*, beyond ordinary accomplishments. Pliny's *miracula* merely hint at Vasari's full-fledged notion of how the great-

¹⁹ *Chapters*, 138 (XXXV, 103); "displiebat autem ars ipsa nec minui poterat et videbatur nimia ac longius a veritate discedere;" Pliny/Landino: "Dispiacevagli essa arte ne si potea partire da quella & era anxio perche voleva che paressi che laschiama nascessi della bocca & non paressi dipinta & desiderava nella pictura el vero & non elverisimile & mutava spesso el colore rasciugando elpennello nella spugna: Finalmente adiratosi collarte frego la sciugava e pennelli di varii colri accaso."

²⁰ *Chapters*, 138 (XXV, 102): "est in ea canis mire factus ut quem pariter et casus pinxerit;" Pliny/Landino: "in quella un cane maravigliosamente dipincto & facto alarte & dallcaso. per la commistione di quegli era facto tal colore quale lui desiderava. Et per questo la fortuna fece nella pictura el naturale." Cf. Callistratus' third-century A.D. description of a bacchant by Scopas: "when they are seized by the gift of a more divine inspiration [sculptors] give utterance to creations that are possessed and full of madness;" quoted by N. Brann, *The debate over the origin of genius during the Italian Renaissance: the theories of supernatural frenzy and natural melancholy in accord and in conflict on the threshold of the scientific revolution*, Leiden, 2002, 78.

est artist must operate beyond the rules of art. Once revised somewhat in the Renaissance by a marriage with the theory of rhetoric, which demanded that the orator display some impetus beyond the predictable and on that account relatively unimpressive formulae, Pliny's text encouraged a certain impetuousness which the evidence of ancient art itself would never have licensed.

In Pliny's text itself no notion exists of a bond between rulelessness and the exploration of an individual's *ingenium*. He does speak of an artist's particular bent: "the natural turn of his genius [spirit or temperament], and his artist's caprice."²¹ But the phrase is used to explain a limitation rather than to describe a particular accomplishment: Protogenes was not up to recording the deeds of Alexander. Similarly, Parrhasios indulged his taste for "licentious subjects, seeking relaxation in this wanton humor."²² Pliny presents this as abnormality rather than genius. Alberti, for all his self-conscious distancing from Pliny, shared the idea that impetuousness was foreign to art: "diligence is no less welcome than native ability in many things."²³

The idea that a good man will be a better artist Alberti took from rhetorical theory. Quintilian, for instance, is clear about this:

The first essential for such an one [the perfect orator] is that he should be a good man, and consequently we demand of him not merely the possession of exceptional gifts of speech, but of all the excellences of character as well.²⁴

Indeed Quintilian claimed that it was more important that rhetoric be seen as a virtuous activity than that it be deemed an art:

that rhetoric which befits a good man and is in a word the only true rhetoric, will be a virtue.²⁵

²¹ "impetus animi et quaedam artis libido," *Chapters*, 140 (XXXV, 106); Pliny/Landino "l'empito dell'animo & una vehemente voglia lo spinsono piu tosto a fare tali chose."

²² *Chapters*, 115 (XXXV, 72): "pinxit et minoribus tabellis libidines, eo genere petulantis ioci reficiens;" Pliny/Landino: "le lebidine perche si richreava con tali spetie di picture & con motteggi."

²³ Grayson, 1972, 104-05: "non paucis in rebus ipsa diligentia grata non minus est quam omne ingenium;" Grayson, 1973, "né in poche cose più si pregia la diligenza che l'ingegno."

²⁴ *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H.E. Butler, Loeb, London, 1922, Book I, Preface, 8-11: "qui esse nisi vir bonus non potest; ideoque non dicendi modo eximiam in eo facultatem sed omnes animi virtutes exigimus."

²⁵ Book II, xx; Loeb I, 315: "quae bono viro convenit quaeque est vere rhetorice, virtus erit."

Alberti modified and expanded Quintilian's behest. The artist should be a good man because then an indiscriminating patron will favor him even when his aesthetic judgment fails him:

The aim of the painter is to obtain praise, favour and good-will for his work much more than riches...in order that he may attain all these things, I would have the painter first of all be a good man, well versed in the liberal arts. Everyone knows how much more effective uprightness of character is in securing people's favour than any amount of admiration for someone's industry and art. And no one doubts that the favour of many people is very useful to the artist for acquiring reputation and wealth. It so happens that, as rich men are often moved by kindness more than by an expert knowledge of art, they will give money to one man who is especially modest and good, and spurn another who is more skilled but perhaps intemperate. For this reason it behooves the artist to be particularly attentive to his morals, especially to good manners and amiability, whereby he may obtain the good-will of others, which is a firm protection against poverty, and [whereby he may obtain] money, which is an excellent aid to the perfection of his art.²⁶

As for Pliny, the friendship between Alexander and Apelles had prompted him to say a few words about the painter's personal charm:

The charm of his manner had won him the regard of Alexander the Great, who was a frequent visitor to the studio.²⁷

Even so, praising the virtue of a good artist never occurs to him.

Similarly Vasari frequently mentions the ingratiating qualities of artists close to powerful patrons—Michelangelo excepted, of course. Often it is their abilities as instrumentalists that recommends them; Leonardo and Giorgione played the lute well, for instance. Still, only Alberti makes a general claim that a painter should pursue virtue.

²⁶ "Finis pictoris laudem, gratiam et benivolentiam vel magis quam divitias ex opere adipisci...Sed cupis pictorem, quo haec possit omnia pulchre tenere, in primis esse virum et bonum et doctum bonarum artium. Nam nemo nescit quantum probitas vel magis quam omnis industriae aut artis admiratio valeat ad benivolentiam civium comparandum. Tum nemo dubitat benivolentiam multorum artifici plurimum conferre ad laudem atque ad opes parandas. Siquidem ex ea fit ut cum non nunquam divites benivolentia magis quam artis peritia moveantur, tum lucra ad hunc potissimum modestum et probum deferant, spreto alio peritioris sane, sed fortassis intemperanti. Quae cum ita sint, moribus egregie inserviendum erit artifice, maxime humanitati et facilitate, quo et benivolentiam, firmum contra paupertatem praesidium, et lucra, optimum ad perficiendam artem auxilium, assequatur;" Grayson, 1972, 94–95.

²⁷ *Chapters*, 124–25 (XXXV, 85); "fuit enim et comitas illi, propter quam gratior Alexandro Magno frequenter in officinam venitanti;" Pliny/Landino: "era piacevole nel parlare ilper che era grato ad Alexandro Magno elquale spesso veniva nella sua officina."

For Vasari artistic temperament implies eccentricity. He is ever laying the groundwork for the Life of Michelangelo, who cannot be cast in the mould of a gentleman-artist like Leonardo or Raphael. The Giotto who mocks the peasant who presumptuously asks that his arms be painted on his shield, the Donatello who won't wear the fancy red cloak he is given by Cosimo, prepare us for Michelangelo as the paradox of a supreme artist who spurns the commands of a Pope and who bathes so infrequently that the skin peels off when he finally removes his boots. Vasari wants the artist himself to be remembered, not merely for his products. And so for Vasari there ought to be good stories about a good artist, though the stories will not necessarily be about making works of art. Piero di Cosimo's prodigious consumption of boiled eggs is not associated with any particular commission, as was Protogenes' of lupin.

Maniera, the expression of personality in the work, is the crux. Yet Vasari is scarcely an advocate of *capriccio*. In general, when he designates a work as capricious he means that he cannot understand what was the good of doing it, that it did not help the arts of *disegno* and cannot be understood as integral to any *maniera*.

Across the *Lives* Vasari works as portraitist, indirectly delineating an ideal type, in which eccentricity is transmuted into rulelessness, and hastiness into inspiration. Even so, he resolutely resists endorsing rulelessness; it is too alien to his own role as courtier. The various artists appear as contributors to a great cause, in an almost militaristic sense. Pliny on the other hand, whose loyalty is with writers, does not see artists as soldiers sustaining the state of culture, but more nearly as traitors against it. He has no scruples about putting all such *artificium* in its place, as when he reports that Apelles' great painting of Aphrodite rising from the sea, the *anadoumenos*, was at once outdone by the poems written in its praise:

at once eclipsed yet rendered famous by the Greek epigrams written in her praise.²⁸

Although Pliny occasionally mentions more than one work by a particularly famous artist such as Apelles or Pheidias, still he is more interested in the works than in the people who made them, and less interested in the works than in his general subject of natural history. There is not a suspicion of the idea that an artist is in any way either a good

²⁸ *Chapters*, 127 (XXXV, 91): "versibus Graecis tali opere, dum laudatur, victo sed inlustrato."

or a noble person. That honor belongs to the consumer, that is, to his social superior, who is *nobilis*, celebrated or high-born. The two qualities are thought to be paired to one another. The closest Pliny gets to describing an artist whose character merits consideration is, significantly, Apelles, whose “simplicity was equal to his sophistication” (“fuit autem non minoris simplicitatis quam artis.”)²⁹ Generally Pliny tells stories about the follies of artists, rather than about their special abilities. Seilanian, for instance, “often broke up a finished statue, being unable to reach the ideal he aimed at; from this he was called ‘the madman.’”³⁰

Pliny was so useful to Vasari partly because he didn’t encumber the concept of a good artist with the obligation to be a good man (as tended to be the case in biographical notices of orators); and secondly because he provided a rudimentary historical scheme. Vasari capitalized on both in his *Vite*, since Michelangelo was not easily portrayed as conventionally virtuous, but did lend himself to the role of the one who culminates the stylistic movement begun by Giotto, dedicated to the robust human figure. Michelangelo could be made to conform to Pliny’s touchstone of *simplicitas*, but would not easily have conformed to Alberti’s description of a good and admired courtier, ingratiating to his superiors. Michelangelo was simple (in Vasari’s words, he displayed “semplicità e bontà”), when as a youth in the Medici garden, he knocked out the teeth of his old faun’s head in response to Lorenzo de’ Medici’s comment that the grin was too perfect. Vasari understandably chose not to take the further step of associating Michelangelo with the destructive acts of the crazed Seilanian (*furioso*, in Landino’s translation).

Alberti’s emphases on both learnedness and moral exemplarity, for him very closely related concepts, are not shared by his fellow writers, ancient or modern. It may well have been that no one else, painter or theorist, ever believed quite as heartily as Alberti that painting belonged amid the liberal arts, and was, therefore, the result of industrious study and diligence—though, of course, not to excess:

diligence is no less welcome than native ability in many things...we should certainly strive to employ every care needed in our work, as far as

²⁹ *Chapters*, 120 (XXXV, 80); translated though as, “his candour was equal to his genius;” Pliny/Landino, “fu non di minore semplicita che d’arte.”

³⁰ *Chapters*, 66–69 (XXXV, 81): “crebo perfecta signa frangentem, dum satiari cupiditate artis non quit, ideoque insanum cognominatum;” “diligentissimo nellarte & incisissimo giudice dise. Et spesso non potendo adempiere quanto desiderava nellarte rompea lefigure gia facte Et per questo fu chiamato furioso.”

our talents permit, but wanting to achieve in every particular more than is possible or suitable is characteristic of a stubborn, not of a diligent man.³¹

Diligence, that humanist virtue, was little admired by Pliny. On the contrary, he records how even the modest and generous Apelles faulted Protogenes for not knowing when to stop.³² Zeuxis, so beloved of Renaissance commentators for epitomizing the artist as one whose vision improved upon the works of nature, is cited by Pliny for excessive diligence in gathering so many maidens of Crotona as models for a single figure to adorn the temple of Hera.³³ For Alberti, the lesson was quite the opposite. Zeuxis, that over-zealous collector of female corporeal data, has become in his hands one who avoids the pitfalls of over-reliance on *ingenium*, preferring instead the hard path of study: “the most eminent, learned and skilled painter of all...not trusting rashly in his own talent like all painters do now.”³⁴

Timanthes is presented by Pliny as a lesser figure than Apelles, despite his role as exemplar of *ingenium*:

He is the only artist whose works always suggest more than is in the picture, and great as is his *ars*, his *ingenium* exceeds it.³⁵

Timanthes showed the huge size of a Cyclops in a small format by depicting a satyr at his side whose thyrsos is the size of the giant’s thumb; and, as cited famously by Alberti, implied the vast grief of Agamemnon at the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia, by showing him veiled, thereby preserving his dignity.³⁶ Timanthes’ native cleverness, a

³¹ “Siquidem non paucis in rebus ipsa diligentia grata non minus est quam omne ingenium...nam conari sane oportet ut pro ingenii viribus quantum sat sit diligentia rebus adhibeatur, sed in omni re plus velle quam vel possis vel deceat, pertinacis est non diligentis,” Grayson, 1972, 104–05.

³² *Chapters*, 120–21 (XXXV, 80): “cum Protogenis opus immensi laboris ac curae supra modum anxiae miraretur, dixit enim omnia sibi cum illo paria esse aut illi meliora, sed uno se praestare, quod manum de tabula sciret tollere, memorabili praeccepto nocere saepe nimiam diligentiam.”

³³ *Chapters*, 108–09 (XXXV, 64): “tantus diligentia;” Pliny/Landino, “troppo diligentia.”

³⁴ Grayson, 1972, 99, “praestantissimus et omnium doctissimus et peritissimus pictor...non suo confusus ingenio temere, ut fere omnes hac aetate pictores;” Grayson, 1973, 96, “Zeusis, praestatissimo e gra gli altri essercitatissimo pittore...non fidandosi pazzamente, quanto oggi ciascuno pittore, del suo ingegno.”

³⁵ *Chapters*, 116–17 (XXXV, 74), “cum sit ars summa, ingenium tamen ultra artem est;” Pliny/Landino, “evisia somma arte: nientedimeno ve ingegno maggioe che larte.”

³⁶ *Chapters*, 116 (XXXV, 73), “velavit quem digne non poterat ostendere;” Pliny/Landino: “grande ingegno degnamente non poteva mostrare conveniente merore.”

species it would seem of the fundamental principle of *audacia*, receives praise, rather than learnedness or the manipulation of precedent.³⁷

Alberti, as the first to set out to define an artist's *ingenium* in the Renaissance, relied on the story of Timanthes even as he transformed it. It was for him much more pivotal than any of the lore of Apelles. Timanthes' Plinian *ingenium* was elided by Alberti into *inventio*, the very much learned quality, an essential part of the training of an orator, by which *historiae* are constructed:

They praise Timanthes of Cyprus for the painting in which he surpassed Colotes, because, when he had made Calchas sad and Ulysses even sadder at the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and employed all his art and skill [omnem artem et ingenium] on the grief-stricken Menelaus, he could find no suitable way to represent the expression of her disconsolate father; so he covered his head with a veil, and thus left more for the onlooker to imagine about his grief than he could see with the eye.³⁸

Although the word *inventio* does not appear in this passage, it is implicit, since for Alberti *inventio* is relevant to all *historiae*:

Literary men, who are full of information about many subjects, will be of great assistance in preparing the composition of a 'historia,' and the great virtue of this consists primarily in its invention. Indeed, invention is such that even by itself and without pictorial representation it can give pleasure.³⁹

Even Apelles, who for Pliny exemplifies the inimitable, becomes an exponent of *inventio* in the hands of Alberti, cleverly devising the *historia* of the Calumny. His *grazia* or *charis*, that mysterious charm beyond the rules of reason, and his glazes which similarly required serendipity rather than recipe—these have been displaced by that quality so central to rhetoric, *inventio*, as mimesis has been subjugated to the greater

³⁷ Vitruvius also uses "ingenium" of that which allows for "spontaneous insights" rather than "the application of learned rules;" see Pollitt, *The Art of Rome, c. 753 B.C.-A.D. 337: Sources and Documents*, Cambridge, 1983, 211.

³⁸ Grayson, 1972, 82-83; "Laudatur Timanthes Cyprius in ea tabula qua Colloticum vicit, quod cum in Iphigeniae immolatione tristem Calchantem, tristiolem fecisset Ulixem, inque Menelao maerore affecto omnem artem et ingenium exposuisset, consumptis affectibus, non reperiens quo digno modo tristissimi patris vultus referret, pannis involuit eius caput, ut cuique plus relinqueret quod de illius dolore animo meditarietur, quam quod posset visu discernere."

³⁹ Grayson, 1972, 94-95; "Neque parum illi quidem multarum rerum notitia copiosi litterati ad historiae compositionem pulchre constituendam iuvabunt, quae omnis laus praesertim in inventionem consistit. Atqui ea quidem hanc habet vim, ut etiam sola inventio sine pictura delectet."

goal of the *historia*.⁴⁰ This shunting aside of *grazia* is a moment of great finesse in Alberti's writing (as well as an important precedent for Vasari), for *grazia* denominated what was essential to the work of antiquity's most distinguished painter. According to Pliny the quality is particularly Apelles' and it cannot be taught. He reports how Apelles would admire his contemporaries' works, "praising every beauty and yet observing that they failed in the grace, called *charis* in Greek, which was distinctively his own."⁴¹ This sticks in Alberti's craw. He cannot tolerate an excellence which is a peculiar talent of one person and not obtainable through education. He does advise, "let all the movements be restrained and gentle, and represent grace rather than remarkable effort."⁴² Yet grace is not for him the distinctive quality of the great Apelles.

For Alberti it isn't *ingegno* on which the dignity of the profession hangs, but *disciplina* and *arte*. It may be that "painting possesses a truly divine power;"⁴³ it may be that Zeuxis when he gave away his works of art "behaved like a god among mortals;"⁴⁴ it may be that painters "see their works admired and feel themselves to be almost like the Creator."⁴⁵ Nevertheless Alberti reveres painting for its rational qualities, as

⁴⁰ Apelles' *gratia* is inimitable, and also his use of glaze: "All have profited by his innovations, though one of these could never be imitated; he used to give his pictures when finished a black glazing so thin that by sending back the light it could call forth a whitish color, while at the same time it afforded protection from dust and dirt," *Chapters*, 132–33 (XXXV, 97); Pliny/Landino: "una cosa nessuno pote imitare Imperoche impiastrava loperre sue gia finite con si sottile atramento che quelloper reflexione de lumi excitava losplendore a gliocchi & conserava la pictura dalle polvere & dogni bruttura."

⁴¹ "quorum opera cum admiraretur omnibus conlaudatis, deesse illam suam Venere dicebat, qual Graeci Charita vocant, cetera omnia contigisse, sed hac sola sibi neminem parem," *Chapters*, 120–21 (XXXV, 79); Pliny/Landino: "fu eccellente la sua venusta nellarte sua & nella eta sua furono eccellenti pictori equali sommamente lodo. Ma disse manhare loro una certa venusta laquale e greci chiamono Charis benche havessino tutte laltre cose & in questo nessuno essere pari allui." Cf. Quintilian, *I.O.*, 12.10.6.

⁴² "moderati et faciles, gratiamque potius quam admirationem laboris exhibeant" Grayson, 1972, 87; "i movimenti moderati e dolci, più tosto quali porgano grazia a chi miri che meraviglia di fatica alcuna," Grayson, 1973, 78–80.

⁴³ Grayson, 1972, 60, "vim admodum divinam;" Grayson, 1973, 44, "tiene in sé la pittura forza divina."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, "quasi alterum sese inter mortales deum praestaret;" "sé porgesse quasi uno iddio."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, "instructi cum opera sua admirari videant, tum deo se paene simillimos esse intelligant;" 46, "qual sia pittore maestro vedrà le sue opere essere adorate, e sentirà sé quasi giudicato un altro iddio."

an extension of humanism rather than as anything remotely connected with mysticism. If his mind is to be moved and held,⁴⁶ it will be by a painting that achieves beauty combined with learning, and by an artist who knows that “the gifts of Nature should be cultivated and increased by industry, study, and practice.”⁴⁷ Dignity implies for him the avoidance of both excessive diligence and a rash reliance on natural talent.

For Leonardo, following on Alberti but without the humanistic take on things, “scientia” is the crucial term. His *Paragone* begins with the query, “Se la pittura è scientia, o no.” It allows him to claim, along with Alberti, that painting should be considered a liberal art, without tying it as closely as does Alberti to booklearning. *Scientia* is a word found in Pliny’s text, not in Alberti’s. For Alberti, *arte* is a label of more prestige, for it links painting with the liberal arts as *scientia* would not.

Pliny uses the word *scientia* as a kind of synonym for art,⁴⁸ but the aspect of rational knowledge seems to be less important to him than *audacia*, as rule is less important to Vasari than *grazia* or *aria*. But whereas the early modern writers are focussed on the question of the dignity of the painter, Pliny, by contrast, simply doesn’t consider the profession dignified. It has its functions; it has its history; but he is not its advocate. Although realistic portraiture has for generations been the highest goal of art according to Pliny, this will not induce him to praise the mere diligence he understands to be requisite for that genre. On the contrary, *ars* and *audacia*, skillful technique and a boldness which at least echoes the courage of an *equus*, form the two poles of his critique. Noth-

⁴⁶ Grayson, 1972, 94, “Finis pictoris...assequetur pictor dum eius pictura oculos et animos spectantium tenebit atque movebit;” Grayson, 1973, 90, “la fine della pittura ...oculos et animos spectantium tenebit atque movebit.”

⁴⁷ Grayson, 1972, 103, “naturae dotes industria, studio atque exercitatione colendae;” Grayson, 1973, 102, “conviensi coltivare i beni della natura con studio ed esercizio.”

⁴⁸ Of Polykleitos, “hic consummasse hanc scientiam iudicatur et toreuticen sic erudisse ut Phidias aperuisse;” (He is considered to have brought the scientific knowledge of statuary to perfection, and to have systematized the art of which Pheidias had revealed the possibilities), *Chapters*, 44–45 (XXXIV, 56); Pliny/Landino “Stimanoche costui conducessi questa arte a perfectione & cosi havere ripulito latoreutice chome Phidia la prese.” Or more simply, “quo apparet antiquiorem hanc fuisse scientiam quam fundendi aeris” (Hence it is clear that the art of clay modelling is older than that of bronze casting), 176–77 (XXXV, 153); Pliny/Landino: “Il perche apparisce che questa fu piu antica arte che non fu elgetto.” And further on the science of art, Landino says, “Questo da glartefice ci e chiamato Regola & da lui tolgono elineamenti & le proportioni chome da certa legge & regola Et solo di tutti glhuomini perle sua opera e giudicato havere facto larte.”

ing in Alberti's treatise corresponds to Pliny's concept of *audacia*. On the contrary, whereas Pliny vaunts the colossus as the prime proof of *audacia*, Alberti avers that "the great work of the painter is not the colossus but the 'historia,' for there is far more merit in a 'historia' than in a colossus."⁴⁹ Invention, and learning, are preferred to a boldness that might imply a standard other than that of reason. *Grazia* only returns to the fore with Leonardo, who was capable of scorning booklearning and of exploring sensuousness in and with paint. The table turns completely with Vasari, for whom *terribilità* (a descendent of *audacia*) and *grazia* (the weakened, post-Albertian version) were more fundamental than study and indeed necessary to distinguishing between the second and third eras.

The "highest subtlety attainable in painting" for Pliny is skillful outline, the correlate of Alberti's circumscription, Vasari's *disegno*, and Paolo Giovio's *lineamenta*.⁵⁰ But in Vasari's polemical hands the exaltation of *disegno* implies a slight damping of the importance of *inventione*, so

⁴⁹ "Amplissimum pictoris opus non colossus sed historia. Maior enim est ingenii laus in historia quam in colossus," Grayson, 1972, 72–3; "Grandissima opera del pittore non uno colosso, ma istoria. Maggiore loda d'ingegno rende l'istoria che qual sia colosso," Grayson, 1973, 60. He had earlier expressed a preference for the *ingenium* of a painter over that of a sculptor: 64–65; 50.

⁵⁰ Parrhasios' "great contributions to the history of art," are detailed as follows: "He first gave painting symmetry, and added vivacity to the features, daintiness to the hair and comeliness to the mouth, while by the verdict of artists he is unrivalled in the rendering of outline. This is the highest subtlety attainable in painting. merely to paint a figure in relief is no doubt a great achievement, yet many have succeeded thus far. But where an artist is rarely successful is in finding an outline which shall express the contours of the figure. For the contour should appear to fold back, and so enclose the object as to give assurance of the parts behind, thus clearly suggesting even what it conceals," (primus symmetrian picturae dedit, primus argutias voltus, elegantiam capilli, venustatem oris, confessione artificum in lineis extremis palmam adeptus. haec est picturae summa suptilitas. corpora enim pingere et media rerum est quidem magni operis sed in quo multi gloriam tulerint, extrema corporum facere et desinentis picturae modum includere rarum in successu artis invenitur. ambire enim se ipsa debet extremitas et sic desinere ut promittat alia post se ostendatque etiam quae occultat); *Chapters*, 110–13 (XXXV, 67–68); Pliny/Landino: "el primo che trovo la Symetria alla pictura & dette el vivo avisi & la eleganzia decapegli & la venusta nella faccia. E per confessione degli artefici acquisto lapalma nelle externe linee. Questa e lasomma subtilita nella pictura. Dipignere e corpi & el mezo delle cose e grande difficulta: ma molto vhanno acquistato gloria. Ma fare le extremita decorpi & sapere concludere el fine dellarte e chosa che radevolte nellarte si conduce a perfectione." On Giovio and Pliny, see T.C. Price Zimmermann, "Paolo Giovio and the Evolution of Renaissance Art Criticism," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. C. Clough, New York, New York, 1976, 406–24, and idem, "Paolo Giovio and the Rhetoric of Individuality," in *The Rhetoric of Life-Writing in Early*

emphasized by Alberti and so associated with Raphael. For Alberti, circumscription was part of a tripartite scheme, whereas for Vasari *disegno* stands above all the rest.

Vasari assesses artists in terms of their contribution to the progress of their art or arts; the progress of “ars” is likewise principal for Pliny. “Art has made extraordinary progress, in technique first and afterwards in audacity,” Pliny asserts in the chapter on bronze statuary.⁵¹ By (*ars*) he denotes the physical dexterity of the artist (“eximum miraculum,”)⁵² something quite compatible with facility, and by “audacity” he refers more nearly to the conceptualization of the project, for instance, the daring thought of making *colossi*. Thus the very terms by which Pliny divides up the history of art are linked to the terms by which Vasari undertakes to do the same. It is hard to imagine Vasari’s characterization of Michelangelo as *terribile* without the precedent of Pliny’s *audacia*,⁵³ the term that had been least appealing to Alberti; and Pliny’s *ars* is not so far from Vasari’s *disegno*. It is the basic trainable skill, the educable element, which interacts with natural talent or *audacia*. When Vasari uses the phrase, “con molto ingegno,” we hear the reverberations of Pliny’s “ars et audacia.” It implies the happy marriage of the two.

Pliny more than once describes art’s progress in three parts. Pheidias opened up the art (*aperuisse*); Polykleitos refined it (*consummasse*); and Lysippus perfected finish in details and showed things as they seemed rather than as they were (*quales viderenter esse*).⁵⁴ The generic parallel with Vasari’s three-part scheme is striking.⁵⁵ Pliny writes not to salute

Modern Europe, Forms of Biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV, ed. Thomas Mayer and D.R. Woolf, Ann Arbor, 1995, 59–62.

⁵¹ “evecta supra humanam fidem ars est successu, mox et audacia,” *Chapters*, 30–31 (XXXIV, 38); Pliny/Landino: “Questa arte salse in grande honore per felicità dipoi per audacia.” See also Pollitt, *Rome*, 32–37.

⁵² *Chapters*, 30 (XXXIV, 38).

⁵³ Cf. Jan Białostocki, “Terribilità,” *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, Akten des 21. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, III, Berlin, 1967, 222–25; David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, 1981, 234–41.

⁵⁴ XXXIV, 56, 65. See also Book XXXV, xi, where he describes three phases in the history of painting: first working with single colors, then developing light and shade, and finally shine or *splendor*. See also XXXV, 15: outlines, single colors, multiple colors.

⁵⁵ On Pliny’s importance for Ghiberti’s idea of history, see E.H. Gombrich, “The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress and its Consequences,” *Norm and Form*, 1–10; Z. Wazbinski, “L’idée de l’histoire dans la première et la seconde édition des *Vies* de Vasari,” in *Il Vasari: Storiografo e artista, Atti del Congresso internazionale*, Florence, 1974, 1–25.

success, however; instead, like Tacitus, his contemporary, he wants to recall when things were simpler and better—when art was made for glory rather than for gain, and “consequently it was even attributed to the workmanship of gods.”⁵⁶ Obsession with detail he considers but a professional pitfall. In his view, decadence has already set in—a thing which Vasari is busy denying four years after the death of Michelangelo, rallying himself and Cosimo to avert its threatened onset. Nevertheless, the specter of decadence is a primary theme for Vasari, as decadence itself had been for Pliny.

“Art,” for Vasari, may straightforwardly denote the three arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Alternatively, it may imply something more akin to manner or style than Pliny’s “technique,” itself derived from the Greek *technē*. Vasari’s “arte” implies the viewer’s pleasures—softness, motion, and grace—rather than manual dexterity. In general Renaissance writing on art is more focussed on what is peculiar to the individual, less on the epoch itself as a formative power. The freedom of the individual, a theme in Pico della Mirandola as it would also be in Burckhardt, takes precedence over the epic sense of unfolding history.

Epoch was a sensitive matter for the survivors of the Black Death and their descendants, the most distant of Christians yet from the life of Christ. For the Florentines, moreover, their own tortured and eventually extinguished republicanism made epoch a difficult issue. The claims of Roman writers that decadence had followed after the fall of the republic was a bit of antique lore Vasari wanted to ignore. And so the divine Michelangelo was par excellence the exceptional individual for whom epoch meant nothing; being “divine,” he was removed from time. This position relieved Vasari of the responsibility of dealing with Michelangelo’s political context, a task at which he could not possibly satisfy both his hero (the artist) and his patron (the Duke). Apelles had been pronounced by Pliny to be the best painter of all time (“omnes prius genitos futurosque postea superavit”),⁵⁷ yet he also lived at the

⁵⁶ “ideo etiam deorum adscripta operi,” XXXIV, iii.

⁵⁷ *Chapters*, 120 (XXXV, 79); Pliny/Landino: “elquale vinse quegli che furono innanzi a lui et quegli che furono dopo e piu cose truovo lui solo che tutti gli altri insieme |7 scripse volumi nequali sicontiene quella doctrina Et Prasitele elquale scripse cinque libri delle opere nobili di tutto el mondo molto le stima. Costui nacque in grecia parte d’Italia & facto cittadino Romano fere gove davorio in casa di Metello nella via che va in campo martio.”

time of the best painters (“eadem aetate maximi pictores essent”).⁵⁸ The implication is that the age of Alexander was flourishing, yet not out of touch with simplicity and rigour. Apelles famously used but four colors. The relationship of Michelangelo to the “terza età” is a somewhat different matter: Vasari’s sense of period is less historically based, being a distillation of style rather than a commentary on culture; and his point is not that Michelangelo represents the summit of this improved period, but that he supercedes even it.

Whereas Pliny admires nature, Vasari admires Michelangelo. When that which is inimitable comes up in Pliny, it seems to belong more to the mysteries of nature and to religion than to the credit of an artist’s reputation.⁵⁹ Pliny does report that one work of art was believed to have been made with the favor of the goddess, the Venus of Knidos by which the place became famous (“Praxitiles nobilitavit Cnidum”). The nude statue, rejected on grounds of propriety by the people of Kos, was:

made, as is believed, under the direct favor of the goddess.⁶⁰

Somehow even this stands more to the credit of the goddess and her statue than to Praxitiles.

Visual artists in antiquity were not normally called divine. Other kinds of men were, for example the orator Servius Galba, “a man who spoke as a god,”⁶¹ but not without encountering pockets of scepticism. Lucian remarked scornfully that:

it is not so true that a man becomes greater if he is likened to a god, as that the divine is inevitably minimized by being forced down to match what is defective.⁶²

When Vasari deems a work divine, he signals his readers that such a work is not merely like life, but equivalent to Creation. Vasari’s “divine” recalls Pliny’s *miraculum*, in that like Protogenes and the dog

⁵⁸ Pliny/Landino: “Fu eccellente la sua venusta nellarte sua & nella eta sua furono eccellenti pictori equali sommamente lodo.”

⁵⁹ See Mary Beagon, *Roman Nature: The Thought of Pliny the Elder*, Oxford, 1992, esp. Ch. 1, “*Divina Natura: The Roots of Pliny’s Thought*” on the compatibility of *mirabilum* and naturalism, given his cosmology.

⁶⁰ “favente ipsa, ut creditur, facta,” *Chapters*, 192–94 (XXXVI, 21).

⁶¹ “divinum hominem in dicendo,” Cicero, *De oratore*, tr. E.W. Sutton, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1948, I, x, 40.

⁶² Lucian, “*Essays in Portraiture Defended*,” tr. A.M. Harmon, IV, Loeb, London, 1925, 309–11.

with the foaming mouth, what has been superceded is art itself, and reason cannot tell why. This suprarational aspect of painting Alberti had attempted to weed out of Pliny's history, but Vasari is quite content that art not appear to us intelligible. He firmly believes in a talent beyond training, which deserves respect to the point of reverence—though he also supported the fledgling Academy and refused to admit any possible conflict between the two ideas of artistic excellence.

Alberti could turn to Quintilian to support his case that painters worked by rule, though Quintilian had not meant for this to be taken as far as Alberti did. On the contrary, in the course of urging that the rhetoricians go beyond imitating the inventions of others, he had asked recriminatingly, “shall we follow the example of those painters whose sole aim is to be able to copy pictures by using the ruler and the measuring rod?”⁶³ No, argues Quintilian emphatically, citing and disdaining primitive men who relied only on nature in making their discoveries. In defiance of those formulae-bound painters, Quintilian declared the importance of talent:

there is however one point which I must emphasize before I begin, which is this. Without natural gifts technical rules are useless. Consequently the student who is devoid of talent will derive no more profit from this work than barren soil from a treatise on agriculture...in some cases, however, these gifts [natural aids such as the possession of a good voice and robust lungs, sound health, powers of endurance and grace] are lacking to such an extent that their absence is fatal to all such advantages as talent and study can confer, while, similarly, they are of no profit in themselves unless cultivated by skilful teaching, persistent study and continuous and extensive practice in writing, reading and speaking.⁶⁴

Diligence he much respects, but a certain warmth (*calor*) is an essential quality in itself:

The more correct method is, therefore, to exercise care from the very beginning, and to form the work from the outset in such a manner that it merely requires to be chiselled into shape, not fashioned anew.

⁶³ Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae*, tr. H.E. Butler, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1922, X, ii, 6.

⁶⁴ *I.O.*, I, Preface, 26–27; “illud tamen in primis testandum est, nihil praecepta atque artes valere nisi adiuvante natura. quapropter ei [vox, latus patiens laboris, valetudo, constantia, decor], cui deerit ingenium, non magis haec scripta sint quam de agrorum cultu sterilibus terris...sed nonnunquam ita desunt, ut bona etiam ingenii studiique corrumpant; sicut et haec ipsa sine doctore perito, studio pertinaci, scribendi, legendi, dicendi multa et continua exercitatione per se nihil prosunt.”

Sometimes, however, we must follow the stream of our emotions, since their warmth will give us more than any diligence can secure.⁶⁵

Indeed, diligence and instruction have their limits:

the greatest qualities of the orator are beyond all imitation, by which I mean, talent, invention, force, facility and all the qualities which are independent of art.⁶⁶

Education, he advised, was of greatest help to the most gifted. Therefore nature's gift ranks as primary. He offers the following affirmation of both *natura* and *ars* on the matter of:

whether eloquence derives most from nature or from education. This question really lies outside the scope of our inquiry, since the ideal orator must necessarily be the result of a blend of both...we may take a parallel from agriculture. A thoroughly barren soil will not be improved even by the best cultivation, while good land will yield some useful produce without any cultivation; but in the case of really rich land cultivation will do more for it than its own natural fertility. Had Praxiteles attempted to carve a statue out of a millstone, I should have preferred a rough block of Parian marble to any such statue. On the other hand, if the same artist had produced a finished statue from such a block of Parian marble, its artistic value would owe more to his skill than to the material. To conclude, nature is the raw material for education: the one forms, the other is formed. Without material art can do nothing, material without art does possess a certain value, while the perfection of art is better than the best material.⁶⁷

In this passage Quintilian implicitly identifies art with *ingenium*, both working on nature's material, be it soil, stone, or mental aptitudes. Yet,

⁶⁵ *I.O.*, X, 18: "Protinus ergo adhibere curam rectius erit atque ab initio sic opus ducere, ut caelandum, non ex integro fabricandum sit. Aliquando tamen adfectus sequemur, in quibus fere plus calor quam diligentia valet."

⁶⁶ *I.O.*, X, ii, 12: "adde quod ea, quae in oratore maxima sunt, imitabilia non sunt, ingenium, inventio, vis, facilitas et quidquid arte non traditur."

⁶⁷ *I.O.*, II, xix: "naturane plus ad eloquentiam conferat an doctrina. Quod ad propositum quidem operis nostri nihil pertinet (neque enim consummatus orator nisi ex utroque fieri potest), plurimum tamen referre arbitror, quam esse in hoc loco quaestionem velimus. Nam si parti utrilibet omnino alteram detralias, natura etiam sine doctrina multum valebit, doctrina nulla esse sine natura poterit. Sin ex pari coeant, in mediocribus quidem utrisque maius adhuc credam naturae esse momentum, consummatos autem plus doctrinae debere quam naturae putabo; sicut terrae nullam fertilitatem habenti nihil optimus agricola profuerit, e terra uberi utile aliquid etiam nullo colente nascetur, at in solo fecundo plus cultor quam ipsa per se bonitas soli efficiet. Et, si Praxiteles signum aliquod ex molari lapide conatus esset exsculpere, Parium marmor mallet rude; at si illud idem artifex expolisset, plus in manibus fuisset quam in marmore. Denique natura materia doctrinae est; haec fingit, illa fingitur. Nihil

declares Quintilian, Nature is more primary than art: uncarved marble is preferable to Praxiteles' work in a lesser stone.

Cicero, the Michelangelo of Quintilian's universe ("for posterity the name of Cicero has come to be regarded not as the name of a man, but as the name of eloquence itself"⁶⁸), he praised especially for his natural gift:

it was to himself that he owed most of, or rather all his excellences, which sprang from the extraordinary fertility of his immortal genius.⁶⁹

No artist received the like from Pliny, though Cicero received from Pliny as well no small commendation: "Cicero, whose genius is in question stands outside all hazard."⁷⁰

Cicero likewise credited nature above art:

and consequently for my own part I confess that the chief source of this endowment, as of all the things I have spoken of before, is nature.⁷¹

Gratia is not a word used even of the most gifted of orators, who tend rather to *vis*, or, notably in the case of Cicero, who is charming and unique, *iucunditate* rather than *gratia*. Nevertheless, even the greatest of orators requires diligent study, whereas *gratia* implies a certain spontaneous appeal. Quintilian quoted Cicero as having said, "If there be aught of talent in me, and I am only too conscious how little it is," and "In default of talent, I turned to industry for aid."⁷²

Pleasingness is but one connotation of *grazia*. Vasari employs it as one of the defining qualities of the third and culminating phase in the history of art: "disegno perfetto e grazia divina," are introduced by Leonardo, and promoted by the "non meno eccellente che grazioso Raffaël," "gentile," "modesto" and endowed with "bontà," all adjectives tending toward the feminine in their connotation. In the case of

ars sine materia, materiae etiam sine arte pretium est, ars summa materia optima melior."

⁶⁸ *I.O.*, X, i, 112: "apud posteros vero id consecutus, ut Cicero iam non hominis nomen, sed eloquentiae habeatur."

⁶⁹ *I.O.*, X, i, 109: "sed plurimus vel potius omnes ex se ipso virtutes extulit immortalis ingenii beatissima ubertas."

⁷⁰ Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, Preface (Loeb I, 7): "M. Tullius extra omnem ingenii aleam positus;" Pliny/Landino: "Cicero, elquale e di tanto eloquentia: che puo sottomettere longegno [sic] al giuoco della fortuna."

⁷¹ "quare confiteor equidem huius boni naturam esse principem, sicut earum rerum de quibus ante locutus sum omnium," Cicero, *De oratore*, II, lxxxvii.

⁷² Quintilian, *I.O.*, XI, I, 19, 165-67: "Si quid est ingenii in me, quod sentio quam sit exiguum, et quo ingenio minus possum, subsidium mihi diligentia comparavi."

Apelles, as well, *gratia* implied sensuousness and allure, at least in the case of his famous paintings of Campaspe and Aphrodite.

Grazia is a natural endowment, according to Pliny in reference to Apelles. Yet Raphael, the premier artist of *grazia* is, oddly enough, the artist Vasari denigrates for overmuch study.⁷³ Whereas Alberti had simply erased Apelles' *gratia* in order to advance the cause of painting as a liberal art, Vasari renders the concept oddly incoherent. Implicitly its Plinian content, namely, an unstinting allowance for the allure of female sensual charm, had bothered Alberti. Moreover, for Alberti *grazia* adhered to the beneficent patron, to the giver of meed, rather than to the artist. Vasari is also bothered, though differently. In his opposition at the top, his subdivision of *disegno* between Raphael and Michelangelo, the masculinity of art is at stake (as it had been, arguably, in the prior territorial division between *disegno* and *colore*). *Grazia* is sacrificed to the more masculine (and more Dantesque) *terribilità*. This gendering of style was made explicit in Dolce's dialogue of 1557, *L'Aretino*, in which Raphael is identified with the beautiful female form and Michelangelo with the powerful male form:

Michelangelo has adopted the most fearsome and complicated type of nude, and Raphael the most appealing and graceful one. Hence some people have compared Michelangelo to Dante, and Raphael to Petrarch.⁷⁴

Despite the fact that Pliny's most esteemed and honored painter is distinguished by *gratia*, and despite the addition of connotations of a Christian god's grace, *grazia* has been diminished in Vasari's hands. He blocks any tendency to read Raphael as the new Apelles by making him guilty precisely of that which Apelles abhorred, overstudiousness or excessive diligence, that which he had faulted in the otherwise great Protogenes. Secondly, Vasari spreads the quality of *grazia* around quite generally, which had not been the case in Pliny, and reserves the unique quality of *terribilità* for Michelangelo—who becomes thereby no mere replacement, but an alternative, to Apelles. *Grazia*, whether Apelles' or Raphael's, spiritual or corporeal, is forced to function as an opposite, and an unequal one, to the *terribilità* of Michelangelo. No painting was

⁷³ On Vasari's description of Raphael's grace and its associations, see Vasari/Marini, 636–37. See also, P. Emison, "Grazia," *Renaissance Studies*, V, 1991, 427–60.

⁷⁴ Dolce, *Aretino*, 172–73: "Michel'Angelo ha preso del nudo la forma piu terribile e ricercata, e Raffaello la piu piacevole e gratiosa. Onde alcuni hanno comparato Michel'Angelo a Dante, e Raffaello al Petrarca."

ever less endowed with *grazia* than the Doni *Madonna*. Vasari by implicitly defending Michelangelo against this deficiency puts a peculiar spin on a word that already had a somewhat overcomplex heritage. That which is most precious according to Pliny, and least imitable, is devalued in Vasari's cosmos. He continues to esteem the inimitable, that which is beyond rule and thus owed ultimately to nature, at the same time that he has plucked that preserve from *grazia* and from Raphael, where imitation of Pliny would naturally have put it. He does praise Raphael as avoiding that "craziness and wildness" ("un certo che di pazzia e di salvatichezza") artists often fall prey to, as showing the grace, studiousness, beauty, modesty, and good mores by which men become "dei mortali," and as having lived more like a prince than a painter.⁷⁵ He seems himself to find it hard not to insinuate some small criticism of Michelangelo in his writing about Raphael, yet he needs the long-lived Florentine to be the hero of his *Vite*.

The word *sprezzatura*, applied in Castiglione's *Cortegiano* in 1528 of the able courtier, and vaunted there as a new word,⁷⁶ was invoked again by Ludovico Dolce in the person of Fabrini, the defender of Michelangelo in the dialogue:

It seems to me that what is needed in this context [the resolution of the demands of *disegno* and *colore*] is a certain proper casualness [*sprezzatura*], so that one does not get either too much beauty in the coloring or too high a finish in the figures, but sees in the whole an agreeable firmness of handling.⁷⁷

Grace tolerates casualness, in art as in nature, but not its opposite, that is, excessive diligence. Fabrini cites Petrarch on Laura's loose hair to make his point: "Negletto ad arte."⁷⁸ Castiglione in his discussion of *sprezzatura* had described its opposite as like pulling hair: "to labor and, as we say, drag forth by the hair of the head, shows an extreme want of grace."⁷⁹ Leonardo and Raphael, the premier artists of *grazia*, were both admirers of loose long hair.

⁷⁵ "tanta grazia, studio, bellezza, modestia e costumi buoni," "non visse da pittore, ma da principe," Vasari/Marini, *Vite*, II, 618–19, 640.

⁷⁶ Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the 'Courtier': The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano*, University Park, 1995, Chs. 1 and 2.

⁷⁷ Dolce, *Aretino*, 156–57, "In questo mi pare, che ci si voglia una certa convenevole sprezzatura, in modo, che no ci sia ne troppa vaghezza di colorito, ne troppa politezza di figure: ma si vegga nel tutto una amabile sodezza."

⁷⁸ "Untouched by art," Dolce, *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, tr. Daniel Javitch, New York, 2002,

Sprezzatura is the inverse of *grazia*, and it describes a quality for which Pliny had no word: the art of hiding art. For Pliny this knack was encoded in the story of Protogenes and the sponge, which he had deemed miraculous or fortunate. A calculated lack of calculation: it is a quintessentially courtly artifice (very like the quality of James Barrie's Peter Pan, who has the "good form" so envied by Captain Hook, or the "laissez-aller" of the Three Musketeers). It contains the germ of Baroque love of deception and its accompanying potential for surprise.⁸⁰ Alberti's mechanistic view of art as mimesis had no potential for surprise or wonder beyond that inherent in mimesis itself. Protogenes accomplished the painting of foam on the mouth of the dog by art—a story which Alberti did not tell for several reasons, one of which being that it does not reflect well on the moral character of Protogenes that he became frustrated.

Vasari was not attracted to the concept of *sprezzatura*. He would presumably have known the word at the time of the writing of the first edition in 1550, though it never appears. (It was not used of music until 1600, though then it became a significant component in the commentary on early opera).⁸¹ He stresses instead *difficultà*,⁸² which is the adjunct to *terribilità*, establishing a relationship between the two analogous to that between *sprezzatura* and *grazia*. He is intent to separate artifice (in a bad sense) from *maniera*.⁸³ *Terribilità* relates clearly to *maniera*, but it keeps its distance from artificiality with its often feminine connotations; *grazia*, by contrast, leads uncomfortably close to what he wants to avoid. Moreover, both his champion and his champion's art were conveniently devoid of *grazia*; he could not have used Apelles as a precedent for

32; "il sforzare e, come si dice, tirar per i capegli dà somma disgrazia e fa estimar poco ogni cosa," I, xxvi.

⁸⁰ Aldo Scaglione, "The Class Ideology of the Florentine Burgher Niccolò Machiavelli," in *Interpreting the Italian Renaissance, Literary Perspectives*, ed. A. Toscano, Stony Brook, 1991, 119–26, esp. 120, comments perceptively on the link between Castiglione's *grazia* and aristocratic values.

⁸¹ Nigel Fortune, "Sprezzatura," *New Grove*, 223–24, in Caccini's preface to *Eurydice*, Florence, 1600.

⁸² See also J. Shearman, *Mannerism*, London, 1967, 21; Summers, 177–85; Vincenzo Gheroldi, "Painting 'A Calce' and 'Sprezzatura' in the 1530s: A Technical Context for Dosso," in *Dosso's Fate: Painting and Court Culture in Renaissance Italy*, ed. L. Ciammitti, S. Ostrow, and S. Settis, Los Angeles, 1998, 112–39, esp. n. 18.

⁸³ Cf. the new connotations of "arte" in diplomatic contexts, implying craftiness; M. Bullard, "Lorenzo and Patterns of Diplomatic Discourse in the Late Fifteenth Century," in *Lorenzo the Magnificent, Culture and Politics*, eds. M. Mallett and N. Mann, London, 1996, 263–74.

Michelangelo had he wanted to. But *difficoltà* functioned with respect to *terribilità* as did *sprezzatura* to *grazia*: it made art out of something natural.

The failure to work diligently and to finish, conspicuous in the work of both Leonardo and Michelangelo, two key figures in Vasari's history, was a seeming defect which he labored to present in an idealizing light. A favorable definition that described a deliberate carelessness would seem most apt for Vasari's purposes, but he chose not to use it. Leonardo and Michelangelo may have displeased their prospective collectors by failing to finish, but had those collectors been true *cognoscenti*, they would have understood the artist's right to casualness—this is what the concept of *sprezzatura* might have allowed him to claim, had he relied on it. Perhaps *sprezzatura* seemed to the obsequious Vasari too casual an attitude in an artist. Moreover, as a homologue of *grazia*, it was to be avoided, for he was intent that *grazia* not play the key role in his *Vite* that it had in Pliny's history, as the most special attribute of the most eminent painter.

Sprezzatura recalls the orator's power of improvisation, each being a facility that is aided by study. As Quintilian puts it:

Nor should any man put such trust in his native ability as to hope that this power will present itself to him at the outset of his career as an orator; for the precepts which I laid down for premeditation apply to improvisation also; we must develop it by gradual stages from small beginnings, until we have reached that perfection which can only be produced and maintained by practice.⁸⁴

Yet the definition of *sprezzatura* goes farther than mere facility (that being a quality Pliny admired), to a more oxymoronic claim:

But having thought many times already about how this grace is acquired (leaving aside those who have it from the stars), I have found a quite universal rule which in this matter seems to me valid above all others, and in all human affairs whether in word or in deed: and that is to avoid affectation in every way possible as though it were some very rough and dangerous reef; and (to pronounce a new word perhaps) to practice in all things a certain *sprezzatura* [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it. And I believe much grace comes of this

⁸⁴ *I.O.*, X, vii, 18: "Nec quisquam tantum fidat ingenio, ut id sibi speret incipienti statim posse contingere, sed, sicut in cogitatione praecipimus, its facilitatem quoque extemporalem a parvis initiis paulatim perducemus ad summam, quae neque perfici neque contineri nisi usu potest."

[from this I believe comes ample grace]: because everyone knows the difficulty of things that are rare and well done; wherefore facility in such things causes the greatest wonder...we may call that art true art which does not seem to be art.⁸⁵

Invoking orators' ability to seem natural and true rather than studious and artful, Conte Ludovico da Canossa, a member of the family to which Michelangelo extravagantly assumed some affiliation, proposes that *grazia* comes from *sprezzatura*, from the shrug or laugh that connotes carelessness. Thus *grazia* comes from both nature and (concealed) art, as Quintilian had said of eloquence. Vasari actively avoids an aesthetic category so tied to *grazia*, and especially so when it comes to Michelangelo, who gloried in evident artifice. The word also, in its literal sense, implies that which is not priced.⁸⁶ *Sprezzatura* is an intangible which complicates the old mechanics of valuation, and which potentially devalues diligence, or *difficoltà*.

Michelangelo *il terribile, il furioso*, personified that quality which Warburg later found in Ghirlandajo's most fraught drapery and loose, streaming hair, an irrational, *je ne sais quoi* which demonstrated that art exceeded the bounds of theory, and life the bounds of reason. Dolce, in discussing the topic of finish with respect to Ariosto's revisions of the *Orlando Furioso*, cited the well-worn example of Apelles as one who knew when to stop finishing a work and call it done. But he slipped from issues of finish to matters of conceptualization when he gave as an example loose and imperfectly ordered hair. In life this might count as a matter of finish, but in art the blown hair could be out of place and quite finished. Dolce admired the lack of affectation implied for him by a technique opposed to the miniaturist's and a conception so close to nature that it was still slightly disarranged. What counted as finish had become a subtle matter, and with this, precise objectivity no longer served as an adequate index to artistic quality:

⁸⁵ Castiglione/Javitch, 32; "Ma vengo io già più volte pensato meco onde nasca questa grazia, lasciando quelli che dalle stelle l'hanno, trovo una regola universalissima, la qual mi par valer circa questo in tutte le cose umane che si facciano o dicano più che alcuna altra, e ciò è fuggir quanto più si po, e come un asperissimo e pericoloso scoglio, la affettazione; e per dire forse una nova parola, usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura, che nasconda l'arte e dimostri ciò che si fa e dice venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi. Da questo credo io che derivi assai la grazia; perché delle cose rare e ben fatta ognun sa la difficoltà, onde in esse la facilità genera grandissima maraviglia...si po dir quella esser ver arte che non par esser arte;" Castiglione, I, xxvi, 62.

⁸⁶ Burke, *Fortunes*, 31.

And certainly the main thing we require of a writer is that he know how to polish his works. Thus Horace said that Romans had talent and dignity in their writing, and appeared to have been born at the summit of the tragic poem. But one defect alone bothered him: which was, that of avoiding the work of finishing their writings. On the other hand, too much diligence offended—either one became affected or just made the thing worse. Whence Apelles used to admonish that good painter by saying that he did not know when to take his hand from the panel, as one sees today with some excellent painters who lived before us: like Giovanni Bellini, who, although he was special in his time, used too much diligence in the things he made, so that they looked like miniature painting, besides there was too much punctiliousness in arranging the hair, so that not one strand would be out of place, and in the sewing of the sleeve, that it was just in the middle of the inside, going all the way to the armpit, and so forth. Titian didn't do this, so that however much diligence he expended in portraying perfectly things from nature, he brought his things to perfection with great skill and savoir faire, still keeping it as delicate as was required. And this that I say of him, I say also of Raphael, of Correggio, and other good painters: among whom Titian excels in imitation, in coloring, and in lifelikeness: plus all his things have incomparable majesty and monumentality.⁸⁷

The quality he prizes should not be conflated with mere quickness, which was also an issue at the time. For Dolce, Titian represents the acme of what we might call visual *sprezzatura*—assurance rather than mere spontaneity. Pliny's *audacia* is ancestor to *sprezzatura*, as also to *terribilità*.

⁸⁷ “E certo la principal cosa, che richiegga a uno scrittore è il limare i suoi scritti. Onde diceva Oratio, che i Romani havevano ingegno e gravità nelle loro scritture, e parevano nati all'altezza del Poema Tragico: ma che un solo difetto gli offendea: il quale era, che fuggivano la fatica di adoperar la lima ne' loro scritti. All'incontro nuoce anco la troppa diligenza: percioche oltre, che s'incorre nell'affettatione, alle volte si riducono le cose in peggio. Onde Apelle soleva riprender quel buon Pittore con dire, che egli non sapeva levar le mani della tavola: come hoggidi si vede in alcuno Pittori eccellenti, che sono stati innanzi a noi: come sarebbe Giovan Bellino: il quale, come che fosse raro a suoi tempi, usava tanta diligenza nelle cose, che egli faceva, che parevano miniate, oltre che si scorgeva una affettatione grandissima nell'ordinar de' capegli, de quali pure uno non spuntava fuor dell'ordine, in fare, che la cuciatura delle maniche fosse giusta a meza di dentro, andando infino all' asella, e cose tali. Ilche non fece poi Titiano, che quantunque ponesse sempre grandissima diligenza in ritrar perfettamente le cose dal vivo; ha però con pratica e gagliardezza mirabile condotto sempre le sue pitture a perfettione: ne remase però di esser delicato, quanto conviene. E quel, ch'io dico di lui, dico anco di Rafaello, di Antonio da Correggio, e di altri buoni Pittori: Tra i quali Titiano nella imitatione, nelle tinte, e nella vivacità tiene la palma: senza che tutte le cose hanno maestà e grandezza incomparabile;” Lodovico Dolce, *Modi affigurati e voci scelte et elegantmi della volgar lingua, con un discorso sopra a mutamenti e diversi ornamenti dell'Ariosto*, Venice, 1564, 293.

These fruitful ideas, *grazia* and *terribilità*, can be seen as homologous: both imply a nonchalance by which courtier and artist alike escape from formula, affectation, and excessive diligence. Raphael was applauded for his *grazia*, the quality which had distinguished Apelles and which was associated in particular with the female form. This characterization is pronounced in Vasari's *Vita* of 1550 and Dolce's *Aretino* of 1557; moreover, the written record presumably solidifies an earlier oral tradition. In Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, dedicated to Alfonso Ariosto (c. 1475–1525), a close cousin of Ludovico Ariosto,⁸⁸ *grazia* is much discussed as a quality desirable in the ideal courtier, and whether it comes only from nature or can be amplified by art. The rule for those who haven't got *grazia* from birth, is to avoid affectation: "usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura." Without much distortion we might say that grace when it comes from art rather than from nature is called *sprezzatura*.⁸⁹ As for "in ogni cosa," speech is definitely included, and dance. The discussion moves next to music and from thence to art and the story of Apelles' faulting Protogenes for excessive diligence. By this time in the discussion *sprezzatura* has not only become the source of *grazia*, but an ornament appropriate to every human action, as *grazia* would not be: war, dance, music, and painting, the oft-cited "una linea sola non stentata."⁹⁰ This last was claimed by Conte Ludovico da Canossa in the midst of a conversation that had become fast-paced, witty, and itself perhaps a bit affected. The interlocutors do not hide their artfulness; only the author can even pretend to succeed in that. Castiglione does not actually cite Raphael, already dead some years, in the discussion of *grazia*. Later, though, his name does come up. Gian Cristoforo Romano, the sculptor, chides the Conte for praising Raphael surreptitiously, under guise of praising painting ("ciò tutto fate in grazia del vostro Raffaello").⁹¹ Presumably when Vasari described Raphael as having acquired a style distinguished for its *grazia*, but only by excessive amounts of study, he was remembering Castiglione's text, and at least some of its convolutions.

When Castiglione developed *sprezzatura* out of *grazia*, he took the key concept of natural talent, Apelles' inimitable *charis*, and fabricated

⁸⁸ Whose inventory at death, in 1525, included art only of the following description: "tre tavolette depinte cum bufonarie," Michele Catalano, *Vita di Ludovico Ariosto*, Geneva, 1931, 104.

⁸⁹ Castiglione, 62.

⁹⁰ Castiglione, 65.

⁹¹ Castiglione, I, l, 94.

a version of it which was learned. He surely must have been self-conscious about the irony. *Sprezzatura* bridges the gulf between *arte* and *ingenium*; it is a quality whose definition lies in that ambiguity. It is not so clear that Vasari realized the implications of what he was doing when he branded Raphael as both the painter of *grazia* and of studiousness. Certainly he meant to lower Raphael in the hierarchy relative to Michelangelo, but whether he realized how utterly he had twisted Pliny's Apellian *gratia* is harder to say.

Later in the century, in a dialogue of 1556, *In difesa della lingua fiorentina, et di Dante*, dedicated to Michelangelo by Carlo Lenzoni, and then, in a twist of fate to Duke Cosimo by Cosimo Bartoli, the translator of Alberti who saw Carlo Lenzoni's text through the press after the death of the author, *urbanità* is invoked in terms reminiscent of *sprezzatura*, as the ability of the ear to pick up what the mind has not absorbed from books. The interlocutor explains that those outside of Florence sometimes overpolish their words, trying in vain to follow the rules of language assiduously, but they lack a certain unlearnable sensitivity, or *grazia* of ear:

one adopts a very good and refined finish, but over crude and badly blocked out figures, to which one can never give the finishing touch. As the very divine Michelangelo says, it isn't worth the effort.⁹²

In other words, lacking *urbanità*, verbal *disegno* fails. If the *concetto* is not fashioned with flair, no amount of diligent polishing of word choice can help.

This intriguing passage, in which once again the visual and verbal arts are aligned, implies that finish and lack of finish were but symptomatic of the core issue. That involved following the rules which theorists had been so busy establishing, and imitating the models the theorists admired and from which they extracted their rules—all the while defying those rules and bettering those models in favor of greater truth to nature and to art both. Sixteenth-century debate about the role of study versus spontaneity was made all the more complex by antiquity's self-consciousness about the same issue. As Quintilian said, "write quickly and you will never write well, write well and you will soon write

⁹² "adopera una sottilissima & buona Lima sì; ma sopra grosse & male abbozzate figure, alle quali non dà mai fine: Et come dice il divinissimo Buonarrato, non ne cava la fatica," Carlo Lenzoni, *In difesa della lingua fiorentina, et di Dante*, Florence, 1556, 33. See also Michael Sherberg, "The Accademia Fiorentina and the Question of Language: The Politics of Theory in Ducal Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly*, LVI, 2003, 26–55.

quickly.”⁹³ Lenzoni’s plea for *urbanità* imitates, in the full sense of the word, Quintilian’s various recommendations that the source of one’s art must needs come from nature.

Grazia and *urbanità*—the latter a word used in antiquity of orators—function in Lenzoni’s dialogue like *sprezzatura*: all stand in opposition both to artificiality, on the one hand, and to the absolute rule of law (which was implicitly founded on the regularities of nature), on the other. For Lenzoni, even matters of decorum require *grazia*, or sensible intuition, rather than rules: *decoro*, he writes, is like the lighting in a painting, which should achieve the *grazia* of Apelles.⁹⁴ The realm of rule is shrinking precipitously here.

During the Renaissance, though not in antiquity, such debates about language formed the matrix from which debate about visual style derived. When decorum appears to violate the rules, as, for instance, in the case of the dangling naked legs in Correggio’s domes and altarpieces, we may well wonder whether this too is a case in which *grazia* inflects decorum, just as it may with language. In anticipation of Lenzoni, Correggio’s angels appear to defy rules of decorum in favor of an ingratiating pleasingness. And in their turn, interest in issues of visual style may have served to shift theories of language, possibly theoretical speculation in general, toward a new responsiveness to the physical and perceptual.

* * *

The Burckhardtian-Panofskian concept of the Renaissance has tended to imply a simple continuity in the use of the antique as model. Yet Panofsky’s idea represented the final “union of classical form and classical content” was always a formula of a suspicious degree of neatness for describing human history. It is, moreover, one which the concept of *sprezzatura* belies. To speak of *sprezzatura* was to assert one’s independence from ancient rule and ancient precedent. Even in signalling the novelty of the word Castiglione deviated from classical norms, for he might have cited ancient rhetoricians to validate his concept and he chose not to.

Sprezzatura transforms a core value in Pliny’s history, namely *grazia* or *charis*, one said to be peculiar to the art and personality of Apelles, into

⁹³ “cito scribendo non fit, ut bene scribatur; bene scribendo fit, ut cito,” *I.O.*, X, iii, 10.

⁹⁴ Lenzoni, *Difesa*, 31.

an oxymoronic mirror image of itself. Art had already been understood as a product representing an amalgam of education and nature, but now the claim is made that beneath every instance of exceptional *grazia* lies study. To speak of *sprezzatura* was to deny that nature could accomplish much on its own, and thereby to credit the individual more: “perché delle cose rare e ben fatta ognun sa la difficoltà.” It was, at least implicitly, to doubt Apelles’ claim to unique, inborn talent and to recognize him as having succeeded in hiding his artistry from those who would have tried to imitate it—like Paganini practicing with a mute on.

It is no accident that the word *sprezzatura* was coined by Raphael’s friend. To practice a studious *grazia*, as Vasari claimed of Raphael, was to merge opposites. Vasari saw this as a fault; Castiglione made of it a virtue. By contrast, Vasari’s reintroduction of the epithet *divino* reasserts the old dichotomy between the gifts of nature and the rewards of study, for being *divino* is absolutely unlearnable. As such, “*divino*” goes hand in hand with the bastardization of “*grazia*.” Both developments imply a mixture of loyalty to and problems with the antique model.

It is a telling fact that art historians’ interest in the word *sprezzatura* dates back only to the mid-twentieth century.⁹⁵ Because of the long-standing focus on Renaissance affiliation with the antique, the historians of a society itself epocally losing its loyalty to the antique across the twentieth century did not ask the basic question: how long did Renaissance writers about art preserve the most basic structures of analysis borrowed from the antique? For how long did *grazia* mean what *gratia* had to Pliny? Those scholars were studying the Renaissance in part to hold on to that tie with antiquity which was so terribly tenuous in their own time; the last thing they would do is undermine its reliability in

⁹⁵ Samuel H. Monk, “A Grace Beyond the Reach of Art,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, V, 1944, 131–50; cf. A. Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450–1600*, Oxford, 1940, 97–98. See also Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the ‘Courtier’: The European Reception of Castiglione’s ‘Cortegiano’*, University Park, 1995. Wittkower skirts the term in his article on “Genius,” for the *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 1973. The esteem granted to *non-finito* is of similar though somewhat older vintage, no doubt catalyzed by developments in contemporary art, not only painting but film as well, and beginning with Ruskin’s appreciation of Turner; a sensitivity transferred to Michelangelo in 1847: “the heads of the Medici sacristy we believe to have been thus left unfinished, as having already the utmost expression which the marble could receive, and incapable of anything but loss from further touches,” *The Works of John Ruskin*, London, 1904, XII, 208. See also Raphael Rosenberg, *Beschreibungen und Nachzeichnungen der Skulpturen Michelangelos, Eine Geschichte der Kunstbetrachtung*, Berlin, 2000, 92ff., which attempts to follow the concept of *non-finito* back to the sixteenth century, though without much distinction between valuing a sculpture despite its incompleteness versus valuing it because of that.

the period they wished to define by that very relationship. The neologism *sprezzatura* was a symptom of what they did not want to find, and thus it was only relatively recently even acknowledged in the literature. But it signals for us what we might call the Montaignesque moment in the Italian Renaissance, in which the style *all'antica* itself begins to look artificial. For Panofsky, for instance, neither systematic linear perspective nor style *all'antica* ever did. For E.H. Gombrich, both *sprezzatura* and the “unfinished” could be traced back to ancient rhetoric, in particular to Cicero’s advice in the *Orator* that a speaker, like a woman, could benefit from a *negligentia diligens*.⁹⁶ For him, trying to undo the damage done by those who labelled Mannerist art as anti-classical, the issue of modernity seemed secondary. The result of this focus on Renaissance classicism made *non-finito* and *sprezzatura* more like each other, and more like ancient rhetoric, than they had seemed to Castiglione.

How would our Renaissance morph were we intent to find the beginnings of an end of devotion to the antique? Walter Friedlaender’s attempt at an aboutface, in his *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism* of 1925, was plagued by an attraction to antithetical structure. The question posed here is more inflected. If, in fact, what Vasari did to Plinian *grazia*—twisting its meaning to the point of re-invention—is not an isolated instance, how far does the net of obstinate refusal to think in the terms of the ancients extend? Montaigne’s essays are a familiar example of something comparable—of a fundamentally new subjectivity that infuses a classically trained mind and produces a result that is more personal, more tormented, more conscious of a conflict between the individual and society.

The highly normative culture of Early Renaissance Florence, with its unquestioned allegiance to Latin learning, expected its artists to be predictable and reasonable characters, fulfilling the functions laid out for them by humanists, generating likenesses, illustrating narratives, and, in general, molding eye, mind, and emotion to universal moral truths. The problem was even more acute for Alberti’s sixteenth-century successors because they relied less on the definition of a liberal art. The liberal art was by definition the activity of a free man, but the enhanced freedom Vasari recognized was that dangerous territory beyond the

⁹⁶ E.H. Gombrich, “Architecture and Rhetoric in Giulio Romano’s Palazzo del Te,” *New Light on Old Masters*, Chicago, 2001/1986 (1982), 166–67. Cf. Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge, 1999, 280, n. 34, 281, n. 49.

rules set down by ancient art. Donatello in some slight way, Michelangelo fully, had broken into the realm without rule that lay beyond parity with the ancients. Vasari let us know that Michelangelo got there by virtue of the alignment of stars at his birth, by divine plan. For Vasari, himself the Duke's creature, Michelangelo's very freedom was determined.

As humanism evolved, and vernacular culture developed, as the printing press modified the conditions of both verbal and visual authority and access, and as courtly society superseded republican, the connotations of *ingenium* shifted toward something more individualized. The word *maniera* comes to mean not only the physical trace of a particular hand and its inextricable habits, but an expression of a spiritual particularity. Again we can mark the incursion of rhetorical theory into what had been Pliny's turf. Pliny's *ars et audacia* had needed no help from the rhetorician's fascination with personal style. His artists' only goal had been mimesis. Vasari, following perhaps Plutarch's contrasts of character and personality, or Cicero's descriptions of the great orators and their individual styles, believed in a less predictable history of art, one in which limits on the mimetic project were possible. For Pliny the cause of art was mimesis; for Vasari, the cause was ultimately the display of *ingegno*, moreover, *ingegno* understood as spritely and engaging, almost Puckish, certainly imbued with courtly debonairness, rather than merely dependable and rational. The difference was epochal.

Concomitantly with this evolution of the implication of the word *ingenium*, *disciplina* shifts in meaning, and with it the connotations of *diligentia*. That which had been thought of in terms of removing faults and achieving an impersonal norm becomes instead that which might inhibit or run counter to natural genius. *Furor*, the quality attributed by the ancients to poets above all, may be understood as a kind of extreme case of anti-diligence—thinkable only in a culture which recognized a distinction between *ingenium* and *ratio*. The writings about the new art reveal a deeply prescriptive culture, as humanism surely was, caught trying to prescribe freedom from prescription.

Many important writers on the Renaissance have tried to describe how the concept of freedom operated in the new culture evolving out of feudal and monastic Europe, this new bourgeois and commercial world of competition which had not yet endorsed greed. Burckhardt cited the rise of individualism (rather than a corporate identity) and realism (rather than reliance on a symbolic interpretation of the world). After him followed a deluge of commentary about the bourgeois val-

ues of Renaissance Florence, combined over time with an increasing reliance on Alberti's *De pictura* as a key text of Renaissance painting.⁹⁷ Alberti's notion of the idealizing function of painting necessarily jarred with Burckhardt's notion of extreme license and individuality to the point of shocking viciousness, but this clash was scarcely acknowledged. Instead we read about a Renaissance which was disciplined and idealizing but also self-indulgent and power-hungry. The result was a Renaissance no one believed in as a whole, the scholarship on which became increasingly incoherent.

To suggest, however, that a new concept of human freedom explains the Renaissance is to mistake the problem for the answer. Similarly, to propose that the key works of the period are those which can be interpreted as icons of human freedom is fallacious. Michelangelo's *David* [fig. 2], for example, we have made a symbol of the Florentine Renaissance for our own reasons rather than for historical ones. This audacious colossus, which Burckhardt, that bastion of bourgeois values, found to be *ein gedampftes Ungeheures*, and which Wölfflin considered a thoroughly ugly hobbledehoy, was rescued by Frederick Hartt as an emblem of republican virtue in "its total and triumphant nudity," which he thought to be utterly reconcilable with "Michelangelo's views on the divinity of the human body."⁹⁸ A work which neither the sixteenth-century sources nor the art historical literature had ever particularly emphasized rose to prominence in the wake of Hans Baron's influential thesis that the Florentine Renaissance was triggered by the city's fortuitous escape from impending Milanese oppression in 1401. Every Florentine *David* then becomes an emblem of civic pride, and Michelangelo's the biggest and most civic.⁹⁹

The bronze *David* of Donatello is the principal exception. Its manifold deviations from heroic norms, besides concurring in some ways with the Biblical text, suggest a compatibility with Cosimo il Vecchio's preoccupations in that, like one of Socrates' young interlocutors, the figure is introspective and passive. Cosimo's pet project, the promotion of Platonism, suited him in that its metaphysics were neither feudalistic nor republican. A highly individualistic philosophy, a confrontation

⁹⁷ Especially after the English translation by John Spencer appeared in 1956.

⁹⁸ Frederick Hartt, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, Englewood Cliffs, 1973 [1969], 421.

⁹⁹ See the reflections of Andrew Butterfield, "New evidence for the iconography of David in Quattrocento Florence," *I Tatti Studies*, VI, 1996, 115–33.

between self and soul, it taught neither heroism and valor, nor civic duty and the ethics of representative government.¹⁰⁰ The bronze *David* was made for Cosimo's private enjoyment, not to preach Platonism but merely to complement it. Michelangelo's *David*, made under the fledgling new republic, is, by contrast, heroic and public again: ready to spring into action, unbothered by daemons. For the exuberant Vasari, the work was better than any other statue, ancient or modern, with beautiful shins and divine hips, but predictably for a man writing under the aegis of the Duke, he makes no reference to republicanism.

Once we allow ourselves to wonder whether the *David* may never have symbolized freedom and individuality to anyone before 1950, we can see it differently. The statue displays Pliny's *ars et audacia* to a fault. Made from a botched marble without sacrifice of scale, the first colossal marble nude since antiquity, faithful to the skeletal and muscular structures of nature: it could have been made to please Pliny. He would have recognized in it a *miraculum*. But it exemplifies as well the paradox inherent in the Renaissance quest for decorum. This ungainly youth with furrowed brow who defeats a mature man, this criminally lusty king, this nude made to be put atop the Cathedral, presents us with an object as paradoxical as Michelangelo himself, the companion of peasants who as the decades wear on disdains to be addressed as a mere sculptor, the shunner of female company who admires Vittoria Colonna, writes Petrarchan poems, and draws ideal women, the sculptor whose most unprecedented opus is a fresco. He operated in the uncertain and shifting space between opposing sources of authority: republican and aristocratic; *all'antica* and Christian; Florentine and Roman; Duomo and Signoria; his *terribilità* and that of his patron; his *ingenium* and his disowned (even burned) study drawings. Oppression, rather than freedom, might explain such a period.

His *David* salvaged decorousness out of the indecorous—the colossal nude made *giovane*, this awkward blast of modernity made presentable because superficially *all'antica*. It managed to be as unlike Donatello's bronze *David* or Verrocchio's, both made for the Medici, as a republican monument should have been, despite Michelangelo's gen-

¹⁰⁰ If the fashionable philosophy had an effect on artistic style, it had one very different from that Erwin Panofsky proposed for Michelangelo as Platonist, explaining the legendary *non-finito* as reflecting an unresolvable disaffection with the material realm. See also Christine Sperling, "Donatello's bronze *David* and the demands of Medici politics," *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIV, 1992, 218–24.

eral indebtedness to Donatello. When Michelangelo pretended to chip a bit of marble off the nose to please the Gonfaloniere, Piero Soderini, with the needed finishing touch, that was *sprezzatura*, whether or not Vasari wanted to employ the word. The artist had learned not to strive to please the patron, as he had done years before with his *Old Faun* for Lorenzo il Magnifico, but to hide his art—in this case, both the art involved in carving and the art involved in not carving when he didn't want to. He had become less simple, and more urbane. That work likewise makes a pleasing paradox out of tradition and its decorum, and particularly out of the tradition that good art resembles the antique. Michelangelo made a colossal heroic nude distinctively modern in its expression and attitude.

The mature Michelangelo was fundamentally a modern artist, and this, for once, Vasari recognized, at least in part. More than anything else, Michelangelo learned from antiquity how to vaunt his natural talent. He made being *senza regola* into a rule of sorts. For as the ancient rhetoricians had known, and as Pliny had intimated, merely to follow rules could not in the end count as art. And with that in mind, the *David*, instead of a symbol of reawakening antique spirit, becomes a symptom of the tangle of rules, and rules about rules, that this hybrid culture had become.

Many other works might be heralded as revisionary of the fifteenth century's focus on the antique. But given the importance of Panofsky's view of the period to its historiographical development, let us conclude by turning to consider a work of Dürer's, one which Panofsky assimilated to the topos of self-portraiture on shaky grounds. Dürer's 1518 etching of the *Cannon* (B. 99) [fig. 3] seems not to represent any subject, not even an allegorical one.

Dürer's composition establishes a continuity between natural landscape in the far distance, and historical relativity in the mid- and foreground. The thoroughly modern cannon dominates fore and mid-ground, while the landscape acts metonymously for nature and a certain freedom from convention. The Virgin presides from a tiny roadside shrine—over nothing more than an empty pathway. Made shortly before the Emperor Maximilian's death, the etching shows a world in which he is already absent and unmissed, a world conceptually the opposite of the *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, with its implications of heroic struggle. The exotic costume in the foreground relativises the antique: that Turk suggests the modern Herod, the current king of Palestine, but he is there as token rather than antagonist.

In Dürer's unprecedented etching, large for the medium, what might have been background *exotica* has taken over the foreground. He gives us, to borrow a phrase from Baudelaire, an iconography of modern life. He gives us also a rebellious definition of beauty, one in which the artist's role is principal. He imitates nature, reckless of the endorsement of either precedent or rule. The subject is the world, lying ready for the artist—no more. This bold attempt at realism may be incomplete, but then all realism is. Convention makes a backwash, in that we can recognize some familiar compositional strategies, and even this innovative work is not without its sources in the tradition. Nevertheless, Dürer himself, rather than his subject or his patron, determined what that backwash from the existing artistic culture would be. He succeeded in creating a work which paid no homage to the antique and next to none to church or state. He did what Leonardo had described in words and tackled only in backgrounds: "If he [the artist] wants valleys, if he wants to discover a great countryside from the high crests of the mountains; and if, after that, he wants to see down to the horizon of the sea, he is lord to do so."¹⁰¹ And lest we miss the point, he emblazoned his vision with that sign of contemporaneity, the cannon, "che va col fuoco,/Ch'a cielo e a terra e a mar si fa dar loco," as Ariosto hailed it.¹⁰²

Whatever he intended, the artist achieved something like synecdoche for the world's complexity. Dürer's composition sets the shrine to the Virgin in the context of the modern world, as it likewise places the exotic Easterner there too. The artist set himself to imitate a vision of nature that no ancient had ever seen, let alone portrayed. Montaigne used the essay rather than the treatise to address his world; Dürer the etching rather than a painting. Both turned to a smaller scale and less formal medium in order to break with a monumental and idealizing aesthetic. Etching itself derived from the decoration of armor; in this work Dürer uses etching to describe the firepower which had made armor obsolete.

More than anything else, the etching proclaims the creative freedom of the artist, who here asserts mutely yet pervasively his release from

¹⁰¹ Leonardo/Farago, *Paragone*, 197.

¹⁰² Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, XXV, 14; "the one [my Lord's Devil] which spits fire and forces its way everywhere, by land, sea, and air;" Ariosto/Waldman, 297. See further on the etching, L. Konecny, "Albrecht Dürer's 'Laus Bombardae,'" *Umeni*, xix, 1972, 344-47.

service to church and state. The artist escapes from the task of creating an *historia* and serving the ideology that goes with it, but not from either history or nature, each in its respective complexity. He lays claim to something more primal than narrative, to something akin to what Montaigne would later designate as his “simple, natural, everyday fashion.”¹⁰³

Whereas Vasari responded to the collapse of the ancient paradigm by emphasizing the supremacy of an art that could be called divine, Dürer expressed the results of his troubled theoretical musings by turning in the opposite direction and immersing his art in the quotidian. Both Vasari’s divine Florentine and his German counterpart have often been viewed through humanistically-tinged lenses, according to which antiquity and modernity were consistently reconciled, one with the other, until the scientific revolution and the “official” beginning of the *querelle des anciens et modernes*. Yet humans are seldom so consistent, historical disjunctions never so absolute. The path from Protogenes and the sponge to Castiglione’s *sprezzatura* may have been a long one, but from Castiglione’s *sprezzatura* to an etching about everything other than antiquity there is no distance but geographical. They are of a piece. Both represent a determination to allow the past and the present to clash and to grate, or even to exclude one another. Coincidentally Castiglione, the champion of *sprezzatura* and notable among sixteenth-century writers for his decision not to measure his list of modern painters against the names of ancient ones,¹⁰⁴ also defended the importance of the art of landscape. In the words of Conte Canossa again:

he who does not esteem this art strikes me as being quite lacking in reason; for this universal fabric which we behold, with its vast heaven so resplendent with bright stars, with the earth at the center girdled by the seas, varied with mountains, valleys, rivers, adorned with such a variety of trees, pretty flowers, and grasses—can be said to be a great and noble picture painted by nature’s hand and God’s; and whoever can imitate it deserves great praise.¹⁰⁵

For the moment, Apelles doesn’t matter.

¹⁰³ Michel Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, tr. M.A. Screech, London, 1991, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Castiglione, I, xxxvii.

¹⁰⁵ “chi non estima questa arte parmi che molto sia dalla ragione alieno; ché la machina del mondo, che noi veggiamo coll’amplo cielo di chiare stelle tanto splendido e nel mezzo la terra dai mari cincta, di monti, valli e fiumi variata e di sì diversi alberi

Castiglione himself displayed *sprezzatura* in writing so unPlatonic a dialogue about the perfect courtier. No less, Dürer in the *Cannon* displays *sprezzatura*. Pliny's *fortuna* and *miraculum* have mutated into a new range of artifice, neither unfinished nor sketchy, but done with a calculated lack of calculation. The mark itself remains far from random, even as the eye has acquired the particular freedom that comes of non-chalance.

e vaghi fiori e d'erbe ornata, dir si po che una nobile e gran pittura sia, per man della natura e di Dio composta; la qual chi po imitare parmi esser di gran laude degno;" Castiglione, I, xlix.

CHAPTER TWO

NOT QUITE THE LIBERAL ARTIST

“...the true Renaissance sovereigns,
the artists and poets, who ruled ‘ex
ingegno’.”¹

When Michelangelo was young, to be thought well of as an artist implied at least one of the following: aspiration to the rank of liberal artist rather than mechanical; comparability to poets; or, finally, inclusion in lists or cycles of *uomini illustri*. These latter consisted primarily of military heroes, but also included figures of learning, and it was by comparison to the latter that an artist might be so categorized. What the works actually looked like played a relatively passive role, or at least translated poorly into what was written down.

By the time of the death of Michelangelo, all three possibilities were exhausted: there was only the possibility of comparison to Michelangelo, who was known as learned, in anatomy if not necessarily in geometry; as a poet in his own right and a commentator on Dante; and as the most famous of Florentines, recipient of the most lavish citizen funeral in memory, accorded the most extravagant tomb in Santa Croce, and the subject of not one biography but two.

Artistic reputation, lapsed since Pliny, had begun again with Alberti's *De pictura* of 1435, specifically with its argument in favor of painting as a liberal art—though with the exception of a passing reference to Giotto in Book II, the text named not a single living painter outside the context of the vernacular dedication. It achieved a certain closure with the two biographies by which the three standards of recognition from outside the profession were subsumed to the model of Michelangelo, *il divino*. As much as anything else, the “divinity” of an artist signalled his having exceeded the predictable bounds. Despite being neither sweeping nor absolute, the change in artistic status that began with

¹ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, “The Sovereignty of the Artist: A Note on Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art,” *Selected Studies*, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1965, 364; reprinted from *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. M. Meiss, New York, 1961, 267–79.

Giotto—who daringly drew only an O to prove himself to the Pope—culminated with Michelangelo, “il divino,” whose Sistine Ceiling was declared done when he got fed up with his Pope. That “O” had been unfinished too. One didn’t have to have read Plato to know that an artist who either initiated or terminated work in accordance with his own judgment was his own master.

Then into the dearth created by Michelangelo’s demise stepped Counter-Reformation theorists and their standards of decorum, introducing ideas of genre to tame those of style. Notions of propriety even infected the mark of ink on the page. *Disegno*, the distant descendent of Alberti’s circumscription or outline, was decoded by Federico Zuccaro in 1607 as signifying the “sign of god” (“segno di dio”).² That declaration culminated a swing back from the innovative norms of humanists toward a more conventionalized notion of art, until Michelangelo Caravaggio emerged in the 1590s to complicate matters. With Zuccaro and other Mannerists’ emphasis on a stylized product, the object had been reasserted over the maker, whose rank had descended from inventor to medium or conduit. The earlier quest for impressive lifelikeness was succeeded by confidence in an ideal and hence impersonal beauty.

Toward the close of that first flush of excitement about the new more lifelike art, Michelangelo had received the acclaim of one who created mimetic miracles at the same time that he pursued an art that was neither particularly mimetic, nor particularly inventive. He managed to assert the role of the impassive creator over the figures he created, which conveyed elements both of suffering and of the ideal, both the weight of materiality and the ethereal air of divinity. Donatello before him had shouted at his sculpture as though it was alive; Giambologna after him created a work so theoretical it had no particular identity at all and had to be given a title (*Rape of the Sabine*) by an admirer. Michelangelo at his most free made a population obviously his—neither borrowed from life nor literature, neither portraits nor heroes.³ The peculiar status of his figures, unassimilable to portraiture

² Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d’arte del Cinquecento*, Milan, 1973, II, 2115; E. Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, tr. J. Peake, New York, 1968, Ch. 5, esp. 86–88. It is worth noting that Zuccaro divides *disegno interno* into three parts: *divino*, *angelico* and *umano*. “Disegno divino” is God’s alone. “[Disegno umano] quasi imitando Dio et emulando la natura, potesse produrre infinite cose artificiali simili alle naturali, e col mezzo della pittura e della scoltura farci vedere in terra novi paradisi,” 2069.

³ E.g., in the subsidiary vaults of the Sistine Ceiling, which did not go entirely unnoticed; *La Sistina riprodotta*, ed. Alida Molledo, Rome, 1991, 35, 44, 86–98.

or to the project of visualizing perfection, correlated with difficulties in articulating his praises. Calling him “divine” could alternatively elevate or tame his artistic power, by rendering him either the analogue of God on earth or the mere recipient of God’s gift. The word could erase either his humanity, or his individuality. In either case, when first given, it isolated him from his peers; later, praise given to his imitators echoed that which had previously been his alone.

Although Michelangelo is recorded as having been called divine with some regularity from 1532 until at least the time of Gregorio Comanini’s treatise (1591),⁴ the resonances of that word were highly variable across time, place, and person. The epithet “*divino*” sometimes served to tie him into a tradition from which he would otherwise have been quite distinct, by connecting him to the ideal of great learned men, especially pagan ones. Plato, for instance, was called by Luca Pacioli “l’antico e divin philosopho.”⁵ The strictly theological use of the adjective continued more or less without variation as its more secular applications grew and evolved, acquiring at times a kind of populist flavor. In the aftermath of Savonarola and Luther, the relationship between human and divine intelligences was a particularly fraught question. The social and political as well as the religious functions of images were being thoroughly redefined. Not only the talk about artists, but the arts themselves, were responding to extraordinary pressures.

Michelangelo’s unprecedented exaltation was a complicated cultural phenomenon, the strains of which ranged from genuine, at times simple, admiration through a sort of homologue to comic relief, as when Pietro Aretino wrote sarcastically of Michelangelo’s divinity, of his being so divine as to be immune from the requirements of common decency in the Sistine *Last Judgment*. That Michelangelo was labelled “divine” thus bore at various times more than a tint of irony. A comparable ambivalence was present when Erasmus explained the adage “*Deum facere*.” He made the expected reference to antiquity: “early men, when they looked up to someone for his excellent and unusual virtues, called him a god, or a son of the gods.” But he also added a sense in which the usage implied a craving for novelty: “St. Jerome, writing to Augustine, turns this round in irony, and applies it to people who

⁴ For Francesco Algarotti, *Opere*, ed. E. Bonora, Milan/Naples, 1969, 379, 417, writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Raphael was divine and Michelangelo “bizzarro e profondo.”

⁵ Pacioli, *De divina proportione*, 1498, 7v.

are not content with the ordinary judgment of men, but want something new.”⁶ Michelangelo also was both praised and criticized under the label divine.

The divine Michelangelo could be a reassuring cultural commodity, superbly antique and superbly Christian both. The appellation originated in that peculiar historical moment following the Sack of Rome in 1527, a phase of low cultural confidence before Counter-Reformation affirmations of orthodoxy. As Claudio Tolomei (1492–1555) nostalgically recalled two years afterwards:

Formerly Italy was filled with divine minds, which adorned their country and that age with most beautiful thoughts and very fine works. Every day some new bright spirit awoke that made Italy more beautiful with its graceful imaginings.⁷

Now, he records sadly:

the arts almost, and letters have faded away; the best people and fine customs have been removed from the world.⁸

Clement VII, “la divina santità,” as dedicatee, is urged to bring back the Golden Age witnessed by his uncle, Leo X.

Two etchings of mid-century show Parnassus in disarray, documenting from the artists’ point of view the phenomenon Tolomei described. One shows Pegasus as an flea-infested ass, braying while the distressed Muses abandon their attributes [fig. 4]. The other, by Master HFE, shows Parnassus in a state of unbridled lecherousness [fig. 5], abandoned by Pegasus (B. XV, 259,4). The state of Parnassus was often commented on in the mid-sixteenth century, both visually and verbally.

To call an artist divine, as Michelangelo first was in 1532, may have implied wishing away the recent troubles and establishing, virtually at least, continuity with that now honored recent past. That past had been celebrated when it had been present too, making Tolomei’s lament more substantial than mere nostalgia. In the very year in which he

⁶ *Collected Works of Erasmus, Adages, i-I V 100*, tr. M. Phillips, Toronto, 1982, 469.

⁷ “Era già ripiena l’Italia di divini ingegni; gliquali con li lor bellissimi pensieri & nobilissime opere la patria loro & questa eta nostra adornavano. Svegliavasi ogni giorno qualche chiaro spirito che con sue leggiadre fantasie faceva l’Italia piu bella;” C. Tolomei, *Oratione de la Pace*, Rome, 1534 (composed 1529), unpag. Paolo Giovio similarly lamented, at mid-century, the loss of liberty and the threat to the Latin heritage; P. Giovio, *Ritratti degli uomini illustri*, ed. C. Caruso, Palermo, 1999, 226–28.

⁸ “hanno l’arti quasi, & le lettere fatte oscure; cosi hanno la nobilità e i buon costumi tolti del mondo,” Tolomei, unpag.

wrote his tract, Matteo Palmieri's earlier celebration of Italian *ingegni* was printed:

these times in which more excellent arts of genius flourish than have in the past for a thousand years.⁹

By the time of Michelangelo's death, the cult of "il divino" had shrunk to a realm largely political and Florentine. In Rome a narrower sense of holiness was replacing that bold formulation, the divine or incomparable man.¹⁰

* * *

Before an artist could be deemed divine, lesser hurdles had to be overcome. Attempts to include painting in the liberal arts both signalled and also augmented a certain elasticity in the definition of the latter.¹¹ Martianus Capella, writing in the early fifth century, transmitted the basic schema of seven liberal arts in an allegorical handbook popular during the medieval period.¹² Although the ideal of the liberal arts flourished in the fifteenth century under the aegis of Cicero, there was some distinction possible between their systematic organization and the more loosely defined *studia humanitatis*. Systematic studies never fully recov-

⁹ "questi tempi quali piu fioriscono de eccellenti arti dingegno che altri tempi sieno stati gia sono mille anni passati;" Matteo Palmieri, *Libro della vita civile*, Florence, 1529, 2v. Adjectives applied in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to *ingegni*, artistic or not, include: *acerrimus*, *acuto*, *affannato*, *affaticato*, *agilis*, *alto*, *ameno*, *ardentissimus*, *attissimo*, *bello*, *ben regholato*, *buono*, *caritatevole*, *celer*, *celestes*, *chiaro*, *circonspetto*, *copioso*, *delicatissimus*, *divino*, *docile*, *dubioso*, *eccellente*, *elegante*, *elevato*, *essatissimo*, *fatale*, *felice*, *Florentino*, *grandissimo*, *gravissimo*, *grosso*, *lascivio*, *laudabile*, *leggiadro*, *liberale*, *lieto*, *magno*, *malo*, *maraviglioso*, *miserio*, *mobile*, *naturale*, *nobile*, *odierno*, *oscuro*, *pellegrino*, *piacevole*, *pocho*, *povero*, *praecox*, *praestantis*, *pravus*, *proditus*, *pronto*, *puerile*, *purgato*, *raro*, *singularius*, *sottile*, *sterile*, *sublimis*, *summus*, *subtile*, *umane*, *valoroso*, *vile*, and *vivace*.

¹⁰ Cf. J.R. Lupton, *Afterlives of the Saints: Hagiography, Typology, and Renaissance Literature*, Stanford, 1996, esp. Ch. 6; and Noel Brann, *The debate over the origin of genius during the Italian Renaissance: the theories of supernatural frenzy and natural melancholy in accord and in conflict on the threshold of the scientific revolution*, Leiden, 2002, 186, who makes the important link also to theories of imagination as linked to the witch-craze: "the witch-craze helped to force the issue of the origin of genius." Isaac Luria, kabbalist, was referred to as divine by the late sixteenth century in Italy; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, New York, 1974, 420. My thanks to David Feldman for this last reference.

¹¹ See P.O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays*, Princeton 1980 (1951), 169–71; Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe*, Cambridge, 1986.

¹² *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, eds. William Harris Stahl, Rochard Johnson, E.L. Burge, 2 vols., New York, 1971, 1977.

ered from Petrarch's passionate rejection of scholasticism, or at least not for centuries, but meanwhile the liberal arts flourished as a fertile range of intellectualism between the staid professions and the emerging *poligrafi* who made their living from the printing press. The *studia humanitatis* functioned as a sort of applied correlate to the liberal arts.

The doctor Michele Savonarola, uncle of the infamous Dominican, writing a tract in the early 1450s dedicated to the Duke of Ferrara, Borso d'Este, avowed in good Ciceronian vein that the liberal arts are so called because in antiquity only the sons of gentlemen could study them.¹³ Their relationship to the visual arts is not a subject he broaches, except elliptically. Building and engineering are cited as among the benefits of the liberal art of geometry. Architecture was always the easiest of the arts to dignify, because patrons took so direct and financially substantial an interest in it. Correspondingly, an artist was most apt to add architecture to his repertoire once successful, from Giotto to Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. But perhaps most notable in Michele's treatment of the subject is his advocacy of the moral sciences over those of the liberal arts: ethics, politics, and economics he, in true humanist fashion, takes to be most fundamental for good governance. Good moral behavior, he contends, is founded on the imitation of nature; bad habits, he explains, following Aristotle, create another, perverted nature.¹⁴ The task of the moral sciences (*scientie morale*) is to keep one's behavior according to nature. As a humanist (albeit also a medical doctor) himself, he recognized the crucial distinction between the theory of the liberal arts and the practice of humanism, which Alberti deliberately ignored. Alberti needed geometry to secure the status of painting, and he had Cicero as witness that the liberal arts and humanities could be elided. Savonarola's perspective was sufficiently different that the only part the arts played in his conceptual universe was in the moral sciences, and there in the guise of the magnificence of the patron. He was, in short, thoroughly Aristotelian, as Alberti had not been. In advising his prince to be beautiful, lovable, virtuous, conformable to nature, and surrounded by learned men rather than buffoons, he sets out for us the normal standards for excellence. Both artists and works of art ranked as minor in this view.

¹³ Michele Savonarola, *Del felice progresso di Borso d'Este*, ed. M. Mastronardi, 1996, 230: "perché non poteano a tempo antico in quelle studiare nomà i fioli de li homini zintili e liberi."

¹⁴ M. Savonarola, *Felice*, 237.

The rank of the visual artist as peer of the man of education never became an unchallenged tenet during early modern times. The claim typically was made by an interested party, and even then it often had an apologetic or defensive tone. Beginning in 1563, Academies of Fine Arts effectively reinclosed the painter in a guild-like society of peers, despite their intention to ensconce him as a liberal artist, a person of theory and of discipline.¹⁵ Eventually, scorn for the mechanical was itself challenged. During the time of the Enlightenment, when tradesmen began to aspire to new status, the booklearning of the idle classes fell subject to disdain. In the words of J.J. Winckelmann (1717–68), “To be learned, that is to say, to know what others have known, was the ambition of a later period. In the best days of Greece, it was easy to be learned.”¹⁶ Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), whose living depended at times on teaching drawing to daughters of the nobility, was contemptuous of what he called the useless arts, ones moreover which implied an urban, and therefore a debauched, life:

these important fellows who are called artists instead of artisans, and who work solely for the idle and the rich, set an arbitrary price on their baubles. Since the merit of these vain works exists only in opinion, their very price constitutes a part of that merit, and they are esteemed in proportion to what they cost. The importance given them by the rich does not come from their use but from the fact that the poor cannot afford them.¹⁷

Accordingly, Émile is to learn a mechanical trade: “Remember that it is not a talent that I ask of you. It is a trade, a true trade, a purely mechanical art in which the hands work more than the head, one which does not lead to fortune but enables one to do without it.”¹⁸

The issue of class had always lain embedded within the disputes over liberal arts status. The liberal artist was free of mercenary motivation; his labor, and his rewards, were mental rather than physical; he wore the clothes of a gentleman, not workclothes. Florentine artists did not always dress the part: Donatello, Michelangelo, and even Brunelleschi were all noted as wearing common attire. But in Florence that was the

¹⁵ See further, *Italian Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, eds. D.S. Chambers and F. Quiviger, London, 1995, esp. Francois Quiviger, “The Presence of Artists in Literary Academies,” 104–12; K. Edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State: The Discipline of ‘Disegno’*, Cambridge, 2000.

¹⁶ Book IV, Chapter i, 294ff.

¹⁷ J.J. Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, tr. A. Bloom, Book III, 186.

¹⁸ Rousseau, 196.

norm; even Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae, did not dress in brocades and disdained those who so presumed. On the other hand, Leonardo and Raphael, who worked elsewhere most of their lives, were known as fancy dressers and aspirant gentleman.

Few practicing artists could claim that they worked other than for monetary recompense, though they did develop strategies for promoting an image other than as workmen for hire. Jacopo de' Barbari, wrote to "Divo Federico," Duke of Saxony, concerning the excellence of painting. Not only was it equal to the liberal arts, he claimed in c. 1501, but foremost among them, because it incorporated all the others:

And it well merits a pre-eminent place among the liberal arts, because it encompasses all the others in itself.¹⁹

In this claim that painting excelled for its comprehensiveness, Jacopo echoed defenses of poetry, itself jealous of the status of the liberal arts.

According to Jacopo, artists in antiquity were not merely freeborn, but noble (an understandable elision in someone once resident in Venice).²⁰ Thus, painting, the eighth liberal art as he called it, should be done by the rich and noble, not by hire. For Jacopo the obvious corollary of the truth that painters were liberal artists was that they deserved regular maintenance rather than merely commissions. Exotic as his talk of painting as the eighth liberal art must have sounded in Saxony at the turn to the sixteenth century, mere bluster though it might have seemed, Jacopo was successful. He got his pension. Other Renaissance artists sought the same, notably Mantegna of the Gonzaga, beginning in 1460, and Titian of the Hapsburgs, beginning in 1548.²¹ The effort to avoid the implicit ideology of artist as workman, inherent in the system of commissioned works of art, doubtless contributed to the replacement of that system by a more speculative art market in the seventeenth century, since only the lucky, diplomatic, or exceptionally gifted artist secured and kept an annuity. Michelangelo was recurrently troubled by the semantics of his payment: this involved not simply disputes about how much or when, but sensitivity to the symbolism of how it was done, as in the incident in which the emissary of Duke Alfonso of

¹⁹ "E ben meritamente se po seder nele arte liberale per la suprema, come quella che cinge tute le altre in sé;" Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 69.

²⁰ Barocchi, 66.

²¹ See M. Warnke, *The Court Artist: On the ancestry of the modern artist*, tr. D. McLintock, Cambridge, 1993.

Ferrara offended him so that he lost his master the *Leda*.²² In this he and other artists shared the lot of humanists, specifically, the conundrum of transferring the concept of the liberal arts into a mercantile era.

Since humanists normally were as much in need of garnering a living as were visual artists, it was convenient to both groups to shift the definition of liberal artist away from litmus tests about income toward more ideological issues. If being an artist required intelligence (*ingenium*), then the artist and his patron, together with the humanist, formed an *intelligensia*, a new class. In all the many art historical disputes about the role of humanist advisors, this very issue of class lies at stake, for the artist who paints what he is told is forever mechanical. Hence the importance of Michelangelo's epistolary claim that he got to do what he liked on the Sistine vault, and likewise of Ghiberti's assertion that on the Doors of Paradise: "I was allowed to proceed in that way which I believed would turn out most perfect, embellished, and rich."²³

The idea that artists qualified as members of the lettered community implicated another tension, namely, that between teachable, rational disciplines and the arts of inspiration, poetry above all. Both had seem tinged with divinity in ancient times; Apollo as well as Bacchus and Mercury fostered the arts, broadly speaking. But Christian theological issues had rarefied distinctions between faith and reason, inspiration and learning, the contemplative life and the active life. During the Renaissance one resolution of the dilemma was to be learned about adhering to an aesthetic of the simple and natural. The seeds of Enlightenment distaste for booklearning lay long dormant in Renaissance love poetry, whether pastoral or Petrarchan, with its emphasis on natural, simple insight. It was there that the refined object of courtly love evolved into the beloved as countrified or natural and full of grace, a development in which Marie Antoinette playing at being a milking maid is the absurd conclusion. And it was there that wisdom was defined as a form of natural virtue, so that Winckelmann could find the Greeks to have possessed both, without possessing so much as an inkling of scholasticism and its intricate theology.

* * *

²² See further, W. Wallace, "Michelangelo's *Leda*: The Diplomatic Context," *Renaissance Studies*, XV, 2001, 473-99.

²³ "la quale mi fu data licenza [che] io la conducessi in quel modo ch'io credessi tornasse più perfettamente e più ornata e più ricca," Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I Commentari*, ed. O. Morisani, Naples, 1947, 45.

The Romans, notably Cicero, provided the concept of liberal art (“all arts which have any bearing upon the common life of mankind”),²⁴ but they left it to Renaissance theorists of art to salt it with polemicism. The Greeks offered no comparable concept, only *techne*, which implied knowhow rather than the privilege to be impractical. The main Latin authors who address the subject did provide license, though somewhat slender license, to call painting liberal. The Greeks were less useful, and in this case, less used.

Socrates, by his own account, had been trained as a sculptor; he styled himself a descendent of Daedalus. It is, then, at least partly from the vantage point of a practitioner that he decried the ignorance inherent in image making. In a typical passage, he explains that, like prophecy, skill in visual representation involves no true knowledge. Imitators (μιμούμενοι) tended to produce appearances which were beautiful rather than likenesses which were true:

artists, leaving the truth to take care of itself, do in fact put into the images they make, not the real proportions, but those that will appear beautiful.²⁵

The most damning condemnation came in the well-known Tenth Book of the *Republic*, in which Plato excludes both painter and poet from the well-governed city:

he [the mimetic poet] resembles him [the painter] in that his creations are inferior in respect of reality, and the fact that his appeal is to the inferior part of the soul and not to the best part is another part of the resemblance. And so we may at last say that we should be justified in not admitting him into a well-ordered state, because he stimulates and fosters this element in the soul, and by strengthening it tends to destroy the rational part.²⁶

This was a passage which Renaissance art theorists would rather had not existed. It could be ignored, it could be bent into compliance with one’s purposes (not least by Panofsky), but in the end, Plato simply did not help the cause of art. When Francesco Berni denounced poets in 1526, he appealed to Plato:

²⁴ “omnes artes, quae ad humanitatem pertinent,” Cicero, *Pro Archia Poeta*, tr. N.H. Watts, Loeb, London, 1923, i, 2.

²⁵ *Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton, 1961, *Sophist*, tr. F. Cornford, 236a.

²⁶ Plato/Hamilton-Cairns, *Republic*, tr. Paul Shorey, 605b.

they are so presumptuous that they think they're a great benefit to the human race and should be cherished and adored by people, as though they had retaken the Holy Land and led the Turk prisoner, and they say they are divine and that God breathes into their brains and makes them sing. O Plato, why didn't you live long enough to bring on yourself what you were planning for your republic [i.e., the expulsion of poets]?²⁷

When in Book VIII of the *Politics*, Aristotle discussed the education of the young, he offered the scantiest of support. He supposed drawing (γραφικά) less dubious than music, for drawing was judged useful and serviceable, music merely pleasurable. A bit later it transpires that the usefulness of drawing lies principally in “making us better judges of the works of artists.”²⁸ It also affects one's perception of nature: “this study makes a man observant of bodily beauty.”

Music was treated by Aristotle at much more length than drawing. Many rules are laid down for its proper role in education. Music is to be studied for its own sake and for the cultivation of the mind; the student is urged to be proud of his amateur status. Performing publicly is deemed vulgar (“vulgarity in the audience usually influences the music”).²⁹ Plutarch records in his life of Pericles the story that Philip asked his son (and Aristotle's pupil) when he played the lyre, “Art not ashamed to pluck the strings so well?” Plutarch's argument, prefacing his resolution to dedicate himself to the project of the parallel *Lives*, goes as follows:

Labor with one's own hands on lowly tasks gives witness, in the toil thus expended on useless things, to one's own indifference to higher things. No generous youth, from seeing the Zeus at Pisa [Olympia], or the Hera at Argos, longs to be Pheidias or Polycleitos; nor to be Anacreon or Philetas or Archilochus out of pleasure in their poems. For it does not of necessity follow that, if the work delights you with its grace, the one who wrought it is worthy of your esteem. Wherefore the spectator is not advantaged by those things at sight of which no ardour for imitation arises in the breast, nor any uplift of the soul arousing zealous impulses to do the like. But virtuous action straightway so disposes a man that he no

²⁷ “Anzi sono così prosuntuosi che par loro fare un gran giovamento alla generazione umana, e dovere essere accarezzati e adorati dalla gente, come se egli avessino racquistato Terra Santa e menato il Turco prigioniero, e dicono che son divini e che Iddio soffia loro nel cervello e falli cantare come fa la zuppa le cutte. O Platone, perché non vivesti tu tanto che ti venisse fatto quel che andavi dissegnando nella tua republica?” Anne Reynolds, *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII: Francesco Berni's 'Dialogue against poets' in context*, New York, 1997, 180–81.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, tr. A. Rackham, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1944, 1337b, 1338a.

²⁹ *Politics*, 1241b, 66g.

sooner admires the works of virtue than he strives to emulate those who wrought them. The good things of Fortune we love to possess and enjoy; those of Virtue we love to perform. The former we are willing should be ours at the hands of others; the latter we wish that others rather should have at our hands.³⁰

Lucian (b. c. 120 A.D.) sounded the same theme. After a day of training as a sculptor, Lucian reports having had a dream in which two women solicit him. Though the dream is reminiscent of the Dream of Hercules, as told by Xenophon, and anticipatory of the Dream of Scipio, as told by Macrobius (early 5th century), it is peculiarly relevant to our theme here:

A working woman, a mannish type, with unkempt hair and calluses on her hands, ill-spoken, urges him to emulate Pheidias, Polykleitos, Myron, and Praxitiles. She is the Lady of Statue Making. The other, Lady Education—beautiful, graceful, and well-dressed, persuades him with her words: “Even if you become a Pheidias or a Polycleitus and create wonderful masterpieces, the world will acclaim your art—but not one of your admirers, if he has any sense, would ask to be in your shoes. Whatever sort of person you may be, people will still think of you as a workman, a manual laborer, a man who makes his living with his hands.”³¹

Plutarch and Lucian were favorite authors during the Renaissance, so such passages as these had to be overlooked quite deliberately.

Among the Latin authors, Seneca, also beloved during the Renaissance, explicitly excluded artists from liberal status: “I do not consent to admit painting into the list of liberal arts, any more than sculpture, marble-working, and other helps toward luxury.”³² It should be noted that his was a rigorous definition, excluding also poetry, music, astronomy, mathematics, indeed anything but philosophy. He stated uncategorically: “I respect no study, and deem no study good, which results in money-making.”³³ But whereas Seneca allowed that those things normally termed the liberal arts might prepare the ground for the study of virtue, which for him was the sole true liberal art, the visual arts

³⁰ Plutarch, *Lives*, tr. B. Perrin, III, Loeb, London, 1916, 5–7.

³¹ Lucian, *Selected Satires*, tr. L. Casson, New York, 1962, 3–10.

³² Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistolae Morales*, tr. R. Gummere, Loeb ed., London, 1930, vol. II, LXXXVIII, 358–59: “Non enim adducor, ut in numerum liberalium artium pictores recipiam, non magis quam statuarios aut marmorarios aut ceteros luxuriae ministros.” See also David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge, 1987, 237ff.

³³ Seneca, 348–49: “Nullum suspicio, nullum in bonis numero, quod ad aes exit.”

are cast with wrestling, the knowledge of perfumes, and cooking. They seem to belong to his second lowest category for the arts, those which serve for amusement (*ludicrae*)—higher than the *volgares et sordidae*, lower than the *pueriles* and *liberales*.³⁴ In a subsequent letter he advises, “Follow nature, and you will need no skilled craftsmen.”³⁵ Diogenes, he avows, is the wise man, not Daedalus.

In ancient times, before the idea of the trivium had been conceived, rhetoricians too had needed to defend what they did as being an art. Cicero (106–43 B.C.) in the *Brutus* asserted the difficulty of speaking well:

whether it is a product of rules and theory, or a technique dependent on practice, or on natural gifts, it is one attainment amongst all others of unique difficulty.³⁶

Moreover, he went on, it is comprised of five arts (invention, arrangement, diction, action, memory.) And, following Aristotle, he traced its origin as a theoretical discipline to Pericles.³⁷ The orator, like the architect and painter later, is required to seek universal knowledge:

no man can be an orator complete in all points of merit, who has not obtained a knowledge of all important subjects and arts.³⁸

The orator, like the poet, must know about many kinds of things.³⁹

Quintilian (c. 35-before 100) also offered arguments that rhetoric be acknowledged as an art, rather than being thought of as merely a natural function:

if...not every man that speaks is an orator and primitive man did not speak like an orator, my opponents must needs acknowledge that oratory is the product of art and did not exist before it.⁴⁰

³⁴ Seneca, 362–63.

³⁵ Seneca, 404–05, Epistle XC, “Non desiderabis artifices; sequere naturam.”

³⁶ “Hoc vero sine ulla dubitatione confirmaverim, sive illa arte pariatum aliqua sive exercitatione quadam sive natura, rem unam esse omnium difficillimam,” tr. G. Hendrickson, Loeb, Cambridge, 1988, vi, 25.

³⁷ Cicero, *Brutus*, tr. H. Hubbell, Loeb, London, 1939, x, 44.

³⁸ “nemo poterit esse omni laude cumulatus orator, nisi erit omnium rerum magnarum atque artium scientiam consecutus,” *De oratore*, tr. E. Sutton, Loeb, Cambridge, 1988, I, v, 20.

³⁹ Cicero, *De oratore*, I, xvi, 70.

⁴⁰ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, tr. H. Butler, Loeb, London, 1933, II, xvii, 11: “si vero non quisquis loquitur, orator est, et tum non tanquam oratores loquebantur, necesse est, oratorem factum arte nec ante artem fuisse fateantur.”

So much so is it an art that “the trained man will prove inferior to one who has received a better training.”⁴¹

Quintilian classified painting as a productive art (as opposed to theoretical or practical). He employed the term, interestingly enough, ποιητική,⁴² and claiming some relation between rhetorical and productive arts, though rhetoric fell mostly in the category of practical or active arts, such as dancing.

Only the distinctly unphilosophical Latin authors, Pliny and Vitruvius, provided real help in dignifying the visual arts.⁴³ Pliny does not unreservedly vouchsafe the status of painting as a liberal art, but he comes close. He cites Eupompos of Pamphilos as an exceptionally well-paid teacher of art. Apelles was one of his students. Eupompos’ authority (*auctoritas*) was so great that a new school of painting was designated in his honor. Moreover, he established the idea that painting should be a preliminary to a liberal arts education:

Pamphilos, the first painter who was thoroughly trained in every branch of learning, more particularly in arithmetic and geometry; without which, he held, art could not be perfect...It was owing to his influence that first at Sikyon, and afterwards throughout Greece drawing, or rather painting, on tablets of boxwood, was the earliest subject taught to free-born boys, and that this art was accepted as the preliminary step toward a liberal education. It was at any rate had in such honour that at all times the freeborn, and later on persons of distinction practiced it, while by a standing prohibition no slaves might ever acquire it.⁴⁴

But Pliny also argues for the dignity of painting on the basis of its association with more absolute governments:

in times past it was reputed a noble and excellent art: in those days I mean when Kings and whole States were made account thereof; and

⁴¹ *I.O.*, II, xvii, 43: “doctior doctum in rhetorices opere superabit.”

⁴² *I.O.*, II, xviii, 2: “such we style productive, and painting may be quoted as an illustration.”

⁴³ Galen mentioned as studies which bring us near to the gods: geometry, arithmetic, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, grammar, choral singing, painting, modelling, grammar, architecture, and carving; *Protrepticus*, Ch. V.

⁴⁴ *Chapters*, 118 (XXXV, 76): “primus in pitura omnibus litteris eruditus, praecipue arithmetica et geometria, sine quibus negabat artem perfici posse...huius auctoritate effectum est Sicyone primum, deinde et in tota Graecia, ut pueri ingenui omnia ante graphicen, hoc est picturam in buxo, docerentur recipereturque ars ea in primum gradum liberalium. semper quidem honos ei fuit ut ingenui eam exercerent, mox ut honesti, perpetuo interdicto ne servitia docerentur.” A sentiment often echoed by Renaissance writers, including Francisco de Hollanda, *Díálogos em Roma*, 1538, 132.

when those only were thought ennobled and immortalized, whom painters vouchsafed to commend by their workmanship to posterity.⁴⁵

Painting thus is tied alternatively to nobility and to free citizens, to kingmaking and to liberal education. Both with respect to its making and its patronage, painting is associated with political power. Pliny thus provided a broad and flexible textual justification of mimetic art, one surprisingly unencumbered with references to idolatry. It is hard to imagine the Italian Renaissance without Pliny.

The other essential ancient authority on these matters, Vitruvius, himself an architect, had claimed that the architect needed to know the liberal arts: “the function of the architect requires a training in all the departments of learning.”⁴⁶ When Alberti imitated his treatise by writing *De pictura* in 1435, he adapted Vitruvius’s claim from the architect to the painter, a claim that had special weight in that no other ancient treatise on the arts had survived. For painters and sculptors, however, what Vitruvius said was of less moment than the genre which his writing legitimated. *De architectura* was itself evidence of the rational character of architecture, and by a somewhat daring but generally accepted extension, of, as Vasari would put it, all the arts of *disegno*. “Disegno,” which meant plan, reason, drawing, or ideal form, belonged to a set of words—including “ingegno” and “divino”—whose ambiguities were highly productive.

* * *

The word *ingenium* appears prominently and repeatedly in the first treatise on art in the Christian era; whereas even in Pliny and Vitruvius it had been notably scarce. For Alberti, the dignity of painting depended upon its acceptance as a liberal art, and its recognition as a liberal art depended in large part upon its alliance with geometry, though also with the development of literary inventions, analogues of rhetorical inventions. He opens the treatise with reference, in the Italian letter of dedication to Brunelleschi’s “ingegno maraviglioso,” and in the Latin letter to Giovan Francesco Gonzaga, to “his ingenuis artibus”

⁴⁵ Pliny, *Nat. hist.*, tr. Philemon Holland, Carbondale, Ill., 1962, 397, the opening of Book XXXV.

⁴⁶ Vitruvius, *Ten Books of Architecture*, tr. I. Rowland, commentary T.N. Howe, Cambridge, 1999, 7–8, and Book I, Ch. I, passim. Drawing, geometry, optics, arithmetic, history, philosophy, physiology, music, medicine, law, and astronomy are mentioned in particular.

(these intellectual arts), a Ciceronian echo of, for instance, the Roman's description of an orator, "omnibus ingenuis artibus instructus" (trained in all the liberal arts).⁴⁷ Nine years later Michele Savonarola would tentatively follow suit, claiming that painting was the most proximate of the mechanical arts to the liberal arts because perspective is a branch of philosophy.⁴⁸

The Gonzaga supported Vittorino da Feltre's *Casa Giocosa*; they deemed a humanistic version of Cicero's liberal arts education to be fundamental. Alberti cast Brunelleschi in his vernacular Preface into fairly traditional liberal arts company, that of musicians, geometers, rhetoricians, and astrologers (*auguri*). For the practical Florentines, having *ingegno* was a more important claim than belonging to the liberal arts, and perhaps not only for artists. But Matteo Palmieri (1406–75), for instance, believed that diligence and education were responsible for the recent revival of painting and architecture, and that the revival itself proved how important teaching was. The intellectual arts ("arti d'ingegno") were now flourishing, as they had not for a thousand years, because of study.⁴⁹

Alberti's *On Painting* of 1435 started with geometry and progressed to the many other forms of knowledge required of the proper painter: historical subjects, motions of the body, decorum, optics. As Alberti put it straightforwardly, "I want the painter, so far as he is able, to be learned in all the liberal arts, but I wish him above all to have a good knowledge of geometry."⁵⁰ Alberti noted that whereas in antiquity all other kinds of craftsmen were called "artifex" (worker or master, but for Alberti, clearly not a complimentary term), painters were not so demeaningly classified.⁵¹

The number of painters and sculptors was enormous in those days, when princes and people, and learned and unlearned alike delighted in painting, and statues and pictures were displayed in the theatres among the chief spoils brought from the provinces. Eventually Paulus Aemilius and many other Roman citizens taught their sons painting among the liberal arts in the pursuit of a good and happy life. The excellent custom was especially observed among the Greeks that free-born and liberally

⁴⁷ Grayson, 1972, 34; Cicero, *De oratore*, tr. E. Sutton, Loeb, 1988, I, xvi, 73.

⁴⁸ R. Lightbown, *Mantegna*, Berkeley, 1986, 22.

⁴⁹ Palmieri, 1529, 19–20.

⁵⁰ Grayson, 1972, "Doctum vero pictorem esse opto, quoad eius fieri possit, omnibus in artibus liberalibus, sed in eo praesertim geometriae peritiam disidero," 94–95.

⁵¹ Grayson, 1972, 62. See 71, n. 35 above.

educated young people were also taught the art of painting together with letters, geometry and music. Indeed the skill of painting was a mark of honour also in women...the art of painting is indeed worthy of free minds and noble intellects. I have always regarded it as a mark of an excellent and superior mind in any person whom I saw take great delight in painting.⁵²

Inadvertently Alberti has here sown the seed that will eventually undo his efforts to promote painting as part of a liberal arts education, for he praises, in high terms, the *ingenium* of one who delights in merely looking at paintings. The humanist observer soon displaces both advisor and that rarity, the humanist painter. It is enough to look, and especially so once printmaking and private collections provide ready opportunities for casual viewing of works of art. And if it is enough merely to look, then the effort to make the practice of painting a basic part of education is damaged, if not defeated. When Dolce's Aretino is challenged as to his credentials for talking about art, he replies intractably, I know the human body and so I know art:

man's ability to judge comes, in general, from practical experience of the way things are. And since nothing is more familiar and close to a man than man himself, it follows that each man is qualified to pass judgment on what he daily sees—that is, to judge the beauty and ugliness of any individual human being.⁵³

We may also wonder what Alberti's thesis meant in a Florence whose notable citizens in many cases had no formal training in the liberal arts, though the *studia humanitatis* they knew well enough through Petrarch, Salutati, and their kin. Surely it meant something, since it was echoed by Ghiberti in his *Commentari* at mid-century.⁵⁴ But it may have meant

⁵² Grayson, 1972, 64–65, “Ingens namque fuit et pictorum et sculptorum illis temporibus turba, cum et principes et plebei et docti atque indocti pictura delectabantur, cumque inter primas ex provinciis praedas signa et tabulas in theatris exponebant; eoque processit res ut Paulus Aemilius caeterique non pauci Romani cives filios inter bonas artes ad bene beateque vivendum picturam edocerent. Qui mos optimus apud Graecis maxime observabatur, ut ingenui et libere educati adolescentes, una cum litteris, geometria et musica, pingendi quoque arte instruerentur. Quin et feminis etiam haec pingendi facultas honori fuit...est pingendi ars profecto liberalibus ingeniis et nobilissimis animis dignissima, maximumque optimi et praestantissimi ingenii apud me semper fuit inditium illius quem in pictura vehementer delectari intelligerem.”

⁵³ “nell'uomo nasce generalmente il giudizio dalla pratica e dalla esperienza delle cose. E non essendo alcuna cosa piu familiare e domestica all'huomo di quello, ch'è l'huomo: ne seguita, che ciascun'huomo sia atto a far giudizio di quello, che egli vede ogni giorno: cioè della bellezza e della bruttezza di qualunque huomo;” Dolce, 100–01.

⁵⁴ Ghiberti, *I Commentari*, I, i.: “Conviene che lo scultore, eziandio il pittore, sia

less there than in established university towns. Moreover, an important aspect of the dignity associated with the liberal arts derived from the immunity of its practitioners from monetary concerns, scarcely a sympathetic theme in Florence. The liberal artist was naturally noble, since he was not motivated by need. For bankers this criterion was irrelevant. Artists' pursuit of competitive patronage and the open market, undertaken to free artists of servant status, oddly enough tossed them into conditions not so unlike that of merchants and bankers. The purist concept of liberal artist was one they all had an interest in voiding.

In its strictest formulation, the liberal artist was by definition an amateur, such a figure as Antonio Maria Zanetti in the eighteenth century, who dabbled in printmaking on the side, while collecting seriously. In the sixteenth century, we hear of a few amateurs: Vincenzo Caccianemici the etcher-friend of Parmigianino as well as the gentlemen friends of Michelangelo in Rome for whom the *teste divine* were made as models. In the fifteenth century, Alberti and Giulio Campagnola stand out as the non-professionals. Landino had given Alberti, his kinsman, space and exceptional credit in his Preface to Dante in 1481, under the category of "Fiorentini Eccellenti nelle Dottrine." Vasari did not usually accord a Life to amateurs, though he made an exception for Alberti, perhaps partly because of Landino's precedent.⁵⁵ The history of those who did not need to make a living at art is an elusive one in European art, yet to be written and difficult to distill from hosts of works ascribed to "follower of." Nevertheless, the absence of a vibrant amateur tradition must itself be reckoned as tacit evidence against the widespread success of the idea that painting was a liberal art.⁵⁶ Few professional artists would have felt comfortable describing themselves as men of letters, a less technical approximation to the term liberal artist. Leonardo famously described himself as "uomo senza lettere," meaning uned-

ammaestrato in tutte queste arti liberali: Grammatica, Geometria, Filosofia, Medicina, Astrologia, Prospettiva, Istorica, Notomia, Teorica disegno, Aritmetica."

⁵⁵ On the importance of "courtly virtuosity" as correlated with "a dilettantish approach to intellectual and cultural pursuits," see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, Princeton, 1994, 225.

⁵⁶ See, though, Ulrich Middeldorf, "On the Dilettante Sculptor," *Raccolta di scritti*, III, Florence, 1981, 173–202. And on Francesco de' Medici's interest in turning, see Wolfgang Liebenwein, "The Prince as Artisan and Artist," in *World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity*, ed. I. Lavin, vol. II, University Park, 1989, 465–69. That the number of amateurs was significant by the eighteenth century, see Barzman, 129.

ucated, particularly in ancient languages and literature. For artists to whom the goal of the learned painter seemed impractical, the idea of natural genius would have come as a welcome, more realistic, alternative. But its appeal to patrons and to humanists was not immediately apparent, and until they were complicit, artists for the most part had to conform to their expectations of bookish content and diligent technique. Not until educational practice itself became debatable did the concept of the artist as trained intellectual encounter serious revision, with John Ruskin (1819–1900) for instance.⁵⁷

* * *

Writing in the 1380s, Filippo Villani made a list of famous Florentines in his chronicle. He used the occasion of such a list to address the question of the relationship between the liberal and the visual arts. Painters he places after musicians and before buffoons. While he does not exactly say that they are liberal artists, he implies acceptance of the idea that their native abilities are similar, that at least with education and training, a man who functioned as an exceptional artist might become a master of a liberal art:

Many people judge—and not foolishly indeed—that painters are of a talent (*ingenium*) no lower than those whom the liberal arts have rendered magistri, since these latter may learn by means of study and instruction written rules of their arts while the painters derive such rules as they find in their art only from a profound natural talent and a tenacious memory.⁵⁸

Giotto in particular is lauded as exceeding the ancients in skill and talent (“ars et ingenium”), and as virtuous in that he seeks fame rather than wealth. Alberti had been to some extent scooped.

⁵⁷ “so far as this higher education has a tendency to narrow the sympathies and harden the heart, diminishing the interest of all beautiful things by familiarity, until even what is best can hardly please...just so far, in all these several ways, the feeling induced by what is called a ‘liberal education’ is utterly adverse to the understanding of noble art,” *The Art Criticism of John Ruskin*, ed. R. Herbert, Garden City, New York, 1964, 166–67.

⁵⁸ Baxandall, *Orators*, 70–71, 147: “extimantibus multis, nex stulte quidem, pictores non inferioris ingenii his, quos liberales artes fecere magistros, cum illi artium precepta scripturis demandata studio atque doctrina percipiant, hii solum ab alto ingenio tenacique memoria, que in arte sentiant, exigant.” See also, H.W. Janson, “The Birth of ‘Artistic License’: The Dissatisfied Patron in the Early Renaissance,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, eds. S. Orgel and G. Lytle, Princeton, 1981, 344–53, and Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*, New York, 1960, 14–15.

Francesco Sachetti (c. 1333–1400) writing at approximately the same time and also in Florence, recorded that Giotto was known as wise, virtuous, and a master of the seven liberal arts: “everyone agrees that Giotto not only was a great master of painting, but also master of the seven liberal arts.”⁵⁹ It is precisely because Giotto is so exceptional that he is so credited by Villani—that is, not as a typical artist, and less for his artistic mastery than for his wittiness. He excuses some pigs who knocked him down, on the grounds that he had grown rich from their bristles and never given them even a bowl of broth, and he explains to his companions that St. Joseph looked melancholy in a certain painting because his wife was pregnant and he didn’t know by whom. He is clever in outsmarting his companions, and so he functions as a sort of natural ruler, dominant by virtue of his intellect and able to extract impressive payment. Nevertheless, the phrase—“maestro delle sette arti liberali”—as used by Sachetti was considerably vaguer in connotation than it would be fifty years later for Alberti. Moreover, Sachetti was writing comedy. So although a compliment was doubtless intended, its rigor may well be wondered at. Giotto is portrayed, after all, as a sort of a buffoon. Yet particularly in Florence, native wit was valued as much as degrees and pedigrees.

In 1434 Cosimo de’ Medici returned in triumph to Florence from exile. The next year Alberti returned from exile to Florence and marked the occasion by writing *De pictura* in which he argued that painters practiced a liberal art. In 1436 Leonardo Bruni, Chancellor of Florence and a man in an awkward position as the politics of his adopted town wavered so unsteadily between republic and narrow oligarchy, penned his “Life of Dante.” The issue here, too, was liberal arts status. Like Alberti with painters, Bruni rehabilitated this poet as a steady, studious type. For Bruni, Dante was also a sort of Cimabue, a piece of the past, since replaced by Neo-Latinity. The Aretine Bruni noted with a certain wonder that the poet’s great-grandson did not even know where his Florentine forefathers had lived. Bruni showed him the site, the house having been destroyed when Dante was sent

⁵⁹ “tutti...affermando, non che Giotto fusse gran maestro di dipignere, ma esser ancora maestro delle sette arti liberali,” ed. A. Lanza, *Il Trecentonovelle*, 1984, *Novella LXXV*, 147. On the other side of the Renaissance, Baldinucci would retell the story, crediting Sachetti, but omitting the reference to the liberal arts. The artists’ companions say simply, “Giotto è maestro d’ogni cosa;” Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno*, Florence, 1845 (reprint 1974), I, 122. *Novella 63* begins, “Ciascuno può aver già udito chi fu Giotto e quanto fu gran dipintore sopra ogni altro.”

into exile: “and thus the world is turned by Fortune and its inhabitants shift their places as her wheel turns,”⁶⁰ commented Bruni in closing the *Vita*. The more adoring Boccaccio, by contrast, had ended his *Life of Dante* with a long description of the miraculous dream Dante’s mother had while pregnant.⁶¹

Bruni was not a poet, had (unlike Petrarch) mastered Greek and read Plato, and made no bones about disdaining popular culture. In his *Life of Dante* (1436), he injected a fundamental distinction into what had been a fairly unrestrained practice of compliment. He categorized Dante as a man of diligence and scholarship, but as someone who fell short of the highest order of poets. This adhered only to those who worked by inspiration (“per ingegno proprio agitato e commosso da alcun vigore interno e nascoso, il quale si chiama furore ed occupazione di mente”)⁶² rather than by analytical reason (“per iscienza, per istudio, per disciplina ed arte e prudenzia”). In other words, Bruni claimed Dante for the liberal arts by weakening his claim as poet, devaluing Dante’s vernacular writings relative to his Latin political writings at the same stroke.

Boccaccio, whose earlier biography of Dante Bruni was well aware of, had presented the poet as part of Providence, (“che a’ nostri secoli fu concesso di spezial grazia da Dio”),⁶³ but also as a liberal artist (“per virtù e per iscenza e per buone operazioni meritasse”).⁶⁴ Boccaccio emphasized Dante’s obscure birth and disinterest in monetary gain:

he spent all his youth in continual study of the liberal arts, and in these he became amazingly expert. His spirit and mind grew together with the years, disposed not to professional studies, those to which everybody usually inclines, but he despised transitory riches in favor of a laudable aspiration for lasting fame, giving himself freely to the desire to have full knowledge of poetical fictions and their artistry.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Angelo Solerti, *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, scritte fino al secolo decimosesto*, Milan, 1905, 107: “e così la Fortuna questo mondo gira, e permuta li abitatori col volger di sue rote.”

⁶¹ Solerti, 73.

⁶² Solerti, 104–05.

⁶³ Solerti, 13.

⁶⁴ Solerti, 9.

⁶⁵ “tutta la sua puerizia con istudio continuo diede alle liberali arti, e in quelle mirabilmente divenne esperto. E crescendo insieme con gli anni l’animo e lo ’ngegno, non a’ lucrativi studi, alli quali generalmente oggi corre ciascuno, di dispose, ma da una laudavole vaghezza di perpetua fama sprezzando le transitorie ricchezze, liberamente si diede a voler avere piena notizia delle fizioni poetiche e dell’artificioso dimostramento di quelle;” Solerti, 14.

Boccaccio went on to emphasize how Dante read and imitated poetry for the sake of the philosophy to be found hidden therein. Later in the *Tratatello in Laude di Dante* of 1357–62, he reproved the Florentines who would exile such a man:

So you take pride in your merchants and many artists, of which you are full? You do so foolishly. The one does a servile job, always working avariciously operates always avariciously; art, which one time was ennobled by great minds, so much that it made a second nature, now is corrupted by the same avarice and worth nothing.⁶⁶

These same criticisms would echo again in the later sixteenth century, when a sense of cultural discouragement gave vent. During the more upbeat fifteenth century, Florentines in particular needed an alternative version of the heritage of Dante, not as Boccaccio's misunderstood genius but as a good and a representative Florentine. This Bruni gave them.

Bruni's Dante is a far less extraordinary man than Boccaccio's—though of better birth. His family was of “molto antica stirpe” rather than “oscura.” He studied literature and the liberal arts, but also served in the army, and was generally sociable rather than reclusive. He studied music and “di sua mano egregiamente disegnavo,” a bit of lore Dolce still remembered more than a century later.⁶⁷ Before his exile he was of middle status:

He was not of very great wealth; nevertheless he was not poor, but had a middling patrimony, sufficient to live honorably.⁶⁸

Bruni characterized Dante's studies as basically poetical, but not merely frivolous:

His principal study was of poetry, but not useless, nor bad, nor silly poetry, but fertile and rich poetry, supported by true knowledge and by many rigorous studies.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Deh, gloriera 'ti tu de' tuoi mercatanti e de' molti artisti, d'onde tu se' piena? Scioccamente farai. L'uno fa, continuamente l'avarizia operando, lo mestiere servile; l'arte la quale un tempo nobilitata fu dagli ingegni, intanto che una seconda natura la feciono, dall'avarizia medesima e oggi corrotta, e niente vale;” Solerti, 33.

⁶⁷ Solerti, 104; Dolce, *Aretino*, 107.

⁶⁸ “di grandissima ricchezza non fosse, niente di meno non fu povero, ma ebbe patrimonio mediocre, e sufficiente a vivere onoratamente;” Solerti, 104.

⁶⁹ “Lo studio suo principale fu poesia, ma non sterile, né povera, né fantastica, ma fecondata ed inricchita, stabilita da vera scienza e da moltissime discipline;” Soleri, 104.

Dante grew learned in philosophy, theology, astrology, arithmetic, history, and wideranging curiosity (“*revoluzione di molte e vari libri*”).

Bruni lauds Dante’s knowledge of the liberal arts, even as, reciprocally, he denigrates his poetic gift. He casts Dante as an opposite to, and inferior of, St. Francis, the sole cited example of the highest form of poetry, that produced by a closeness to God on account of which “*qualunque dicono i poeti esser divini.*”⁷⁰ (That “*qualunque*” is doubtless Boccaccio, Dante’s earliest fervent advocate.) That Dante had to work at being learned counted against him with Brunni, at the very same time as Alberti was struggling to have painters accepted as learned. The juxtaposition of Brunni’s and Alberti’s texts indicates how little equivalent painters and poets were yet.

Whereas for Boccaccio the salient theme in the *Life of Dante* was the turpitude of the Florentines who would exile such a man (and, tacitly but not insignificantly, the family of his friend Petrarch at the same time), for Brunni it was Dante’s republican political career combined with the glory he brought Florence through his poetry, his predecessors in the vernacular having hailed from other cities.

As a staunch imperialist and a political exile, Dante could scarcely be accorded unreserved honors by the Chancellor of Florence. In this context Brunni denigrates Dante for his learnedness—though the opposite was also possible. The *Comedia*, while encyclopedaic, was also thoroughly vernacular. In Brunni’s *Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum* of c. 1405, Niccolò Niccoli attacks Dante as low-brow (an insult retracted later in the dialogue):

I shall remove that poet of yours from the number of the lettered and leave him to wool workers, bakers and the like; for he has spoken in such a way that he seems to have wished to be familiar with this sort of men.⁷¹

As such varying treatments show, Dante was the victim of others’ agendas in the early Quattrocento, rather than an icon in his own right.⁷² Neither Latin humanist culture nor republican Florentine culture could easily adopt him, but both were diminishing forces. By the time Lorenzo de’ Medici was penning *canzoni*, Dante was less difficult to handle both politically and aesthetically. Even in 1465, under the

⁷⁰ “some say poets are divine,” Solerti, 105.

⁷¹ *The Humanism of Leonardo Brunni: Selected Texts*, ed. and tr. G. Griffiths, J. Hankins, D. Thompson, Binghamton, 1987, 74, 79.

⁷² See also D. Parker, *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance*, Durham, N.C., 1993.

aegis of Lorenzo's father Piero, a large and elaborate portrait of Dante against the backdrop of heaven, hell, and Florence herself was erected in the Duomo [fig. 6].⁷³ He was, in a word, rehabilitated by the forces of absolutism, who came to power due to popular support. Dante was first deemed *divino* in Landino's 1481 edition of the *Comedia*, nine years after the first printed edition.

Gradually artists were rescued from the dilemma of mercurial social status by vernacularization. They became men of letters because Dante and his beneficiaries, in the course of two centuries, changed what that meant enough for them to qualify. When Leonardo left Florence in 1481, no artist could aspire to the category of "letterato." When Raphael arrived there in 1504, he was on the verge of a spate of sonnet writing himself. Botticelli studied Dante deeply; Michelangelo was likewise expert, as Vasari would be too later. Bronzino wrote poetry beginning in 1538.⁷⁴ In the sixteenth century, painter-poets of Dante's natal town generally counted themselves sufficiently learned—except Michelangelo, who is reported in Donato Giannotti's dialogue of the mid-1540s as mocking his own ignorance of Latin:

I have heard it said that Cato, Roman citizen and censor, learned Greek at 80. Would it be so big a thing, that Michelangelo Buonarroti, Florentine citizen, should learn Latin at 70?⁷⁵

Precisely in setting the standard so high, he had outlived his era. For Vasari, merely looking at the Sistine *Isaiah* constituted an education: "you will see a figure so well studied that it could teach amply all the precepts of a good painter."⁷⁶

The adulation Dante received in the later fifteenth century formed the foundation of Michelangelo's reputation; both were largely produced in accordance with Medici political agendas. Dante was both "divino" without being saintly or even uncontroversial, and he was

⁷³ Erich Loos, "Das Bild als Deutung von Dichtung: Zur Darstellung Dantes von Domenico di Michelino in Santa Maria del Fiore, Florenz," in *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. L. Griesbach and K. Renger, Frankfurt, 1977, 160–72. See also, Jonathan Nelson, "Dante Portraits in Sixteenth-Century Florence," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CXX, 1992, 59–77.

⁷⁴ Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet*, Cambridge, 2000, 18.

⁷⁵ "Io ho pur sentito dire che Catone Censorino Cittadino Romano imparò lettere Grece nel LXXX anno della sua età. Sarebbe egli però così gran fatto, che Michelagnolo Buonarroti Cittadino Fiorentino imparasse le latine nel settantesimo?" Giannotti, 30.

⁷⁶ Vasari/Marini, 1220: "vedrà una figura che tutta bene studiata può insegnare largamente tutti i precetti del buon pittore."

learned without being inaccessible to the man in the street. Of this Michelangelo was a kind of echo, his own learning was derived in no small part from Dante's, and his art both "divine" and popular, popular enough to be spread through many copies, versions, and adaptations.

The humanist Lorenzo Valla, writing an encomium of Latin in the 1430s, the same period as *De pictura* and Bruni's "Life of Dante," again associated the visual arts with the liberal arts. This well-known passage confirms for us that Alberti's claims for painting were reasonable ones in the estimation of those practicing the liberal arts themselves:

those arts which are most closely related to the liberal arts, the arts of painting, sculpture, modelling and architecture, had degenerated for so long and so greatly and had almost died with letters themselves, and that in this age they have been aroused and come to life again, so greatly increased is the number of good artists and men of letters who now flourish.⁷⁷

In Valla's hands, the arts of painting, sculpture, modelling, and architecture come close to being both liberal and divine. Latin is deemed "the language that embraces all disciplines worthy of a free man."⁷⁸ No wonder then that Alberti, writing as Valla's contemporary, did not neglect to write all of his treatises in Latin, adding a vernacular version only of *De pictura*, in order to make it accessible to artists. Clearly he assumed that an architect would be able to read Latin, a painter not.

Valla credits the Roman republic not only with establishing the glory of the Latin language, but also with establishing the liberal arts themselves, which have in his words divine or everlasting status:

you may justly call those men royal, indeed divine, who not only founded the republic and the majesty of the Roman people, insofar as this might be done by men, but, as if they were gods, established also the welfare of the whole world.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ J. Ross and M. McLaughlin, eds., *The Portable Renaissance Reader*, New York, 1967, 131; "illae artes, quae proxime ad liberales accedunt, pingendi, sculpendi, fingendi, architectandi, aut tamdiu tantoque opere degeneravint, ac paene cum litteris ipsis demortuae fuerint, aut hoc tempore excitentur ac reviviscant, tantusque tum bonorum opificum, tum bene litteratorum proventus efflorescat;" E. Garin, *Prosatori Latini del Quattrocento*, Milan, 1952, 598.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Reader*, 131; "Illos enim regios homines, hos vero divinos iustissime dixeris, a quibus non quemadmodum ab hominibus fit aucta respublica est maiestasque populi romani solum, sed quemadmodum a diis salus quoque orbis terrarum;" *Prosatori*, 596.

Jacopo de' Barbari echoed the sentiment, affirming that the liberal arts showed the way to immortality: "this art had revealed the customs and the rational life to men and beyond this showed the way to immortality."⁸⁰ Sperone Speroni continued this line of thought a half century later in his *Dialogo della lingua*: "The Latin language has the power to make gods of men, and of mortals (not of mortals such as we are), immortals through fame," he wrote in Italian.⁸¹ In Greek the gods were literally immortals (ἀθάνατοι); and in the Renaissance similarly, divine status implied permanent value. It seemed that Latin literature would be pre-eminent forever. Reputation grew in the sixteenth century in no small part because the reputation of reputation grew. It was evident that one's name might outlive one's accomplishments, that in some sense, reputation was not merely an attribute of worldly power but pertained to something more lasting, something that in later centuries would be called human civilization. Apelles' reputation had outlasted his works; not to mention the deeds of his patron Alexander, whose victories had little lasting effect but whose fame remained legendary.

The revival of the visual arts was seen at the time to parallel that of the Ciceronian liberal arts. For Erwin Panofsky, the thesis that art *all'antica* was virtually a liberal art in the minds of Quattrocento humanists was absolutely central. Yet, as Panofsky duly recognized, Valla does not say that the visual arts may be included with the liberal arts, only that they are related.⁸² Moreover, Valla says nothing about style. Humanists had at this point one hundred years of analysis of Latin style. The idea, so central to Panofsky, that artists were liberal artists whose works *all'antica* aspired to divine perfection, to that *segno di dio*, echoes various ideas of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries without distinguishing strands and stages of development, amalgamating all instead to the concept of Renaissance. In the sixteenth century, it is true that analogies between letters and paintings were rife; but even a century earlier they had been much sparser and more superficial. Latin literary style was at the center of aesthetic debate from the time of Petrarch, and architectural style *all'antica* was achieved more or less overnight by Brunelleschi. By contrast, visual style *all'antica* was a con-

⁸⁰ Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 66: "ese arte han trovato i costumi e la vita rationale a li homeni e da li ancora monstrato la via a la immortalidade."

⁸¹ "la lingua Latina ha virtù di fare d'uomini Dei, e di morti, non che di mortali che siamo, immortali per fama," Sperone, *Dialogo della lingua*, ed. H. Harth, Munich, 1975.

⁸² Panofsky, 1960, 16.

cept only gradually formulated. There was no ancient visual equivalent to Cicero or Virgil: Apelles' work was never recovered, and Praxitiles was barely known. In 1450 there were no *all'antica* paintings. By the time visual style *all'antica* might have developed into an orthodoxy, the growth of vernacular literature was eroding its importance. When it did happen, in the seventeenth century, Raphael was more important to the concept than Apelles.

Florentine artists may not have ever known what Valla had to say about their efforts, but they readily echoed the complimentary formulae Alberti had set out. Ghiberti claimed that he "did not join the chase after lucre."⁸³ He followed Alberti, who had cited him in the Italian letter of dedication, in asserting the importance of learning to sculptors and painters. He listed ten sorts of learning in particular (grammar, geometry, philosophy, medicine, astrology, perspective, history, anatomy, the theory of design, and arithmetic), and he echoed the theory of rhetoric to resolve the dilemma of natural gift versus the advantages of study: "intelligence without rigor or rigor without intelligence will not make the perfect artificer."⁸⁴ His *Commentari* represented an enormous effort by an essentially unlettered artist to meet the paradigm of Alberti. Whether he actually understood the principles of any style of ancient art is a more complicated issue. How did he recognize what he called "la nobiltà dell'arte"? Did he even intuitively formalize what he called "audacia," "perfezione," "simmetrie," or "misure"? Did his adjectives "meravigliose" and "perfette" imply a certain style, or only dedication to the project of mimesis? When he retells the story of ancient art, for instance, he mentions how Polignotus learned how to show the head with the mouth open, showing a bit of teeth, and "vary the faces from the old rigidity."⁸⁵ To say something comparable of Cicero or Virgil in 1450 would have seemed elementary to the point of childish.

During his Milanese years, Leonardo argued much more weakly, and privately, on behalf of the same proposition that Alberti had—a hint as to how bold Alberti's claims had been. Leonardo privately and somewhat sophistically argued against painting's being labelled a mechanical science ("scientia meccanica") on account of its basis in the apprehen-

⁸³ L. Goldscheider, *Ghiberti*, London, 1949, 19; Ghiberti/Morisani, "non ò a ubbidire la pecunia," 41.

⁸⁴ Ghiberti, 2–3: "lo ingegno senza disciplina o la disciplina senza ingegno non può fare perfetto artefice."

⁸⁵ "variò i visi dalla antica rigidezza," Ghiberti, 20.

sion of light, distance, and motion.⁸⁶ He deemed painting a “vera scientia” with power over the minds (“*ingegni*”) of men, able to inspire love and otherwise to control their volition.⁸⁷ In the course of this private but plaintive lament—“O writers, for what twisted reason have you left her [painting] outside the number of the liberal arts?”⁸⁸—he offered a convincing reason for painting’s neglect, namely that writers were preoccupied with texts and ill-equipped to do justice to images:

Since writers had no knowledge of the science of painting, they could not describe its degrees and parts. For the same [reason], the aim of painting cannot be demonstrated in words. Through ignorance painting remained behind the sciences previously mentioned, not because it lacked divinity, and yet truly not without cause either. [Writers] have not ennobled painting because painting possesses nobility in itself without the aid of other languages, not unlike the way the excellent works of nature do.⁸⁹

For Leonardo, the parallel between the visual and the liberal arts was a matter of heartfelt polemic, rather than common cultural assumption.

Whereas in the fourteenth century, the *ingegno* required by the liberal arts commanded reverence and was accounted rare, by the sixteenth century, treatises had proliferated, and praise for *ingegno* with them. The availability of printed books and increasing educational opportunity intellectualized life both within and without Florence, and although *ingegno* may not have been generally lauded as divine, it must have seemed a much less recondite attribute by 1600 than it had in the early

⁸⁶ “The first operation of painting is to put down its scientific and true principles, which are: what is the umbrageous body, what are primitive and derived shadow, and what is light, that is, darkness, light, color, body, figure, position, distance, nearness, motion, and rest. These are comprehended only by the mind, without manual operations, and this is the science of painting which stays in the mind of its contemplators;” “Della qual pittura li suoi scientifici et veri principij prima ponendo che cosa è corpo ombroso, et che cosa è lume, cioè tenebre, luce, colore, corpo, figura, sito, remotione, propinquita, moto e quiete. Le quali solo con la mente si comprendono senza opera manuale, e questa sia la scientia della pittura, che resta nella mente de suoi contemplanti,” Leonardo/Farago, 252–55.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁸⁸ “Onde à torto, o scrittori, l’avete lasciata fori del numero delle dett’ arti liberali?” *Ibid.*, 236.

⁸⁹ “Perché gli scrittori non hanno aauta notitia della scientia della pittura, non hanno posuto descriver e li gradi e parti di quella. E lei medesima non si dimostra col suo fine nelle parole. Essa è restata mediante l’ignorantia indietro alle predette scientie, non mancando per questo di sua divinita, et veramente non senza caggione, non l’hanno nobilitata perché per sè medesima si nobilita senza l’aiutto del’altrui lingue. non altrimenti che si facciano l’ecceienti opere di natura,” *Ibid.*, 254–55.

days of humanism. *Ingegno* was the commodity of treatises, and treatises, the ancestor of the how-to book, were an important commodity of the printing trade. The theory and criticism of visual art thus acted as a slow wedge into the repressive effects of university disciplines. This ranks high in its contributions to early modern society, though Vasari had no sense whatsoever of this aspect of art's importance.

Attention to artistic *ingegno* began as a special case of humanists' attention to *ingegno*. Eventually the same elaborate formula of compliment expanded to almost limitless application. Art provided a useful precedent in broadening boundaries of intellectual respectability. By the later sixteenth century a barrage of treatises asserted the pedigrees of a panoply of new "liberal arts," from chess to swordfighting. Chess, it was boasted in a treatise published in Venice in 1584, shares all the excellencies of the other liberal arts: "ingegno, memoria, imaginativa, essercitio, affettione" (intelligence, memory, imagination, discipline, sentiment). It is, we are told, a science whose foundation lies in arithmetic and geometry. To learn it, *ingegno* is essential (though, admittedly, not primary). According to this treatise, the teacher is most important:

all learning of whatever subject comes mostly from the teacher, but secondarily from talent and the practice of the student.⁹⁰

* * *

The first instance of calling an artist divine occurs in a text dated 1282, written in Arezzo. Anonymous artists of antiquity, modellers and painters of vases uncovered there, receive a lengthy and enthusiastic description. The "artificio" is said to be "nobelissimo e miraculoso," the "artifici" "nobilissimi e suttilissimi." Those lacking connoisseurship did not value the pieces, but artists and other *conoscenti* were amazed, treated them like holy objects, and said amongst themselves, "quelli artifici fuoro divini, o quelle vase descesaro de cielo" (either those artisans were divine, or those vases came down from heaven).⁹¹ In the record as it has come down to us, this way of speaking is an isolated occurrence in the Italy of Giotto's boyhood.

⁹⁰ "tutto l'imparare qual si voglia cosa viene principalmente del maestro, ma secondariamente dall'ingegno, & esserciti di chi imparo;" Ruy López de Segura, *Il giuoco de gli scacchi*, Venice, 1584, 2.

⁹¹ Julius von Schlosser, "Über einige antiken Ghibertis," *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, XXIV, 1903, 152–53.

The sculptures for Or San Michele, among other public commissions of the early Quattrocento, had marked a new cultural role for works of art more than they did for artists themselves. Despite Alberti's vision of the artist as quasi-rhetorician, and some echoes of his thoughts, the social advancement of the artist in Florence during the Quattrocento amounted to rather little until Lorenzo de' Medici programmatically promoted, exported, and eventually, elaborately entombed favored artists. He himself had claims to learnedness and to poetical achievement which his father and grandfather had not, and it was part of his largess to acknowledge related qualities in his artists, thereby according them some of the prestige which artists had previously received only in the minor principalities of Ferrara and Mantua, where they had enjoyed favored servant status.

Mantegna, for example, in a Latin poem of 1458, was asked whether he was not of divine birth ("Num te Mercurius divina stirpe creavit?"; "Say, did Mercury give thee birth and an origin divine?") and advised that he would become a god of painters ("Numen pictorum").⁹² Putting the compliment in the form of a question is a strategy not unlike using a qualifying "almost." The more absolute language of Lorenzo de' Medici opened the way for Florentine artists to play a unprecedented role in the major European courts.

In the hands of the Medici creature Cristoforo Landino, Fra Giovanni, known for painting angels and even as painting angelically, came to be called Fra Giovanni Angelico, which was then shortened by Vasari to Fra Angelico.⁹³ The first step was taken by another Medici minion, Fra Domenico da Corella, whose 1469 text, *Theotokon*, named Giotto as one who "deserved the title of divine painter," and Fra Angelico as "angelicus pictor."⁹⁴ Michelangelo, in turn, was taken into the lord's household. Lorenzo de' Medici understood that, whereas corporate patronage could produce notable works of art and beautify the city, lordship required as its attribute artists of great personal renown. Artists, moreover, made the most affordable, and initially at least, the least uppity, of courtiers. When Leonardo, and later Raphael

⁹² Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna*, Berkeley, 1986, 459–60.

⁹³ Landino in the 1481 commentary hailed the painter as "Fra giovanni angelico & vezoso & divoto & ornato molto con grandissima facilità;" John Spike, *Fra Angelico*, New York, 1996, 81–82. His epitaph in Santa Maria sopra Minerva deemed him "tanto doctore."

⁹⁴ *Images of Quattrocento Florence, Selected Writings in Literature, History, and Art*, eds. S. Baldassarri and A. Saiber, New Haven, 2000, 249, and Gilbert, *L'arte*, 178.

and Michelangelo, entered the intimate circles of dukes, kings, and popes, they became the associates also of humanists. This made the question of liberal arts status moot. Once they kept company with courtiers, whether they had studied geometry didn't matter.

Lorenzo and Federico di Montefeltro, Count (later Duke) of Urbino, were both military and cultural allies. Both were leaders of newly important states who used the new learning as a bolster to their personal dignity. Federico established a court in which the Muses and the liberal arts virtually formed a satellite religion. The palace chapel shared a wall with the tempietto of the Muses, and proximate to both lay a balcony from which the wonder of God's landscape could be admired. Federico, educated by humanists, illegitimate yet wealthy, worldly yet devout, had neither the inhibitions of the Florentines about formal education nor of the Italian nobility about amassing new wealth. He was interested in everything and threatened by nothing. His patronage of artists served his own pleasure as much any political agenda, for while he lived his position was secured by his military prowess.

Under his aegis, the visual arts came as close as they ever did to being accepted as liberal arts, and painting was publicly deemed like poetry. Piero della Francesca wrote a treatise on perspective and fostered Luca Pacioli, who would write *De divina proportione* after removing to Milan.⁹⁵ Vasari was still proud to report that Piero's books were in the library of the Duke, and that he was known as the best geometer of his time. Giovanni Santi stoutly defended the liberal character of the arts within an extensive epic vernacular poem in honor of his patron, Federico da Montefeltro. Writing in the 1480s, he cited both Vitruvius and Pliny in support:

Pliny is early witness of it [the glory of painting], full of enthusiasm; also Vitruvius, also the definition of Eupompus of Macdeonia, a man of great heart, who decreed that painting surpassed in excellence every other art. And our century so abuses it, that such a gift, inspired by the gods, ungrateful, evil, ignorant, and bad people want to place it among the mechanical arts!⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Cf. S.A. Jayawardene, "The 'Trattato d'Abaco' of Piero della Francesca," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, ed. C. Clough, Manchester, 1976, 229-43.

⁹⁶ "Plinio n'è testimón, pria pien de ardore,/Vitruvio anco, e 'l diffinire ancora/di Eupompo in Macdeonia, huom di gran core,/el qual volea che de excellentia fuora/ogni arte fusse al mondo senza lei./E'l secul nostro tanto la divora,/che una tale dote infusa da li ideï/Fra le mechaniche arte voglion porre,/ingrati, iniqui, sconoscenti e

His defensiveness about the current estimation of painting is as notable as his certainty that the ancients had honored it.

Like Alberti, Santi was eager to enlist the authority of geometry on behalf of painting. Then, after naming the great modern artists of Bruges and of Italy (as he puts it), he closed his laudation by asserting that ancient philosophers had used painting to stimulate their minds, that it was required by law that sons be trained in these arts, and that in Rome Scipio and Julius Caesar were learned in this art.⁹⁷

In the midst of his argument of behalf of the dignity of painting, Santi cited Perugino as “pictor divin:”

two youths similar in age and affection, Leonardo da Vinci and Perugino from Pieve, who is a divine painter.⁹⁸

The adjective appears as casual, rhyme-induced compliment, in the context of an argument strongly in favor of liberal arts status for painting. Its appearance there is certainly noteworthy, though the choice of adjective may have been induced as much by Perugino’s characteristically devout subject matter as by his powers of creativity. Santi’s choice of adjective does not seem to have had much effect on Perugino’s reputation.

Federico himself enacted a de facto divinization of the liberal arts by architecturally pairing the Temple of the Muses and the Chapel, and providing the inscription “BINA VIDES PARVO DISCRIMINE IUNCTA SACELLA ALTERA PARS MUSIS ALTERA SACRA DEO EST” (“You see a pair with little distinction conjoined, one chapel for the muses, the other sacred to God”).⁹⁹ On the floor immediately above, in the Studiolo, liberal artists were honored by their portraits arranged in a manner at least potentially reminiscent of an iconostasis. Dante and Petrarch were included along with twenty-six other learned men both pagan and Christian, ancient and recent, six of them saints [fig. 7]. Christian culture melded with pagan, and genius with sainthood, *pace* Bruni.

rei!” Giovanni Santi, *La Vita e le Gesta di Federico di Montefeltro*, ed. Luigi Tocci, 2 vols., Vatican, 1985, Book XXII, Ch. 91, 671.

⁹⁷ C. Gilbert, ed., *L'arte del Quattrocento nelle testimonianze coeve*, Vienna, 1988, 121–24.

⁹⁸ “dui giovin par d’etate e par d’amori,/Leonardo da Vinci e ’l Perusino/Pier dalla Pieve, ch’è un divin pittore,” Santi, Libro XXII, Cap. XCI, 674. See also A. Chastel, *Art of the Italian Renaissance*, tr. P. and L. Murray, New York, 1984, 120ff.

⁹⁹ Pasquale Rotondi, *The Ducal Palace of Urbino: Its Architecture and Decoration*, New York, 1969, 79–94.

Even earlier, in 1468, Federico issued a respectful patent to his architect Luciano Laurana, in the following terms:

We deem as worthy of honour and commendation men gifted with ingenuity and remarkable skills, and particularly those which have always been prized by both Ancients and Moderns, as has been the skill (*virtù*) of architecture, founded upon the arts of arithmetic and geometry, which are the foremost of the seven liberal arts because they depend upon exact certainty. It is an art of great science and ingenuity, and much esteemed and praised by us.¹⁰⁰

He does not go so far as to include the visual arts among the liberal ones; instead he claims only that architecture, traditionally the most prestigious of the visual arts, depends closely upon two of the liberal arts. As an expression of esteem by a non-artist for the science of the visual arts, this document can lay claim to great rarity. Moreover, as such an expression by someone not only of the patron class but a ruler, it may well be unique in the fifteenth century. It ranks with Villani's fourteenth-century tribute and Valla's testimonial as among the strongest statements on behalf of the visual arts by disinterested parties. Nevertheless, it is distinctly hedged.

Landino, a key Renaissance expositor of poetry, had Leon Battista Alberti present the idea, in his *Camaldolese Disputations* of c. 1480, that God is truth. This, it was claimed, constituted the real meaning of Virgil's *Aeneid*.¹⁰¹ That radically reductive formulation, in a work of philosophy dedicated to Federico and featuring not only Alberti but the young Lorenzo de' Medici, signalled that the liberal arts could be fully divine—as Valla had also indicated, but Cicero never. The Christian tradition identified the godhead with knowledge as the pagans never had. It took a Christian interpretation of a pagan epic to reach the conclusion that literary enlightenment was also theological enlightenment. Perhaps it took the precedent of the *Comedia* as well. The time was ripe to rehabilitate the studious Dante as a divine poet. As Michelangelo

¹⁰⁰ David S. Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance*, Columbia, S.C., 1971, 164–65; “Quelli huomini noi giudicamo dever essere honorati, et commendati, li q(u)ali si trovano esser ornati d'ingegno e di virtù et max. di quelle virtù che sempre sono state in prezzo appresso li antiqui et moderni com'è la virtù dell'Architettura fondata in l'arte dell'arithmeticca e geometria, che sono, delle sette arti liberali, et delle principali, perché sono in primo gradu certitudinis, et è arte di gran scienza et di grandi ingegno, et da noi molto extimata, et apprezzata;” Rotondi, *Urbino*, 11.

¹⁰¹ Thomas H. Stahel, *Cristoforo Landino's Allegorization of the 'Aeneid': Books III and IV of the Camaldolese Disputations*, Johns Hopkins unpub. Ph.D. diss., 1968, 46. My thanks for a timely loan of this text by Christopher Baswell.

came of age in Florence, the liberal arts and the inspiration of poetry were newly allied, and the artist could hope to be assimilated to both categories. Raphael, despite not being Florentine, grew up in Urbino with a similar expectation, namely, that poetry, painting, and learning all were divine—whether or not everybody accepted the idea. Certainly there was resistance. Even in Rome in 1509, when a painter published an obscure verse treatise in honor of painting, he complained that it was wrong not to include painting among the liberal arts.¹⁰²

Not by accident was Castiglione's *Cortegiano* set in Urbino, that of 1506 under the shaky rule of Federico's sickly son. The tradition of "esteem and praise" for the arts allied with geometry and conducive to philosophy continued. Yet in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro detto il Cortegiano* of 1518–27, it is only apologetically that Conte Ludovico da Canossa suggests that their candidate ought to know how to draw and should understand painting ("aver cognizion dell'arte propria del dipingere.")¹⁰³ Echoing Pliny once again, but much more diffidently than artists did, he explains that his auditors should not be amazed if he suggests that drawing is worthy of a gentleman, for it was so regarded in antiquity: "Don't be too surprised if I make this division, which today perhaps seems mechanical and little appropriate for a gentleman."¹⁰⁴

Even such tentative endorsement depended upon what proved a fragile cultural climate. By the time the painter Paolo Pino wrote his *Dialogo della pittura* (1548), two years before the first edition of Vasari's *Lives*, he complained at the beginning that painting was too little respected in his day, that so powerful a resource lay neglected through ignorance: "such a faculty worthy of brightening the sky with its glory, through the ignorance of us painters lies dormant and neglected by the world."¹⁰⁵ Yet the fact that he wrote the dialogue, and that Vasari was at work on the *Vite*, certainly indicates the effort artists were willing to put

¹⁰² Francesco Lancilotti, "Trattato di pittura," in Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 742–50: "Sappi che sopra tutto mi dispiacque/che io nelle sette arte liberali/messa non son; e da ignoranza nacque."

¹⁰³ Book I, xlix.

¹⁰⁴ "Né vi maravigliate s'io desidero questa parte, la qual oggidì forse par mecanica e poco conveniente a gentiluomo." And in 1504, published in Florence, Pomponio Gauricus' *De sculptura*, "semper hanc artem existimavi, ut ne ab liberalibus ipsis disciplinis separari posse crediderim" (I have always valued this art, so that I would not have believed it ought to be separated from the liberal disciplines), in Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 251. On earlier skepticism about the conjoining of liberal and visual arts, see Brann, *Debate*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ "una tanta virtù degna di rasserenare il cielo con la gloria sua, per ignoranza di

into the project of joining the more established ranks of polite society. The artists and their more bookish counterparts did not always mean even approximately the same thing by the term “liberal art.” Later in the dialogue, the character Fabio defends painting as a liberal art in these terms:

You may call painting a liberal art since, like queen of the arts, she expands and gives good understanding of everything in creation; also liberal, as that to which is conceded liberty to form what pleases her.¹⁰⁶

There is a note of bombast here, reminiscent of Jacopo de Barbari’s assertions in Germany, as though one might as well claim the world, since not even a patch of it was reliably going to be granted. Pino has conflated the claims of a liberal artist and a poet, so that liberal now implies license. On a literal level, his claims are understandable, but he betrays his ignorance of the connotations of the categories to which he is appealing. Pino gives us a topsy-turvy version of Alberti’s ideas, only eight years after Alberti’s treatise was published in Italian. For Alberti, kings ruled partly through their portraits, and painters deferred to learned advisors; for Pino, painting is queen, and the painter is free to delight himself. Alberti was read by rulers; Pino presumably not.

Michelangelo Biondo (1500–65) published a treatise also in Venice the very next year which is notable principally because he, a medical doctor (and polymath who wrote on many subjects), defended the liberal arts status of painting. He had a little trouble explaining how painting could both qualify as an Aristotelian art, done by rule, and as a locus of free will.¹⁰⁷ His solution was grand, and reminiscent of Jacopo’s: painting was no poor cousin sneaking in at the bottom, but the flower and mistress of all the arts.¹⁰⁸ The treatise, however, remained quite obscure.

noi pittori giacer sopita e negletta dal mondo,” Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, ed. A. Camesasca, Milan, 1954, “Alli lettori,” 16.

¹⁰⁶ “Ma liberale si può dir la pittura, la qual, come regina dell’arti, largisse e dona buona cognizione di tutte le cose create; liberale anco, come quella, a chi è concessa libertà di formar che le piace;” Pino, 33–34.

¹⁰⁷ “Essendo perciocché l’abito del pengere quello che fenge l’imagini con vera ragione, pertanto io dico tal abito essere l’arte, imperoché cotesto abito se suppone a certe regole e gli artissimi precetti, a ben che il pittore posseda libero arbitrio del pengere, nondimeno egli, ancora libero, gli è la arte, perciocché si suppone agli precetti,” Biondo, *Delle nobilissima pittura e della sua arte*, Venice, 1549, in Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 767–80.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 773, 775.

Pino had initiated a branch in the written commentary on the visual arts, a popularizing and thoroughly vernacular branch. He was followed a decade later by Ludovico Dolce, whose *L'Aretino, ovvero Dialogo della pittura* of 1557 features Pietro Aretino in the place of the wise authority. Clearly we have slunk now into a shadow of high culture. And when the character Aretino proclaims indiscriminately:

poetry is painting, history is painting, and...any kind of a composition by a man of culture is painting.¹⁰⁹

we recognize again an overthrow of Albertian tenets: painting now defines the man of culture, rather than vice versa. As of 1540 Alberti was in print in Italian, and whether the artists were reading him or not, the art theorists were. That truly divine power of painting (*vis divina*) of which Alberti spoke sparingly and abstractly, something beyond mere beauty, could now be found in infinite works by multiple masters. Dolce, for example, found both Raphael and Titian divine. Vasari in 1550 numbered Raphael among those “not simply men, but mortal gods,”¹¹⁰ and reported that his Borghese (then Perugian) *Entombment* was held to be “divinissima.”¹¹¹

Dolce's voice, like the real Aretino's, comes from the artistic community, loosely speaking, rather than from the humanists. He and his ilk had minimal education and could only claim to be learned in *volgare* books. By them a painter might be hailed in the traditional language of recognition—as liberal artists, or even as divine—but when made by men of more status, the judgment was different. The Platonist Mario Equicola of Mantua declared unabashedly in 1541, “Painting is work and effort more of the body than of the mind, usually practiced by numskulls.”¹¹² And in 1550, the Florentine and also Platonically-minded Benedetto Varchi published his *Due lezioni*, delivered orally two years earlier, in which, also, the visual arts were placed low in the hierarchy of arts and sciences.¹¹³ Dolce, like Sir Joshua Reynolds three hundred

¹⁰⁹ Dolce, 100–01: “Pittura è la Poesia: Pittura la Historia, e Pittura qualunque componimento de'dotti.”

¹¹⁰ “non sono uomini semplicemente, ma dèi mortali,” Vasari/Bellosi-Rossi, *Le Vite*, Turin, 1986, 611.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 615.

¹¹² Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 259: “È la pittura opera e fatica più del corpo che dell'animo, dagli idioti esercitata il più delle volte.”

¹¹³ F. Quiviger, “Benedetto Varchi and the Visual Arts,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, L, 1987, 219–24.

years later, lauds the people he identifies with socially, and his plaudits must be valued accordingly.

Romano Alberti in 1585 published a lecture originally delivered at the Accademia in Rome, entitled “Della nobiltà della pittura” which began by posing three opinions: one that painting was mechanical, the second that, when it was done on commission or command, it is mechanical, and the third, his choice, that painting is noble and excellent, or as he eventually concludes both “nobile e liberale.”¹¹⁴ He not only lines up all the supporting authorities (Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Lorenzo Valla), but admits those opposing (Seneca, Vulpiano) and finds one source that argues both sides of the question (Giulio Firmico). It is worthy of the free man, capable of ennobling its practitioners, and can render them melancholy precisely because it is so imbued with the speculative sciences. As for the comparison to poetry, he claims that it is very like oratory or rhetoric, and therefore assimilable to the liberal arts:

since poetry is placed among the noble and liberal arts, because it causes folk to live better, showing various deeds and virtues of famous men, which is the function of a noble, moral art; so also painting ought to be a noble and liberal art, yielding the same results, and serving mankind much more, like oratory, with great benefit; since, as Cicero and the other authors say, the proficient orator ought to produce three results in the souls of his listeners: to teach, to delight, and to move. These things we can also say are much fostered by painting.¹¹⁵

So, once again, a highly receptive audience is told that painting, poetry, and the liberal arts all fall into the category of man’s most noble pursuits, what we might expansively term activities dedicated to *logos*, to the art of activating and improving the mind of man.

Undaunted by the strictures of the Council of Trent, artists continued to line up to praise painters as liberal artists. Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (1538–1600) had grown much bolder about his public claims than had been Leonardo about his private jottings, though he remained reliant on Pliny’s account of Pamphilus of Macedon, the teacher of Apelles:

¹¹⁴ R. Alberti, *Trattato della nobiltà della pittura*, Rome, 1585, 209.

¹¹⁵ “si come la poesia è posta fra l’arti nobili e liberali, per l’esempio ch’arrecà agli altri del viver bene, rappresentando varii gesti e virtù d’uomini illustri, il che è officio d’arte nobile, detta morale; così ancora dovrà esser nobile e liberale la pittura, producendo li medesimi effetti, tanto più oltre servendo ella agli uomini, a guisa dell’istessa arte oratoria, con grand’utile; imperocché, si come dicono Cicerone et altri

at the time of Pamfilo it was determined that it belonged in the first rank of liberal arts and thus it is esteemed also by the moderns.¹¹⁶

Lomazzo is not in the slightest defensive about the idea that painting is a liberal art. He is, however, very concerned about charges that painting corrupts its viewers when its subject matter is lascivious:

that isn't art which bad-minded men put to bad uses, as happens obviously in all the sciences...watch out not to calculate how to put figures in lascivious and suggestive postures...from such paintings and sculptures, however otherwise excellent they may be, instead of praise, there follows for the artists blame and scandal, quite apart from the offense they give to God.¹¹⁷

A liberal art was by definition immune from such a charge; an art like Dolce's, dedicated to pleasure alone ("Painting was invented primarily in order to give pleasure")¹¹⁸ was not—though it might help if the artist himself was resolutely called "divine." Lomazzo's position is not unlike that of John Ruskin, in his dual sensitivity to where imitation might lead, and his desire to maintain the intellectual respectability of an art he understood as more pleasing than useful, a stumbling point which Freud remembered. By his time art would be understood as divulging the mind in all its primitiveness, rather than as describing the world.

In the sixteenth century itself, not all non-artists sided with Equicola in calling artists "idioti." Particularly when the issue was compounded by cultural transfusions across Europe, the prestige of the artistic movement associated with Italy invested artists with liberal status, to the point of inflation. Innocentio Ringhieri, in a vernacular book of 1551 dedicated to Catherine de' Medici, listed as liberal and noble arts a

autori, l'eccellente oratore tre cose principalmente deve produrre negli animi degli auditori, cioè l'insegnare, il delectare et il commuovere, le quali cose potiamo ancor noi dir che concorrino notabilmente nella pittura;" R. Alberti, 212.

¹¹⁶ "a tempi di Panfilo, fu procurato che ella si riponesse nel primo grado delle arti liberali e tale è stimata anco da moderni;" Lomazzo, *Idea del Tempio della pittura* (1590), Ch. I. Ciardi, Vol I, 246.

¹¹⁷ "non è arte de la quale gli uomini di mala mente non possano valersi a mali usi, sí come accade parimente in tutte le scienze...si guardino di non metter studio in rappresentar le figure loro in atti molli e lascivi...onde di cotali pitture e sculture, quantunque per altro fossero eccellentissime, in vece di lode, ne segue a gli artefici scorno e vituperio, oltre l'offesa che si fa a Dio;" Lomazzo, 268.

¹¹⁸ "essendo la Pittura trovata principalmente per dilettere," Dolce, 148–49. Cf. Pino, 42, "in nessuna cosa più piacevole agli uomini si possi gustare maggior soavità e contentezza di quella che si assaggia nell'arte nostra;" Dolce, in a letter to Gasparo Ballini, 208, "piu diletтино le cose di Raffaello, che di Michele Agnolo."

total of twenty-five, including even *Mercatoria*. Among those honored were *Pittura* and *Statuaria* (whereas *Dipintore*, *Legnaiuolo*, and *Orfice* were relegated to mechanical arts). The author anticipated problems with his categorization in the matter of *Poesia*, which he anticipates some will say is not a liberal art, but a product of *furor divino*, or “favole enighmi,” or damaging to the public good (“danosi tahhor a utile”).¹¹⁹ As for *la pittura*, if any should have scruples about his judgment, he reminds them archly that he has seen them working at various visual arts himself: “I have seen many of you cutting gems at the wheel, sculpting in gold, giving shape and polish to marble, solemnly painting, writing, and illuminating, to escape tedium.”¹²⁰

* * *

The status of the visual arts vis à vis the liberal arts was debated by word of mouth as well as in print. It was also implicitly at issue in every pictorial invention. To set out to defend the visual arts as liberal via visual means might take any one of several courses, learned iconographies of various kinds, and ambitious perspective schemes prime among them. Certainly there is a rapid change from an art that uses no perspective to one that features elaborate manifestations of it, and from an art whose glory was the standardization of its subjects and their presentations to an art of invention. The verbal record corroborates the idea that artists, for their part, aspired to the status of liberal artists. Perhaps even, as Panofsky supposed, that was one meaning of the effort to create *all’antica*. Still, the visual iconographies of learnedness which got past the screening of humanists and patrons—to which we now turn—do not lend much credence to the idea that the route by which the visual arts achieved honor was simply via their intellectual value.

The Trecento program on the Florentine campanile, executed by Giotto and Andrea Pisano, included reliefs of Sculpture (on the east side), Painting and Architecture (on the least desirable north side) on the first level, along with other arts usually designated mechanical (Medicine, Hunting, Weaving, Navigation, Agriculture, Theater, and Construction—the visual arts adhering presumably to this rubric). Three pagan subjects were included on this rank: Daedalus, as exem-

¹¹⁹ I. Ringhieri, *Cento giuochi liberali, et d’ingegno*, Bologna, 1551, 48–59.

¹²⁰ “molte di voi n’ho veduto io, intagliare alla Ruota le Gemme, scolpire in oro, dar forma, & politio ai marmi, solennemente dipingere, scrivere, & mineare, per non essere otiose,” Idem.

plar of the arts in general, Hercules and Cacus, and Phoroneus, as inventor of law and order. The liberal arts were reserved for the second level, along with the planets, virtues, and sacraments.¹²¹ Clearly, in this program, the visual arts were not considered liberal. Poetry was not included at any level.

Long afterwards, Pollaiuolo's tomb for Pope Sixtus IV (1493) includes "Prospectiva" as the eighth liberal art, demanded by the symmetry of the occasion [fig. 8]. But as a landmark in the dignity accorded to the visual arts, this is again only a qualified success, in that the figure so inscribed, who appears set between Grammatica and Musica, signifies the larger and more philosophical subject of optics, rather than specifically artist's perspective.¹²² Geometria also appears, set between Musica and Theologia. Some correspondance with Vitruvius' list of the arts an architect should know is evident here, but scarcely a full-fledged endorsement of painting or sculpture as a liberal art. On the other hand, Luca Pacioli's treatise of 1498 claimed both that "universally there wasn't a genteel person who didn't like painting," that a painting in which only the breath was lacking to make it utterly lifelike should be called divine rather than human, and that a line divided according to optimal proportions should be deemed divine not natural.¹²³ Like Alberti, he had befriended artists, Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci, among others, and he was willing to champion their claims.

The engraved so-called Tarocchi cards of c. 1460s included a series of the liberal arts, expanded to include Poetry [fig. 9], Philosophy, and Theology (Hind E.I.21–30). Even more significantly, when Raphael painted the Stanza della Segnatura, the idea of the liberal arts was certainly somewhere in his mind and it included the *Parnassus*. That he inserted likenesses of himself, Michelangelo, and Bramante in the *School of Athens* may, without much latitude, be taken as a signal that painters, sculptors, and architects belong amidst the lovers of learning [fig. 10]. It

¹²¹ Marvin Tractenberg *The Campanile of Florence Cathedral: 'Giotto's Tower'*, New York, 1971, 85–108.

¹²² Helen and Leopold Ettlinger, *Pollaiuolo*, no. 20, 150–51; and L.D. Ettlinger, "Pollaiuolo's Tomb of Pope Sixtus IV," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, 239–74. See also, P.P. Vergerius, "Concerning Liberal Studies," in William Woodward, ed., *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, Toronto, 1996, 107–08, in which drawing is excluded from liberal studies, and perspective is included.

¹²³ Pacioli, *Divina*, 10, 14: "vedendo una leggiadra figura con suoi debiti lineamenti ben disposta acui solo el fiato par che manchi i non la giudichi cosa piu presto divina che humana?" "universalmente non e gentile spirito achi la pictura non dilecta," "una linea secondo ϕ per lei divisa non naturali ma divini veramente sonno dappellare."

is no doubt significant also that geometry, the most visual of the original liberal arts, is prominently indicated. Bramante in crypto-portrait plays Euclid, no less. Apollo, the god of philosophy, functions likewise as the god of poetry, implying a link to that sister discipline; by extension, Dante's double appearance as theologian and as poet not only implicitly refutes Bruni, but again knits together this painted schematization of knowledge and its potential relevance to the artist, which the paintings themselves assert tacitly quite apart from iconographic hints. At the same time, despite such richness in implication on both the large and small scale, the Stanza della Segnatura could be taken as a declaration of the intellectual privileges of the painter only by a biased and initiated viewer. The patron would have seen the room as straightforward and deservedly lauding his own learnedness.

Condivi in 1553 asserted that the Slaves planned for the tomb of Pope Julius II represented the dying liberal arts, and, moreover, that painting, sculpture and architecture were to be included among them "l'arti liberali, similmente Pittura, Scultura, e Architettura, ognuna colle sue note," a claim which Vasari echoed somewhat vaguely in 1568 ("le virtu ed arte ingegnose").¹²⁴ That Michelangelo's ideal version of the tomb would finally accomplish the vivid realization of the conjunction so many of his fellow artists had worked toward for a century can only be deemed fitting. At the same time, their characterization as dying is reminiscent of Pino's and Romano Alberti's plaintive tone. Even as the distance between the liberal arts and the visual arts shrank, respect for the liberal arts was itself in decline.

In some part, though, the set of the liberal arts was too established to rewrite. Instead it partially fused with the notion of humanistic learning, though few humanists took the practice of the visual arts upon themselves. In the 1590s series of terms for the Palazzo Valori in Florence set forth a set of literary *fiorentini illustri*—including Alberti, but not a single artist per se.¹²⁵ When in 1567 Cosimo Bartoli listed the people he hoped to meet in heaven, Alberti ("diligentissimo, accuratissimo & giudiciosissimo") was there along with Ficino, Cosimo Pater Patriae,

¹²⁴ Cf. Mary Garrard, "The Liberal Arts and Michelangelo's First Project for the Tomb of Julius II (with a Coda on Raphael's 'School of Athens')"
Viator, XV, 1984, 335–76.

¹²⁵ Donatella Pegazzano, "I 'visacci' di Borgo degli Albizi: Uomini illustri e virtù umanistiche nella Firenze di tardo Cinquecento," *Paragone*, no. 509–11, July–Sept. 1992, 51–71. There were fifteen portraits, including Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

and Lorenzo il Magnifico, but no artists.¹²⁶ No compelling iconography of the liberal arts evolved to demonstrate that painting, sculpture, or architecture had been accepted into the category. Instead, the relevance of argument about whether painting counted as a liberal art faded away without the argument's having been fully conceded by men of letters. For, whatever help he may have gotten, it was Vasari whose name was put on the first history of art.

* * *

In early modern times, not only particular artists but the artist qua artist gained a reputation. Sometimes that type was dubbed Apelles.¹²⁷ To be hailed as the modern Apelles was, implicitly at least, to be hailed as a successful rhetorician, since Apelles had spectacularly defended himself against the charge of treason.

Even as the notion of liberal arts learning lost vibrancy, the visual arts came to play an increasingly important role in the life of sixteenth-century admirers of Cicero, whether or not they were still "liberal artists" in any meaningful definition of the term. For these people, the type of the visual artist became prime material for metaphor. The liberal artist, the poet, the courtier, may not ever have felt that the artist was thoroughly his peer, but he did increasingly, and beginning as early as Dante, use the case of the human creator to illustrate his points and, sometimes, to help him think. The human creator functioned metaphorically for these literary men not by analogy with the divine creator but by analogy with themselves. This had been true to some extent of Plato and Aristotle as well, who referred to artisans for the sake of metaphor. But in antiquity this was done neither in such complimentary nor such frequent usages, and more for the sake of exposition than self-reflection.

When Dante in *Purgatorio* XI used painters in analogy with poets to demonstrate the ephemeral quality of fame, he initiated a practice of using the artist as a convenient type, not merely for compliment but for analysis:

¹²⁶ Bartoli, *Ragionamenti*, 77.

¹²⁷ See Ruth Kennedy, "Apelles Redivivus," *Essays in Honor of Karl Lehmann*, ed. Lucy F. Sandler, New York, 1964, 160–70.

In painting Cimabue thought that he
Should hold the field, now Giotto has the cry,
So that the other's fame is growing dim.¹²⁸

The point was not to illustrate the workings of painting, but to use the lesser to illuminate the greater subject, namely, the evanescence of earthly glory. Moreover, the case of painters was cited as a secondary, corroborating example of poetical fame: Guido Calvalcanti had outdone Guido Guinizelli. Merely to use painters (both panel painters, and the miniaturists, Oderisi and the otherwise unknown Franco Bolognese) to illustrate such a point was in itself revolutionary. It made artistic fame something to be curious about.

In the fifteenth century Gasparino Barzizza (c. 1360–1431), a Paduan humanist, used the painter's shop to make vivid a point about paedogogy:

I indeed would have done what good painters habitually follow with those who are learning from them: whenever, in fact, something is to be learned from the master, before they have got the theory of painting, they are in the habit of handing them some very good figures and pictures, as models of this craft, and, taught by these, they can progress a bit by themselves.¹²⁹

The way artists work is here used as an example for their social superiors.

Somewhat comparable is Girolamo Savonarola's memorable use of the engraver as a type for God: a sort of world upside down. In a sermon of the 1490s, he compared us all to painters trying to follow the engraved pattern made by God:

If a pupil has a print from a painter that he has to paint, if he does not follow the arrangement of the engraving, the painter says, "you made a

¹²⁸ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, tr. H.W. Longfellow, Boston, 1895, 283; "Credette Cimabue ne la pittura tener lo campo/e ora ha Giotto il grido/sì che la fama di colui è scura."

¹²⁹ C. Gilbert, *Italian Art, 1400–1500, Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, 1980, 163, ca. 1420; Gilbert, *Testimonianze*, 1988, 186: "Fecissem enim, quod solent boni pictores observare in his, qui ab eis addiscunt; ubi enim a magistro discendum est, antequam plane rationem pingendi teneant, illi solent eis tradere quasdam egregias figuras, atque imagines, velut quaedam artis exemplaria, quibus admoniti possint vel per se ipsos aliquid proficere." See also, Peter Mack, "Agricola's Use of the Comparison between Writing and the Visual Arts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LV, 1992, 169–79.

mistake.” Thus God in his affairs wanted to make a pattern such that deviation constitutes sin, and for that you will be punished.¹³⁰

The point is not that Savonarola intended any honor to the artistic profession, but that the world of art had seeped into his habits of thought so thoroughly that he could use the stuff of art unselfconsciously to illustrate ideas, even ones of fundamental importance. The metaphor was freshly imitated from life, and so part of a different intellectual tradition than the medieval image of God as architect.

Another case in which the metaphor of the artist is used to try to understand theological mysteries is given by Cosimo Bartoli, writing a series of dialogues about Dante in the mid-sixteenth century, interestingly enough dialogues which turned out to be as much about art, architecture, and music as they were about fine points in the *Commedia*:

As, for example, a portrait made by a painter, by means of lines, colors, lights, and shading, will make an image of the one who was portrayed by the painter, but those colors, lights, and shadows aren't the real essence of the person portrayed, nor do they convey the true and internal self of the sitter, by the resemblance out of which they are made. Thus the angels likewise do not know the true and uncreated essence of God.¹³¹

Artists are like the ignorant angels, and their patrons like God.

Giovanni Santi's letter of dedication for the *Vita e le Gesta di Federico di Montefeltro*, written to Federico's son Guidobaldo after the death of the Duke in 1482, refers to “this my book as I have painted it in my mind” (“questo mio volume como io ho dipinto in nella mente”)—an appropriate sentiment for a painter cum poet, and but a small step from a more customary use of the word “disegnato.”¹³²

In the sixteenth century, Baldassare Castiglione introduced himself as a portraitist of the court at Urbino, lesser than Raphael or Michelan-

¹³⁰ “Se uno discepolo ha una stampa dal dipintore che egli abbia a dipignere, se egli non segue l'ordine di quella stampa, il dipintore dice: —Tu hai fatto errore—. Così Dio nelle cose sue ha voluto fare una stampa che chi cade da quello ordine va in peccato, e però che e' sia dipoi punito,” Gilbert, 1988, from *Prediche sopra Zaccaria*, 185.

¹³¹ Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti*, 1567, 69: “Come per essemplio, un ritratto fatto da un pittore, mediante i liniamenti, i colori, i lumi, & le ombre, farà similitudine di colui che sarà stato ritratto da quel pittore; ma quei colori, quei lumi, & quelle ombre, non son già la vera essenza di colui che è stato ritratto, ne conoscono ancora la vera & intera essenza di colui, per la similitudine del quale sono stati fatti: come non conoscono ancora gli Angeli, la vera & increata essenza di Dio.”

¹³² Giovanni Santi, *La Vita e le Gesta di Federico di Montefeltro*, ed. Luigi Tocci, 2 vols., Vatican, 1985, I.

gelo, base even, and barely able to delineate.¹³³ He went on later to compare the courtier's use of language to an artist's handling of modelling wax or, in a Horatian move, to someone adjusting the placement of a painting:

and like modelling wax, pushing it this way and that, so that at first glance it shows forth its beauty and seemliness, or like a painting put in good, natural light—this, I say, is like writing and speaking.¹³⁴

In general, such references to the visual arts cited no masters by name. Sometimes the references were deliberately unpretentious—far from the formulaic compliments of the discourse of the liberal arts. Bernardino Daniello, as a character in his own *Poetica* of 1536 urged his fellow poets “not to disdain to imitate in your writings the master stonemasons who, before setting themselves to the task of building...choose those stones or tiles which seem to them most suited to the composition of the wall.”¹³⁵ Their tenor could be almost homespun or folksy, and quite unhumanistic—but at the same time, sincerely felt.

Stefano Guazzo (1530–93), champion of the pleasure of painting in Comanini's *Il Figino*, in a letter of 1589 compared a person of many talents (what we would now call a Renaissance man), not to a painter, but to the spotted apron of a painter:

God has endowed different people, you see lots, with I don't now what kind of cleverness, gathered in them, which they display to me familiarly every day like Proteus in various guises, so that I discover with amaze-

¹³³ “questo libro come un ritratto di pittura della corte d'Urbino, non di mano di Raffaello o Michel Angelo, ma di pittura ignobile e che solamente sappia tirare le linee principali, senza adornar la verità de vaghi colori o far parer per arte di prospettiva quello che non è;” letter of dedication. Machiavelli compared himself to a landscape artist at the beginning of *Il principe*, explaining that it was not presumptuous of him to advise a prince, because he was like a landscape artist, who studied the mountains from the valleys [and, implicitly, the artist is also like a prince, when he studies the valleys from the mountains]: “Né voglio sia reputata presunzione se uno uomo di basso ed infimo stato ardisce discorrere e regolare e' governi de' principi; perché, così come coloro che disegnano e' paesi si pongono bassi nel piano a considerare la natura de' monti e de' luoghi alti, e per considerare quella de' bassi si pongono alti sopra e' monti, similmente, a conoscere bene la natura de' populi, bisogna essere principe, e a conoscere bene quella de' principi, bisogna essere popolare;” letter of dedication to Duke Lorenzo de' Medici.

¹³⁴ “e come cera formandole ad arbitrio suo collocarle in tal parte e con tal ordine, che al primo aspetto mostrino e faccian conoscer la dignità e splendor suo, come tavole di pitture poste al suo bono e natural lume. E questo così dico delle scrivere, come del parlare;” I, xxxiii.

¹³⁵ Quoted by Martha Feldman, 150 (also in the Italian original).

ment now an excellent grammarian, now a subtle dialectician, now a perfect orator, now a divine poet, sometimes a pleasing historian, other times a moral philosopher, now a Roman, now an Athenian. I shall say to Your Excellency that such people are greatly like the spotted apron of painters, unsystematically spattered with every kind of color.¹³⁶

In another instance, he compared himself to Protogenes, because he recognized the hand [handwriting] of his master: “and with all your power you did not tell me the author; however, I like Protogenes in one solitary line have recognized the famous Apelles.”¹³⁷ And, again, he took himself to be analogous to Apelles, by leaving undone what was impossible to do: “like Apelles, I have painted, even if ineptly, only the head of Venus, recognizing that neither I nor anyone else could provide the body.”¹³⁸ He thinks in terms of analogy to painters, sometimes casting them as normative, sometimes only as vivid, examples.

It is not the metaphor of artist as divine creator which dominates these literary asides; instead, the artist is of more humble interest. Citing the type adds a down-to-earth note, a note of realism, particularly if the artist is left anonymous. Pietro Aretino found himself compared with “that painter who threw the loaded sponge at the mouth of the horse, who made by chance the foam that he had not known how to make by diligence and by art.”¹³⁹ Protogenes, here rendered anonymous, is the type for success without “art,” implicitly with *furia*.

A treatise on gentlemanly behavior, published by Aldus in 1584, advised in Horatian terms about friendship (a topic more obviously related to Cicero):

¹³⁶ “Iddio hà compartite à diverse persone, si veggono tutte, non sò con quale artificio, raccolte in lui, il quale praticando meco famigliarmente, mi si presenta ogni giorno à guisa di Proteo con diverse faccie, onde lo scuopro con istupore hora eccellente grammatico, hora sottile dialettico, hora perfetto oratore, hora divino poeta, quando vago historico, quando moral filosofo, quando Romano, & quando Atheniese. Dirà V.S. che cotali persone sono per lo più come i gremiuoli de’ pittori leggermente spruzzati d’ogni sorte di colori;” S. Guazzo, *Lettere*, Venice, 1590, 59.

¹³⁷ Guazzo, 233; “et con tutto che vostra signoria non m’habbia nominato l’autore, io però come Protogene ad una sola linea ho riconosciuto il famoso Apelle.”

¹³⁸ Guazzo, 326: “à guisa d’Apelle ho dipinto (benche sconciamente) il solo capo di Venere, diffidando che nè da me, nè da altri si possa adempire il rimamente del corpo.” His reference is a bit confusing, in that Apelles had painted the whole; it was the would-be restorers who hesitated to reconstruct the lost lower portion.

¹³⁹ Coccio, in Aretino, 434: “egli è quel dipintore che avventò la spugna molle di colori ne la bocca al cavallo, il qual fece fare a la disavertenza del caso quella schiuma che non aveva saputo ritrare la diligenza de l’arte.”

just as paintings ought to be put in a good light in better please the eye of the observers, so they look better than in dim conditions, so I think one ought to do with friendships. These should be conducted publicly in the open air with your equals; those others with whom you sometimes interact that are less appropriate to your status and profession and age, we do less openly and more in confidence, if possible.¹⁴⁰

Like the others, Aldus thinks naturally in ways conditioned by the now long-standing prominence of art in his culture, regardless of the acknowledged status of that art in the eyes of its patrons. This applies, moreover, well beyond the range of the topic of creativity. It is not that painting has become a liberal art, but that Latin texts about artists have become part of an educated man's reading, and, beyond that, aspects of the practical world of art have infiltrated into the study. Often the references are to art generically, and not all of them take painting as exemplary:

don't you know that a learned man compared with an ignorant one is analogous to a real man compared with a painted one?¹⁴¹

Such examples of references to artists to make points not about art are legion, and their significance is by no means uniform. Sometimes they reinforced the cultural attachment to antiquity; sometimes not. Giraldo Cinthio, even when he seemed to be saying something about antiquity, was involved in a much more interesting cultural rearrangement when he compared Virgil to a painter:

The great Virgil, understanding that if architecture, military science, rhetoric, geometry, music, and the other arts worthy of the liberal mind are allowed to add, to increase, to diminish, to change, judged that this was much more fitting for the poet, to whom had been given the same power given by the consent of the world to the excellent painter, namely, the authority to vary the likenesses according to the artistic purpose.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ "si come le pitture vogliono tal'hora esser poste on chiara luce per poter meglio diletta a gli occhi de' riguardemti, tal'hora più riescono in aere oscuro, & chiuso; cosi stimo, che far si debba delle amicitie. Quelle farete in aere aperto, & publico, che sono de i pari vostri; quelle altre, che vi porgerà l'occasione, meno convenevoli al grado, & alla professione, & età nostra, si facciamo meno in palese, & meno strettamente, che si può," Aldus Manutius, *Il perfetto gentil'huomo*, Venice, 1584, 12.

¹⁴¹ "non sapete voi che l'huomo dotto comparato con l'indotto é come l'huomo vivo posto al paragone dell'huomo dipinto," Ortensio Landi (published anonymously by M. Antononimo di Utopia), *La Sferzade de Scrittori antichi et moderni*, Venice, 1550, 34v.

¹⁴² Giraldo Cinthio, *On Romances*, tr. and ed. H. Snuggs, Lexington, 1968 (1554), 39.

Here the greatest poet of Latin antiquity is portrayed as indebted to painters for the idea of freedom, thereby reversing the norm by which Renaissance painters credited ancient poets with exemplary freedom. Ut pictor poësis, truly.

Giraldi told how Ariosto left his poem in the front hall of his house for two years, for guests to comment on, in the manner of Apelles' hiding behind his work to hear what was said. The modern poet is seen as re-enacting the precedent of the ancient painter:

As Apelles was accustomed to do about his painting, so Ariosto did about his work; indeed, two years before he let it go to the printer, he placed it in the hall of his house and let it be judged by anyone who read it.¹⁴³

Again, the poet (albeit modern) imitates the painter (albeit ancient).

Finish comes up often in these comparisons, being an issue both writers and artists shared and about which there was genuine contemporary controversy. Aldus uses the artist to illustrate different modes of production:

an excellent painter gives greater perfection to those figures that are to be put up in public, than to those that he dashes off for fun,¹⁴⁴

a difference said to be analogous to Latin oration versus *volgare* speech. Aretino, on the contrary, boasted that he wrote with a spontaneity modelled on Titian's:

I make myself portray others with the vivacity with which the amazing Titian renders this or that face, and because good painters prize a great deal a sketched beautiful group of figures, I send my things to press that way, and I don't take any care at all to make word miniatures; because the work is in the design, and although the colors are beautiful in themselves, they do not make the papers into something else, and it is all idle, except to work fast and of yourself. See there so many works, which I have delivered with genius before the mind was even pregnant.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Giraldi, *Romances*, 171.

¹⁴⁴ "si come anco uno eccellente Pittore renderà maggior perfettione à quelle figure, che haveranno da esser poste in publico giudicio, che à quelle, che da lui saranno fatte per ischerzo," Manutius, 19.

¹⁴⁵ "Io mi sforzo di ritrare le nature altrui con la vivacità con che il mirabile Tiziano ritrae questo e quel volto; e perché i buoni pittori apprezzano molto un bel gruppo di figure abbozzate, lascio stampare le mie cose così fatte, né mi curo punto di miniar parole; perché la fatica sta nel disegno, e se ben i colori son belli da per sé, non fanno che i cartocci loro non sieno cartocci, e tutto è ciancia, eccetto il far presto e del suo. Eccovi là tante opre, le quali ho partorite con l'ingegno prima che ne sia gravida la mente," Dec. 1537, Aretino/Procaccioli, *Lettere*, 417–18. See also from 1537, a comparison of the Bishop of Nocera's style as historian with Michelangelo "divino," 447.

References to named artists were customarily to the legendary ancients—up until about mid-century, when there was a certain shift toward preferring the moderns, whether as a result of Vasari’s publication, or a more stringent preference for Christian examples. Dante had famously named Giotto as an exceptional modern, but in a usage that was more anecdotal than preceptorial. Giraldi, in the middle of the sixteenth century, cited Leonardo. Editing Bandello’s version of the story, he told how:

Da Vinci caught sight of a man who had a face to his liking; he quickly took his pencil, roughly sketched it, and with this and others that he had collected diligently for a year from various faces of vile and wicked people, he went to the friars and finished painting Judas, with such a face as appeared to have treachery engraved on its forehead. The poet ought to do likewise when he strives with the colors of writing to present the appearances, the customs, the conversations, the actions of diverse persons because he will not be able to draw thence the incredible except as the useful.¹⁴⁶

Michelangelo, whose role in Vasari’s *Lives* made him an obvious choice, was the modern artist most commonly referred to by men of letters when discussing topics other than the visual arts.¹⁴⁷

* * *

The ubiquitous, if discrete, practice by which the men of letters took the men of images as examples was ultimately more consequential than the relatively idle debates about whether painting was a liberal art. It meant that a concrete yet highly varied and evolving model of creativity was persistently invoked. Whereas for the artist to imitate the orator or

¹⁴⁶ Giraldi, *Romances*, 163.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., Carlo Lenzone, who dedicated his *In difesa della lingua fiorentina, et di Dante* of 1556 to Michelangelo; Cosimo Bartoli, whose *Ragionamenti accademici*, Venice, 1567, discusses Michelangelo as of “divino ingegno,” as “sopranaturale e divino,” as having “aperto gli occhi a ciaschuno, in fargli conoscere il buono, & la verità di questa arte [architecture],” 19, also praising Michelangelo as the parallel figure to Josquin, as singlehandedly having “aperti gli occhi a tutti coloro che di questi arti si diletano;” and Aretino in his *Carte parlanti*, ed. G. Casalegno and G. Giaccone, Palermo, 1992, 373, in which Michelangelo is twice invoked, once an interlocutor saying he would rather see himself published than the statues of Buonarroti, and soon thereafter that his writing is as distinctive as Michelangelo’s [Sistine] chapel. Pietro Bembo, in his *Prose della volgar lingua* (published 1525) mentioned Michelangelo and his friend Raphael as having best imitated antique example; “più agevole è a dire quanto essi agli antichi buoni maestri sieno prossimani, che quale di loro sia dell’altro maggiore e miglior maestro,” Libro terzo, 184.

the geometer was to try to work more regularly and formulistically, for the writer to compare what he was thinking about to an artist's careful yet explorative practice was to suggest new ideas. To compare oneself with an artist encouraged innovation both because this practice of metaphor based on the mind and works of the artist was itself new and because, increasingly, in a dynamical feedback, the artist was striving to innovate. The writer had Virgil or Cicero ever before him; the painter was relatively unrestricted by the ghost of Apelles. And so writers were able to borrow from painters the stimulus toward innovation, even as they formulistically praised the artists for conforming to their own inhibiting standards.

In a dynamical process, the humanist observers of this innovative painting now began to place more value on viewing and on sight. When Galileo compared literary and painting styles, he compared both to his perceptual experience of the world, specifically to different kinds of rooms, and not to totemic ancestors:

It has always seemed to me and seems, that this poet is beyond measure stingy, impoverished, and lackluster in his inventions: and that Ariosto, on the other hand, is magnificent, ornate, and marvelous: and when I turn to consider the knights with their actions and episodes, and also all the other subplots of this poem, it strikes me as like entering a little study of some curious crabbed man which he delights in decorating with his things, collected either for their being old or rare or for some other reason, from a pilgrimage, but which are in effect mere trifles, being so to speak, a petrified crab, a dried-up chameleon, a fly and a spider embalmed in a piece of amber, some of those little dolls said to be found in the ancient tombs of Egypt, and similarly in painting, some little sketches by Baccio Bandinelli or Parmigianino, and a thousand other bits and pieces; but, on the contrary, when I enter in the *Furioso*, I see revealed an entrance hall, a tribune, a royal gallery, adorned with a hundred ancient statues by the most famous sculptors, and many vases, crystals, agates, lapus lazuli gems, and other kinds, and in sum, full of rare, precious, wonderful, and entirely excellent things.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ E. Panofsky, *Galileo as a Critic of the Arts*, The Hague, 1954, 18–19; “Mi è sempre parso e pare, che questo poeta sia nelle sue invenzioni oltre tutti i termini gretto, povero e miserabile: e all’opposito, l’Ariosto magnifico, ricco e mirabile: e quando mi volgo a considerare i cavalieri con le loro azioni e avvenimenti, come anche tutte l’altre favolette di questo poema, parmi giusto d’entrare in uno studietto di qualche ometto curioso, che si sia dilettrato di adornarlo di cose che abbiano, o per antichità a per rarità o per altro, del pellegrino, ma che però siena in effetto coselline, avendovi, come saria a dire, un granchio petrificato, un camaleonte secco, una mosa e un ragno in gelatina in un pezzo d’ambra, alcuni di quei fantoccini di terra che dicono trovarsi ne i sepolcri antichi di Egitto, e così, in materia di pittura, qualche schizetto di Baccio Bandinelli o

His predecessors, by making a contemporary male citizen “divine,” had already slain those ancestors and opened up the experience of the present.¹⁴⁹

As the viewer acquired a more important and active role, describing and judging, a profound interest in viewing began to compete with the traditional obsession with spirituality and its offshoot, the artist as creator of essentially referential value. In an established print culture, imitation and creation as a reflection of the divine was gradually integrated with highly judgmental reading and viewing. Prints par excellence were objects more valued for being looked at than for being made, for what the collector had to say about them as much as for their authorship.

The intellectual model of empiricism owed much to the creator figure, both to its waxing (which had validated vision and an increasingly unprogrammatic attention to nature, or in the language of the time, sight over reason) and to its waning (which inverted the relative positions of God-like maker and viewer). One could then immerse oneself in objects in a new way, focussing on perception itself rather than on myths of creation, intention, and the divide between material and intellect. Eventually, the whole notion of law evolved to the point that John Locke could declare the compatibility of law and freedom—more than that, could declare that law, rightly understood, was the instrument of freedom. Vasari, whose horizon did not extend beyond the absolute power of his Duke and, on a different plane, of his premier artist, could not have comprehended this. For him, and for others of Michelangelo’s contemporaries, the attribute of divinity bore with it an element of the arbitrary.

In 1754 the Abbé de Condillac wrote his *Traité des Sensations*. He imagined the problem of epistemology in the guise of a statue whose sensory experience could be perfectly delimited and controlled, and whose reason would be determined thereby. The statue served as the model of the human mind:

del Parmigianino, e milli altre cosette; ma all’incontro, quando entro nel *Furioso*, veggio aprirsi una guardaroba, una tribuna, una galleria regia, ornata di cento statue antiche de’ più celebri scultori, con infinite storie intere, e le migliori, di pittori illustri, con un numero grande di vasi, di cristalli, d’agate, di lapislazzari e d’altre gioie, e finalmente ripiena di cose rare, preziose, maravigliose, e di tutta eccellenza,” Galilei, 502–03.

¹⁴⁹ The literary debates about Ariosto had made architectural comparisons quasi a commonplace; Galileo here was siding with the Accademia della Cruca’s defense of Ariosto: “un palagio perfetissimo di modello, magnificentissimo, ricchissimo, e ornatissimo, oltre ad ogni altro: e quel di Toquato Tasso una casetta piccole, povera, e spro-

The statue will judge things as we do only when it has all our senses and all our experience, and we can only judge as it judges when we suppose ourselves deprived of all that is wanting in it. I believe that readers who put themselves exactly in its place, will have no difficulty in understanding this work; those who do not will meet with enormous difficulties.¹⁵⁰

It is not the role of the sculptor which intrigues him, but of the viewer, so much so that the work of art has been reconceived as a mirror of its own observer, rather than of its creator. For Landi, the painted man was to the ignorant one as the real man was to the learned; for Condillac later, the statue is ignorant and learned both, and the real man likewise, since both are understood as the products of empiricism. Both understand and are understood in terms of sensory perception received rather than intentions materialized. In some small part, that empiricism was rooted in various earlier attempts to think about the experience of images in perceptual terms, de-emphasizing the role of the maker. It is as though Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* had been rewritten as a manual on listening.

Condillac reversed the legend of Pygmalion, by making life become a model rather than the model become alive.¹⁵¹ In the sixteenth century, men of letters had begun to tweak the idea that the painter was like an orator, able to achieve a perfect work if only he would study theory, and they began to speculate about artistic judgment as more complicated than the following of rules. Instead of understanding the artist as a little God executing perfect patterns, various liberal artists learned to put themselves in the place of a working, very human artist making ad hoc stylistic decisions, or to put themselves in the place of an appraising viewer or analytical engraver—or even, occasionally, to see the world as like a painter's splattered apron, in all its confusedness, waiting for the viewer to make sense of it.

porzionata, per lo essere basso, e lunga," like the granaries lumped on top of the baths of Diocletian in Rome, *Apologia*, 1585, unpag.

¹⁵⁰ Étienne Bonnot (Abbé de Condillac), Advice of some importance to the Reader, *Treatise on the Sensations*, tr. G. Carr, London, 1930, xxxvii.

¹⁵¹ Hoffman's Dr. Coppelius descends from this, and Shelley's Frankenstein reverts to a more Pygmalion-like scenario, but with opposite valence.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIVINE POET, TWINNED

*this gift you have of speaking well on Homer
is not an art; it is a power divine, impelling
you like the power in the stone Euripides
called the magnet.*¹

What did Renaissance artists imagine, at their most free? And what did they imagine about their own creativity, at such moments? Poetry figured crucially in the answer to either question, for poetical theory was traditionally where issues of art as a vehicle of pleasure rather than learning came up. Since Renaissance poets never succeeded in reviving the heroic genre, “poetical” tended to connote the pleasurable. As Lo Strascino (Niccolò Campani, 1478–1523) put it in his poem about syphilis in 1523, echoing and expanding on Horace, “It is allowed to painter and to poet, to say what he wants, and you believe what you want.”² Poetry was also the locus at this time of issues of invention, the finding of new *res*. “Painting is rightly poetry, that is, invention,” Paolo Pino succinctly declared in 1548, but the sentiment was not unusual.³ Since in antiquity problems of subject and its captivating expression had formed the stuff of rhetorical theory, painting served not only as the epic poetry but also the rhetoric of the Renaissance, both determining

¹ Plato, *Ion* 533d, tr. L. Cooper, *Collected Dialogues*, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton, 1961.

² “Al pittore & poeta, si concede./Dir quel che vuole, & tu qualche vuoi crede,” Strascino, *Lamento sopra el male incognito*, Venice, 1523, unpag.

³ “Pittura è propria poesia, cioè invenzione,” Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, Milan, 1954, 45. See further, Creighton Gilbert, *Poets Seeing Artists’ Work: Instances in the Italian Renaissance*, Florence, 1991; Norman Land, *The Viewer as Poet*, University Park, 1994; *The Eye of the Poet: Studies in the Reciprocity of the Visual and Literary Arts from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. A. Golahny, Lewisburg, Pa., 1996; Paul Holberton, “Metaphor in Early Renaissance Art,” *Word and Image*, I, 1985, 31–58. And further, J. Lindhardt, *Rhetor, Poeta, Historicus: Studien über rhetorische Erkenntnis und Lebensanschauung im italienischen Renaissance*, Leiden, 1979, P. Murray, “Poetic Genius and its Classical Origins,” in *Genius*, Oxford, 1989, 9–31, J.M. Cocking, *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas*, ed. P. Murray, London, 1991, esp. Chs. 8, 9; *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur héritage en France au XVI^e siècle*, eds. P. Galand-Hallyn and F. Hallyn, Geneva, 2001; and Brann, *Genius*.

and reacting to public opinion, intervening between popular and elite spheres of the culture.

In 1341 Petrarch was awarded a crown of laurel by King Robert of Anjou atop the Capitol in Rome. In 1546 Michelangelo's Dantesque *Last Judgment*, complete with Charon's ferry, was first subjected to verbal attack. In between, beginning in the mid-fifteenth century and lasting without much controversy for a hundred years or so, to be thought poetical was a key marker of accomplishment for a painter. Francisco de Hollanda in 1538, for instance, had an interlocutor declare, "You may read all Virgil and find in him nothing but the art of a Michael Angelo!"⁴

The divine poet was a notion much promoted by the ancient poets, beginning with Homer. Within his epics bards were dubbed divine, and beloved by the Muses. Virgil in his *Eclogues* referred to divine bards, as well as to his divine patron. Homer was called divine by Plato—"the best and most divine of all,"⁵ a sentiment echoed by Lorenzo de' Medici.⁶ Statius graciously complimented the divine *Aeneid* at the close of his *Thebaid*,⁷ and in Dante's *Purgatorio*, Statius is made to refer to the divine flame represented by the *Aeneid*.⁸ Although the accolade was particularly affixed to Homer, it applied by extension to his imitator Virgil,⁹ and was generalizable. Cicero in *Pro Archia Poeta* proclaimed that:

while other arts are matters of science and formula and technique, poetry depends solely upon an inborn faculty, as evoked by a purely mental activity, and is infused with a strange supernal inspiration. Rightly, then, did our great Ennius call poets 'holy,' for they seem recommended to us by the benign bestowal of God.¹⁰

⁴ Francisco de Hollanda, *Dialogos em Roma*, Heidelberg, 1998, 94.

⁵ Plato, *Ion* 530b.

⁶ Lorenzo de' Medici, "un poeta tanto eccellente che fu chiamato 'divino,'" *Comento*, in *Opere scelte*, 224. A Byzantine ostrakon contains the line "A god, not a man, was Homer," see R. Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. D. MacDonald, Harrisburg, 2001, 63.

⁷ "nec tu [*Thebaid*] divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora," XII, 816–17.

⁸ *Purgatorio* XXI, 94–98: "Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville, / che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma / onde sono alluminati più di mille; / de l'Eneida dico, la qual mamma / fummi e fummi nutrice poetando." See also Penelope Murray, "Poetic Genius and its Classical Origins," in *Genius*, ed. P. Murray, Oxford, 1989, 9–31.

⁹ This was, however, debated in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, Book V, Ch. 1, in which Eusebius lauds Virgil as like nature, "with a prescience born of a disposition divine rather than mortal," only to be mocked by Evangelus, for comparing "the divine craftsman and the rustic poet from Mantua," tr. P. Davies, New York, 1969, 285–86.

¹⁰ Cicero, *Speeches*, tr. N.H. Watts, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1935, 27: "ceterarum

These divine poets were sometimes called painters on account of their descriptive powers. Homer was the first painter, said Petrarch, a pronouncement echoed much later by Dolce: "Petrarca chiamò Homero 'Primo Pittor de le memorie antiche.'"¹¹ Vasari intimated that Michelangelo might be the last. Still, if poets were both divine and painters, the door was open for divine painters.

Before that development, poetry had suffered a certain drop in its esteem, marking the transition from pagan to Christian culture. Dante inaugurated a new importance for poetry, building on and expanding the courtly love tradition. He was discussed and admired, but called divine only in the fifteenth century, an early instance being the life, written in Latin by Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1459), in which Dante is said to have carried on the ways of the divine poets of antiquity ["divinus poeta illud effecit"] because he appealed to the learned rather than to the common people ["plebeis etiam idiotis"].¹² He was first called "divino poeta" on a title page in the Florentine edition of 1481 with commentary by Cristoforo Landino.¹³ The *Comedia* itself received that adjective first in Dolce's edition of 1555.¹⁴ Landino made in clear in print that "divine fury, which is the origin of poetry, is more excellent than human excellence, from which derive the [liberal] arts."¹⁵ The most exuberant praise for artistic accomplishment in antiquity had gone to poets, and the admirers of Dante (and the promoters of Florence) self-consciously revived that tradition.¹⁶

Poetry was at the center of Renaissance thought, and near the center of the active or secular life. It celebrated visuality, and thus the success

rerum studia et doctrina et praeceptis et arte constare, poëtam natura ipsa valere et mentis viribus excitari et quasi divino quodam spiritu inflari. Qua re sup iure noster ille Ennius sanctos appellay poëtas, quod quasi deorum aliquo dono atque munere commendati nobis esse videantur," viii, 18.

¹¹ Dolce, *Aretino*, 100–01; the reference is to Petrarch, *Trionfo della Fama*, 3.15.

¹² He also uses the Ciceronian phrase "quodam spiritu afflati," to describe the old poets. Angelo Solerti, ed., *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, scritte fino al secolo decimosesto*, Milan, 1905, 144; see also the 1431 lecture of Filelfo, in Parker, *Dante*, 53ff.

¹³ G. Mambelli, *Gli annali delle edizioni dantesche*, Bologna, IX, 1931, 3ff.

¹⁴ Parker, *Dante*, 153–55.

¹⁵ "el divino furore, onde ha origine la Poesia, è piú eccellente, che la eccellentia humana onde hanno origine l'arti," Cristoforo Landino, *Comento sopra la 'Comedia'*, Rome, 2001, vol. I, Proemio, 257.

¹⁶ See Craig Kallendorf, "From Virgil to Vida: The *Poeta Theologus* in Italian Renaissance Commentary," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, LVI, 1995, 41–62; Ronald Witt, "Coluccio Salutati and the Conception of the *Poeta Theologus* in the Fourteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXX, 1977, 538–63.

of Renaissance painting may be counted one of its consequences. Each writer and each reader of poetry was surreptitiously in training to look at the new pictures, for in reading lyric and pastoral poetry one imagined the women and landscapes which were then beginning to appear in paint. Painters generally had greater need than sculptors to aspire to the poetical. Colors, sensuous pleasure, and themes of love and adoration seemed naturally suited to both arts.

Painting's alliance with poetry was essential to its prestige. Painting was a relatively modest medium, whereas the dignity of sculpture vis à vis painting was ensured both by the expense involved and by its usefulness in publicly asserting the authority of the ruler. The poet Ariosto chose to compare himself to a sculptor, whose business it was to glorify his patrons:

Were I to give a full account of the honours of this House, no lyre would suffice, not mine, none, O Phoebus, but the very instrument on which you rendered thanks to the Lord of the Universe when he had felled the Titans. If ever you concede me finer tools, tempered to work on stone of such perfection, I shall devote all my skill, all my labour to carving those lovely images. I shall for the moment take my ill-suited chisel to chipping free a first rough outline; later, perhaps, with more practice, I shall be able to reduce my work to perfection.¹⁷

Dolce discusses this passage to defend Ariosto from the charge of mixing metaphors, and switches to describing how Ariosto both sketches with the chisel and then works to finish the design (he was sometimes accused of overworking his poem).¹⁸ Ariosto couldn't stop revising; *Orlando Furioso* had three printed revisions. When Giambattista Pigna discussed the matter, slightly defensively, in his *Vita*, he reported that Ariosto compared poetry to a tree, which its cultivator wanted to tend, but not fuss over excessively, lest it lose "that first beauty, which it had at birth."¹⁹ This passage of Ariosto's was also noted because it was the only place Ariosto made the invocation to the divine for aid, as the epic genre required.

¹⁷ Canto 3; Waldman, 20–21. I would prefer, at the end, "If ever I have from you better tools, apt to carve in the best stone, I will make beautiful images in it, I will employ all my effort, all my intelligence;" "E volendone a pien dicer gli onori,/Bisogna non la mia, ma quella cetra,/Con che tu dopo i Gigantei fuorori/Rendesti grazia al regnator de l'etra:/S'instrumenti avroò mai da te migliori,/Atti a sculpire in così degna pietra,/In queste belle imagini disegno/Porre ogni mia fatica, ogni mio ingegno."

¹⁸ Dolce, *Affigurati*, 300: "ne andrà levando con lo scarpello le prime scaglie, ch'è un bozzare, e che dipoi condurrà questo suo nobile lavoro a perfettione."

¹⁹ "quella prima beltà, che portò con seco nel nascere," O.F., 1556, unpag.

Michelangelo, although a sculptor, was imbued with the poetic model, a heavily allegorized, Platonic and Dantesque, version thereof. He thus combined multiple sources of artistic prestige, as neither Leonardo nor Raphael succeeded in doing, and as Donatello did not even think of trying to do. Michelangelo's excellence was seen largely in literary terms, much more so than that of any of his predecessors. As the character Fabrini would declare in Dolce's dialogue of 1557:

Just as Homer takes first place among the Greek poets, Virgil among the Latins, and Dante among the Tuscans, so does Michelangelo among the painters and sculptors of our age.²⁰

* * *

The Florentine campanile reliefs had not included Poesia among their roll call of human accomplishments. It was not one of the traditional liberal arts, and it had been censored even in pagan times, notably by Plato. His condemnations would have been familiar even before a Latin translation of the *Republic* became available early in the fifteenth century, though they had to be taken more seriously once the full force of the prohibition became clear.²¹ In the 1460s in North Italy, *Poesia* was included in an engraved series of representations of the order of the natural and civilized world, as implicitly one of the *artes liberales* [fig. 9].²² Two hundred years after the Campanile reliefs, *Poesia* made it to the list of the top four departments of learning on the ceiling of the Stanza della Segnatura, along with Theology, Philosophy, and Justice, symbolizing Jurisprudence. Moreover, Poesia was the most often engraved of the quartet [fig. 11]. In a scheme executed by a non-Florentine, Dante appeared in both the group portrait (so to speak) for Poetry and for Theology (a double portrait quietly echoed in the double cameo of Raphael himself, in Poetry and Philosophy).

Raffaele Brandolini wrote *De musica et poetica* in 1513 for Giovanni de' Medici, son of Lorenzo and soon to be Pope Leo X. There poetry is defended not as a liberal art, but as a divine talent:

²⁰ Dolce, *Aretino*, 86–87; “Si come Home[ro] è primo fra Poeti Greci, Virg[ilio] fra Latini, e Dante fra Thoscani: così Michel'Agnolo fra Pittori e Scultori della nostra età.”

²¹ James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, Leiden, 1991, I, 39. Cf. Aldus Manutius, 1584, 32–33, recalling how the divine Plato had expelled poetry as detrimental to the Republic.

²² J. Levenson, K. Oberhuber, and J. Sheehan, *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art*, exh. cat., Washington, D.C., 1973, 120, n. 40.

what gravity does poetry not possess? It is a divine capacity, which touches solely the best and most learned men by divine power. And, since it rests upon the foundations of religion and philosophy, it is considered both most honorable to master and most fitting for all subjects, persons, places, and times. Or have you not heard that poetry is a certain spiritual quality that inspires literary fictions—that breaths feeling into them, and dignity and charm into the feelings? For this reason Plato said that the class of poets was divine and that poets themselves, stirred by divine instinct, imparted that same furor to their interpreters, whom he called “rhapsodes.” They imitated the nature of magnetic stones that not only attract iron rings, but pass on invisibly that same attracting force to the rings themselves.²³

It is against the background of this phenomenal rise in the esteem of poetry that the comparison of painter and poet must be put, as also against its subsequent decline, as scruples about lascivious content and the allure of mere fiction versus the canonical histories took hold. The easy assurance that fiction might reveal truth had been lost by the end of sixteenth century. Tasso and his allies were busy waging a cultural war against any literature which required allegory to be respectable, and Ariosto had been allegorized as early as 1549.

Poetical content in pictures generally implied lyrical, pleasurable themes, and was often signalled by the presence of mythological characters. A bit later, attention to landscape might be an indicator, for in pastoral poetry in particular, landscape functions in expressive sympathy with the shepherd protagonists. Early engraving and early woodblock book illustration both abetted the cause of the visual *poesia*, either by illustrating less authoritative texts, or by responding to texts generically, a function which had never been possible with the didactic *istoria*, in which the specifics were crucial. In portraiture as well, the notion of a visual *poesia* prompted the development of generic portrayals, from portraits of pretty young women with no individualizing attributes to—eventually—Giorgionesque, small-scale paintings of shepherd youths or similar types, subjects popular not only as paintings but also as prints.

Visual art in the fourteenth century had not particularly featured depictions of youth—a notable exception being the Life of the Virgin cycle at the top register of Giotto’s frescoes at Padua. By comparison, fifteenth-century painting, and even sculpture, sported a very youth-

²³ Raffaele Brandolini, *On Music and Poetry (De musica et poetica)*, ed. and tr. Ann Moyer, Tempe, 2001, 40–43.

ful population. In contrast to the old seers on Or San Michele, Luca della Robbia terra cottas began to smile from the walls. Many factors must be responsible for this tendency—some demographic, some more subjective—but the phenomenon helps us to gauge, even if but vaguely, how the relative weight of visual *poesia* was beginning to counterbalance that of *istoria*. The self-image of Florence in the fifteenth-century was youthful, particularly under Lorenzo de' Medici, whose portrait medal showed the nymph Florentia on the verso [fig. 12].²⁴ The poetical subjects developed by Botticelli and Pollaiuolo reflected and supplemented that. Visual *poesie* were first invented by Francia, Perugino, Botticelli, and Mantegna, culminating in Giorgione's *Concert champêtre* and Raphael's *Parnassus*.²⁵

Paolo Pino wrote a mere two years before the first edition of Vasari's *Vite*, in Venice, the city that had virtually adopted the Neapolitan Sannazaro's *Arcadia*. His aquatic city indulged in a cult of pasture and copse. For Pino, the concept of *poesia* was key not so much to the dignity of painting as to its promise. Good pictorial invention was poetical, and that meant it was spontaneous—uninhibited and personal. Pino had his interlocutor cite “inventions, by which we mean finding themes and stories by oneself (a prerogative used by few moderns).”²⁶ The modern artist, once he understood his own prerogatives, would invent his own subjects and work at his own tempo to his own degree of finish. An artist could paint what he thought up, execute his ideas as they flowed from his brain, and dash on to whatever lay ahead. The ultimate proof of the nobility of art was impetuosity, provided that facility was backed by natural gift. Pino's dialogue attempted to refute, on the one hand, Leonardo's disdain for poetry as bad painting, and on the other, Plato's disdain for poetry as madness sent by the gods. For Pino, poetry connoted freedom of imagination, and in that direction lay the future of painting. As Claudio Tolomei said of language, but with obvious potential for analogy:

²⁴ See Adrian Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, New Haven, 2002, Ch. 2.

²⁵ On Mantegna's interest in an artistic self-image as poet, see A. Roesler-Friedenthal, “Ein Porträt Andrea Mantegnas als ‘Alter Orpheus’ im Kontext seiner Selbstdarstellungen,” *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, XXXI, 1996, 149–86, esp. 170ff., a reference I owe to a fellow reader at Houghton Library.

²⁶ Pino, *Dialogo*, 44: “invenzione; questa s'intende nel trovar poesie e istorie da sé (virtù usata da pochi delli moderni).”

words being pictures of thought, itself brief and rapid, certainly that language is worthy of great praise that lends more quickness to thought, more ability with sparse words to picture clearly human emotions, to be developed later at greater length.²⁷

Pino was the tip of the iceberg. The change he intimated, that between an art which imitated an unchanging idea of perfect creation, working diligently to be ever more accurate, and that which was left like the flotsam from a river of creativity, ever changing, ever producing, was fundamental. The new conception of art as inherently various implied a new conception of nature, one which would come to fruition with Ruskin and then the Impressionists, one which would ruin forever the project of the Academy. More immediately, this new nature could become a feminized creatrix in place of the remote godhead, and so, violable. Depicting landscapes of flickering light and portraying a population unrestricted to the heroic and saintly implied a different sort of nature—changeable, fertile, abundant, and capricious—rather than God’s perfect creation. This imperfect and feminized conception of nature had as its reciprocal the male artist who could dominate and mold it, co-opting the role of the divine toward the natural. The metaphor could be as unsubtle as woman is to man as field is to plow, and its corollaries included the idea of the writer and artist as pregnant with ideas, sometimes specifically the male *ingegno* fertilized by the female *anima*—a metaphor long implicit in the myth of the Muses.²⁸ On occasion Muses were flesh and blood, and the fury of inspiration very closely paired with libido.

* * *

The status of poetry in antiquity admittedly was high, but as a matter of inspiration, not as a discipline requiring study and erudition. The rather dour Aristotle allowed that “poetry implies either a happy gift of

²⁷ “essendo le parole imagine del pensiero, essendo breve & veloce, certo quella lingua è di maggior lode degna, che più avinca alla prestezza del pensiero, & più s’avinca alla prestezza del pensiero, & può con manco parole figurarci chiaramente li affetti humani, & ove poscia voglia, con molte copiosamente distenderli;” Tolomei, *Cesano*, 1555, 94.

²⁸ Francesco Coccio refers to Aretino as divine, and to his writing as a miracle, “nasca improvviso prima che ne sia gravida la mente,” Aretino, 433. See also Emison, 1992, and cf. Claudia Lazzaro, “Gendered Nature and its Representation in Sixteenth-Century Garden Sculpture,” in *Looking at Renaissance Sculpture*, ed. S. McHam, Cambridge, 1998, 246–73. Paolo Giovio referred to Erasmus as someone with a very fertile womb, whose printers were his obstetricians: “Tanta enim erat naturae foecundi-

nature [εὐφροσύνης] or a strain of madness [μανικός].”²⁹ So the theoretical link remained weak, although humanists, themselves often both poets and experts in the liberal arts, often teachers of them, connected the liberal arts and poetry by example. Landino was quite explicit on this issue:

And easily one recognizes that poetry is not one of those arts which the ancients named liberal because of its excellence. In any of those if someone became expert, he was always held in great esteem. But it is a certain thing much more divine than the liberal arts, which embraces all of them.³⁰

And earlier, in his lectures on Dante a decade before, he had said much the same:

not from mortal mind, but from divine fury infused in human minds, it finds its beginning.³¹

From the beginning both painter and poet were associated with potential vice, that is, with the pursuit of pleasure, the modality of art and deception, rather than with the pursuit of truth, the modality of history. For Plato, art was inspired, irrational, and full of lies:

the poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer with him. So long as he has this in his possession, no man is able to make poetry or to chant in prophecy. Therefore, since their making is not by art, when they utter many things and fine about the deeds of men, just as you do about Homer, but is by lot divine—therefore each is able to do well only that to which the Muse has impelled him.³²

The contrast with Alberti’s artist, who seeks variety in his subjects and dignity in his style, could not be more clear.

Plato explicitly excludes poets more than once:

tas, ut, plena semper ac ideo superfoetante alvo, varia et festinata luxuriantis ingenii prole delectatus, novum aliquid quod statim ederetur chalcographis, tanquam intentis obstetricibus, parturiret,” *Ritratti*, 202.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. S.H. Butcher, New York, 1951, 1455b, 63. Cf. Seneca, *De tranquillitate animi*, XVII, 10.

³⁰ Landino/Procaccioli, I, Proemio, 257: “Et facilmente conobbe la poesia non essere alcuna di quelle arti, le quali gl’antichi per la excellentia di quelle nominarono liberali. Nell’una delle quali se alcuno è venuto eccellente, sempre in gran prezzo è stato havuto. Ma è una certa chosa molto più divina che le liberali discipline, la quale quelle tutte abbracciando.”

³¹ “non da mortale ingegno, ma da divino furore nell’humane menti infuso originariae trae;” *Reden Cristoforo Landinos*, Munich, 1974, 27.

³² Plato, *Ion* 534c.

we can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and praises of good men. For if you grant admission to the honeyed Muse in lyric or epic, pleasure and pain will be lords of your city instead of law and that which shall from time to time have approved itself to the general reason as the best.³³

In this case, the visual arts were paired with poetry to their detriment:

painting and imitation on the whole produce work that is far from the truth.³⁴

He included sculpture in these condemnations,³⁵ even as he avowed kinship with Daedalus.³⁶

Plato's infamous, though qualified, expulsion of the poets from the ideal republic grated on Renaissance ears, at least on progressive ones. Landino explained that Plato in the *Laws* had meant to exclude only tragic poetry;³⁷ Boccaccio in the *De genealogia deorum* (XIV, 19), that he had meant in the *Republic* only to exclude comic.³⁸ Petrarch, the figure most instrumental in the establishment of the *studia humanitatis* and in the reinvigoration of a secular poetics, still had no direct access to Plato and would have associated disapproval for lyric poetry with the scholastics rather than with the ancients.

Sources other than Plato had already had their effect on theory by the time the full force of his condemnation was confronted. That the painter functioned like a poet was enunciated most prominently by Horace in the *Ars Poetica*, first published c. 1470, and known long before the *Republic* became available in Latin. For Horace the crux of the matter was a degree of freedom of invention and arbitrariness of style—a soupçon of inherent eccentricity. Using painting as the humanists later would, to illustrate his main subject metaphorically, Horace enjoined:

A poem is like a picture: one strikes your fancy more, the nearer you stand; another, the farther away. This courts the shade, that will wish to be seen in the light, and dreads not the critic insight of the judge. This pleased but once; that, though ten times called for, will always please.³⁹

³³ *Republic*, X, 607a; tr. Paul Shorey, *Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Princeton, 1961, 832.

³⁴ *Republic*, X, 603a.

³⁵ *Sophist*, tr. F.M. Cornford, ed. Shorey, 236.

³⁶ *Euthyphro*, tr. L. Cooper, ed. Shorey, 11c.

³⁷ Landino, *Camaldolese Disputations*, 46.

³⁸ Hankins, *Plato*, 39.

³⁹ "Ut pictor poesis: erit quae, si propius stes, te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes. haec amat absurdum, volet haec sub luce videri, iudicis argutum quae non

For writing at least, this inherent variability is moderated by such injunctions as, “Of good writing the source and font is wisdom,”⁴⁰ and, “It is hard to treat in your own way what is common.”⁴¹ It is not subjectivity that Horace associates with poetry, but ornamental niceties—the very sort of niceties by which Mannerism has sometimes been defined. The poetical painter and the painter ambitious about what it means to be creative roughly correspond.⁴² Cellini, carefully arranging the light in which his statues would be viewed, matches well with Horace’s type, as does Baldassare Castiglione, debating the nuances of the vernacular.

On the venerable question of the relative priority of nature versus *arte* or *disciplina*, Horace straddles the fence, making jest of those who refuse to shave their beards or pare their nails because they believe solely in “ingenium.”⁴³ The nature whose imitation he advocates is one of laws, rather than of license. Accordingly, when the poet creates fictions, verisimilitude must be observed: the painter’s grotesques are scorned, poetic license does not exceed the natural limits of plausibility:⁴⁴ a sentiment shared by Horace’s contemporary, Vitruvius.⁴⁵ As in the story of Zeuxis and the maidens of Crotona, nature is to be exploited—according to rule—for its best bits, and the result is art.

Long before Horace, the Greek Simonides had called painting a silent poem (“*pictura poema tacitum*”), according to the much-read Plutarch.⁴⁶ Plutarch functioned as the Virgil, the guide, in Giovanni Santi’s epic poem, so presumably Simonides’ utterance was one which Raphael’s father knew and honored. Simonides was also famous as a

formidat acumen; haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit,” Horace, *Ars poetica*, tr. H.R. Fairclough, Loeb, Cambridge, 1929, 361–65.

⁴⁰ “Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons,” 309.

⁴¹ “Difficile est proprie communia dicere,” 128.

⁴² The question, to what extent Dürer’s meditations derive from imported poetical issues and to what extent from more local theological ones, is perhaps the crux of Koerner’s *Moment of Self-Portraiture*.

⁴³ Horace, l. 295.

⁴⁴ “Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam/iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas/undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum/desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,/spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?/credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum/persimilem, cuius, velut aegri somnia, vanae/fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni/reddatur formae. “pictoribus atque poetis/quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas.”/scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim;/sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut/serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni,” 1–13.

⁴⁵ Vitruvius, Book VII, v.

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *De gloria Atheniensium*, 346F.

expert in memorization, the key story being that he was able to identify the remains of the guests at a dinner party after the roof had fallen in and utterly disfigured the victims, because he remembered where each person had been seated, though the dinner had but begun when he had been called to the door and thereby spared.⁴⁷ This story in its own gruesome way helped the prestige of painting, for both painting and poetry served to preserve the memory of the great which would otherwise be lost, the lives of heroes rendered by time as obscure as those of no note at all.

Likewise, the story of Alexander lamenting that he had no Homer to immortalize his deeds, referred to by Raphael in a monochromatic painting in the *Segnatura*, beneath the *Parnassus*, and more accessibly in a number of prints of the same composition [fig. 13], is a visual correlate of this episode in the life of Simonides. Its theme is the memorial function of poetry, that its dignity lies in its ability to make the past present.

Cicero, faithful as he was to bits of Plato, did not adhere to his predecessor's condemnation. He compared Pheidias and the orator, both operating in relation to eternal forms, and of course both never succeeding in transmitting them perfectly into their arts. Cicero viewed the process somewhat more optimistically than Plato had:

in the case of the statues of Phidias, the most perfect of their kind that we have ever seen, and in the case of the paintings I have mentioned, we can, in spite of their beauty, imagine something more beautiful. Surely that great sculptor, while making the image of Jupiter or Minerva, did not look at any person whom he was using as a model, but in his own mind there dwelt a surpassing vision of beauty; at this he gazed and all intent on this he guided his artist's hand to produce the likeness of the god. Accordingly, as there is something perfect and surpassing in the case of sculpture and painting—an intellectual ideal by reference to which the artist represents those objects which do not themselves appear to the eye, so with our minds we conceive the ideal of perfect eloquence, but with our ears we catch only the copy. These patterns of things are called *ideai* or *ideas* by Plato, that eminent master and teacher both of style and thought...whatever, then, is to be discussed rationally and methodically, must be reduced to the ultimate form and type of its class.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Quintilian, *I.O.*, XI, ii, 13.

⁴⁸ *Orator*, tr. H. Hubbell, Loeb, 1988, iii, 9–10: “Itaque et Phidiae simulacris, quibus nihil esse illo genere perfectius videmus, et eis picturis quas nominavi cogitare tamen possumus pulchiora. Nec vero ille artifex cum faceret Iovis formam aut Minervae, contemplabatur aliquem e quo similitudinem duceret, sed ipsius in mente insidebat species

This passage would have appealed to Vasari, for his attempts to understand artists similarly acknowledged both the absolute character of the ideal toward which the arts were striving and the relative nature of the works accomplished.

* * *

The theoretical parallel between poetry and painting was a stronger and more enabling tenet than the attempt to disguise painting as a liberal art. It joined an art which, throughout much of the Renaissance, was struggling to equal the examples from antiquity, with an art for which antiquity offered a kind of blank check; and it linked an art whose status was assured, thanks to Dante, with one whose place was in flux. Whereas Horace was focused on the relationship of each art to the other and to nature, in a kind of conceptual triangle that established freedom of invention but even more so the requisite boundaries, for Renaissance thinkers the development of the analogy between painting and poetry licensed a world of fiction hitherto trivialized, until ultimately nature and its rules, like antiquity and its rules, shrank to options rather than requisites.

The division in the early commentary on Dante, between the poet as a man of learning or one of inspiration, analogous to the paradigm of the active versus the contemplative lives which was being debated during the later fourteenth century, remains the root of much of the thought about visual artists in the following two centuries. It lies at the core of the alternative models of esteem, as liberal artist or poet. But whereas the active life was definitely promoted in those philosophical debates, in the aesthetic realm it was the type of the artist-“saint” which rose to the fore, culminating in the epithet “divino.” Even in the practical Bruni’s *Life* this had been true, in that “il beato Francesco” had upstaged Dante. Humanists preferred poetry and painting to the liberal arts as they had calcified under the professors of scholasticism. They became more priestly than the priests by promoting these newly conceived arts of inspiration.

pulchritudinis eximia quaedam, quam intuens in eaque defixus ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat. Ut igitur in formis et figuris est aliquid perfectum et excellens, suius ad cogitatum speciem imitando referuntur ea quae sub oculos ipsa non cadunt, sic perfectae eloquentiae speciem animo videmus, effigiem auribus quaerimus. Has rerum formas appellat ideas ille non intelligendi solum sed etiam dicendi gravisissimus auctor et magister Plato... Quicquid est igitur de quo ratione et via disputetur, id est ad ultimam sui generis formam speciemque redigendum.”

Modern associations of painting and poetry had begun already in the fourteenth century. Cennino Cennini, reporting fairly directly from the workshop, judged that painting deserves:

to be enthroned next to theory, and to be crowned with poetry. The justice lies in this: that the poet, with his theory, though he have but one, it makes him worthy, is free to compose and bind together, or not, as he pleases, according to his inclination.⁴⁹

Filippo Villani, in approximately 1380, with a revision sixteen years later,⁵⁰ reported that Giotto portrayed himself together with Dante in an altarpiece for the Palazzo del Podestà, the Bargello, since lost. The later version referred to a painting on the wall instead. The fresco may be one documented but lost, rather than the *Last Judgment* still to be seen in the chapel; moreover, any allusion to Dante would have to have been a private one, since Dante's family continued in exile. The visual evidence that would link the two personally is elusive; the poetical evidence well known but something less than complimentary, that is, Dante's lament about the evanescence of earthly fame, a subject he was no doubt happy to fork off, even partially, onto his lesser confrères the artists, Giotto and Cimabue. Nevertheless, the idea of a joint revival of literature and painting, spurred by the coincidence of the careers of Dante (1265–1321) and Giotto (c. 1276–1337) and their slight intersections, was a convenient one, much appealed to, by Baldinucci for example, in the seventeenth century and Panofsky in the twentieth. For Michelangelo, Giotto and Dante were the two great founding fathers, though Dante was doubtless the more essential, the Homer to his Pheidias and also the Aristotle to his Pamphilos.

The theory of the *istoria* initiated by Alberti had been like that of the icon in its reference to authority, especially to an authoritative text. Alberti had barely mentioned poetry. After paraphrasing the ancients' claim that Pheidias learned how to represent Zeus by reading Homer,

⁴⁹ Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook*, tr. D.V. Thompson, New York, 1960, 1–2; "E con ragione merita metterla assedere in secondo grado alla scienza, e choronarla di poexia. La ragione e questa: che'l poeta con la scienza, per una che a il fa dengnio, ellibero di potere conporre elleghare insieme, si e non, come gli piace, secondo suo volonta Per lo simile, al dipintore dato e liberta potere conporre una figura ritta, a sedere, mezzo huomo, mezzo cavallo, si chome gli piace, secondo suo fantasia;" Cennino d'Andrea Cennini da Colle di Val d'Elsa, *Il Libro dell'arte*, ed. D.V. Thompson, New Haven, 1932, 2.

⁵⁰ E.H. Gombrich, "Giotto's Portrait of Dante?," *New Light on Old Masters*, Chicago, 1986, 10–31. Hayden McGinnis, *Painting in the Age of Giotto, A Historical Reevaluation*, University Park, 1997, 27, follows Vasari in calling Giotto and Dante friends.

he concluded simply, "I believe that we too may be richer and better painters from reading our poets, provided we are more attentive to learning than to financial gain."⁵¹ It is as though an unacknowledged suspicion of poetical influence has seeped out, of the collusion between lubricity and avarice. But once poetry became as valid a point of comparison as geometry, which it was notably for Leonardo, the prescription of *docere et delectare* (with its literal prioritization of the former) began to slip in the sixteenth century to the less rigorous *docere* or *delectare*, for instance in the view of the writer Stefano Guazzo as portrayed by Comanini or earlier, by Aretino in Dolce's dialogue. After all, to delight, to feel wonder, might itself be antecedent to the process of obtaining wisdom, as Aristotle had famously asserted at the opening of the *Metaphysics*. The prime case of this for poets was the experience of falling in love, with all of its allegorical potential as first fully realized by Dante and Petrarch.

Bartolommeo Fazio, writing about *huomeni famosi* in about 1456, cited four painters, placing them after the poets. He explains that there is much affinity between the two, and quotes Simonides without citing him. Both arts demand powers of invention and disposition. Great intellect and diligence as well ("magnus ingenius ac solertus") are required. In fine, he cites Horace, who taught us that a poem must be not only beautiful but also sweet ("*dulcia*") in order to move the audience; similarly painting requires not only good colors but vivacity. He goes on to discuss Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, Gentile da Fabriano, and Pisanello, as well as various sculptors. Pisanello is praised as having the mind—nearly—of a poet: "to Pisano of Verona has been ascribed almost a poet's talent for painting the forms of things and representing feelings."⁵² Fazio's claim, however, is hedged with that telling "prope," "almost."

At about this time, about the 1460s, a painter reminded himself of Horace's injunction—modifying it slightly to assert its relevance for the future: "PICTORIBUS ATQUE POETIS SEMPER FUT ET ERIT EQUA POTESTAS."⁵³ Thus Benozzo Gozzoli, sometimes denigrated as a fairly retardataire artist by art historians, pronounced his hopes for

⁵¹ Grayson, 96–97, "Nostris sic arbitror nos etiam poetis legendis et sopiosiores et emendatiores futuros, modo discendi studiosiores fuerimus quam lucri."

⁵² Baxandall, *Giotto*, 166: "Pisanus Veronensis in pingendis rerum formis sensibusque exprimendis ingenio prope poetico putatus est." See also 107, 99.

⁵³ An approximation of Horace's "pictoribus atque poetis/quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas."

a glorious future for his art. He did so proudly, no doubt, though in his private sketchbook. This inscription appears on the title page, at the top of which appeared the Hebrew and Latin inscriptions from the cross, making a compendium of foreign foreign language cribs, preceding the visual cribs. The block letters at the center are no crib, however, but an exhortation, even a manifesto. The sentence has been deemed, “one of the few direct and authentic manifestations of the self-esteem of the artist during the 15th century,”⁵⁴ a claim which slights the visual record, but which does signal the sparseness of the written record. As in the case of Pisanello, harboring poetical ambitions may have fostered a desire to vary the content of pictures by exploring landscape and animal motifs, and a wider figural repertoire, including from clothing to expressions, than the standard subjects enforced. The twentieth-century categorization of both artists as International Gothic has disguised the fact that by fifteenth-century standards, these poet-painters were practicing a fundamentally novel theory of art, one that had in it the kernal of the destruction of the very straight-laced Albertian tradition.

Nor was that inscription a totally isolated event in Gozzoli’s life. In the frescoes adorning the choir of the Franciscan church in Montefalco, completed in 1452, he painted Giotto in company with Dante and Petrarch as the peers of famous Franciscans [fig. 14].⁵⁵ He inserted in the proud inscription: “This chapel of the Holy Trinity was painted by Benozzo of Florence in the year of Our Lord 1452. See for yourself, O reader, what sort of painter has made the preamble:” “QUALIS SIT PICTOR PREFATUS I[N]SPICE LECTOR.” This may be the first declaration that has come down to us of the equivalence of text and picture, a direct challenge to the traditional view of images as subservient to texts, made in the year of Leonardo’s birth and not much articulated again until his maturity. No “prope” appears in Gozzoli’s inscription.

⁵⁴ U. Middeldorf review of M. Wackernagel, *Art Bulletin*, XXI, 1939, 298–300. See Francis Ames-Lewis, “Benozzo Gozzoli’s Rotterdam Sketchbook Revisited,” *Master Drawings*, XXXIII, 1995, 388–404, illus. 13, 400; idem, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, New Haven, 2000, 167, prob. 1460s; Diane Cohl Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, New Haven, 1996, 108; and further, Land, *The Viewer*, esp. Ch. 1, “*Ut Pictor Poësis* and the Renaissance Response to Art,” N.B. the artist’s proud self-portrait in the Medici Chapel; J. Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*, New Haven, 1998, 48.

⁵⁵ Ahl, fig. 56; 230–31: “LAUREATUS PETRARCA OMNIUM VIRTUTUM MONARCA, THOLOGUS DANTES NULLIUS DOGMATIS EXPERS, PICTORUM EXIMIUM IOTTUS FUNDAMENTUM ET LUX.”

Dante's and Petrarch's reputations varied widely over the centuries following their deaths,⁵⁶ which added to the complexity of the adage *ut pictura poësis*. Dante was a poet for cobblers, Brunni had made Niccoli complain; on the other hand, Signorelli paired him with John the Evangelist [fig. 15].⁵⁷ Landino reported that attempts to arrange for a monument in the Duomo to Dante had been thwarted by the "envy of a minority."⁵⁸ As esteem for vernacular literature waxed and waned, the poets were at times weighed against one another. At other times their oeuvres were understood as complementary.⁵⁹ Dante's imperial politics and Petrarch's association with tyrants complicated their reception in Guelph and republican Florence. For Michelangelo, however, the politics were long ago enough not to matter relative to his nostalgia for the days when the Alighieri had been important in Florence, perhaps not so different from the days in which his own family line might have prospered. He managed, more so than most of his contemporaries, to admire both poets. Furthermore, he was relatively undistracted by ancient literature.

Against the background of scruples about equating word and image, Renaissance intellectuals, and others, grappled with the problem of artistic inspiration. Neither their notion of craft (*artificium*) nor of art (*arte*) allowed for an endeavor that might be done without industriousness yet at the very highest level of accomplishment. This is the problem to which the theory of *disegno* was one answer, artistic *furia* (what Shelley later called "harmonious madness") another. The model

⁵⁶ See Brian Richardson, "Editing Dante's *Commedia*, 1472–1629," in *Dante Now*, ed. Theodore Cachey, Jr., Notre Dame, 1995, 237–62.; Parker, 1993, esp. 145; C. Grayson, "Dante and the Renaissance," in *Italian Studies presented to E.R. Vincent*, eds. C. Brand, K. Foster, and U. Limentani, Cambridge, 1962, 57–75; and Solerti, *passim*.

⁵⁷ Signorelli in the Cappella Nuova, Orvieto, includes as Greek poets Homer, Empedocles, and Orpheus (seemingly), as Romans Lucan, Virgil, and Ovid, and Christian poets John the Evangelist and Dante; Rose Marie San Juan, "The Illustrious Poets in Signorelli's Frescoes for the Cappella Nuova of Orvieto Cathedral," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, LII, 1989, 71–84. Dante invokes John the Evangelist in *Purgatorio*, XXIX, 105.

⁵⁸ Landino, "Nella mercatura," unpag. See also Sally Korman, "'Dante Alighieri Poeta Fiorentino': cultural values in the 1481 *Divine Comedy*," in G. Neher and R. Shepherd, *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, Aldershot, 2000, 57–65; and Susan McKillap, "Dante and *Lumen Christi*," in *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389–1464*, ed. F. Ames-Lewis, Oxford, 1992, 245–301.

⁵⁹ See Angelo Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists: Studies of Language and Intellectual History in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy*, Leiden, 1993; Elisabetta Cavallari, *La fortuna di Dante nel Trecento*, Florence, 1921.

for the latter was prophecy, as Plato had recognized and as had been instantiated most recently in the person of Savonarola, who was called divine even while alive.⁶⁰ Savonarola and then Luther, for all their differences, both preferred personal inspiration to regulation by Rome. In the Dominican's wake it was newly feasible for an artist to be divinely inspired, since this served to defuse a concept otherwise closely associated by some with heresy. After his fall, the whole concept of personal inspiration was ripe for diminution, specifically for declassification from theology to art. Although no Renaissance source would ever say so, it seems credible that Savonarola unintentionally desanctified the claim of divine inspiration and helped make it possible to claim for mere artists—a claim that was to become easy in the sixteenth century, though it had remained unthinkable in antiquity. On the other hand, because of Dante, who was both poet and de facto theologian, the idea of divine art had roots as popular as Savonarola's later support would be. Giovanni da Prato's (1367–c. 1446) *Paradiso degli Alberti*, a vernacular text of c. 1425–26, is one in which the notion of poetic divinity, Dante's as well as Virgil's, and even the fury of inspiration, is already functioning as a commonplace.⁶¹ Dante's reputation, which surely made Michaelangelo's reputation possible, may, in some small part, have helped to make Savonarola's possible too.

Dante and Petrarch, as poets of abstract emotionality directed ultimately yet convulsively and contortedly at God, offered Michelangelo an anchor for an art whose content was in many ways conventionally devout, yet whose means of expression was the human body so long contemned in Christian teachings. His poetical images, like theirs, aspired neither to encyclopedaic variety nor to epic complexity; instead they managed to combine lyrical rapture with iconic severity. Michelangelo still remembered the strength of Giotto's stolid figures when he carved and painted twisting nudes, but he also remembered the torment of the lyric lover. Vasari was sadly ill-suited to exposit

⁶⁰ See also Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance*, Princeton, 1998, 141. In 1546, Paolo Giovio remembered how Savonarola had been supposed inspired by divine inspiration, and able to tell the future (“Futura enim praedicere, veluti divino adflatum numine, credebant,” Paolo Giovio, *Ritratti degli uomini illustri*, ed. C. Caruso, Palermo, 1999, 132). Ariosto, of course, contrasted the divine Michelangelo with a painter able to tell the future. In a late sixteenth-century biography Savonarola is called “uomo angelico et divino,” and “pieno di fuoco divino,” *La Vita del beato Ieronimo Savonarola*, ed. Piero Ginori Conti, Florence, 1937, 4, 13.

⁶¹ Gherardi, *Paradiso*, 16, 39, 48, 100, 197.

Michelangelo's art, since his criteria of artistic excellence were so little poetical. The excessive frequency of the adjective "divine" in Michelangelo's *Vita* bears some implicit admission of his inadequacy to the task.⁶² He wrote the *Life of Michelangelo* as though he were Brunni forced to write about St. Francis. Condivi, by contrast, barely used the word at all. He ended the *Life* by promising to publish soon Michelangelo's poems, to demonstrate "how many beautiful ideas are born from that divine spirit."⁶³ The appeal to the adjective "divino"—rife in Vasari, restrained in Condivi—is one of the most palpable differences between the *Lives* of 1553 and 1568.

* * *

By the time it was true of Michelangelo that some people said he was divine, a long, slow cultural process had taken place whereby Michelangelo had been assimilated to the type of the Florentine exile poet Dante, but only after Dante had himself come to rival St. Francis, "transfigured beyond human perception...by internal abstraction and mental agitation."⁶⁴ For Petrarch a roughly parallel process of slow glorification took place, except that he was never adopted by the Medici, or indeed by Florence, for the purpose of promoting civic pride.

In the fourteenth century, the enthusiast Boccaccio was willing to give Petrarch credit for a memory more divine than human ("memoria vero illum divinum potius quam humanum autumo reputandum"),⁶⁵ a sentiment echoed and expanded upon by Pietro da Castelletto. Filippo Villani called his *ingenium* "divine" ("divinum illud Francisci ingenium circa musas et moralia studia occupatum"), and undistracted by mate-

⁶² Michelangelo or his art are deemed divine in one form or another twenty-five times in 1550, thirty-eight in 1568. See further P. Barocchi, *Vita*, Florence, 1962, II, 21-24.

⁶³ "quanti bei concetti naschino da quel divino spirito," Condivi, 66. He is also said to be in love with the "divino spirito" of Vittoria Colonna, 60. There is also a passing but intriguing reference to how Domenico Ghirlandaio's son claimed that the "eccellenza e divinità" of Michelangelo derived from his father's instruction, 10; praise of his mind, "Iddio e la natura ha formato non solamente ad operar unico di mano, ma degno subietto ancora di qualunque divinissimo concetto, come...in moltissimi suoi ragionamenti e scritti conoscer si può," 20; praise of the sculptures of the Medici Chapel, "divine più che umane," 41; the *Last Judgment*, "divin compozion della storia," 51.

⁶⁴ Brunni in Solerti, 105: "transfigurava oltre al senso umano...per interna astrazione ed agitazione di mente."

⁶⁵ Solerti, 261.

rial aims.⁶⁶ A good deal of effort went also into describing his asceticism and dedication to prayer, presumably as a defense against the erotic material of his vernacular poetry. Domenico Bandini dubbed him both “in humanitate perfectus” and “vir divinus.”⁶⁷

In the fifteenth century, Giannozzo Manetti told how, on his death-bed, the divine spirit of the poet could be seen returning to God (“ipsum scilicet moribundum in extrema ultimi spiritus sui efflacione aerem quemdam tenuissimum in candissimae nubeculae spetiem exhalasse”), a miracle (“promiraculo habitum divinum Poetae spiritum ad Deum revertisse propalam indicavit”).⁶⁸ Landino certainly praised him generously: “What a man, immortal God! And worthy of how much admiration, who in his songs and sonnets I will not hesitate not only to compare him with the early lyric and elegiac poets of Greek and Latin, but much to prefer him.”⁶⁹ Landino, however, praised Petrarch in order to praise Dante even more, and, in general, Petrarch’s reputation was in eclipse as that of Dante, “il divino,” grew under Medici absolutism.

In the sixteenth century, the adjective divine extended to Petrarch, as in Bernardo Daniello’s “a poet truly excellent and divine and worthy of eternal praise,”⁷⁰ and he certainly became more influential thanks to the Paduan Bembo’s sponsorship of a Neo-Petrarchan movement. Bembo’s father Bernardo, as a child, had once while walking in the hills met a peasant who could remember having met as a child the elderly Petrarch. His leather coat had scribbles of poetical inspiration on it. He had written on his coat, as the inspiration came to him—not out of avarice, our source hastens to assure us:

in winter he wore a fur coat with a good lining inside, but outside bare, as these days many northerners do; which he did perhaps by habit or perhaps because it was less heavy. And the peasant said that in many places the leather was scribbled on, something I readily believe since I have seen writing in the hand of Petrarch that was made on scraps of paper: feeling himself suddenly moved to write, as his spirit spurred him,

⁶⁶ Solerti, 277.

⁶⁷ Solerti, 287.

⁶⁸ Solerti, 318–19.

⁶⁹ Landino/Procaccioli, “Vita et costumi del poeta,” vol. I, 253: “Che huomo, immortale Dio, et di quanta admiration degno, el quale nelle sue canzone et sonetti, non dubiterò non solo agguagliarlo a’ primi lyrici et elegiaci greci et latini poeti, ma a molti preporlo.”

⁷⁰ “poeta veramente eccellente e divino e degna di eterna laude,” Solerti, 446. See also *L’Esposizione di Bernardo Daniello da Lucca sopra la Comedia di Dante*, ed. R. Hollander and J. Schnapp, Hanover, 1989.

and grabbing whatever was near, a practice common among all poets. This I wanted to report more to show his modesty than for any other reason, it being very clear that avarice had nothing to do with it, since he had nothing at all to do with that vice.⁷¹

Surely then Petrarch was a natural, and an inspired, poet, vouchsafed as such by no less than a simple countryman (*contadino*).

In a 1596 edition of Dante, Petrarch is accorded the praise, “quasi immortale.”⁷² Although he never was “il divino” in the way the author of *La comedia* was, partly because too much effort went into defending his piety (which had never been an issue with Dante), still the cult of Petrarch and of spontaneity, of loose hair, of painting *alla prima*, and of subjective lyric poetry—a largely Venetian cult—was at least as important to the development of Renaissance culture as the more exclusively Florentine cult of Dante. It was only when the Petrarchan version of poetic naturalism wedded with the Florentines’ (and specifically with Landino’s) more ethereal version of poetical composition that a major accomplishment of Renaissance art became possible: namely, the displacing of the epic norm by a lyric one. Michelangelo, for all his attention to male musculature, was essentially a lyric artist, as was his early patron Lorenzo de’ Medici. So were Raphael and Leonardo. Their imaginations centered on the emotions felt by the artistic self, and often by a distinctively passive version of the artistic self. All three of them, in their various ways (e.g., with the Dukes of the New Sacristy, *Galatea*, the *Last Supper*), complained that instead of seeking out natural specimens to imitate in their art, they required inspiration, or the will to spontaneity.

* * *

Whatever Leonardo Bruni really thought of poetical inspiration, even if his ideas were actually slaves to his politics and he could not admire Dante without reserve, his distillation of the highest form of poetry as

⁷¹ “che di verno portava una pelliccia di buone fodere dentro, ma di fuora scoperta, com’anco oggidì usano molto oltramontani; il che forse faceva o perusanza, o perchè fosse men greve. E diceva il contadino che in molti luoghi di quel cuoio era scritto variamente; cosa che facilissimamente credo per aver veduto scritture di mano del Petrarca fatte ezianio in pezzi di carta straccia: movensodi a scrivere repentinamente, secondo che l’animo lo sospingeva, e servendosi di qualunque materia se gli parasse davanti, uso quasi comune a tutti i poeti. Questi ho voluto qui dire più per segno della modestia sua, che per altro; essendo chiarissimo che d’avarizia non può esser notato, perchè da quel vizio fu lontanissimo;” Solerti, quoting Ludovio Beccadelli, 462.

⁷² Dante, *Commedia*, Venice, 1596.

inspired and fundamentally unnatural, as opposed to the more learned *scientia* that ordinary mortals might aspire to, was an important step toward the eventual division in art theory between the fantastical and the mimetic. The basic division certainly was heralded in ancient thought about the arts, but now there was considerably more room for respecting the fantastical. The grotesque was allied with the irrational, the unnatural, but also with the lawless, and hence with *furor*.⁷³ Monstrosity could be a code for perfection beyond what nature achieves, a paradox developed alongside Christianity's routine exploitation of the paradox between power and submission, and between eternal life and death. As Innocentio Ringhieri put it in 1555, "le belle donne siano un Mostro piu raro di tutti i Mostri" (beautiful women are the rarest of all monsters).⁷⁴ The artist now had at his disposal both the norms of nature and the denial of natural law; either might produce an art which claimed to be the product of divine inspiration.

This was a part of art theory not derived from rhetorical theory. It established a less pejorative approach to Vitruvius' division between modern monsters and the old reliable images of real things. Michelangelo in his drawings of heads made naturalistic grotesques by fashioning elaborately sculpted helmets, crowning sometimes demented expressions.⁷⁵ In a drawing in Frankfurt, a characteristically Michelangelesque head with its pupils stretched to the side of the eye, seems to suckle furtively the nipple of an old man with a goiter [fig. 16].⁷⁶ The grotesque on the money box of Michelangelo's *Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino*

⁷³ Cf. Onians, *Bearers*, 280. See also Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge, 1999, 141, 156, 182, 184, 225, 306, n. 39, for references to an aesthetic tolerance for monstrosity. And to broaden the scope on the aesthetics of the unnatural, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, New York, 2001, Part III, and L. Daston and K. Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750*, New York, 1998.

⁷⁴ Ringhieri, *Cento giuochi*, 152v. See also Benedetto Varchi, "Delle generazione de' mostri," in *Opere*, vol. II, 664: "Michelangelo è un mostro della natura," and Petrarch's Laura too, in the sense that "mostri dell'animo" "eccedono tanto e sopravanzano gli altri nelle opere loro o di mano o d'ingegno che vincono quasi la natura."

⁷⁵ See Archivio Buonarroti, XIII fol. 145v. Dussler has as "attributed to;" De Tolnay accepts (312, as 1525–32). The helmet is in the shape of a boar's head; the woman opposite has both breasts exposed, with distended nipples.

⁷⁶ De Tolnay accepts the drawing but does not attempt to date it; Dussler rejects it. The obvious point of reference is the *Last Judgment*. For my purposes here, the authenticity of the sheet is less at issue than the Michelangelesque character of the ideas.

suggests a sort of precursor of Goya's *Sleep of Reason*, a figure overcome by figments of imagination. The human figure is removed from the mimetic project by its abstractness, which is peculiarly not idealization in this particular case, while the bat-face complicates the psychological resonances, just as the landscape does in *Mona Lisa*. The figure is generic yet seemingly ensouled, beautiful yet not ideal, worldly without being realistic. Like the Sistine ancestors [fig. 17], this seated figure belongs to an art that portrays another nature than our own, one in which the generic is also the monumental, rather than a composite version of perceptual reality with its stronger implication of absolute and undisturbable perfection. The result could be as fantastical as the Cumaean Sybil or as plausible as the lean and hungry Duke [fig. 18]. But in neither case was it an art competing with nature in the details, or with Zeuxis. It hinted of caprice—but whereas the grotesque had signified antiquity's modernity, i.e., the problematic developments of artists contemporary with Vitruvius, the *capriccio* served as a sign of modernity's modernity, of the freedom to play with the rules of ancient, epic art. A charcoal drawing by Michelangelo for an architectural relief [fig. 19],⁷⁷ which shows a grinning human skull with capriciously long ears, demonstrates his independence from ancient bucrania.

Michelangelo, in becoming an artist more inspired than scientific, joined an increasingly varied company. Many had been deemed divine before he, and not only poets. But his most significant predecessors were two: "il divino poeta Dante Alighieri," to quote from the title page of Landino's 1481 edition of the *Comedia*, and the divine Homer. All three men were acclaimed as divine; yet all three also received public castigation. Homer had been contemned by Plato, principally for portraying the gods as vicious; Dante had written of common people in the common tongue and had placed the republican Brutus at the bottom of hell; Michelangelo broke artistic and social rules. In April of 1532, shortly before the publication of the new edition of *Orlando Furioso* in which Ariosto dubbed him divine, a new and much reduced contract for the tomb of Julius II had been drawn up. The project of the tomb, now destined for San Pietro in Vincoli, was ever a blot on his reputation, since he had already received enormous sums from Pope

⁷⁷ De Tolnay, 402v.

Julius and his heirs for a tomb not completed for three decades (1547).⁷⁸ To be called “divino” carried no promise of perfection.

* * *

Ariosto (1474–1533) and Michelangelo were born within six months of each other. It is much more likely that they met than that Giotto and Dante did, since Ariosto visited Rome and Michelangelo Ferrara.⁷⁹ Indeed Ariosto could have met all the artists he listed in that memorable stanza of *Orlando Furioso* in which he named those modern painters who deserved comparison with his preceding list of ancient painters:

In days of old there were painters like Timagoras, Parrhasius, Polignotus, Protogenes, Timanthes, Apollodorus, Apelles (the most renowned of these), and Zeuxis, artists whose fame (even though their bodies and their works are extinct at Clotho’s hands) will endure for ever, so long as there are writers, and therefore reading and writing. And in our own day artists have lived and still survive, such as Leonardo, Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, the two Dossis, and Michelangelo (who equally as sculptor and painter is more divine than human) [“Michel piú che mortale Angel divino”], Sebastiano del Piombo, Raphael, and Titian (the boast respectively of Venice, Urbino, and Cadore), and others whose work is visibly of the same eminence as is ascribed to the painters of old. Now these painters whose works we can see, and those who were in high regard thousands of years ago used their brushes, either on panels or on walls, to depict scenes which had happened. But you never hear of the ancients having painted the future—nor is this evident in any contemporary work. And yet scenes have been discovered that were depicted before they actually took place.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ See Rob Hatfield, *The Wealth of Michelangelo*, Rome, 2002, 33–34, 48–51, 126–38, for the accounting Michelangelo had received 12,169 Cameral ducats for the tomb, most of it paid by 1517.

⁷⁹ Ariosto mentions Michelangelo’s *Jonah* from the Sistine Ceiling in Satira III: “sie ver che tante mitre e disdeme/mi doni [l’ Papa], quante Iona di Capella alla messa papal non vede insieme.”

⁸⁰ Canto 33: “Timagora, Parrasio, Polignoto,/Protogene, Timante, Apollodoro,/Apelle piú di tutti questi noto,/E Zeusi, e gli altri ch’a quei tempi foro;/Di quai la fama (mal grado di Cloto/ Che spinse i corpi e dipoi l’opre loro)/ Sempre starà, fin che si legga e scriva/Mercé degli scrittori al mondo viva;/E quei che furo a nostri dì, o sono ora,/Leonardo, Andrea Mantegna, Gian Bellino,/Duo Dossi, e quel ch’a par sculpe e colora,/Michel piú che mortale Angel divino;/Bastiano, Rafael, Tizian, ch’onora/Non men Cadore che quei Venezia e Urbino;/Egli altri di cui tal opra si vede,/Qual de la prisca età si legge e crede;/Questi che noi veggian pittori, e quelli/Che già mill’anni in pregio furo,/Le cose che son state, coi pennelli/Fatt’hanno, altri su l’asse, altri sul muro;/Non però udiste antiqui, né novelli/Vedeste mai, dipingere il futuro;/E pur si

Both the ancients and the moderns, however wonderful they might have been or be, fail by comparison with magic, which can paint the future. So much for *istorie*, the most noble task of the painter! Michelangelo's compliment functions simultaneously as a witty put-down of existing rules for excellence. On top of which, the unassailable supremacy of writers is asserted early on. Michelangelo had little cause to feel deeply honored.⁸¹

Michelangelo may have been called divine by Ariosto mostly in fun; the whole poem was fun. "Michel più che mortale angelo divino:" the pun was irresistible. It made of Michelangelo a kind of monster, for what else would a mortal angel be? In 1532 to call an artist divine, even an artist who wrote poetry, was not done routinely, nor without a hint of the absurd. Indeed, Petrarch had referred to Dante and Cino as "angeli;"⁸² this may have been the direct referent of Ariosto's punning line, in which case, the context of romance, the pun, and the implicit Petrarchan (and Dantesque) reference suggest the adherence of the compliment to things lowly, quite the opposite of Platonic divinity.

Luigi Pulci, in the First Canto of his rollicking *Morgante* (1478),⁸³ burlesque epic done under the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici, called Charlemagne divine, if only he (like Alexander) had had a poet:

sono istorie anco trovate,/Che son dipinte inanzi che sian state;" Ariosto/Waldman, 396. See also Achille Monti, "L'Ariosto e Michelangelo," *Il Buonarroti*, II, n.s., 1867, 28-33; and especially, P. Barocchi, "Fortuna dell'Ariosto nella trattatistica figurativa," *Critica e storia letteraria, Studi offerti a Mario Fubini*, Padua, 1970, vol. 1, 388-405; idem, "Fortuna della epistolografia artistica," *Studi vasariani*, Turin, 1984, 83-111; Romeo De Maio, *Michelangelo e la Controriforma*, Rome, 1978, Ch. XII.

⁸¹ Francesco Algarotti would later, in 1762, characterize Ariosto's praise as meaningless. In analyzing Pliny as critic, he says "delle qualità loro pittoresche, che è l'importanza, non fanno quasi mai parola. Le lodi poi di che sono loro larghissimi, secondo che l'uno o l'altro viene in campo, sono lodi vaghe, che niente caratterizzano; simili a quelle che nel suo poema dà l'Ariosto a' principali maestri del tempo suo." He then quotes "duo Dossi" through "Urbino", and cites an unnamed Englishman as saying of the line about Michelangelo, "this praise is excessive, not decisive; it carries no idea;" *Saggio sopra la pittura, Opere di Francesco Algarotti e di Saverio Bettinelli*, ed. E. Bonora, Milan, 1969, 414.

⁸² Dolce, *Affigurati*, 205. Rosso had written to Michaelangelo in 1526 and referred to his works as divinely made ("divinamente facta"), a compliment whose effusiveness he apologizes for even as he makes it clear that he refers to God's help; D. Franklin, *Rosso in Italy*, New Haven, 1994, 306.

⁸³ On Torquato Tasso's recognition of Pulci as a kind of modern rhapsode and Lorenzo de' Medici as legitimating the first person in poetry, see Dennis Looney, "Ariosto the Ferrarese Rhapsode: A Compromise in the Critical Terminology for Narrative in the Mid-Cinquecento," in *Interpreting the Italian Renaissance: Literary Perspectives*, ed. A. Toscano, Stony Brook, 1991, 139-50, esp. 145.

Leonardo Aretino 'twas who wrote
 that if a worthy writer he had found,
 possessed of both intelligence and care,
 the way he had an Urman and his Turpin,
 Charles would be reckoned now a man divine,
 for mighty victories and realms he won,
 and surely did for Church and Faith achieve
 far more than people mention and believe.⁸⁴

Ariosto is very likely to have noted this passage in a poem devoted, like his, to the adventures of Charlemagne's greatest knight, Orlando. When it came time for him to praise the Este in *Orlando Furioso*, he did not call them divine (they had long since called themselves so, somewhat obtrusively). That particular praise he reserved for other, ostensibly lesser objects—presumably because, as Pulci jokes, to be called divine was as much a sign of the power of the poet-speaker as of the person so praised.

Ariosto's praise of painters was added in the third and last edition, of 1532, when four of the honorees were already dead. Ariosto himself was ailing and had only months to live, whereas for the fifty-seven-year-old Michelangelo, the epithet here launched would factor largely in his public face during his remaining thirty-one years. It was almost twenty-five years later that Dolce would recall how Ariosto, at the beginning of the thirty-third canto of his *Orlando Furioso*, sets Michelangelo apart from other painters in such a fashion as to call him "divine."⁸⁵ A few years before, Aretino had included a poem in a letter, in which he recalled, with a difference, Ariosto's verse and implied that divinity was not the highest accolade:

Raphael was divine in beauty;
 And Michelangelo more divine than human
 Amazing in design; and Titian
 has the essence of things in his brush.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Luigi Pulci, *Morgante: The Epic Adventures of Orlando and his Giant Friend Morgante*, Bloomington, 1998, 4; "Diceva Leonardo già Aretino,/che, s'egli avessi avuto scrittore degno,/com'egli ebbe un Ormanno e 'l suo Turpino,/ch'avessi diligenza avuto e ingegno,/sarebbe Carlo Magno un uom divino,/però ch'egli ebbe gran vittorie e regno,/e fece per la Chesa e per la Fede/certo assai più che non si dice o crede."

⁸⁵ "l'Ariosto nel principio del tresesimo terzo canto del suo Furioso distingue in tal guisa Michel'Agnolo da gli altri Pittori, che lo fa Divino;" Dolce, *L'Aretino*, 92–93; See also the letter to Gasparo Ballini, 200–11, 342, published 1559 but composed c. 1542–44.

⁸⁶ Aretino/Camesasca, 436, letter of 1553 to Boccamazza: "Divino in venustà fu Rafaello;/E Michel Agnol, più divin che umano,/Nel dissegno stupendo; e Tiziano/Il senso de le cose ha nel pennello."

In 1585, in a volume dedicated to Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara, Tomaso Garzoni would recall Ariosto's verse yet again, citing it briefly and inaccurately in a list of famous modern sculptors that began with Michelangelo and went on to some fairly obscure characters.⁸⁷ Cellini, in response to disputes about the relative priority of painting and sculpture consequent to the funeral of Michelangelo in 1564, wrote both an essay and a group of sonnets defending his own art. One stanza runs as follows, again echoing Ariosto:

Donatello, Masaccio, Filippo Lippi and Leonardo
that great and more learned, divine Michaelangelo
each of these was a profound painter.⁸⁸

Earlier in the same sonnet he compared Michelangelo to Aristotle, using Dante's phrase for the same, "maestro di color che sanno" (master of them that know). His basic point in the sonnet, however, is that Vasari simply knew nothing of sculpture and hence favored painting. Finally, Francisco de Hollanda echoed the same passage from Aretino's letters in his record of conversations purportedly held in Rome in 1538. He says to Michelangelo:

The nobles and captains, the discreet few and the murmuring many, the princes and cardinals and popes esteem and sometimes almost worship that man alone who is reputed to be peerless and excellent in his profession. In Italy great princes as such are not held in honour or renown; it is a painter that they call divine; as you, Michel Angelo, will find in letters written to you by Pietro Aretino, who has such a sharp tongue for all the lords in Christendom.⁸⁹

We can imagine that Michelangelo was not particularly gratified by such a reminder, but it does document for us that Aretino affected Michelangelo's reputation.

The context in which Ariosto had dubbed Michelangelo divine had been not only poetical, but thoroughly imbued with notions of rulelessness, indecorousness, and modernity in general.⁹⁰ Girolamo Ruscelli declared in the 1573 edition of the *Orlando Furioso* that Petrarch and Ariosto revealed the acme of the language, despite their having written

⁸⁷ Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale*, Turin, 1996 [1585], vol. II., 1092.

⁸⁸ "Donato, Maso, il Lippi e Lionardo, / quel gran Michel più dotto Angel divino, / ciascun di questi fu pittor profondo;" Cellini, *Opere*, 849.

⁸⁹ Francisco de Hollanda, *Dialogos em Roma, 1538*, Heidelberg, 1998, 79.

⁹⁰ See, inter alia, Robert Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*, Cambridge, 1965, Ch. V; Daniel Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of 'Orlando Furioso'*, Princeton, 1991; Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*,

in the lesser genre of lyric. For Aristotelians, however, the terms of the debate gradually hardened around Tasso versus Ariosto as epic poets, a statement of the question bound to favor Tasso who, after all, had been meaning to write epic.

Ariosto the lyric poet was sometimes characterized as an abject and crazed lover, not unlike Orlando—and incidentally, not unlike Fra Filippo Lippi. Vasari's life would describe how the painter could scarcely attend to his art when he was driven to venereal matters. Cosimo once tried to lock him up to force him to work, whereupon the painter escaped by making a ladder of torn sheets and escaping through a window. Cosimo's reaction to all this was tolerance, and the observation that "rare geniuses are celestial forms and not beasts of burden."⁹¹

Simone Fornari's 1549 life of Ariosto described him as one inclined by nature to libidinous pursuits.⁹² Ruscelli asserted that Ariosto himself was rendered *furioso* by his passion:

Ariosto here writes about his beloved, because of whom he says he has become almost crazed and mad.⁹³

Pigna, secretary to the Duke of Ferrara, after describing how moderate Ariosto was in his appetite for food, concluded somewhat lamely that "as for the erotic impulses, temperance was not really a possibility."⁹⁴ Ortensio Landi wrote in 1543 of Ariosto as foremost among madmen:

Look at whatever profession you want, and you will see that I do not lie, be it sculptors, painters, musicians, architects, or writers: today what good poet is there who isn't a little cracked? Truly anyone who has a bit of craziness, feels himself more a poet, and if Ariosto hadn't had more

vol. II, Chicago, 1961, Chs. 19, 20, esp. 979, where he cites a manuscript which compares Michelangelo's achievement with Ariosto's; Raffaello Ramar, *La critica ariosteca dal secolo XVI ad oggi*, Florence, 1954.

⁹¹ Fra Filippo was "spinto da furore amoroso, anzi bestiale," and "pazzia sua;" Cosimo said "l'eccellenze degli ingegni rari sono forme celesti e non asini vetturini," Vasari/Marini, 408–09; Vasari/Bondanella, 193.

⁹² "havendo da natura l'ingegno à cose piu dilettose disposto," "Vita," 1577. Further, "da lacci d'Amore fusse stato incapestrato, e dalla natural libidine vinto infino all'ultimo tempo della sua età."

⁹³ "Intende qui l'Ariosto, & leggiadramente va circo scrivendo la Donna sua, per laquale dice esser lui divenuta quasi Tale, cioè matto, & in furore;" *Orlando furioso*, Venice, 1573, annotations to Canto I. Even the very serious-minded Varchi equated *furor* and *pazzia*; see "Lettera sul verbo farneticare," Varchi, 96; and also Dolce, *Affigurati*, 101.

⁹⁴ "quanto all'impeto dell'amore, il temperarsi non fu in tutto in sua potestà," *O.F.*, 1556, *Vita*, unpag.

than a chunk, he never would have intoned verses so lofty nor so refined, and should we then be ashamed to be considered crazy?⁹⁵

Don Quixote represents an extreme and somewhat later example of madness associated with literature and love. When he admires the lines in a romance, “the high heaven of your divinity divinely fortifies you with the stars and renders you deserving of that desert your greatness doth deserve,”⁹⁶ we may take it that implicitly, not only Don Quixote but also the unnamed author of that romance is mad. The same could be said of Orlando and Ariosto.

Pigna claimed that Ariosto was as fundamental as Plato (also a man prompted by a *daemon*)—and a “painter” to boot:

And just as they say of Plato that he refined certain studies of the Egyptians, exactly thus he [Ariosto] colored with such art the shaded pictures of other masters, that our descendants can only work to maintain what he did.⁹⁷

Even his attackers often acknowledged Ariosto’s brilliance, and often his defenders were willing to acknowledge his personal and poetical faults. This contributed in no small part to the interesting course of sixteenth-century Ariosto criticism. Ariosto was frivolous and Ariosto was canonical, both. Therein lay the crux. He was universal (a good, according to Aristotle) and at the same time disturbingly popular. Gradually he was nudged toward respectability, sometimes only in order to be denigrated relative to the very standards of criticism he had turned his back on—a situation not unlike Michelangelo’s. Vasari’s *Life of Michelangelo* parallels Ludovico Dolce’s *Modi affigurati e voci scelte et eleganti della volgar lingua, con un discorso sopra a mutamenti e diversi ornamenti*

⁹⁵ Landi, *Paradossi*, 55: “guardete qual professione volete, & troverete ch’io non mento, siano scultori, pittori, musici, architetti, ó ver litterati: è qual buon poeta hoggidi si truova che alquanto pazzarello non sia? veramente ciunque ha piu del pazzo, sente anche piu del poeta & se l’Ariosto non ne havesse havuto piu che buona parte, mai havrebbe intonato versi ne tant’alti, ne si ben culti, & si vergonaremo poi d’esser tenuti pazzi?”

⁹⁶ Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, tr. Putnam, 26. Elsewhere Cervantes called Michelangelo divine (and Raphael devout); *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda, A Northern Story*, tr. C. Weller and C. Colahan, Berkeley, 1989, 326. Cf. Cole Porter: “You’re an angel, you’re simply too too too divine, You’re Botticelli, you’re Keats, you’re Shelley, you’re Ovaltine.”

⁹⁷ “E come di Platone si dice intorno al suo avere ridotto varie scienze di Egitto all’ultimo componimento; così egli a punto le diverse pitture da altri maestri ombreggiate col tal arte colorito ha, che ai discendenti da noi più fatica alcuna sopra esse on ha da restare;” Pigna, 1794, 9.

dell'Ariosto,⁹⁸ in that both attempted to extract a degree of regularity and conformity with ancient precedent within oeuvres otherwise seen as modern and licentious. This issue was not simple, for the Romans themselves had had to grapple with issues of imitation versus progress. Armenini reported that, "Michelangelo used to say...that one never led by following"⁹⁹—though to say so was, ironically enough, to echo Quintilian.⁹⁹

* * *

Michelangelo shared with Ariosto the fundamentally new experience of reception within a print culture, of being scrutinized and criticized under the microscope of commentaries, more so than Dante or Giotto by far, and in a much more compressed interval of time. This enmeshed each of them in extremes, both of praise and censure. The editor and commentator Girolamo Ruscelli tried to protect Ariosto from charges of error by blaming the careless editing of printers. Many, he says, are the errors of the press, which can be distinguished from those of the brain (*cervello*), though many, too, are the "monstruosi nella lingua."¹⁰⁰ Whereas Ariosto predeceased most of the fuss, Michelangelo lived on in the midst of it. This culture dedicated to censure, Apelles' shoemaker run amok we might say, may be counted among the causes of his notorious reclusiveness. He was more scrutinized than celebrated, and often as the foil to literary matters closer to the hearts of men of letters than were nuances of visual style. When they wrote about how the painter's *disegno*, *ombre* and *colori* corresponded to the writer's *favola*, *costume*, *sentenza* and *locuzione*, they did not do so because they cared about the particulars of making art, but only because the visual arts had become a sort of touchstone of achievement.

Ariosto served as a fulcrum of debate throughout the century—earlier and more active debate than any Michelangelo engendered. The demands of decorum opposed a poetical inventiveness that pushed toward ever greater effect. The public debate on the place of rule in poetry (with Aristotle's precepts meanwhile growing ever more powerful) and the authority of the ancients had broad ramifications, not only for the visual arts but for the cause of authority more generally. Ariosto

⁹⁸ On Dolce's career overall, see R. Terpening, *Lodovico Dolce, Renaissance Man of Letters*, Toronto, 1997, 25–30.

⁹⁹ Armenini/Olszewski, 136; *I.O.* X,ii, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Ruscelli, *Discorsi*, 106.

and Michelangelo, like Orlando himself, were sometimes thought of as *pazzo* or *furioso*. Freedom from rule and from any other ancient precedent was authorized by a madness that need not be sent by any god more lofty than Cupid. Orlando was destroyed by his madness. Both Ariosto and Michelangelo deviated from the heroic mold, and both were eventually forced back into its bounds. This argument was carried on amidst a developed and active print culture, punctuated by reprints and responses, and even by woodcut illustrations, with their attendant issues of format and framing. As Ariosto was forced into the category of epic poet, the size of the illustrations increased to full page and the exuberant framing motifs, full of grotesques, diminished in importance. The woodcut portraits of Vasari's second edition, incidentally, had very restrained frames. License was less in fashion by then, though print was there to stay. As Antonio Manetti (1423–97) put it, “you could say that these days everything is common and in print,”¹⁰¹ and Ruscelli observed ruefully that print “helped everybody to expose their whims.”¹⁰²

Pietro Aretino was called divine also in the third edition (“ecco il flagello/De principi, il divin Pietro Aretin,” Canto 46, 14), but his correspondents had often addressed him as such before 1532. The phrase “flagello de' precipi” was said by Giovanni dalle Bande Nere's biographer to have come from the warrior (d. 1526), who himself was poorly educated (“non aveva lettere”).¹⁰³ Particular women also came in for extravagant praise from Ariosto, but not as “diva” or “divina.” Julia Gonzaga comes closest; she is reported to be admired as though she were a goddess, excelling all others, past and present, in grace and beauty (“come scesa dal ciel Dea, l'ammira,” XLVI, 8). Nevertheless, the most extraordinary compliment in the poem was undoubtedly Michelangelo's. The label stuck with such pertinacity that it must have expressed a deference already widely felt. Yet so flexible were the connotations of that epithet, that it could range in use from a harmless facetiousness to a barbed irony while, alternatively, continuing to encompass genuine reverence.

Pietro Aretino, who picked up on Ariosto's compliment to the two of them and initiated the facile use of the word in regard to Michelangelo,

¹⁰¹ “in questi tempi che si può dire che ogni cosa ci sia vulgare e a stampa,” *Studi*, ed. Gigli, 44.

¹⁰² G. Ruscelli, *Del modo di comporre in versi, nella lingua italiana*, Venice, 1612, 23: “stampe ...che aiutano ciascuno à metter fuori i suoi ghiribizzi.”

¹⁰³ Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere*, ed. V. Bramanti, Rome, 1996, 104, 97.

continued to call Michelangelo divine when he was excoriating him for his indecorous *Last Judgment*: “Is it possible that a man more divine than human would have done this in the greatest sanctuary of God?”¹⁰⁴ In the latter case the word dripped with sarcasm, but it was not retracted. In turn, after all of Aretino’s books had been placed on the Index in 1559, Francesco Sansovino would find the application of the adjective divine to him sufficiently absurd that he took Ariosto’s endorsement of it as a joke:

this one was called the scourge of princes for the licentious presumption of his very biting pen, and he, dying, lost his reputation: since, being ignorant of letters and following his natural impulses, after death the deserved recompense of his impertinence was that his things were judged by the church unseemly for a Christian, and forbidden to all readers, and he would have been completely forgotten if Ariosto hadn’t, joking about the epithet, that he had undeservedly taken, in the *Orlando Furioso* said, “Behold the scourge of princes, the divine Pietro Aretino.”¹⁰⁵

At mid-century, Ortensio Landi had expressed a comparable scorn for pretensions to divinity. If one is not inclined to law, then try poetry:

apply your mind to poets, a breed truly divine, full of heavenly fury, replete with high imagination and noble whims, on account of which they were favored by patrons, loved by beautiful lads, and revered by the people as prophets.¹⁰⁶

Somewhat later Montaigne was similarly scornful:

a practice which will, in my judgement, bear witness one day to the singular ineptitude of our century—is our unworthily employing for anybody we like those glorious cognomens with which Antiquity honoured one or two great men every few years. By universal acclaim Plato bore

¹⁰⁴ “È possibile che l’uomo più tosto divino che uoman, abbia ciò fatto nel maggior tempio di Dio?” Aretino/Camesasca, *Lettere*, IV, no. 189, 130.

¹⁰⁵ “il quale fu cognominato Flagello de Principi per la licentiosa presunzione della sua mordacissima penna, & il quale morendo perdè del tutto il nome: poi che essendo ignaro di lettere, & operando per forza di natura ne suoi capricci, hebbe dopo morte il meritato premio della sua petulantia conciosia che essendo le cose sue repute dalle Chiese poco christiane, furono vietate del tutto a lettori, & si sarebbe affatto cancellata la sua memoria, se l’Ariosto burlandosi del titolo, ch’egli si haveva preso indebitamente non havesse detto nel Furioso, ‘Ecco il flagello/De i Principi, il divin Pietro Aretino:’” *Venetia, Città nobilissima et singolare*, Venice, 1663, under San Luca, 120. In 1536 he had felt differently; Aretino/Camesasca, III, 66.

¹⁰⁶ Orazio Landi (M. Anonimo di Utopia), *La sferzade de scrittori antiche e moderni*, Venice, 1550: “applicare l’ingegno á Poeti schiatta veramente Divina piena di furore Celeste, piena di alta Fantasia, & nobili capricci per la qual cosa furono dagli Mecenati favoriti; dalle vaghe fanciulle amati, & da Popoli, à guisa de propheti riveriti.”

the name “divine,” and nobody thought to dispute it with him: now the Italians, who rightly boast of having in general more lively minds and saner discourse than other people of their time, have made a gift of it to Aretino, in whom (apart from a style of writing stuffed and simmering over with pointed sayings, ingenious it is true but fantastical and far-fetched, and apart from his eloquence—such as it is) I can see nothing beyond the common run of authors of his century, so far is he from even approaching that “divinity” of the Ancients.¹⁰⁷

Aretino’s detractors found his divinity ludicrous.¹⁰⁸ Francesco Berni (1497/98–1535), in his humorous denunciation of poets, *Dialogo contra i poeti*, paired craziness and divine fury as early as 1526: “I excuse them [poets] as madmen—because they themselves proclaim they are mad [*pazzzi*] and are pleased to be called so, saying that they are inspired [*furiosi*] and that they have divine inspiration [*furor divino*] and fly above the stars and other such silliness.”¹⁰⁹ Berni’s primary target was evidently Aretino.¹¹⁰

Women as poetical objects might also be reminded of the hollowness of their divinity, of owing it to the poet, whose lines would last far longer than their beauty. In the case of Laura, her early death already demonstrated the memorial effect of poetry. In general, consciously valuing a poem’s presumed immortality was not uncommon. When

¹⁰⁷ M. Montaigne, “On the vanity of words,” *The Complete Essays*, tr. M.A. Screech, London, 1991, 344.

¹⁰⁸ Giovanni Albert Albicante, *Occasioni Aretiniane*, ed. P. Procaccioli, Rome, 1999, 74; an interlocutor says, “egli era valente roffiano, et però lo tolse Leone e lo chiamò Divino per questo.” See also 61, n. 23, which reports a Pasquinade in which Adrian VI is called di-vino, “cioe todesco,” and 85. In 1539 Aretino himself wrote to his detractor, Albicante, “the fury of the poets is a silly mania so excellent in whim that others call it divine, but by the hour it allows them to sanction their caprices so that the pen itself rages against the name they have given themselves, for which bestiality they are taunted by them that they ought to be regarded as the devil,” (“il furor de i Poeti è un farnetico di stoltitia sì eccellente nel giribizzo ch’altri il chiama divino, ma all’hora fornisce di canonizara i suoi capricci, che la penna istessa pazzeggia contra il nome di loro medesmi, per la qual bestialità son dileggiati da coloro, che soglion riverirgli come il Diavolo”), 127.

¹⁰⁹ Anne Reynolds, *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII: Francesco Berni’s ‘Dialogue against poets’ in context*, New York, 1997, 180–81, spoken by Sanga; see Brann, *Debate*, 236. Ludovico Castelvetro also castigated poets for encouraging the vulgar to think of them as divinely inspired, and proposed that Plato had meant the theory only in jest (*Poetica d’Aristotele*, Basel, 1576); Brann, *Debate*, 237.

¹¹⁰ Strascino, *Lamento*, 1523, already spoke of “suo stil divino,” referring to Aretino, and of how others would complain that he wrote poetry because he wanted to be thought divine: “Forse qualcun dire questo Strascino/Ha strascinato qua mille versacci,/Per prova sappi chio son in divino/Ne vo che experientia ti dispiacci.”

Pietro Bembo wrote a poem to his patron, he emphasized its value as “eterno segno” of his devotion.¹¹¹

For Vasari, nearly twenty years after Ariosto’s pun, the compliment as applied to Michelangelo contained not a glimmer of a lighthearted touch. Ariosto, too, represented a divine gift from heaven, guilty though Vasari thought he was of overpraising the Dossi, the local painters of Ferrara.¹¹² With all the plodding seriousness of mediocrity, Vasari set out to create an image of Michelangelo as *il divino* in the image of absolute authority, as *terribile* and heroic rather than as eccentric and even licentious. He needed to save Michelangelo for a Florence the sculptor himself had rejected, for a Duke who was not particularly well disposed toward the self-imposed exile. His own professional status depended upon his ability to make Michelangelo palatable to the contemporary powers of Florence, who were all too ready to forget not only Michelangelo but anything that smacked of feisty individuality. To promote Michelangelo as the type called “divino” was to speak a language to which the Duke was receptive.

In 1549 Simone Fornari published an extensive commentary on the *Orlando Furioso*, including (unusually among Ariosto’s commentators) a fairly robust gloss on Ariosto’s praise of artists. Fornari’s publisher was the same as Vasari’s, and because of that he seems to have had early access to the *Vite*. Only what he says about Titian is particularly new, and that is brief. But he calls the hand of Titian very divine,¹¹³ a praise bested only by Michelangelo’s “spirito divino,” recognized in the youth by Lorenzo de’ Medici. The barbarian king, the Sultan of Constantinople, is said to have looked upon Gentile Bellini as “una cosa divina,” though the implication in that case seems to be that a

¹¹¹ Bembo, *Prose*, to Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici, XCII, 583: “Perché sia forse a la futura gente,/com’io fui vostro, ancora eterno segno,/queste rime, devoto, e questo ingegno/vi sacro e questa mano e questa mente.”

¹¹² “Quasi ne’ medesimi tempi che il cielo fece dono a Ferrara, anzi al mondo, del divino Lodovico Ariosto, nacque il Dosso, pittore nella medesima città, il quale, se bene non fu così raro tra i pittori come l’Ariosto tra i poeti, si portò non di meno per sì fatta maniera nell’arte, che oltre all’essere state in gran pregio le sue opere in Ferrara, meritò anco che il dotto poeta amico e domestico suo facesse di lui onorata memoria ne’ suoi celebratissimi scritti. Onde al nome del Dosso ha dato maggior fama la penna di Messer Lodovico, che non fecero tutti i pennelli e colori che consumò in tutta sua vita. Onde io per me confesso che grandissima ventura è quella di coloro che sono da così grandi uomini celebrati; perché il valor della penna sforza infiniti a dar credenza alle lodi di quelli, ancor che interamente non le meritino,” Vasari/Marini, 730.

¹¹³ As does Granvelle, similarly call his brush divine in a letter to Titian of 1549, “il divino vostro penello,” Tiziano, *Lettere*, no. 107, 137.

barbarian king wouldn't know any better, and was merely practicing idolatry, whereas Lorenzo, like a good ruler, recognized grace given from on high.¹¹⁴

In 1552 Dolce edited Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, a book, he said in the preface, he had always held in veneration, "come cosa divina." He warned his readers that the text was not entirely regular, but that out of respect for the author he had left it as it was. Fittingly, Castiglione was to be allowed to write with *sprezzatura*, with the irregularity of a personal style, rather than according to traditional rules. The same issue raised by Dolce with respect to Castiglione is inherent also in the reception both of Ariosto's poem and Michelangelo's oeuvre.

* * *

The most unignorable response to Ariosto's compliment came from Aretino. He was the one other person so addressed in the poem, though in his case it was not for the first time. Also in his case, there was no pun involved, only presumption and a bit of rhyme. Part of what Michelangelo had to contend with when hailed as divine by Ariosto was the implicit analogy to the dubious Aretino. Aretino, always poised to work an advantage, decided that he would share his epithet not only with Michelangelo, but also with Titian, and that he would leverage himself into even greater prominence in the process.

In September of 1537, Aretino wrote "al divino Michelangelo,"¹¹⁵ telling him chummily that the world had many gods but only one Michelangelo, and then proceeding to take on the role of the learned advisor who could provide the *invenzione* the painter would need for his *Last Judgment*. Michelangelo responded, briefly, to the man he compliantly addressed as the divine Aretino, on 20 November.¹¹⁶ In January of 1538 Aretino wrote again, this time "al gran Michelagnolo Buonaruoti."¹¹⁷ Dripping obtrusively with obsequiousness, he avers "certamente voi siete persona divina," as he begs for a drawing that would otherwise go into the fire. He regrets that he has not got so ele-

¹¹⁴ See Appendix. On the publisher, see Antonio Ricci, "Lorenzo Torrentino and the Cultural Programme of Cosimo I de' Medici," in K. Eisenbichler, *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, Aldershot, 2001, 103–19.

¹¹⁵ *Lettere sull'arte di Pietro Aretino*, ed. E. Camesasca, Milan, I, XXXVIII, 64–66; Poggi, *Carteggi*, IV, 82–84. He had already referred to Michaelangelo as "lo iddio de la scoltura" in a letter to Vasari in 1535; Aretino/Camesasca, I, 24.

¹¹⁶ *Carteggi*, IV, 87–88.

¹¹⁷ *Lettere*, LXX, 112–13; *Carteggi*, IV, 90–91.

giant a repository for this coveted drawing as Alexander the Great had for the poems of Homer [fig. 13]—a compliment he no doubt thought reflected very elegantly on them both.

In April of 1544, he is again begging “Michelagnolo Buonaruoti” (now unadorned with any flattering adjective) for a drawing, while describing himself as the tearful admirer of the *Last Judgment*: “but why, oh lord, do you not reward my exuberant devotion, I who bow to your heavenly quality, with a relic of one of those sheets that is less dear to you?”¹¹⁸ By April of 1545, the salutation has been reduced to a curt “Al Buonarroto.”¹¹⁹ The artist is still hailed as divine in the body of the letter (“singularmente divin”), however snidely. The letter is essentially a complaint that the author has not yet been given any drawings. Again in April of 1546 the same but shorter request, is addressed, briefly, “al Buonarruoti.”¹²⁰ He is assured that Aretino adores him (“vi adoro”), the language more nearly of lovers than of religious supplication, and asked for a drawing that would otherwise be burned.

Meanwhile in November of 1545, though published later with a date of July 1547 and in that latter instance addressed to Alessandro Corvino, secretary to Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, rather than to Michelangelo himself,¹²¹ came the blast “al gran Michelagnolo Buonaruoti,” in which Michelangelo is told that the sketch (“lo schizzo”) of the *Judgment* which Aretino has (presumably an engraving),¹²² reminds him of none other than Michelangelo’s long-dead and despised rival, Raphael, and more specifically of that quality he shared with Apelles (and not normally with Michelangelo), namely, grace. In the revised letter Titian is brought into the act, as “preacher of your superhuman style” (“predicatore del vostro stile soprahumano”), no less. The insults continue, though stripped now of irony. The fresco is less decorous than an ancient statue of Venus, and in need, like his *David*, of some fig leaves. It belongs in a bath house; because of its sacred location, it offends decency as Aretino’s own printed pornography does not. Michelangelo

¹¹⁸ “ma perché, o signore, non remunerate voi la cotanta divozion di me, che inchino la celeste qualità di voi, con una reliquia di quelle carte che vi son meno care?” *Lettere*, I, CLXXVIII, 15–16; *Carteggi*, IV, 181–82.

¹¹⁹ *Lettere*, CCXXI, 62–63; *Carteggi*, IV, 208–09.

¹²⁰ *Lettere*, II, CCCXLV, 162; *Carteggi*, IV, 238. No manuscript of this letter survives; it may have been invented for the sake of Aretino’s published Letters.

¹²¹ The manuscript is actually dated 1565; this is taken as an error for 1545 (LX rather than XL). *Lettere*, II, CCCLXIV, 175–77; *Carteggi*, IV, 215–17; Barnes, 81.

¹²² Moltedo, *Sistina*, 33, takes this as evidence to the contrary, that the earliest engravings after the *Judgment* should be dated later than the letter.

is accused of avarice in not sending a drawing (evidently a sore spot, since he is repeatedly defended against avarice by his biographers), and of cruelty in response to Aretino's devotion (again, the very language of lovers: "la crudeltà vostra usa a la mia devotione"). The epithet that had brought the two together is turned against Michelangelo. He is mocked as "divino:" "If you are divine ("di-vino," of wine), I am not water" ("se voi siate divino, io non so d'acqua").¹²³ He is reminded that kings and emperors do not neglect to respond to him, Aretino. With rhetorical flourish Aretino asked, "Is it possible that a man more divine than human did this in the greatest temple of God?" ("È possibile che l'uomo più tosto divino che umano [already the more conservative formulation] abbia ciò fatto nel maggior tempio di Dio?"). If it was his usefulness to the Church that induced potentates to tolerate Aretino, his ability to satirize the heretics and to whip up devotion for orthodoxy in his religious writings,¹²⁴ it was in that very role that he castigated Michelangelo, who had given the Lutherans something to talk about. Aretino turned next to the task of promoting Titian as divine, in Michelangelo's place, as his new artistic double. Aretino called Titian *il divino* as early as 16 September of 1537.¹²⁵ By 1545 he was writing of "the sacred style of your immortal painting" ("lo stile sacro del vostro immortale dipignere").¹²⁶ In 1548 he made the compliment that was begging to be made, that only a divine hand could portray the very divine Emperor ("non sarà lecito che mortal mano dipingesse lo immortalissimo Duce").¹²⁷ Eventually Aretino was himself hailed as the person who had made Titian famous, like the love poet who makes the object of his affections immortal:

thanks to the pen and the good will of Aretino, the works of Titian are in that celebrity and have the great bounties that they well merit.¹²⁸

¹²³ The "di-vino" pun is not unique; see n. 108, above. Aretino wrote to Albicante in July of 1539, "Il furor dei poeti è, fratello, un fernetico di stoltizia si eccellente nel ghiribizo, che altri il chiama "divino." Ma allora fornisce di canonizzare i suoi capricci," Aretino/Camesasca, 127.

¹²⁴ Cairns, 72.

¹²⁵ In a letter to Francesco Donato, written the same day as a letter to the divine Michelangelo in which Aretino asserted that "il mondo ha molti re e un solo Michelangelo:" "la miracolosa virtù del divin Tiziano;" Camesasca, I, 67. He had been "mirabile" as early as 1531; idem, I, 19.

¹²⁶ Aretino/Procaccioli, *Lettere*, 154.

¹²⁷ Aretino/Procaccioli, *Lettere*, Libro IV, 294.

¹²⁸ *Lettere a Aretino*, 395: "mercè de la penna, & del favore de l'Aretino che l'opre di Ticiano sono in quella riputatione, & havutone li gran premi, che ben li merita," from

In a similar role Aretino had accused Michelangelo of failing to respond to his devotion. The language of artistic divinity was permeated with the sentiments of sonnets.

Aretino used “divino” with an abandon equalled only by Vasari, meaning something like “uniquely individual.” He used it early on of rulers and women, and then increasingly widely, especially of writers, his favorite artists, and of Venice. Most of all, he loved to use it of himself. Aretino prided himself on having not only the epithet but the power of a king. He wrote boldly if not impertinently to the Marchese del Vasto in 1544, “Do you suppose only you can be happy? Only you lords can afford to make yourselves in the image of God?”¹²⁹ His portrait medal by Alessandro Vittoria, some twenty years after Ariosto’s compliment, would tout him as *Divus*, as the servant to whom rulers paid tribute (“The princes, having received tribute from the people, pay tribute to their servant”)¹³⁰ [fig. 20]. The world was shown upside down, the servant—the ingenious servant—bowed to by masters. The vernacular inscription was equally unorthodox. The implications of both were, in good time, revolutionary, quite literally.

* * *

After Michelangelo’s funeral and the 1568 *Vite*, little was heard of his divinity. Armenini used the adjective once in his various mentions of Michelangelo in his *De’ veri precetti della pittura* of 1586;¹³¹ Comanini similarly in 1591 barely mentioned Michelangelo’s divinity. Among Michelangelo’s correspondents, very few had called him “divino.” The exceptions include Aretino (1537 and after), Anton Francesco Doni (1543: “o divino huomo, tutto il mondo vi tiene per uno oracolo”),¹³² and Cellini (1560: “Eccellentissimo et divino precettor mio”).¹³³ Niccolò Martelli in December 1541 hailed Michelangelo as “più che uomo,” “messenger

Francesco terzo, Pittore, July 1551. See also Luba Freedman, *Titian’s Portraits through Aretino’s Lens*, University Park, 1995, 148ff.

¹²⁹ “Credevete voi di esser felice voi solo? Solo voi Signore vi potevate dare ad intendere simigliarvi a Dio...” Aretino/Procaccioli, *Lettere*, 75–76.

¹³⁰ “I PRINCIPI TRIBUTATI DAI POPOLI IL SERVO LORO TRIBUTANO,” Stephen Scher, *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, New York, 1994, 181–82; Joanna Woods-Marsden, “Towards a History of Art Patronage in the Renaissance: The Case of Pietro Aretino,” *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, XXIV, 1994, 275–99.

¹³¹ Book I, Ch. VIII.

¹³² *Carteggi*, IV, 160–63.

¹³³ *Carteggi*, V, 208.

of God in heaven and on earth the one unique son and sole imitator of nature," his art "divina."¹³⁴ A seemingly embarrassed Michelangelo replied in January of 1542 that he was a poor man and of little worth ("io sono un povero huomo e di poco valore, che mi vo faticando in quell'arte che Dio m'ha data per alungare la vita mia il più ch'io posso").¹³⁵

The more usual address in the years of his glory was "magnifico," which by the 1550s was standard even from his social superiors. (Francesco Sansovino complained in 1588 that everybody, no matter how vulgar and plebian, was so addressed.)¹³⁶ Alternatively "eccellentissimo" or "spettabile" might be used. At the time that Ariosto called Michelangelo "divino," he was just dropping the label "scultore" in his correspondence in favor of more dignified forms of signature. His correspondence from twelve years before indicates that "semidei" was for him a term of sarcasm appropriate for Raphael and his pretentious crowd.¹³⁷ In these same years Titian would sign a letter, "Your slave forever" ("Il vostro perpetuo schiavo"), and was addressed by the person whose slave he was willing to be as himself divine, his art and brush likewise.¹³⁸

Ariosto scarcely lived to hear himself called divine. In the months just before Ariosto's death, in correspondence from Isabella d'Este, he was addressed as "divino." This is noteworthy since often poets and artists (Serafino Aquilano and Raphael, for instance) were not the recipients of extreme praise until dead (at which point deemed, respectively, divine and threatening to the pre-eminence of nature).¹³⁹

¹³⁴ "nuntio di Dio in cielo et uno in terra unico figliuolo et solo imitatore della natura;" "la fama di ciò esser grande e immortale, ma l'opera maggiore et divina," *Carteggi*, IV, 119.

¹³⁵ *Carteggi*, IV, 125–26.

¹³⁶ F. Sansovino, *Del segretario*, Venice, 1588, 21v: "Ancora che oggi è introdotto che di dà titolo di Magnifico, quasi ad ogni persona, per vile & plebea ch'ella si sia."

¹³⁷ *Carteggi*, III, 243: "quelli homeni che non sonno semidei sanno dipinger ancora loro;" and in a letter of 7 September 1520, from Sebastiano del Piombo, "dar ad intender a le persone maligne che 'l c'è altri semidei che Rafel da Urbino con e' soi garzoni," *Carteggi*, II, 242.

¹³⁸ Titian, *Lettere*, Cadore, 1976, in letters of 1548 and 1549 to and from Bishop Granvelle, 121, 133, 135; see also a letter from Domenico Lampsonius which refers to Titian's invention and design as divine, and his hand, but it should be noted that the writer learned Italian from Vasari's text; 241.

¹³⁹ E.g., of Serafino, "morto non è che uno angelo non more," (Hieronymo Candioto) or "Come ora é on Cielo/era qua giù divino," (Antonio Morando Bolognese) or "Per dimostrar suo gran poter Natura/In fabricare un Spirito divino/Produce el gran Poeta Seraphino/La cui memoria ogni altra antica obscura," (Firiano Zanchino) in Achillino, *Collettanee*.

But such radical compliment was still exceptional when used by Aretino of Ariosto in a Capitolo of 1548.¹⁴⁰ In the edition of 1553 Clemente Valvassori explained that poetry prepared the mind for theology; it served to “whet the mind” (“assottigliar l’ingegno”). And with poetry secured as theology once again, there was no bar to hailing Ariosto as “divino.” He was even compared with Virgil. The present had fully recovered its sense of self-esteem:

no matter how many perfect poets you find, either in our time or antiquity, you ought to prefer no one to the divine Ludovico Ariosto.¹⁴¹

In addition, the poet was labelled divine on his portrait, first in an edition of 1542.¹⁴² Pigna wrote in his Life of Ariosto (1554) that he had shown signs of divine genius very young (“nella prima età diede segni chiarissimi del suo divino ingegno”). By the Venetian edition of 1573, Ariosto was hailed repeatedly as “il Divino,” the poem as “divino” too.

This divinity proved a point of contention in Camillo Pellegrini’s (1527–1603) *Il Carrafa, o vero della epica poesia* of 1584 and the Accademia della Crusca’s point-by-point response, *Difesa dell’Orlando Furioso dell’Ariosto* of 1585, Ariosto’s divinity is alternately denied and defended, the latter on the grounds that it has pleased audiences all over the world, not only in Italy, but France, Spain, Germany and in Arabic countries.¹⁴³ Marcantonio Carrafa, the advocate of Aristotelian rule, protests that he doesn’t know in what this divinity consists (“io non so in che cosa consista la divinità dell’Ariosto”). The debate can be stated as that over the relative priority of the senses versus reason: the senses tell us that the moon is bigger than the stars, just as Ariosto pleases the senses more than Tasso. In response to this comes a defense of sense impressions, and of the rationality inherent in whatever processes please them.

¹⁴⁰ Catalano, 140–41, who points out that Tribraço was called divine by Tito Vespasiano Strozzi and Aretino by Ariosto, both “per evidente iperbole.” The adjective appeared with Ariosto’s name in a 1545 edition of the *Erbolato*, a dedicatory letter for a Lyon edition of 1543 and in a Venetian edition of 1542.

¹⁴¹ “di quanti si sono ritrovati perfetti Poeti, / così ne gli antichi secoli, come à nostri / di, niuno ve ne habbia, che al divino/M. Ludovico Ariosto preferir si debba;” Preface.

¹⁴² Michele Catalano, *Vita di Ludovico Ariosto*, Geneva, 1931, 141. See also, R. Mortimer, “The Author’s Image; Sixteenth-Century Printed Portraits,” *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n.s. VII, 1996, no. 2, 37–40.

¹⁴³ *Difesa*, unpag.: “CAR l’Ariosto è pur huomo di tanta fama, non solo in Italia, ma quasi nel mondo tutto...DIA poc che il suo Orlando è stato traciotto in tante lingue, che non sola la Spagnuola, la Francese, & la Tedesca, ma altre, infino all’Arabica (se vero è quel che si dice) è stata vaga di cantarlo, o di ragionarlo: il che non è avvenuto (per quel ch’io sappia) di nessun altro libro nell’età nostra, & forse nelle passate.”

If one did not take proper account of the senses, the figures on a high dome would appear as mosquitoes or flies:

According to this thesis architects don't have to take account of appearances, but they only look at the true essence, and the figures painted in the vault of our dome ought to be three braccia and not more, and if they seem flies or mosquitoes to us that will have to do, since the intellect understands this as truth, and Michelangelo and Brunelleschi have done badly in their buildings to increase the size of the figures according to the proportions of the elevation. And Vitruvius and Alberti have given false rules about this. A great law: to make a thing displeasing to the senses, of which it is the object, because otherwise the intellect would have to adjust.¹⁴⁴

Perspective, the old weapon on behalf of the visual arts as a liberal and rational art, here becomes a set of laws deserving to be broken. Its rules must be understood in such a way as to please the viewer, or else they are worthless.¹⁴⁵ Aretino had praised Michelangelo in similar terms as early as 1537.¹⁴⁶ Ariosto, because he pleases the senses, is granted the freedom to defy the laws of reason. Something very like “docere et delectare” is here asserted once again (though with nary a nod in the direction of Horace). Ariosto wins over Tasso, Dante, and Petrarch because he accomplishes his poetry “more with natural, or divine, fury, than with art, very studied” (“piu con naturale, o divin furore, che con arte, molto ricercata”). Precisely because it is divine and inspired, his art need not follow all the rules.

Braided with this debate about the limits of reason is another debate, about whether modernity can equal antiquity. The achievement of the ancient epic poets is seen as so very impressive that it can only be called divine.¹⁴⁷ The ancients made “miracoli.” And it is not clear that the

¹⁴⁴ “Secondo questo discorso gli architetti non avrebbono à tener conto di quel, che pare: ma guardar solo alla verità dell'essere: e le figure dipinte nella volta della nostra Cupola dovrebbero essere di tre braccia, e non più: e se ci paressero mosche, o zanzare avrebbe à bastare, che lo intelletto conoscesse egli la verità: e male avrebbon fatto nelle lor fabbriche, e Michelagnolo, e Pippo à crescere le misure de' corpi, secondo le proporzioni de'altezza: e false regole intorno à questo sarebbon quelle di Vitruvio, e di Liombattista. Bella legge: fare una cosa, che spiaccia al senso, del quale elle è oggetto, perchè poi l'intelletto v'habbia à riparere egli;” *Difesa*, unpag.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ruscelli, 1573, who also cites the rules of perspective, as apparent in the woodcut illustrations to the poem.

¹⁴⁶ “Guardate dove ha posto la pittura Michelagnolo con lo smisurato de le sue figure, dipinte con le maestà del giudizio, non col meschino de l'arte,” Aretino/Proaccioli, *Lettere*, 343.

¹⁴⁷ Giovanni Battista Attendolo, himself called of “mirabile ingegno” by Pellegrino,

same can be done in the *volgare*, no matter how good a mind (*ingegno*) is at work.¹⁴⁸

Some of this debate flourished after Michelangelo's death, when his reputation was already less prominent. But it began when Michelangelo was at the height of his fame, in the 1540s. The divinities of Ariosto and Michelangelo were particularly analogous in those middle decades because in both cases *i divini* produced controversial work for a society not much accustomed to that. There was an element of doubt, whether *Orlando Furioso* or the *Last Judgment* or the design for St. Peter's might be bad, since following the rules constituted the essence of art as a liberal art and science. Titian simply followed nature; in his case the comparison with antiquity was less pressing. But cultural self-respect hung on whether that which was not like ancient example, yet manifestly artful, could be anything other than inferior to it.

For his supporters, no moderation was used in the divinization of Ariosto. From humble love poet he evolved into into quasi-Messiah. Porcacchi called it a "divin poema" in 1566, and spoke of Ariosto's natural talent, by virtue of which he was released from the normal obedience to rules. Reminiscent as this lavish language is of Vasari's encomium of Michelangelo as the culmination of modern art, in the biography soon to be republished in expanded form, Ruscelli in 1556 had gone even further. Ariosto is likened to an angel of the apocalypse: an opinion billed as not Ruscelli's personal one but that of all *dotti*:

this author certainly was given to us by the very gracious God to be our true light, and as a glorious herald of our being near the time in which the divine Majesty will bring to conclusion every glory of his in a culminating finale.¹⁴⁹

However, Ariosto and Michelangelo both spoke of themselves in terms quite opposed to such bombast, even humbly. In *Orlando Furioso* Ariosto referred to himself as of "poco ingegno" and made no invocation to the Muses. Instead he cast himself as "l'umil servo" to his local prince, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. The inscription on his house deemed

says as interlocutor: "giongere all'ultima perfettione...non si può da ingegno humano: ma noi chiamiamo perfetti poeti Omero, & Vergilio, perche de gli altri si sono fatti vicini à questa perfettione," *Replica*, 237.

¹⁴⁸ *Replica*, 288–90.

¹⁴⁹ "questo scrittore sia certamente stato dato in questa età nostra da Dio benignissimo alla nostra Italia per un vero sole di questi secoli, & per un glorioso annuntio d'esser vicino il tempo, che la divina Maestà sua la voglia finir di tener nel colmo d'ogni sua gloria;" Ariosto, 1556.

it: "Parva, sed apta mihi" (Small, but right for me). When he was challenged about the disparity between the magnificent structures he described in his poem and the relative meagerness of his *casetta*, he replied, according to Pigna, "arranging stones and arranging words are not the same thing."¹⁵⁰

Michelangelo in his poems was similarly self-denigrating. This befits the love poet, who humbles himself before his mistress as one divine, perfect, and proud. In his personal conduct Michelangelo could swing unpredictably between humble and imperious, as though between lover and beloved, or between Settignano peasant and aristocrat, scion of the Canossa. Michelangelo wrote in 1525 to his collaborator Sebastiano del Piombo of his characteristic melancholy and craziness ("mio melin-chonicho, o vero del mio pazzo"),¹⁵¹ and in 1549 to his old friend Giovan Francesco Fattuci: "You will say that I am old and mad; but I answer that there is no better way of keeping sane and free from anxiety than being mad."¹⁵² He also refers to his reputation as a bit nutty and called himself "a poor man of little worth."¹⁵³ Yet he asserted his respectability, that he was not like those who ran a shop.¹⁵⁴ Like a poetical lover, he was *nobile*, yet rendered *basso* and *pazzo* by circumstance.

Orlando's *pazzia*, that which renders him *furioso* and even *terribile* [fig. 21],¹⁵⁵ constituted a kind of Dantesque *selva* in the eyes of the commentators. Orlando runs through the forest in his madness, at the conclusion of the poem rather than at the beginning. Indeed to speak of oneself as monstrous, grotesque, or terrible seems to have

¹⁵⁰ "porvi le pietre, & porvi le parole, non è il medesimo." *Orlando Furioso*, 1556, *Vita*, unpag.

¹⁵¹ *Carteggi*, III, 156.

¹⁵² Wittkowers, *Born*, 74; *Carteggi*, IV, 260: "voi direte bene che io sia vecchio e pazo: e io vi dico che, per istar sano e con manco passione, non ci truovo meglio che la pazzia." Some of this way of talking goes back to the Quattrocento Medici circle; cf. Lorenzo de' Medici in Angelo Poliziano, *Tagebuch*, ed. A. Wesselski, Jena, 1929, 90: "ne farà tanti egli [errori], che mi farà tener savio."

¹⁵³ "povero huomo di poco valore," *Carteggi*, III, 27, Jan. 26, 1524, to Piero Gondi; that others complain "sopra mia bizzarria o pazzia che e' dichon che io ò, che non nuoce se non a mme, si son fondati a dir mala di me e a vituperarmi, che è el premio di tucti gl' uomini da bene;" and Jan. 20, 1542.

¹⁵⁴ 2 May 1548 to his nephew Leonardo, after telling him that he is not called Michelangelo, sculptor, but Michelangelo Buonarotti, "e che se un cictadino fiorentino vuol fare dipigniere una tavola da altare, che bisogna che e' truovi un dipintore i ché io non fu' mai pictore né scultore come chi ne fa boctega. Sempre me ne son guardato per l'onore di mie padre e de' mia frategli, ben io abbi servito tre papi, che è stato forza," *Carteggi*, IV, 299.

¹⁵⁵ Dolce, *Affigurati*, 397.

been something of a fashion among the Ariosti, Galileo included.¹⁵⁶ Self-burlesque was becoming a cultural property since Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, and "la pazzia" a *virtù*.¹⁵⁷ Its roots lay partly in the burlesque love poetry of Laurentian Florence, Luici Pulci not least among its practitioners. It was because of their continuing loyalty to Pulci that the Florentine Accademia della Crusca leapt to the defense of Ariosto in 1585. In burlesque, poetry was used to mock not only the particular beloved, but the whole culture of love. Erasmus initiated its second flowering, and in that atmosphere of craziness as sanity both Ariosto and Michelangelo participated.

Aretino, Michelangelo's fellow "divino," likewise was associated both with *pazzia* and with monstrosity. In October of 1532, he wrote to Conte Monfredo di Collato, "He who is crazy is blessed, and in his craziness he is pleasing to himself and to others."¹⁵⁸ The world's honor is but *pazzia*.¹⁵⁹ Aretino functions as a mock-idol, to whom homage is done and yet begrudged. One correspondent hails him facetiously with the words: "The follies of revering and adoring the most divine Signor (but with some pun, probably on Saint) Peter."¹⁶⁰ He too is called "mostro della natura," for he too was one who had broken the hierarchical norms inscribed in nature and in society.¹⁶¹

Almost twenty years before Vasari's *Lives*, Michelangelo entered the world of print in a work which explicitly connected love, *pazzia*, and *furia*. Michelangelo was first called divine by a poet working in a vein indirectly but palpably Florentine, Dantesque in parts, spiced with burlesque, and in need of interpretation to make it seemly. The vocabulary with which we now address Michelangelo's art may not be simply an Ariostan vocabulary, but it definitely has passed through an Ariostan lens.

¹⁵⁶ "Mostro son io più strano e più diforme/Che l'arpia," G. Galileo, *Scritti letterari*, ed. A. Chiari, Florence, 1970, 16. His father set Ariosto's verses; see H.M. Brown, "Vincenzo Galileo's First Book of Lute Music," Coehlo, *Music and Science in the Age of Galileo*, 153-75. (He also named a younger son Michelangelo.) On Bronzino's poems, "celebrations of sexuality;" see Parker, *Bronzino*; N.B. 205, n. 26, and 93, for Bronzino's description of Michelangelo as divine, his works as monsters. See also J. Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio*, Berkeley, 1993, 106.

¹⁵⁷ Landi, *Paradossi*, 54: "la virtù della pazzia."

¹⁵⁸ "È beato colui chi è pazzo, e ne la pazzia sua compiace ad altri e a se stesso," *Lettere*, 85.

¹⁵⁹ *Lettere*, 436.

¹⁶⁰ "Le pazzie in reverire & adorare il divinissimo S. Pietro," *Lettere a Aretino*, 325, from Girolamo Ruscelli.

¹⁶¹ *Lettere à*, Libro secondo, 390, in 1551.

In particular, *furore*, a concept known from Plato and Ficino,¹⁶² changed in the era of Ariosto's popularity into something distinctly less august. Landino had needed to read (or misread) Plato to convince himself of the divine nature of poetry; Ariosto was more independent intellectually. He made poetry which was deliberately not divine, though certainly it was about madness. When he translated Pliny, Landino described Seleion as *furioso*, because he broke his marbles when they did not match his intentions. Yet he never explicitly conflated poetic and artistic inspiration. Ariosto did make that analogy when he compared himself to a sculptor, and moreover, his hero broke trees while *furioso*. A bit later, Vasari was happy to compare poets and artists working furiously:

the arts of design, not to limit it to painting, are like poetry, and who knows this knows also that poems spoken from poetical inspiration are the truest and good and the best that are achieved, since the works by excellent masters in the arts of design are better when they are made at a single stroke in the impetus of that fury, than when one proceeds daydreaming, cautiously, with labor and weariness.¹⁶³

Michelangelo, as the crazed lover-artist, addressed the marble as his ideal beloved. If this is a valid analogy, it is so as much by reference to Ariosto as to Plato or Petrarch. Michelangelo in his modest aspect was a low style poet cum lover; in his proud and imperious one he was again like the love poet, who characteristically turns the table on his poetical object and assumes hegemony over her, under Horace's admonition: *ars longa, vita brevis*. If we ask ourselves why writing poetry was important to Michelangelo, more so and earlier than for his peers, a piece of the answer lies in this duality of self-characterization, traditional for the love poet and convenient for Michelangelo as one himself so outside any norms, social as well as artistic.

¹⁶² See *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, I, London, 1975, no. 52, 98, 4 March 1474: "Plato adds that some very unskilled men are thus possessed by the Muses, because divine providence wants to show mankind that the great poems are not the invention of men but gifts from Heaven;" see also M. Ficino, *Opera omnia*, I, Turin, 1959, 612ff., from Dec. 1457.

¹⁶³ Vasari/Marini, 289–90: "chi sa che l'arti del disegno, per non dir pittura solamente, sono alla poesia simili, sa ancora che come le poesie dettate dal furore poetico sono le vere e le buone e migliori che le stentate, così l'opere degli uomini eccellenti nell'arti del disegno sono migliori quando sono fatte a un tratto dalla forza di quel furore, che quando si vanno ghiribizzando a poco a poco con istento e con fatica." He goes on to say that *ingegni* vary, and that Bembo wrote poetry slowly.

* * *

Ariosto had taken epic-length romance and mixed in a large measure of burlesque. His Orlando, mad like Achilles or Hercules, is at the same time peculiarly modern, the poem as well as the character. Heir not only to the local forebear Boiardo, with his direct precedent *Orlando innamorato* (1484–95), but also to Laurentian poetry, in particular its counterpoint of burlesque and rapture, Ariosto's great romance distanced itself from any one model—more than that, it gloried in a cornucopia of reference. The poem was a compendium of cultural memory, rather than an affirmation of identification with the classical past. Like pastoral, one of the prime pleasures it offered was description—of female beauty, but also of landscape, and even of the fantastical or monstrous.

Female beauty, ostensibly a primary theme of poetical production, was celebrated alongside the sensuous pleasures of landscape. In the case of the reclining *al fresco* figure, the analogy is made explicit. As Otto Pächt long ago observed, the visual genre of landscape began in poetry.¹⁶⁴ So perhaps it was to be expected that painting would eventually turn to landscape subjects. Like women, landscape could be counted as beautiful, natural possessions and therefore suitable attributes of the patron, or of the poet trailing in the patron's shadow. However, just as not all Italian Renaissance painted landscapes were gentle and arable, so not all portrayals of womankind idealized its beauty. Particularly in the literary tradition, the grotesque beloved provided counterpoint to the ideal one, as the stony hard obdurate beloved to the gracious and potentially fruitful one. Lorenzo de' Medici himself sang both of the inspiration of love, of youth and ardor, and love's absurdity. The practice of burlesque love poetry that Lorenzo fostered, the turning upside down of Petrarchan eulogy, complicated models of artistic creativity for anyone who was willing.¹⁶⁵ The Leonardo who delighted in drawing grotesques, the Michelangelo who knocked the teeth out of his marble faun head, achieving laughter and approval at one blow, both knew poems like *La Nencia*:

¹⁶⁴ Otto Pächt, "Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscape," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XIII, 1950, 13–47.

¹⁶⁵ Emison, 1997, 111–25. See also, Jackson Cope, *Secret Sharers in Italian Comedy*, Durham, N.C., 1996, 39; Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's 'Primavera' and the Humanistic Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent*, Princeton, 1992. See also

Her rosy lips appear to me as coral.
 And there behind them are her teeth—two rows—
 More white than those of any horse, and on
 Both sides she's more than twenty, I suppose.
 Her cheeks are white resembling finest crystal,
 And ruddy in the middle like a rose—
 All this without the help of rouge or cream,
 A prettier thing you've surely never seen.¹⁶⁶

In Leonardo and elsewhere, we find articulations of the idea that Nature may not be fundamentally good, that its divinity is in question, and that beauty and ugliness are not simply opposites but partners within this newly ambivalent nature. Michelangelo drew, on a sheet now in the Louvre, the head of a faun over the head of a beautiful woman [fig. 22],¹⁶⁷ as though revealing that he, too, shared the idea of nature's ambivalent significance. "Nature tends to evil," wrote Dolce,¹⁶⁸ a sentiment distantly but palpably correlate with aspects of Lutheranism and reminiscent of Leonardo's fascination with nature's destructive powers. Ariosto ended *Orlando Furioso* with the self-belying motto, "PRO BONO MALUM" (In front of the good [is] the bad). One need not go so far as to suspect Lutheran leanings scattered throughout Italian culture; that would be to confuse cause and effect. Rather, some of the stimuli that produced Reformation ideas were stimuli also operative in Italy, affecting conceptions of nature and its imitation. The ideal realm, that province special sometimes to art and always to theology, became distinctly dusty in Arcady. It became less rarified even in Rome. Michelangelo was divine not so much because his works were impossibly pure of form, but because his figures felt the strain of desire that could be conflated with the poet's, or even with any

the uppity beloved of madrigal: Martha Feldman, "Authors and Anonyms," in *Cultures*, 184–85.

¹⁶⁶ Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, tr. J. Thiem, University Park, 1991, 183–84; "Le labbra rosse paion de corallo;/ ed havvi dentro duo filar de denti,/ che son piú bianchi che que' del cavallo:/ da ogni lato ve n'ha piú de venti./ Le gote bianche paion di cristallo/ sanz'altro liscio, né scorticamenti,/ rosse ento 'l mezzo, quant'è una rosa,/che non si vede mai sí bella cosa;" Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere scelte*, ed. B. Maier, Novara, 1969, 56.

¹⁶⁷ Michael Hirst, *Michelangelo, Draftsman*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, 1988, 90, no. 37. The head underneath is often taken to be by a pupil.

¹⁶⁸ "Natura inchina al male," *Modi*, 267. Cf. "La Natura...in molte cose ci è stata piu presto crudelissima matregna, che benigna matre," *La Pazzia*, unpag. See also Brann, *Debate*, 252, 361ff.

lover's, libido. This attraction even Savonarola acknowledged as basic in his sermon on the art of dying well, though with the objective of turning that desire toward God.

This Florentine foretaste of Rabelais (or even of Baudelaire), this turning of the cult of beauty onto its head, this admixture of the modern, the medieval and the ancient in the *canzoni* of Florence, eroded the severity of the early humanists. Before Savonarola moved in to re-establish a simple aesthetic of the precarious soul, artists and their fellow citizens had gotten a good taste of aesthetic exuberance at the expense of didactic, or even remotely sincere, content. Between Dante, whose feelings in the *Comedia* were never doubted, and Petrarch, whose Laura was rumored very early on to be a fabrication,¹⁶⁹ there lay the gulf of an art primarily didactic and rule-abiding versus an art primarily pleasurable and less predictable. Indeed Galileo would say later—with echoes of Brunì—that Dante had been called divine for his science, for the orderly architecture of his great construction.¹⁷⁰ Favoring Petrarch normally correlated with a fundamentally more secular attitude toward art, and in the sixteenth century the pendulum was favoring Petrarch. Ariosto and Michelangelo both contrived to appeal to these opposed traditions, the Dantesque and the Petrarchan. Yet at the same time they both felt the tension between the two, and expressed it in a version of inspired *pazzia* that was less reminiscently Platonic than proleptically Freudian. The same Michelangelo who described himself as grotesquely misshapen from painting the Sistine Ceiling (“*l petto fo d'arpia*”—the same female monster Galileo would compare himself with) also painted the *Temptation* with an implicit lewdness to rival Marcantonio's *I Modi* [fig. 23]. Without attempting to pronounce on the issue of Michelangelo's personal sexuality, we can say that the theme of sexuality insinuates itself into his art, as it does into the art of his contemporaries, including Ariosto. Creativity itself was conceptualized along sexualized lines. It was not so much that artists exercised their freedom by picturing licentious subjects, as that licentiousness had been appropriated by them as an allegory of their creativity, and the

¹⁶⁹ See on this later, Giraldi, 169–70, who does not think that a living woman could be addressed as “diva,” and Dolce, *Affigurati*, 205v.

¹⁷⁰ “corografo e architetto di più sublime giudizio, quale finalmente è stato il nostro Dante: onde se quegli, che si accortamente svelò la mirabil fabbrica del cielo, e si esquisatamente disegnò il sito della terra, fu reputato degno del nome di Divino, non doverà già il medesimo nome essere per le già dette ragioni al nostro Poeta conteso,” *Studi*, ed. Gigli, 4.

irrationality previously denigrated as feminine had been assimilated to their understanding of how one broke with precedent.

* * *

Michelangelo straddled the burlesque and lyric in poetry, the grotesque and heroic in the visual arts (arguably also the burlesque in his early *Bacchus*). Ariosto similarly bridged modes, as satirist and by using the *verso sdrucciolo* associated with lyric and pastoral on the one hand (and harder to count the feet of), and heroic verse on the other. This introduction of the comic into elite culture was a pivotal move. The eventual response was to insist on dignifying whatever seemed low and comic, as had happened earlier with Dante. Still, for a couple of decades a more complex situation prevailed. As the culture of love became self-mocking, the moral high ground of the poet was endangered right along with the ideal status of the beloved. It was perhaps because poets and women were now endangered divinities that the artist was able to join them.

With a shift in aesthetic hegemony toward the interpreter, whether spectator or reader or critic, came a change in the role of the poetic beloved. It became possible to objectify women without the point being their objectification. They acted as placeholders.¹⁷¹ This is not to deny the existence of misogyny or its relevance to burlesque poetry, but by the time Francesco Berni established burlesque as a standard item in the literary life of Florence, the point of the exercise lay more with *verba* than *res*. What we have recently called Mannerism is in part this phenomenon, whereby the female object, whether of burlesque or of straight lyrics, functions as an excuse for the exercise of *ingegno* understood as capricious, or essentially irreverent. Women were like buffoons, in that they provided a relaxing opposite, that which was simple and natural, something to be loved rather than feared. Artists were to women as princes were to buffoons, appropriators, respectively, of beauty and wit.

Proverbially, female beauty was said to consist in a certain resemblance to male, and male beauty in a certain resemblance to female: “in proverbio si dice, la bellezza in Donna con sembianza di maschio, & nel

¹⁷¹ L. Martines, “The Politics of Love Poetry in Renaissance Italy,” in *Historical Criticism and the Challenge of Theory*, ed. J. Smarr, Urbana, 1993, 129–44, suggests correspondences between the beloved and the urban upper classes, as well as to the poet himself.

maschio con sembianza di femmina.”¹⁷² Given this habit of conceptual mirroring, poets—Michelangelo included—could assume the attributes of the beloved, from highhandedness to divinity. Aretino, analogously, described the world from a female perspective in the racy *Ragionamenti*, though that work belonged unmistakably to low art.

Women in burlesque, like women in love lyrics, act metonymously for nature, but a newly ambivalent understanding of nature. This nature was inadvertently ripening for scientific investigation by becoming less a proof of God’s existence than the subject of observation, in both its regularities and irregularities. Vasari, because he was so inimical to caprice, so wedded to the notion of the artist as studious, nature as essentially noble, and the Duke as absolutely powerful, didn’t do justice to this part of his own culture. He saw Michelangelo as aberrant, rather than as one who, along with others, recognized the complexities of nature.

* * *

What was at stake in the analogy between artist and love poet was not only abandoning the model of epic and its idealization, but also a developing narcissism, that Ur-artistic modality, a bond between the artist and his work. Just as the love poet tends toward loving his own poetry and viewing the woman as pretext, so the artist acquires a certain highhandedness toward the natural model. Michelangelo’s representations of women are not so much unconvincing due to lack of female models, as converted into the sort of modern Muses he felt comfortable with.

How did Michelangelo dare conceive of the *Night* [fig. 24], a figure so unlike any other reclining nude in art until then? Her expression of longing, adopted by Pontormo, is also ancestor to Bernini’s *St. Theresa*. She is a female analogue to a river god; she is also a woman who has given birth. She lies there uneasily, on the sarcophagus, oddly reminiscent of a river god and yet not: a metaphor for his own state of mind, tied to antiquity and yet not. Her portrayal as having been fruitful vies for importance with the formal reference. To see self as female would not have been far from seeing self as monstrous. The masks on the frieze behind her in the Medici Chapel link visually with the bats on the capitals of the Laurentian vestibule, and more discretely, with the mask on the back of the Active Duke as well

¹⁷² “proverbially one says, female beauty has the look of masculine, and in the male it has a resemblance to female,” Ringhieri, 130.

as the bat on his money box. These masks are as much attributes of *Night* as the mask positioned under her shoulder. The *Night* is a sculpture by a poet, plausibly Virgilian in resonance (for Virgil invoked night as memorably as Homer did dawn), and a sculpture to which many poems were dedicated. To produce monsters implied that one had worked from *furia* rather than from reason; to produce highly ordered grotesques—monsters placed just so—implied control even over rulelessness.

The maidenly *Dawn* is a visual analogue of the poet's beloved [fig. 25], opposite the matronly *Night*, which signifies the fruitfulness of its creator.¹⁷³ The men, *Dusk* and *Day*, are both middle-aged, as was Michelangelo. The Chapel's allegory is, at least on one level, an allegory of a complicated notion of self, of self subsumed to political power and of political power subsumed to religion—three forms of divinity, from weakest to strongest.

Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* [fig. 26], like Michelangelo's *Night*, shows a mature and sexually aware woman, neither the virginal beloved of Petrarchan tradition, nor a courtesan.¹⁷⁴ Although that painting presumably began as a commissioned portrait, we may speculate that it became something more, that that fantastic rocky background, reminiscent of the *Virgin of the Rocks* compositions, develops a new symbolic significance for landscape, not as an emblem of fruitfulness but of impregnability (Lorenzo de' Medici's Nencia "ha cuore com'un ciottol duro"). Landscape, sometimes symbolic of nature as subject to art and design, here signifies something wilder, more inspired and intuitive.¹⁷⁵

Michelangelo's *teste divine* also belong to, and comment on, the tradition of Petrarch and Lorenzo de' Medici [fig. 27]. For Vasari they were studies in ideal beauty, made for those elusive gentleman amateurs to copy and thereby practice their hands. They doubtless relate as well to poetical imaginings of the ideal beloved; but if we take into account a verso which include studies of male genitalia,¹⁷⁶ and a related sheet

¹⁷³ On the attribution of this etching to Battista Franco, see Raphael Rosenberg, "The reproduction and publication of Michelangelo's Sacristy: drawings and prints by Franco, Salviati, Naldini and Cort," in *Reactions to the Master: Michelangelo's Effect on Art and Artists in the Sixteenth Century*, eds. F. Ames-Lewis and P. Joannides, Aldershot, 2003, 114–36.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. David Alan Brown, *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo's 'Ginevra de' Benci' and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2001.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. P. Emison, "Leonardo's Landscape in the *Virgin of the Rocks*," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, LVI, 1993, 116–18.

¹⁷⁶ *Zenobia*, Uffizi, De Tolnay 307, the source of our fig. 29. Cf. a drawing in which

such as that of the head of a faun drawn over an ideal female head [fig. 22],¹⁷⁷ the project to which they belong begins to seem less effete ideal, less decorous, and less bounded by genre.

The *teste divine* were influential, one might almost say popular [fig. 29]. Although their lines melded into a mesh perhaps deliberately calculated to foil any engraver, they were much copied, often painted. They were innovative; they were not conceived in any particular loyalty to the antique. Their closest formal sources lie in Michelangelo's own work, though they cannot be explained away as demonstrations of his *maniera*. The interlockedness of beauty and the grotesque is a theme they share with *Mona Lisa*.¹⁷⁸ It may well have been the ambivalence of Leonardo and Michelangelo toward that common cultural icon, the beloved, which enabled them to develop a sense for the versatility of art.¹⁷⁹ The Leonardo who portrayed the sensuous and horrible Medusa on a peasant's shield, and the Michelangelo fascinated with Schongauer's engraving of St. Anthony tormented by grotesque devils, representing female attractiveness with reverse valence, had much in common. Their sense of the potential repulsiveness of conventional female beauty opened up for them art which did not pursue physical perfection. When Vasari needed an adjectival peg for each, Leonardo got *grazia* (the genuine, natural version) and Michelangelo *terribilità*, but the similarities remain regardless.

The tightly bound tresses of those *teste* and their descendants visually renounced the loose golden tresses of the Petrarchan tradition and proclaim artifice rather than closeness to nature. The horns and fantastic accoutrements offer no iconographic clues, but instead suggest a

a woman with hanging breasts appears face-to-face with a man whose helmet takes the form of a boar; Archivio Buonarrotti, De Tolnay 312, black chalk, c. 1525–32; and a drawing of a dragon with breasts, De Tolnay 263v, charcoal, c. 1524–25; and one in the Fogg, Cambridge, Ma., in which grotesque oil lamps are paired with a slightly Botticelli-like though aged, female figure, De Tolnay 438, fig. 28.

¹⁷⁷ Louvre, De Tolnay 95, c. 1514–20; the underdrawing attributed to a pupil.

¹⁷⁸ On the grotesque aspect of which, see not only Water Pater, but below.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962), in which the sly and lecherous artistic "genius" is done in while cowering behind a painting reminiscent of Reynolds' *Miss Gideon and her brother William*, private collection (minus the brother, among other variations). In this twentieth-century version, the Beatrice-aged beloved is paired with two writers, both led to destruction, one of them mad and the other a "genius," a television personality. Cf. also the etching by Van Dyck, *Titian and his Mistress*, based on a lost original by Titian, which some at least of his successors took to be a self-portrait of the old artist with a courtesan and a death's head; Carl Depauw and Ger Luijten, *Anthony van Dyck as a Printmaker*, exh. cat., Antwerp/Amsterdam, 1999, no. 32, 240–48.

tincture of the grotesque. Like Ariosto's Angelica, these women insinuate an Orlandesque *furia* rather than more benign epiphanies. They do not imply *furia* via their technique; they are far from sketches. On the contrary, their technique is meticulous. They are modern, artificial, they imply irrationality: like grotesques [fig. 28], they are icons of artfulness, and unlike *istorie* they do not disclose themselves satisfactorily. When the female figure acquires as valence artificiality rather than naturalness, then the artist portraying that figure personifies not art, but a second-order nature, a world of monsters and harpies. It is as though Michelangelo, in his freest moments of thinking about his own creativity, imagined himself as a pagan worshipping Art in the guise of a most ungracious goddess, a goddess only he could visualize, a kind of personification of marble, not unrelated to Petrarch's stony beloved.

Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo—for all of the disparities amongst what we know of their personal feelings for women—each exploited the worship of the beloved as a theme in their art, and demonstrated thereby their reliance on the model of poetry. Likewise “the great Titian, father of coloring,” was said to create another nature by union with the beautiful object, an idea dependent on Petrarch as well as Plato:

he, according to what I have heard him say himself, and according to those who have been present while he was working, when he wants to draw or color any figure, he has in front of him an actual woman or a man, and this object so moves the corporeal sight of him, and his spirit so penetrates into the object which he is portraying, that it is as if he is aware of nothing else than that, and he seems to the bystanders to be totally abstracted [his spirit seems gone]. From which abstraction one understands that he in his work accomplishes little less than another nature, so well does he represent the flesh and features of the model. Thus one may suppose happens to a woman and a man making love.¹⁸⁰

Michelangelo may have had a more intense relationship with the marble than with the model. Nevertheless, any artist working at the time

¹⁸⁰ “il gran Titiano, padre del colorire; il quale, secondo ho udito di sua bocca, & di quegli che sono ritrovati presenti a' suoi lavori, quando volea disegnare o colorir alcuna figura, tenendo avanti una donna o un huomo naturale, cotal oggetto così movea la vista corporale di lui, & il spirito così penetrava nell'oggetto di chi ritirava, che facendo vista di non sentire altra cosa, che quella, veniva a parere a' circostanti d'esser andato in ispirito. dalla quale astrattione si cagionava che egli nell'opra sua riuscisse poco men che un altra natura, tanto bene esprimendo la carnatura & fattezze d'essa. Così dunque avenir si estimera della donna & dell'uomo che s'amano infra di loro,” Antonio Perseo, *Trattato dell'ingegno dell'uomo*, Venice, 1576, 97–98.

would “naturally” have thought of the artist as like the lover, and creation as procreation. The metaphors were common property.

Girolamo Ruscelli explained that poets love their verses more than tailors their clothes or parents their children, because they give them both material and form,¹⁸¹ and it is not hard to imagine that Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo were similarly obsessed. So were their viewers, at times. Leonardo wrote about the effect of a portrait of his on its owner, exciting his lust to such an extent that he had it removed;¹⁸² and we might place *Mona Lisa*, his never-delivered commission from a Florentine bourgeois, as the answer of someone who loved the grotesque to the strictures of Zeuxis, for she is beautiful without being pretty or alluring, more terrible than charismatic, even monstrous, as Walter Pater famously described:

She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times.¹⁸³

This monumental woman, robust and a bit dreary of dress, set against a craggy landscape of wetness, that feminine element, emanates a sense of power without claiming high social status. Even by the standards of the time, she is a strange creature.

Raphael, rumored by Vasari to have died (indirectly) from sexual over-indulgence, left his signature on the arm bracelet of the boldest of all the nude responses to *Mona Lisa*, his *Fornarina*, presumably because the woman was his as well as the painting of her. Michelangelo when he signed the band across the chest of his Vatican *Pietà* of 1500 was making a claim upon the sculpture analogous to that of the poet to his beloved. And with that, he had set himself apart from the primary model of ancient art, because he was asserting an individualized, but even more so a potentially erratic and even crazed, artistic voice. The modes of the lover/poet were *pazzia* and *furia*—madness—rather than Christian inspiration. In general, when Renaissance artists put themselves in the position of imagining themselves as lovers and imagining their beloveds, fictive or real, as carnal Muses, they also abandoned the model of ancient art, in favor of a highly individualized and non-normative (though in some ways still conventional) artistic expression.

¹⁸¹ Ruscelli, *Comporre*, 8.

¹⁸² *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone'*, 230–31: “Et gia interviene a me far una pittura che rapresentava una cosa divina, la quale comperata dall'amante di quella, volse levarne la rapresentazione de tal Deità per poterla bacciare senza sospetto.”

¹⁸³ W. Pater, *The Renaissance*, New York, 1919, 103.

Because he was not bound to the norms of *grazia* as catalogued in treatises on female beauty, Michelangelo created a broader vocabulary of the female figure than any of his contemporaries. Unlike Dürer, his nearest rival in exploring beyond the Zeuxian norms, Michelangelo managed to expand what the ideal itself might mean, rather than merely escaping from a single ideal type.¹⁸⁴ Whereas Dürer resorted to typical types according to age and class, Michelangelo invented ideal types that were not at all stereotypical, ones that ranged from young to old, and from humble to regal—and he did so more particularly for the fair sex. Rosso, who was so interested in many facets of Michelangelo's work, including the *teste divine*, which he had made more ornamental and elegant, not only made a copy of the now-lost *Leda*, compositionally related to the *Night*, but a chalk drawing of a big-bellied if not pregnant, distinctly not elegant, yet not old nude woman.¹⁸⁵ Compositionally the latter has nothing to do with the *Night*, but inventively it may be a direct descendent. Both picture female fertility as a lesser rival of the fertility of men's minds.

The loosening decorum with respect to sexual subjects had as its corollary a reconceptualization of the visual artist according to the pattern of the poet's beloved: sexual *pazzia*, or libido, and artistic *furio* were close cousins, all the more so once Ariosto's *Furioso* was published. A small book called *La pazzia*, a carnivalesque romp in which libido is credited for a world normally upside down,¹⁸⁶ reflects the same consensus that concupiscence, and in particular "la divina, & singular Pazzia" of women, explains more about the world than reason. *Pazzia* is more effective than a buffoon; it makes you forget both arts and sciences; it ranges from the divine *pazzia* and *furor* of prophets and poets to the *terribile* and *furioso pazzia* of Turks and Lutherans, but it centers around:

the lusty Cupid, who is the most beautiful of the gods, and always a child, because always irrational.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ What Dürer was trying to do was similar, which probably explains Michelangelo's harshness toward someone he saw as a distracting rival.

¹⁸⁵ Eugene Carroll, *Rosso Fiorentino: Drawings, Prints, and Decorative Arts*, exh. cat., National Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1987, n. 3, 58–60.

¹⁸⁶ Paul Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530–1560: Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolò Franco, & Ortensio Lando*, Madison, 1969, 168–70, where it is dated c. 1541; on the attribution, see Appendix V. As Grendler observes, the work mimics Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, but could not be deemed a translation. There were six Italian and two French editions, at least.

¹⁸⁷ "il lascivio Cupido che è bellissimo sopra tutti gli altri Dei, et sempre fanciullo, perche sempre è pazzo;" Anonymous, *La Pazzia*, Venice?, 1530?, unpag.

Even Savonarola was associated with *pazzia*. He often called himself *pazzo*, and preached on *santa pazzia*, such as that shown by the dancing David, whom Savonarola termed both *buffone* and *pazzo*. A *lauda* by Girolamo Benivieni was titled, "About the love of Jesus Christ called holy craziness." ("dello amore di Iesù Christo chiamata la savia pazzerella"). Moreover, Savonarola remained a respected figure in Ferrara, from whence he had come and where ideas of reformation flourished.¹⁸⁸ Savonarola was lauded there as *divus*,¹⁸⁹ though (as far as we know) only after Ariosto was already dead. Ortensio Landi, presumed author of the Carnival booklet, took refuge in Ferrara. How much of this supplementary culture of *pazzia* Ariosto or Michelangelo may have been aware of, let alone consciously responded to, must remain a matter of speculation, but particularly in Michelangelo's case, the notions of saintliness and *pazzia* may reverberated one with the other, and more so because of Savonarola's career. Savonarola's sermon of 2 November 1496, on the art of dying well, began with the culture of love, comparing the animal appetite that naturally attracted one to a woman with the potentially all-consuming love of God. He proceeded to argue that crickets and rabbits and peasants all were wiser than the so-called wise with their laws and "scientia," because those simple creatures directed their lives toward God. Those who do not remember death show "O grande pazia!"¹⁹⁰ And, Savonarola urges, when you are tempted by ambition, say to yourself, "I am crazy!" ("Pazo che io sono"), because the grand men you look at with envy you ought to see as dust and ashes, dead as they will be. Paint Death in your house to remind you, he urged. Michelangelo did paint Death in his stairwell,¹⁹¹ and he did refuse to look up to grand *signori*.

Among the themes of the culture of *pazzia* was the idea that value was inconstant. If value and taste were as variable as cultural whim, rather than ruled by immutable, natural law, then the shocking conclusion might well be that antiquity offered no infallible guide to moder-

¹⁸⁸ P. Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy*, Oxford, 1998, 82–85, 6, Ch. VIII. See also, in particular on the relation between secular and sacred songs, Iain Fenlon, *Music and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy*, Oxford, 2002, "Music and Reform: The Savonarolan Legacy," 44–66, esp. 63–65.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁹⁰ "semplicemente servano gli commandamenti di Dio senza tanta scientia... costoro sono piu savi che gli savi Theologi/Philosophi/Legisti/Oratori/& Poeti che spendono il tempo in pensare loro argomenti," *Predica dell'arte del ben morire*, Florence, 1497, unpag.

¹⁹¹ Michelangelo, *Rime*, 1975, 171.

nity. Fornari, the early advocate of the *immortale* and *divino* Ariosto, the poet who so deviated from ancient precedent and from Aristotelian rules, grappled with this very problem:

they are crazy those that are inveigled; and who so studiously seek gems, and study the value and quality of them, which vary according to the taste of men, according to which many gems at one time are much praised, then worth nothing. And similarly with paintings, collected and then gotten rid of.¹⁹²

Fornari places his poet above “la depravata openione del vulgo,”¹⁹³ but the basic problem was intractable: the universality of cultural judgment, threatened first when individual visual styles developed of equal excellence, and exacerbated by the case of Dürer’s naturalistic yet indecorous art, was increasingly under seige as literature in the *volgare* (and even *volgari*) developed. The whole issue of whether art equaled or surpassed ancient example tended to fade away, like the question of liberal arts status, once a more complicated notion of vernacular culture evolved. When Pietro Bembo and others initiated the idea that Tuscan

¹⁹² “Son pazzi anchor quegli che si ne sono invaghiti; et si studiosamente cercano le gemme, & la qualita et valore di quelle, ilquale secondo la stima de gli huomini o cresce, o sceme: onde molte gemme un tempo son pregiate molto, che poi nulla vagliono. Et il simile avviene delle pitture, lequali in brieve si disperdono;” Fornari, vol. II, 273ff. Cf. Landi, *Paradossi* 12–13: “per che si bramano adunque tanto? bramansi forse per possedere Diamanti, Rubini, Topatii, Smiraldi, o altre simili gioie? Se per questo si bramano, farsi nel vero troppo vanamente: non veggiamo noi che il pregio di quelle, consiste o nell’appetito de ricchi & pazzi huomini, o nella parola de bugiardo mercatanti? non veggiamo altresì che il prezzo & la reputatione loro è piu d’ogn’altra cosa all’incertezza & varietà soggetta? l’Agata c’hora è in si vil pregio, fu in grandissima stima, & Pirro una già n’hebbe qual tenne maravigliosamente cara: il Zaffiro, perche imita il color celeste, fu in gran reputatione appresso gli antichi, hora quasi si vilipende, & come cosa di poco valore si tiene, il Diamante poco si prezzava, hora è tenuto gratissimo, lo Topatio era havuto caro dalle donne, hora (non so per qual cagione) in si vil stima l’habbino, lo Smiraldo fu già in suprema dignità & al presente se ne sta agietto, & par che si doglia della sua cambiata sorte;” “what is it, after all, that you yearn for so? Do you perhaps desire to own diamonds, rubies, topaz, emeralds, or other such jewels? If it is this you want you agitate yourself truly in excessive futility: do you not see that the price of these is determined by the appetites of crazy rich people, or by the claims of lying merchants? Do you not also see that their price and esteem more than anything else is subject to whim and changeableness? Agates now are looked down on, but used to be prized, and pyrite formerly was thought tremendously dear: sapphire, because it imitates the color of the sky, was held in high estimation by the ancients, nor it is almost despised, and held to be a cheap thing, diamond was little admired, now is thought very pretty, topaz was liked by women, now (I don’t know why) it is not valued, emerald was before in high esteem and now it isn’t, and it seems that it grieves over its changed fortune.”

¹⁹³ Fornari, *La spositione*, 298.

linguistic culture was distinct from contemporary Florentine parlance, that there was a literary language founded on the great works of the Trecento but common to whomever studied usage carefully, the hold of Virgil and Cicero weakened. Ariosto had his claim to belong to Tuscan culture despite being Ferrarese, and Michelangelo, implicitly, was its champion, the person who best combined the heritage of Dante, Petrarch, and the ancients, while being himself more purely Florentine than any of them.

* * *

Michelangelo encompassed the spheres of both poet and beloved: filled with irrational fervor, divine, himself the goal rather than the seeker. His divinity licensed his caprice. Vasari resisted this conclusion, but later, more theoretical writers recognized that fundamental beliefs had shifted. The concept of caprice had early acceptance in music—the first musical *capricci* date to 1561—and by the time Gregorio Comanini wrote his treatise on the purpose of art in 1591, music had become an important model for the understanding of visual art. This it would still be in the time of Whistler and Kandinsky. The grotesque was ancestor to the caprice, and the caprice, in due course, was ancestor to abstraction. Aretino described Titian as “rather a monster of a new nature, than a divine spirit of painting” (“più tosto monstro d’una nuova natura, che spirito di pitture divino”).¹⁹⁴ A new nature and a divine art: they were two sides of the same coin, minted from the habit of comparing art and nature chiasmically (“l’arte, che si crede diventata la natura, e la natura, che si pensa conversa ne l’arte”),¹⁹⁵ which was itself reinforced by the habit of comparing antiquity and modernity, likewise chiasmically.

The Renaissance saw a flourishing of pornography, but also of the significance of female form. Not merely a type for beauty, adored like the Virgin, representation of the female form acted as a catalyst for getting beyond the norms of lifelikeness as the wellspring of *delectare* and beyond the antique as the source of *inventione*. Pleasure and invention were instantiated in the female form, most explicitly in *I Modi*, the engravings of sexual positions circulated widely in Rome in the 1520s. But even for artists so little interested in flesh and blood females as

¹⁹⁴ Aretino/Camesasca, Libro II, 252, letter of 1548 to Ferario. Cf. Payne, *Treatise*, 182, 228.

¹⁹⁵ Letter to Giovio, 1545, Aretino/Camesasca, II, 48.

Leonardo and Michelangelo, the female form, both the more traditional type of the beloved and the more mature type of the mother, acted metonymously for the irrational which was common both to transports of love and to artistic creativity. Divine was an adjective for women and for artists, not because artists had been feminized, but because procreativity was colonized. The model of geometric and rational perfection in the arts had been upheld by a humanist community that was itself now debilitated. Sacchetti had long since made the joke that the best painters were women, painting their faces—better he said, than God or nature.¹⁹⁶ *Colore* had long had associations with the irrational side of creativity, as opposed to *disegno*, used metonymously for reason. Michelangelo, the paragon of *disegno*, held more of the field of art because he was associated with *terribilità* and with the lover's irrational *furia*. The tormented writhings of his *ignudi* suggest the formal vocabulary of a lover, rather than of a hero.

Michelangelo's career cannot be organized around the issue of invention. He simply lacked that inventiveness which served to illustrate texts. Vasari promoted *disegno* as the concept according to which Michelangelo could be seen as surpassing all his contemporaries, and as the key by which architecture, sculpture, and painting could be unified. But for Michelangelo as for others, the most sensitive issue in the arts, from the time of *Orlando Furioso*, was sexual allure, or in aesthetic terms, pleasure, the *sdruciolare* long associated with poetry. Michelangelo's version of licentiousness was comparatively hygienic, since practical sexuality was not its primary locus; his inimitable quality was his *terribilità*, rather than Apelles' *charis*. For Michelangelo to become known not only as a poet, a painter, a sculptor, an architect, but also as an ascetic was to confound expectation, and to catapult thereby into a new category. If he was called "divine," he was by no means "divine" as Aretino or Ariosto was. All three were divine by virtue of licentiousness, but only Michelangelo was not personally licentious, and only he disdained *il volgo*, avoiding prints, practicing a style that was relatively inaccessible,¹⁹⁷ and maintaining his identity as a citizen of a lost Republic.

¹⁹⁶ Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, 136.

¹⁹⁷ "it seems to me that in painting and sculpture, nature has been generous and liberal to Michelangelo with all her riches, so that I am not to be blamed for saying that his figures are almost inimitable. Nor do I think that I have permitted myself to be carried away because, disregarding the fact that to this day he is the only one to handle the chisel and the brush both equally well and that today no record remains of the paintings of the ancients, we do have many examples of their statuary, and

Rulelessness was an issue disseminated throughout the culture. Castiglione's interest in *grazia* was one symptom of this cultural crux. He applied the concept to both art and life, language and people. With the *volgare* in particular, there were pressing questions about which ancient models to follow and how. Dolce (1508–68) started his commentary on Ariosto, printed in 1564, with the assertion that Petrarch and Boccaccio, just like sculptors, architects, and painters, had to obey rules.¹⁹⁸ The *volgare* was by its very nature less strict in its rules than Latin, he asserted. The *volgare* is:

so loosely regulated and so nuanced, that perhaps it is harder to write well in the vulgar tongue than in Latin.¹⁹⁹

Poetic language in particular was a focus of debate about the place of rule. Lyric love poetry was by its very nature less bound than epic. Women were thought less bound by rule than men, physically, intellectually, and morally. So using poetry and its favorite object, woman, as the model for artistic creativity allowed for the old dichotomy of nature versus art to be reconceptualized, this time with a bias in favor of the natural and intuitive rather than diligence, rule, science, and discipline.

Michelangelo practiced poetry because he admired Dante and Petrarch, but also because rulelessness was poetical by cultural definition. Once he conceived of himself as ruleless (perhaps as early as the *Bacchus*), his poetical self was increasingly validated, and increasingly important for his visual art. Conversely, Michelangelo's art was

to whom should he defer? Certainly to no one, in the judgment of men concerned with the art, unless we follow the opinions of the herd, who blindly admire antiquity, despising the geniuses and industry of their own time; although I have yet to hear anyone say a word to the contrary, to such an extent that this man has surpassed all envy," Condivi/Wohl, 93–94: "a me pare che nella pittura e scoltura la natura a Michelagnolo sia stata larga e liberale di tutte le sue ricchezze; sì che non son da esser ripreso, se ho detto le sue figure esser quasi inimitabili. Né mi pare in ciò d'avermi lasciato troppo trasportare, perciocché, lasciando andare ch'è stato solo, fin qui, che allo scarpello e al pennello insieme degnamente abbia posto mano, e che oggi delli antichi nella pittura non resti memoria alcuna, nella statuaria, che pur molte ce ne restano, a chi cede egli? Per giudizio delli omini dell'arte certamente a nessuno, se già non ce ne andiamo dietro all'openion del volgo, che senza altro giudicio ammira l'antichità, invidiando alli ingegni ed industria de' suoi tempi. Benché non sento per ancora che il contrario dica: di tanto questo uomo ha superata la invidia," Condivi/Nencioni, 53–54.

¹⁹⁸ "il medesimo è da dire nella Scoltura, nell'Architettura, e nella Pittura: lequal arti (e così qualunque altra) hanno le loro leggi, e i loro ordini tali, che non si debbono tralasciare," Dolce, *Affigurati*, "Ai lettori," 1.

¹⁹⁹ "così vaga regolata e gentile, che peravventura è più difficile a bene scrivere in lei, che nella Latina;" Dolce, 1564, ded.

so important to his contemporaries in part because they could see in his art an exemplary treatment of the very problem of style with which they themselves were struggling—the problem of tying themselves to antiquity without feeling bound by those ties.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IDIOTI OR ANGELS

*I do not think to become as God, or to inhabit
eternity, or embrace heaven and earth. Such
glory as belongs to man is enough for me.
That is all I sigh after. Mortal myself, it is
but mortal blessings I desire.¹*

In the previous chapter I attempted to show that Michelangelo's divinity hinged upon Ariosto in more ways than simply as efficient cause, as the author of Canto XXXIII. Although Ariosto himself was not lauded as divine until later, the challenge presented by his romance, the *Orlando Furioso*, rendered it a more crucial cultural document in the eyes of his contemporaries, at least the non-Florentine ones, than anything by Michelangelo. Some of the controversy was fuelled by the appearance of Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, largely completed by 1575 and first published, though an unauthorized and partial version, in 1580. But even before this catalyst, Ariosto's great and popular poem had become the most important book of the time. In some ways Orlando was the herald of *Hamlet*, another not-fully-heroic protagonist tormented to the point of insanity by love.

Ariosto was seen as the figure who championed modernity in the face of antique precedent, and who proved that following rules simply for the sake of following rules could be wrong. Modernity was defined very nearly as a readiness to break the rules, because the rules were those established by ancient practice. Modernity was also signalled by licentiousness in the matter of love, for whatever the Romans had practiced in these affairs, and whatever lusty bits of poetry and visual art they may have left, their Renaissance devotees had worked long and hard to shore up the opinion that ancient art was morally upstanding. Ariosto, by writing an epic length poem about the adventures of a

¹ Petrarch to Augustine, *Secretum*, Book III, "Neque enim deus fieri cogito, qui vel eternitatem habeam vel caelum terrasque complectar. Humana michi satis est gloria; ad illam suspiro, et mortalis nonnisi mortalia concupisco"; *Petrarch's Secret*, tr. William Draper, Westport, Ct., 1911, 172.

silly Muslim princess named—of all things—Angelica, declared that art could be pleasurable without even seeming true, that there was more scope to love than Petrarch had ever let on, and that even the ideal was a topic suitable for spoof. The divine beloved, who had promised heaven since Dante, or “hell” since Boccaccio, became a pawn in the hands of the divine artist, who was himself similarly a creation of the divine poet. Their interlocking divinity was as fragile as the patronage which allowed them to work.

Since to be divine implied being of everlasting fame like the ancients, it was a strange accolade for a renegade like Ariosto, and only belatedly applied to him. Latin, after all, was the language of immortality, not Italian. In the case both of Michelangelo and of Ariosto, their being called divine represented an attempt by others to mitigate their novelty and render them conceptually more like the ancients whose precedents they were busy ignoring. Architectural metaphors were important in the analysis of the magnificent style of poetry, as epic was sometimes called, and this again suggests a conceptual parallel with Michelangelo, Ariosto’s fellow aberrant. The sources do not explicitly compare the two, as Dolce, for instance, does Ariosto with Titian, saying that Ariosto’s coloring made him a Titian.² The point instead is that the reception of Ariosto and that of Michelangelo, in particular, reinforced and inflected one another. They were tandem phenomena because each of them produced work as startling by its resemblance to the greatest cultural works left by the ancients as by its difference therefrom. Titian was more obviously modern and more obviously natural. Ariosto and Michelangelo instead balanced intriguingly between *arte* and *natura*, rule and inspiration. The two of them presented in particularly acute form the problem of appropriating antique norms in the early modern world. It was a problem they both explicitly refused to solve in the expected way, by compliance. Instead they gloried in the disparities, Michelangelo mixing in something of Savonarola’s abrasiveness, Ariosto mixing in humor.

The present chapter looks further at the implications of calling an artist divine, including possible consequences in the conception of works themselves. These consequences have less to do with the theme of the ennobled artist, a theme which has been long and ably developed in the art historical literature, than with the adoption of low style poet-

² Dolce’s *Aretino*, 132: “Qui l’Ariosto colorisce [his description of Alcina], & in questo suo colorire dimostra essere un Titiano.”

ical norms having to do with love, at the level of cultural production formerly dedicated to epic norms. The displacement of the essentially pagan hero from the center of artistic celebration by the lover and his beloved was perhaps a natural development, reflecting as it does the duality of the religion of the Savior and Virgin, “figlia del tuo figlio,” as Dante put it.

The duality between Savior and Virgin found a resonance not only in the relationship between poet and beloved, on the model of Dante and Beatrice, but also in that between artist and opus. In an anonymous engraving of the mid-sixteenth century, the exalted beloved is matched with the belated lover, he poetical but also vaguely imperial, in a diptych reminiscent, at least to modern eyes, of ones pairing Mary and Jesus [fig. 30].³ She warns that she must be sought as spirit rather than as flesh—the flesh being now dust. He, in turn, hails her as his golden snare and sun.⁴ This basic schema was familiar to poets and assumable by artists, for whom the beautiful object paralleled the beloved and its maker the lover. An art in which the object was paralleled with a woman, beautiful yet dispensable, and the creator was compared with a self-abasing lover, humble like a pastoral poet, or, in Equicola’s term, the *idiota* most artists were, provided the ultimate vaccination against pagan idolatry. The artist’s humility could always be redeemed as Christlike divinity, while the whole culture of love was underpinned by proverbial sentiments such as “a gentleman loves; a peasant fears” (“il gentile ama; il villan teme”),⁵ and “a better mind is more inclined to love.”⁶

Still, the shift from the prevalence of epic to that of lyric poetry was not swallowed utterly without hiccups. In a letter published in a collection of 1548, one woman tells another that she is very upset to hear that her friend has given up proper stylishness (*attilatura*), embroidery

³ Cf., from 1613, Antonio Tempesta’s engraving of a male and female facing profiles (B. 1371–72), each elaborately and fantastically ornamented, with the inscription: “Michelangelus Bonarotus inven. Canossiae familiae nobilissimo Stipiti Michaelangelus Bonarotus delineabat.” The female is based on Michelangelo’s black chalk drawing (Wilde 42r) and the male on the Count of Canossa drawing after Michelangelo, also in the British Museum, Wilde 87.

⁴ “I am a naked spirit, and I rejoice in heaven. That which you seek has already been dust many years;” “Are these the blond locks, and the golden knot that binds me? and the beautiful eyes that were my sun?”

⁵ Angelo Poliziano, *Tagebuch*, ed. A. Wesselski, Jena, 1929, 205.

⁶ “un di bello ingegno è piu amorevole & con piu ardore ama le cose belle,” Antonio Perseo, *Trattato dell’ingegno dell’uomo*, Venice, 1576, 118.

and sewing, all for poetry, since this will give her a reputation as crazy (“pazza”). Most poets are evil, irritable, self-indulgent, odd, and melancholy besides—that is why Plato got rid of them. There is nothing in poetry these days except tears, sighs, sobs, and amorous passions with which a lady should have nothing to do. She will be talked about in the piazze, the loggias, the churches; children will point and jeer and say, there goes the woman in a Platonic fury! Go back to your weaving like a good girl, is the advice: stay away from poetry, and its themes of crazy, furious love (“di pazzo & di furioso amore”).⁷ The respondent hastens to deny that she was herself ever a poet. While she does defend “il divino Petrarca,” in large part she bashes her justification of poetry specifically upon epic, as being morally worthwhile and allied with religious writings from Ambrose to Dante. She distances herself from “licentiosi Poetastri,” unnamed.

* * *

The prime case of a painting which has been taken to assert the divinity of the artist is Dürer’s Munich *Self-Portrait* of 1500 [fig. 31]. The artist addresses the viewer frontally, his right hand held upright at the bottom of the picture, against the fur collar, and his left hand barely visible at the base. The figure is life-size.

The pose first reminded Jules Michelet in 1842 of Christ, and since then the question has lingered whether Dürer here presented himself as Christlike, and if so, in what sense.⁸ Panofsky saw the image as indeed

⁷ *Lettere di molte valorose donne, nelle quale chiaramente appare non esser ne di eloquentia ne di dottrina alli huomini inferiori*, Venice, 1548, letter from Margarita Pobbia and from Isabella Sforza; 10–13: “vi siete detta tutta in preda alla vana poesia; & odo di più che ven’andate à guisa di spiritata, hor per la casa, hor pel giardino, cercando delle desinentie per concordar di molte rime: Ditemi (de gratia) non sapevate voi trovar piu agevol via per farvi tener pazza che darvi nelle mani di poeti? huomini per la maggior parte maligni, iracundi, satievoli, bizarri, & maninconici? Certo, non senza cagione il divino Platone li scacciò dalla sua divina Republica: & Aristotele ne suoi miraculosi Scritti li pubblicò per bugiardi & per mentifori...et che altro trovate voi ne poeti, che lagrime, sospiri, singhiozzi, & amorse passioni dalla quai cose, vorrei foste (quanto vi si possibile) aliena?”

⁸ According to Białostocki, *Dürer and his Critics, 1500–1971, Chapters in the history of ideas, including a collection of texts*, Baden Baden, 1986, 101, no one observes the reference to the *Salvator Mundi* type (Białostocki’s term) until Michelet: “young Christ of art;” Michelet, *Journal*, Paris, 1959, 441.] Joachim Camerarius credited Dürer with having a divine hand (*divina manus*) in 1541; Lomazzo called him divine in 1584, 29. See also *Joachim Camerarius (1500–74), Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. Frank Baron, Munich, 1978.

Christlike, both as an expression of the pious hope of living like Christ and as an assertion of the artist's divine, creative power. The artist embodied an ideal virtue:

the modern conception of art as a matter of genius had assumed a deeply religious significance which implied a mystical identification of the artist with God.⁹

Joseph Koerner's extensive treatment of the painting enhanced the attention paid to Dürer's self-consciousness about the role-taking:

Dürer thematizes the unbridgable rift between himself, in all his vanity, narcissism, and specificity, and the higher role to which he aspires. Dürer presents himself *as* Christ but reveals himself to be mere man.¹⁰

Not only like Christ, Dürer makes himself also like a peasant realizing that he who had been servile might now dominate:

Gewalt refers to something like a quasi-divine "power" placed within the artist by God and manifested in everything the artist produces, from large panel paintings down to the roughest sketch or woodcut illustration. *Gewalt* is manifested most immediately in the strength, accuracy, agility, and freedom of the artist's own characteristic and calligraphic line.¹¹

Gewalt also "means something like 'freedom' and is often what the rebelling peasants [in the *Bauernkrieg* of 1525] demand."¹² In what Panofsky had seen as a triumph of gentility, now there is found an element of rebelliousness.

Dürer's act of looking at himself being looked at, as he wanted to be looked at, is, for Koerner, the painting's subject. He is seen not merely as imitating Christ in his Munich self-portrait but as imitating Christ's creativity—and that understood not only in terms of invention

⁹ Panofsky, 43. This usage was also current in the medieval period; see, inter alia, R.W. Hanning, "Ut enim faber...sic creator: Divine Creation as Context for Human Creativity in the Twelfth Century," in *Word, Picture, and Spectacle*, ed. Clifford Davidson, Kalamazoo, Mi., 1984, 95–149, esp. 108–10, 118–19. Cf. the famous saying by Daniel Webster in which God acts as the artist of nature: "Men hang out their signs indicative of their respective trades. Shoemakers hang out a gigantic shoe; jewelers, a monster watch; even a dentist hangs out a gold tooth; but up in the Franconia Mountains God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that in New England He makes men."

¹⁰ Koerner, 67. The interpretation is distantly consonant with Clifford Geertz's summary of Gilbert Ryle's theory of the parodic twitch; C. Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures, Selected Essays*, New York, 1973, 6–7.

¹¹ Koerner, 213.

¹² Koerner, 490, n. 56.

but as including manual capacity, a certain *Gewalt*. Koerner dwells on the corporeal detail of the self-portrait as proving that Dürer is able to create not only an *alter deus* but an *alter mundus*. Dürer reads Ficino's *De vita triplici*:

not as a special state of artistic afflatus, but as a general characteristic of all art. At the moment when an artist asserts that he not only imitates the natural, god-created world but also produces something totally new, he elevates himself from the secondary status as image of God to become truly another god, an *alter deus*.¹³

According to Koerner, Burckhardt's notion of a birth of selfhood won't do. "The moment of self-portraiture" signifies something stronger, something less confined within a single subjectivity:

the moment of self-portraiture represents here less Burckhardt's notion of an awakening to or a discovery of self than the self's reinvention within changing paradigms of religious experience.¹⁴

Only a German, in other words, someone who lived in an ambient in which the very nature of the Eucharist was soon to be open to examination, could have achieved what is represented for Koerner in this painting: a declaration of art itself as a kind of miracle, done in signs rather than essences. Rather than making any personal claim as beneficiary of God's grace, by which he can make exceptionally naturalistic images, Dürer, for Koerner, discovers that image-making gives him a kind of freedom from nature—and this because of its very naturalism. His art can mock nature, so to speak; it exists not as a loyal echo but as a kind of impish taunt.

But does the *Self-Portrait* invoke Christ at all? Art historians are conditioned by familiarity with later printed (and sometimes deliberately unsophisticated) reproductions of the frontal *Salvator Mundi*. In 1500 that was less familiar. And why the *Salvator Mundi* type, if the pri-

¹³ Koerner, 138. The phrase *alter deus* has dubious credentials, however. *Alter deus* is attributed to Alberti by E. Zinsel, *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Antike und des Frühkapitalismus*, Tübingen, 1926, 276, although what he actually writes is "quasi alterum sese inter mortales deum praestaret," *De pictura*, II, 25; "sé porgesse quasi uno iddio," Grayson, 1973, 46. Zinsel was working from a facing page German/Italian translation; the German omitted the "almost." Charles de Tolnay covers the topic of Michelangelo's divinization with a reference to Zinsel; *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, V, Princeton, 1960, 11. The phrase "alter deus" is used by Scaliger (*Poetices*, Book VII); see Eckhard Neumann, *Künstlermythen, Eine psycho-historische Studie über Kreativität*, Frankfurt, 1986, 24.

¹⁴ Koerner, 137.

mary idea is an analogy with God the Creator? When Palma Giovane painted himself painting the Resurrection and casting his glance proudly back at us the viewers [fig. 32], the point was clear. The artist raises the dead too. But that was painted toward the end of the century. It seems less than Pascalian odds to suppose that Dürer asserted his divine creativity thirty-two years before it was proclaimed, and that not entirely seriously, of Michelangelo.

When Dürer included himself in the pictorial field of altarpieces, standing boldly beneath the *Holy Trinity* in (Vienna) or amidst the carnage of the *Martyrdom of 10,000* (Vienna), he was visualizing in a novel way a familiar idea that the pious man contemplates the events of religious narrative in order to make himself present to them. Certainly he was encroaching upon territory formerly reserved for the patron or an intercessory saint, but not upon prerogatives of the divinity itself. This intrusion into the sacred narrative was a basic idea underlying the expansion of Franciscan and Dominican art in the early Renaissance. The Munich *Self-Portrait* could be taken similarly, as a pious pose, an *imitatio Christi* quite apart from the sitter's identity as a painter. His upraised hand focusses our attention on rich fur, not on hogs' bristles. The crook of the little finger recalls the Louvre *Self-Portrait* of 1493 quite specifically, rather than anything particular to the painter's vocation.

The strict frontality combined with the noticeably differential lighting is an odd combination, for by the time such naturalistic lighting was the norm, stock frontality had usually loosened into a more mobile sense of the head.¹⁵ Dürer signed his portrait as Noricus, a geographical designation from Tacitus and so probably intended to carry implications of local pride vis-a-vis the Italians. The *Adam and Eve* of 1504, in which he also avoided angled presentation in favor of frontal and profile views, was likewise signed "Noricus." Those two figures function as exceptional exercises in classicizing form, though set against a dense northern forest. If Dürer was thinking of his *Self-Portrait* in terms like those of the engraving of four years afterwards, as an exercise in appropriating into his own idiom the perfect beauty previously associated with the antique, he may have been thinking in terms of profile

¹⁵ E.g., Bissolo's roughly contemporaneous *Salvator Mundi*, also in Munich, in which the head is slightly off frontal, an effect enhanced by the differential shadowing. The innovation belongs to Bellini; see F. Heinemann, *Bellini e i Belliniani*, Venice, 1962, fig. 83 (Madrid), from before 1495, and Marco Baisaiti, 455, a painting in Bergamo of 1517.

and frontal, deliberately avoiding the three-quarter pose—for formal rather than for iconographic reasons. A self-portrait, moreover, is naturally conceived of as we see ourselves, frontally.

The orientation of the hand, with the palm turned inward and the thumb uppermost, displays its beauty and its having been beautifully painted, more than it recalls any gesture of blessing. The painting, from its prominently stray locks on the forehead, to the fur cuffs of the sleeves, is undeniably an essay in worldly vanity. There has never been any doubt that Dürer was vain. Consciously or unconsciously, there could be a trace of otherworldly reference as well, if only as augmentation to the former. What is in doubt is whether he chose the frontal pose as a sign of his divine creativity, divine in the sense his personal radical empowerment, quite beyond routine appreciation of God's beneficence. If we take the painting instead as basically an essay in empiricism, there are many credible precedents; however, as an essay in self-divinization, it would stand strangely isolated, both visually and textually. Although the work is clearly an exceptional one, if it showed Dürer in the guise of the creative and powerful God it would exceed the bounds of the merely exceptional.

Panofsky was disposed to find visual codes, because he feared and loathed the anarchy of any absolute pictorial realism. Any art which referred to pre-established schema had at least a degree of classicism, that is, of rational order, and, with that, of dignity. So he was content to find a reference to Christ, and to explain this as pious *imitatio*. Michelet, for his part, was obsessed with the Catholic church and its grip on the popular imagination. It is no wonder that he saw in this portrait of a struggling worker ("sublime ouvrier") the ghost of a popular icon. But if this were made as a recording of visual reality only fleetingly glimpsed in glass or water, made as a tour de force without the benefit of a flat mirror, faithful to the empirical world even down to the slight irregularities in the shape of the lower lids of the eyes, a pure assertion of self looking as grand and as close to vision as possible (that is, to others' vision of the artist, rather than what he himself could see), an attempt to make permanent what the convex mirror was able only to approximate, then it need have little or nothing to do with divinity. Its avoidance of the three-quarters pose is at least as much Italianate and classicizing as it is Christian. The structure of the head is made perfectly evident. This was Dürer's chance to be Narcissus; but he trumped Narcissus by making such a satisfactorily permanent version of the likeness he longed to look at.

Dürer, like Leonardo, spoke newly of the plentitude of an artist's imagination, but in terms quite removed from the project of portraiture:

The mind of artists is full of images which they might be able to produce; therefore, if a man properly using this art and naturally disposed therefore, were allowed to live many hundred years he would be capable—thanks to the power given to man by God—of pouring forth and producing every day new shapes of men and other creatures the like of which was never seen before nor thought of by any other man.¹⁶

Sixteen years earlier, in 1512, he had written, “They [the mighty kings many hundred years ago] made the outstanding artists rich and treated them with distinction because they felt that the great masters had an equality with God, as it is written.”¹⁷ Even this more exuberant claim by the younger painter seems a far cry from the extraordinary leap necessary to take on the persona of the Pantokrator, a persona which had better be assumed with bravura or not at all. When Dürer claimed divinity verbally, he did so not in his own voice, but in that of the kings of hundreds of years ago. The dandy we see in such particularized detail in the portrait of 1500 does not seem to belong among the visual instantiations of the still nugatory notion of the divine artist. It does certainly belong to that more familiar one of the gentleman artist, and it is true that every aspiration to nobility implies an emulation of the ultimate Good and King.

* * *

Libido metonymously implies the *furia* of artistic creativity, and female fertility offered a ready analogy for male creativity. What was implicit in the vernacular poetry of Dante and Petrarch became explicit in the love poetry of the sixteenth century, and implicit in some of the visual images made. The recumbent and receptive female figure became an important compositional type partly because it encased the notion of inspired, irrational creative force—and did so without endorsing it as an absolute good. As Vasari wrote in Parmigianino's *Vita* of 1550, “cer-

¹⁶ “Animus artificum [sic] simulacris est refertus, quae omnia incognita prius cum in humanis tum aliarum rerum effictionibus in dies prolaturus sit, si cui forte multorum seculorum vita et ingenium,” Panofsky, 280.

¹⁷ Ibid.; “Dÿ gros kunst der molereÿ ist vor vill hundert joren peÿ den mechtigen künigen jn grosser achtparkeit gewesen, dan sÿ machten dy vürtrefflichen künstner reich, hiltens wÿrdig, dan sy achtetten solche sinreichikeit ein geleich formig geschopff noch got,” Dürer, *Schriftlicher Nachlass*, ed. Hans Rupprich, vol. II, Berlin, 1966, 113.

tainly I do not deny that working furiously is not the best” (“certamente non niego che il lavorare a furore non sia il più perfetto”).

In 1514, only two years before the first edition of Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* was published, Raphael made a drawing which implies a sexualized female presence [fig. 33]. The woman rests on a window seat very like those of the Vatican Stanze, her left foot raised onto the opposed ledge. It is not hard to imagine that the drawing records a particular woman waiting for the painter while he was at work in the Stanza. The onrushing angels in the drawing, like Victories but bearing only empty clouds, resemble the angels who bear God the Father toward the cowering Moses there. A third face, profile and young, gazes intently at the woman from beneath the cloud bank—plausibly Raphael himself. Two lines indicate some overflowing from the heavenly group in the direction of the sleeping woman, toward her foot or skirt. We may well imagine that Raphael has sketched his lover from life, and made her Danae by adding the heavenly group, the painted version of which would have actually soared above her as she dozed there [fig. 34]. The architectural sketch of ideas for rebuilding St. Peter’s, in the lower right of the sheet, may have been there first, given the way the figural episodes impinge on its edges. Presumably it was partly the remuneration associated with the prestigious post as architect of St. Peter’s that prompted Raphael to transform his beloved into Danae, the recipient of his munificence. He comes to her out of the clouds, like Zeus. Without wanting to subscribe to orthodox Freudianism, I would suggest that the barrel vault and implicit apse, together with the phallic niches, might gently have stirred Raphael’s figural meditations, regardless of issues of relative scale.

If any of this is at all near the mark, the drawing was a very personal one, though far from a portrait. Raphael never used the invention for any finished image of Danae. He used the pose for the sleeping soldier on the wall of the Stanza d’Eliodoro, in the scene of the *Freeing of St. Peter* [fig. 35]. The woman’s pose appears, in the person of a Muse, also in a border for a set of Tapestries after Raphael’s designs for the Sistine chapel set.¹⁸ The closest version to the drawing was an engraving assigned by Bartsch to an anonymous follower of Marcantonio Rai-

¹⁸ This time for a set in Mantua; see J. Shearman, *Raphael’s Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, 1972, fig. 28. Some of the following material was presented at a Renaissance Society of America conference in Chicago, 2001, under the title, “Raphael’s ‘Danaë,’ from Sculpture to ‘Sculpfit.’”

mondi, one particularly delicate of technique and evidently admired, since it was copied more than once [fig. 36, 37].

Others used that engraving, and appropriated the figure of the dreamy seated woman. For decades it was quietly incorporated it into works of art across Europe. Barthel Beham's version (B. 8) shows the figure has straightened up somewhat to become the Virgin Mary, nursing the Christ Child.¹⁹ The same figure became a worthy but sleeping virgin in a scene of St. Nicholas providing dowries in a painting and a reproductive etching after it [fig. 38]. Veronese enlarged the image to make an altarpiece of St. Helena, who dreams of the cross (aberrantly appropriating her son's dream) [fig. 39]. The dog at her feet, extraneous for a St. Helena, and not visible in the Uffizi drawing, only in the engraving, he retained, as well as the contemporary clothing, though that is often the case with Veronese's lovely ladies.

When Raphael's drawings began to be collected and catalogued, this one was not among them. The actual drawing was attributed to Raphael only in 1966, although Bartsch had hypothesized long before that the design was Raphael's.²⁰ But by the time the drawing entered his oeuvre, the basic outlines of Raphael's artistry had grown near-indelible. If it were possible to re-conceive Raphael's artistry at this even later date, to reverse a kind of art historical arterial sclerosis, this drawing and its engraved reflections would demand revision in Raphael studies, and in routine invocations of *ut pictor poësis*. Usually cited in connection with matters of status in art, the poet being generally more learned and more respected than the painter, here the analogy extends to the process of creating art. The painter is like a poet in fantasizing about his love and producing his art from a state of erotic longing, whether real or fictive. What began, seemingly, as an informal sketch from life, which Raphael may well have labelled "DANAE" with tongue in cheek, became an essay in representing the female form as inspirer of creative *furia*. She is a modern muse, with emphasis on the word modern, and an icon, in the sense that she deflects the viewer's mind toward that which cannot be represented directly, toward the *furia* and *pazzia* that Ariosto was at this very time making the theme of his romance, in place of heroism. A strong hint of sexuality has compli-

¹⁹ See P. Emison, in *The World in Miniature: Engravings by the German Little Masters, 1500–1550*, ed. S. Goddard, exh. cat., Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Ks., 1988, 132–34.

²⁰ K. Oberhuber, "Eine unbekannte Zeichnung Raffaels in den Uffizien," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XII, 1966, 225–44.

cated the Apollonian model. The loose formal parallel between Danae and her heavenly impregnation and Adam and his creator [fig. 40], or God the Father and the recipient Moses on the ceiling of the room in which the drawing was originally conceived [fig. 34], is not merely that; the ideas correspond too, in that (to revert to Quintilian's language), creation is associated with *vis* rather than *studium*.

When Leonardo had debated in his notebooks the relative merits of painting and poetry, he conceived of them as alternatives—both as processes of imitation, to be sure, and both claiming credentials as *scientie*, but not as allied or even synthesizable functions. He denigrated poetry in order to exult painting, conceiving of a contest won by painting:

[The painter] overpowers the *ingegni* of men even more [than poetry], for he makes them love and fall in love with a painting that does not represent any living woman.²¹

The future, however, lay in forgetting about priority issues and simply getting on with exploiting the ideas that bound painters and poets together. Those ideas exceeded the humanists' call for eloquence in the arts, and focussed on passion instead. Proto-Romantics these painters and poets were not, but that there has since been a degree of conflation is understandable, for they did significantly downgrade the role of reason and of precedent in their quest for an ever more impressive or even astounding art. If fifteenth-century artists had seen themselves as reformers and therefore dependent upon conservative guidelines, the early sixteenth-century ones saw themselves as modern heroes, but ones who worked in a newly permissive framework, one of romance rather than traditional epic. The pressure never to repeat oneself, recorded early on as a criticism of Perugino and repeated, more insistently, in Dolce's criticism of Michelangelo,²² was increasing, and the more the artist was expected not to repeat himself, the more important and fraught the issue of inspiration versus rule became.

The figure in this drawing is motionless. The features which make up contemporary catalogues, poetical and prosaic, of feminine charms are masked by clothing and posture. We do not see the pearly teeth and delicate long fingers of the Petrarchan and courtly tradition, no

²¹ Farago, 230–31, “tanto più supera l'ingegni de li huomini, ad amare et innamorarsi de pittura che no rapresenta alcuna donna viva.”

²² Aretino says, “chi vede una sola figura di Michel'Agnolo, le vede tutte,” Dolce/Roskill, 170–72.

smile and no attractive gesture or turn. Raphael is not, as in the *Galatea* or the *Lucretia*, creating a personification of *grazia*, of alluring beauty. *La femme pensive*, as Bartsch called her, signifies inspiration itself, the stimulus to *furia*, rather than its offspring. She is the modern Muse, and dressed accordingly. Tasso's *Apologia in difesa della sua Gierusalemme Liberata con alcune altre opere, parte in accusa, parte in difesa dell'Orlando Furioso dell'Ariosto*, later raised the question whether Michelangelo and Raphael should have dressed their figures in contemporary clothes ("come oggi se veste"), or according to the unchanging rules of "vera arte." Titian, after all, used modern dress ("l'usanza moderna").²³ In this drawing, unusually, Raphael did too.

The formal correspondence between the angel here and those that help the Sibyls in Santa Maria della Pace is more than merely coincidental [fig. 41]. This woman is no Sibyl, but she is the recipient of inspiration, as they were. Her full-length figure in casual profile pose, the face obscured by the bracing of head in hand, is turned slightly away from us. Her clothes appear to be contemporary, though they are not displayed for status or for any delicate pictorial effect. The wash accentuates her corporality. Her right hand and left foot delicately indicate her libidinous appeal. The pose is reminiscent of an ancient relief sculpture, but well-known from the fifteenth century through the time of Bellori and Winckelmann [fig. 42].²⁴ Bellori interpreted the figure as a bride, with all the attendant implications of fecundity. Raphael may have asked the woman to pose in accordance with his memory of the relief; her independent pose may have reminded him of the relief and so have struck him as worth drawing, or the connection may be merely coincidental. However, since the sleeping soldier in the *Freeing of St. Peter* assumes the same pose, a conscious connection to the antiquity seems likely.

The invention circulated in at least three engraved versions, only one of which, the finest and presumably the first, showed the angel [fig. 36]. Without the angel, the engraving depicted a figure difficult to identify in a composition hard to attribute [fig. 37]. Most likely the drawing

²³ Tasso, *Apologia*, unpag.

²⁴ Leo Steinberg, 231–335, suggests that an unspecified ancient model lay behind the prevalence of the slung leg motif that first occurs in the *Isaac and Rebecca* of the Loggetta, in which Rebecca's pose is related to Danae's. The relief, with the single female figure, no slung leg, was published P. Santi Bartoli, *Admiranda*, 1693, 59, and has been suggested as a source for Rembrandt's Louvre *Bathsheba*. See also P.P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture, A Handbook of Sources*, Oxford, 1986, no. 198, 231.

was never intended by Raphael for engraving. Baviera, who published prints after Raphael, also took care of the woman he loved, according to Vasari.²⁵ Perhaps it was he who suggested, at some point during the next ten years and after the partnership with Marcantonio had ended, that the single angel from the Pace composition be grafted onto the image of the woman at the window to make a saleable, though still far from standard, image.

The engraving has long been hypothetically associated with Parmigianino—that is, the drawing behind the engraving has.²⁶ Now that we have the drawing in hand, and can confidently disassociate the drawing from Parmigianino, it is worth considering whether Parmigianino might still be implicated in the design's history. A seventeenth-century etching by Cornelius Visscher of a female bust after Parmigianino includes a design on a medallion around her neck of a female figure reminiscent of Raphael's angel [fig. 43]. So it seems highly likely that Parmigianino somehow knew Raphael's design. Moreover, the technique of the anonymous sixteenth-century engraving after the drawing is highly distinctive and delicate. Long, slight parallel lines of hatching de-emphasize the linear contour. This is a trait found also in Parmigianino's etchings, and not much elsewhere. If we knew Parmigianino as engraver, the attribution of the *St. Helen* engraving might be a simple matter. As it is, the possibility exists that the engraving is Parmigianino's, and if not, that it has rightly been assigned to his circle.

Raphael's beloved, once engraved, became the ideal beloved. The figure became, respectively, virginal or sainted or genreless, but in all these instances she took the place of Moses on the ceiling as God rushes toward him, inspired, made prophet, by the furious onrush of the divine vision, a fresco itself inspired by the Sistine *Creation of Adam* [fig. 40]. Like Ariosto's own Angelica, like the strong female presence in the spandrels of the Sistine ceiling [fig. 44], those iconographically indeterminate spaces dedicated to the Jewish ancestry of Christ, she belongs to the type of female agents of divine will who need not themselves be particularly virtuous, but who offer the occasion for

²⁵ Vasari/Marini, 631.

²⁶ According to Bartsch, the drawing behind the engraving was probably Parmigianino's, though others gave it to Raphael. Lili Frohlich-Bume, "Five Unpublished Drawings by Parmigianino," *Pantheon*, XVIII, 1960, 236–41, attributed a drawing of the woman at blank woman, in a private collection in London, to Parmigianino, and reported that P. Pouncey attributed the same to Peruzzi. Cf. Popham 423. Bartsch catalogued the engraving among "Sujets de fantaisie," rather than with saints.

virtue to others—in this case the *virtù* required, as was said of Aretino, to “impregnate the mind” (“gravida la mente”).

* * *

Giovanni Bellini’s old-age painting of the *Woman with a Mirror* (Vienna) resembles Raphael’s drawing in theme [fig. 45].²⁷ It was made in 1515, a year after Raphael’s drawing.

Out of the blue, in the year before his death, this octagenarian painter, who would rather produce one more Nativity than a *poesia* for Isabella d’Este, made a painting (on his own initiative, as far as we know) whose primary subject is female beauty, the beauty which has inspired him throughout his career. She functions as a *memento mori*, but here doubled with the sexualized sense of *morire*. The artist has often felt passion for flesh, a passion potentially consummated by painting. Having sensed his own body’s death, he chose to paint this—for him, particularly—extraordinary painting, in which the idea of his own impending death is made palatable by means of her flesh, which has so often yielded both his (little) death as well as his immortality through art.

The circular object she holds could conceivably be a portrait of herself, an icon in the religion of beauty, more faithful than the mirror behind. It is usually taken to be a small mirror, used in conjunction with the mirror on the wall behind, but the optics of the painting don’t support (as opposed to merely allow) that notion, and sixteenth-century mirrors were, usually at least, larger, whereas portrait miniatures were not. So—perhaps—we may take it that she turns her back both on the natural landscape and the mirror’s reflection to contemplate art, just as he is content with his art and his hoped-for immortality through art. Regardless of whether she holds a mirror or a portrait roundel, she, in her pre-eminent naturalness, is transfixed by an image, a piece of art. The artist, by painting this three-quarter-length nude woman, iconographically as anonymous as Raphael’s woman at the window (the window itself being likewise a metaphor for artistic vision), may have reminded himself of the gusts of *furor* that had helped his creativity, just as did Raphael.

²⁷ Cf. Rona Goffen, “Giovanni Bellini’s *Nude with a Mirror*,” *Venezia Cinquecento*, I, 1991, 185–202, in which the iconography is identified as that of the ideal Venetian wife and the theme as “the beautiful woman as the image of beautiful art,” in the context of the paragone with sculpture.

The whole pastoral world existed as an adjunct to this aesthetic, for its nymphs were sexualized creatures whose presence elicited poetry. Michelangelo's poetry took the related Petrarchan tradition in which object and subject resolve their differences in religious ecstasy, and twisted it abruptly into something much less conventional. Instead of confronting, as Petrarch had, the troubled history of his *anima*, with woman as catalyst, he wrestles with himself as creator. The traditionally stony beloved is now actual stone; his *anima* rather than the beloved's is at issue. Petrarch's poetry is made even more narcissistic than it had originally been.

The ideal beloved became a type for the artist himself, whose *ingegno* is impregnated by divine inspiration, whose works are his children. Vasari quoted Michelangelo as saying, when chided by a priest for not having married, "I have too much of a wife in this art that has always afflicted me, and the works I shall leave behind will be my children, and even if they are nothing, they will live for a long while."²⁸ Cervantes would say something similar of *Don Quixote*, though in a more self-denigrating and bantering tone: "I should have liked this book, which is the child of my brain, to be the fairest, the sprightliest, and the cleverest that could be imagined; but I have not been able to contravene the law of nature which would have it that like begets like."²⁹ This metaphor of creativity as procreativity could be used mockingly as Cervantes did, or as when Michelangelo accused his rivals of doing better in making children than in making art, but it also was used seriously. It was implicit in the concept of the Muses, who inspire artistic production. It is appealed to by Filarete in his *Treatise on Architecture*, in which it is said, "when the architect has given birth, he becomes the mother of the building."³⁰ The *ingegno* could be thought of not only as having been

²⁸ IV, 177; "Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte che m'ha fatto sempre tribolare, et i miei figliuoli saranno l'opere che io lasserò; che saranno da niente, si viverà un pezzo;" Bondanella, 479.

²⁹ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, tr. S. Putnam, New York, 1949, 11. This is addressed to the "Idling reader."

³⁰ "poi partorito chela larchitetto viene aessere lamadre desso edificio," *Filarete's Treatise on Architecture*, tr. John Spencer, I, New Haven, 1965, Book II, folio 7v, 15. The patron is the father. Benjamin Thomas first referred me to this passage, in the course of a conference at Leeds University organized by Christina Warner, May 2002. My paper there, "Michelangelo, The Female Body, and 'la maniera moderna,'" presented some of this material, as is also true of my paper "Imagining the Italian Renaissance," presented at Binghamton University at a graduate student conference organized by Victoria Scott and Damien Kempf, April 2002.

born in one, but as enabling man's generative role: as Aretino put it in 1545, writing to Michelangelo, "you give birth continually to wonders from the divinity that impregnates the mind" ("maraviglie di continuo partotite da la divinità che ingravida lo intelletto").³¹ In this case, the artist's mind is the womb in which divinity plants its ideas, and the works are the divine offspring. Antiquity, despite its divine poets, had lacked the cultural resources to make this metaphor work.

The artist who became as divine as the beloved was free to pursue less natural and normative effects. As her free hair was both artless and yet the essence of art, so his artistry was unbound by rule and yet essentially natural. Like her, he balanced between the natural and the artificial, and was associated with irrationality, with caprice. Baldassare Taccone's *Comedia di Danae*, a play put on in Milan in 1496 with Leonardo's help on stage and costume design, featured as protagonist a Danae who was "comendata assai più che natura."³² "Michel più che angelo" was like Ariosto's Angelica, associated with beauty and, again by her name, with divinity, but not with holiness. The female beloved had long been both the type and the antitype of the natural, and now, so too was the artist. Correspondingly, love might be understood alternatively as that which clouded the mind's eye or as that which led to true knowledge, as that which hurt the *ingegno* or as that which aided it. When Raphael imagined himself descending upon Danae, or Bellini imagined the personification of artistic beauty, each was participating in a visual culture which was thoroughly imbued with poetical ideas. Michelangelo shared in that same poetical culture.

* * *

There is a rich tradition of portraiture of Michelangelo, who, contrary to the norms of the time, disliked portraiture. The portraits we have of Michelangelo generally derive from a three-quarter view by Jacopino del Conte [fig. 46], variously dated c. 1535-c. 1545 and known in several versions—including a series with felt cap, most of these latter atop engraved reproductions of the *Last Judgment* and at least one example in which he has been dressed up in brocade;³³ or from a profile

³¹ Aretino, CCXXI, 63.

³² *Teatro del Quattrocento, Le corti padane*, eds. Antonia Benvenuti and M. Sacchi, Turin, 1983, 334.

³³ Federico Zeri, "Rivedendo Jacopino del Conte," *Antologia di belle arti*, VI, 1978, 114–21, dates the Metropolitan's version c. 1535. See also, E. Steinmann, *Die Porträtdarstellungen des Michelangelo*, Leipzig, 1913; Giovanni Morello, "Il ritratto di Michelan-

view known through engravings of the 1540s [fig. 47] or, alternatively (and with more ample hair), Leone's medal of 1561, as in an anonymous, earlier engraving which identifies Michelangelo as "Nobilis" and seventy-one years old (1546) [fig. 48]; or, thirdly, from the bronze bust by Daniele da Volterra (1509–66) done posthumously in 1564 [fig. 49], probably with the help of a frontal chalk drawing of c. 1550 (Haarlem) with the head tilted to the right.³⁴

There is also a nearly frontal painting of Michelangelo in a turban by Giuliano Bugiardini, a man Michelangelo excused as "semplice." The portrait he greeted with the exclamation, "what the devil have you done?"³⁵ [fig. 50] Other examples include a miniature by Francisco de Hollanda from c. 1540, in profile with cap;³⁶ and a portrait roundel assigned to the 1550s, 23 cm in diameter, attributed to the workshop of Frans Floris. It seems to derive from the Jacopino prototype, and, quite exceptionally, it bears an inscription which does label Michelangelo "divin."³⁷

gelo," in *Michelangelo e la Sistina, La tecnica, il restauro, il mito*, Rome, 1990, 129–34.

³⁴ Six busts were listed in the inventory at Daniele's death (some versions head only; others with bust), Paul Barolsky, *Daniele da Volterra, A Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1979, no. 27, 112–13; eight were listed by Steinmann. See also Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, *Vittoria Colonna, 1490–1547, Dichterin und Muse Michelangelos*, exh. cat., Vienna, 1997, IV.1, 314–16. On the drawing, presumably a cartoon for Michelangelo's portrait in the *Assumption* in the Rovere Chapel in Trinità dei Monti, early 1550s, Barolsky, 85–86, and Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop, Theory and Practice, 1300–1600*, Cambridge, 1999, 108.

³⁵ "buona persona, ma è semp[re] l'ice uomo," *Carteggio*, IV, 13 April 1549, 321–22; "disse ridendo a Giuliano: 'Che diavolo avete voi fatto! Voi mi avete dipinto con uno degl'occhi in una tempia, avertitevi un poco...'ghignando... 'Questo è dunque... difetto di natura: seguitate e non perdonate al pennello, né all'arte'" (Like the artist with an Italian accent in *Broadway Melody of 1940*, who says to Fred Astaire, "I don't make your face. I just make your silhouette"), Vasari/Marini, 990. The painting is dated to the early-to-mid 1520s, partly on the basis of an inscription on the Louvre version, though Laura Pagnotta, *Giuliano Bugiardini*, Milan, 1987, 210, 229, 235, 239–40 places the copies at mid-century. She accepts the version formerly in the Bossi Collection in Genoa. Four versions are known (Louvre, Casa Buonarroti, private collection, Christie's sale in 1965, and a variant in the Ambrosiana) as well as a drawing in the Louvre; Deoclecio Redig de Campos, "Das Porträt Michelangelos mit dem Turban von Giuliano Bugiardini," in *Festschrift für Herbert von Einem zum 16. Februar 1965*, eds. G. von der Osten and G. Kauffmann, Berlin, 1965, 49–51; and Sylvie Béguin, *Le XVI^e siècle florentin au Louvre*, Paris, 1982, 28–30. She takes the turban to be a work garment.

³⁶ Steinmann, Tafel 38. Cf. the portrait from the collection of the Archduke Ferdinand II, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, in which he wears the rolled brim hat similar to the *Last Judgment* engraving portrait roundels of Martino Rota and others.

³⁷ Ferino-Pagden, *Colonna*, no. IV.3, 317–19, with illustration.

Jacopino's striking three-quarter portrait was, whether directly or indirectly, the prototype for Giorgio Ghisi's engraved portrait (B. XV, 71) and for an anonymous, oval etched portrait [fig. 51]. Both declare Michelangelo to be "TUSCORUM FLOS DELIBATUS," "Choice Flower of the Tuscans."³⁸ The complimentary phrase which describes Michelangelo as choice among the Tuscans derives from Cicero's *Brutus*, in which the consul and orator Marcus Cornelius Cethegus is reported to have been described by Ennius as "flos delibatus populi:" "the choice flower of the people."³⁹ True to humanist tradition, the artist's orator-like credentials are deemed more prestigious than the epithet "divino."

Bonasone's engraving (B. XV, 345) [fig. 46], dated 1546, depicts Michelangelo at the age of approximately seventy, and so at the culmination of his career as painter and sculptor, soon to be named chief architect of St. Peter's (1 January 1547), and still considering publishing his poetry. He was, in other words, at the pinnacle of a successful career. Also, early in 1546 he suffered a serious, potentially fatal, bout of illness. It may even be that Bonasone was anticipating the sort of commemorative frenzy that marked the passing of Serafino. In any case, whether his engraving was conceived as a frontispiece for the poetry, as a souvenir, or simply as a recognition of a saleable degree of fame, the portrait was put to use seven years later as frontispiece in Condivi's *Vita*. Both portrait and *Vita* provided some graceful closure on the awkwardness of the Julius tomb project, which was completed at about the time the portrait was engraved. Here, too, the artist is not called divine, but "PATRICIUS." In the third state, the material of his clothes has been upgraded to brocade. The inscription reads: "How much art can do in nature and

³⁸ Suzanne Boorsch, M. and R.E. Lewis, *The Engravings of Giorgio Ghisi*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985, no. 39, 139-41, "MICHAELANGELUS BONAROTA/TUSCORUM FLOS DELIBATUS/DUARUM ARTIUM PULCHERRIMARUM/HUMANAE VITAE VICARIARUM/PICTURAE STATUARIAE QUE/SUO PENTUS SAECULO EXTINCTARUM/ALTER INVENTOR FACIEBAT;" translated there as "Michelangelo Buonarroti, the picked flower of the Tuscans in the two most beautiful imitative arts of human life, painting and sculpture, which perished together with his age. Another artist made it." I would prefer "Michelangelo Buonarroti, Choice Flower of the Tuscans, a reinventor, was making esteemed the two most beautiful, mimetic arts of human life, painting and sculpture, which had been wholly extinct in his time."

³⁹ Cicero, *Brutus*, Loeb, xiv, 58, 59: "for as reason is the glory of man, so the lamp of reason is eloquence, for pre-eminence in which the men of that time did well to call such a man the flower of the people (qua virum excellentem praeclare tum illi homines florem populi esse);" tr. G.L. Hendrickson, Loeb, Cambridge, Ma., 1939.

nature in art, this one who was equal in art to nature teaches.”⁴⁰ Earlier, in 1545, or so the inscription claims, the same profile likeness was engraved by an anonymous engraver in a boxlike space with cartouche at the bottom [fig. 52]. Michelangelo is there deemed “Nobilis.” In this case the interestingly querulous inscription reads: “Who I should be, you have the name and it is enough. For the rest to whom these things are not known, they have neither mind nor eyes.”⁴¹ The best explanation for the oddly blank eye sockets of Michelangelo seems to be a misunderstanding of the Latin. The inscription refers to the blindness of those who do not recognize Michelangelo, but may have been taken by the engraver to refer to the inner vision of the artist.

Michelangelo’s visage also appeared in various works by his contemporaries, in tribute to his importance. Although the identification is not wholly uncontroversial, this author accepts that Raphael placed Michelangelo prominently on the steps of the *School of Athens*, next to a stone block, pen in hand, cast as the grouchy Heraclitus. In 1546 Vasari himself painted Michelangelo’s likeness into his decoration at the Palazzo della Cancelleria, in a scene of the court of Paul III. He also painted Michelangelo in the Palazzo Vecchio, Sala di Leone X. The woodcut portrait in the 1568 *Vita* is close to Daniele da Volterra’s bronze likeness, though it shows him in a brocade jacket trimmed with fur. A design by Francesco Salviati for a tapestry (1547), *Joseph Explaining the Pharaoh’s Dream*, includes Michelangelo not far from the central action.⁴² El Greco included him with Titian, Giulio Colvio, and

⁴⁰ “QUANTUM IN NATURA ARS NATURAQUE POSSIT IN ARTE/HIC QUI NATURAE PAR FUIT ARTE DOCET.” The past tense of “fuit” does seem to imply that Bonasone (or his lettered advisor) was not optimistic about Michelangelo’s longevity.

⁴¹ “QUI SIM NOMEN HABES SATQUE EST NAM CAETERA CUI NON SUNT NOTA AUT MENTEM NON HABE[N]T AUT OCULOS;” Stefania Mas-sari, *Giulio Bonasone*, exh. cat., vol. 1, 1983, nos. 85–87, 73–74 and figs. 85–87, credits the design to Enea Vico and illustrates two states of Bonasone’s signed portrait, a copy with a different framing element, and two states each of two versions of the 1545, blank-eyed profile portrait. The second version of this last mistakes “OETERA” for “CAETERA.” What looks to Morello like a tear on Michelangelo’s face, just to the left of his eye, seems to be a misunderstanding of a combination of wrinkle and mole in the Bonasone engraving. In that case, as one would expect, the Bonasone must pre-date the other, despite its claim to 1545. It is alternatively possible that they share a common ancestor.

⁴² *The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence*, exh. cat., Detroit Institute of Art, New Haven, 2002, figs. 45, 46. A putative portrait of Michelangelo occurs on the far right side of an *Adoration of the Magi*, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; J.W. Goodison and G.H. Robertson, *Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Catalogue of Paintings, vol. II, Italian Schools*, Cambridge, 1967, 186–87, plate 63, as Taddeo Zuccaro.

Raphael, in the bottom corner of *Christ Driving the Money-Changers From the Temple* (Minneapolis, 1575), and Allori included him in a fresco in Santissima Annunziata in 1582. There is a portrait of Michelangelo on the right background of Daniele da Volterra's *Assumption of the Virgin* in Santa Trinità dei Monti (1553). Vasari reported intriguingly that in Santa Trinità dei Monti, underneath paintings of *St. Jerome* and *St. Francis of Paula* (now all lost), Daniele made two stucco reliefs as a defense against possible detractors. One showed satyrs who were busy weighing limbs, saving out the good ones and giving the bad ones to Michelangelo and Sebastiano del Piombo. The other showed Michelangelo, Prudence-like, contemplating a mirror.⁴³ The meaning of that, Vasari announced pre-emptively, is very clear. It is clear at least that Daniele was allied with Michelangelo in a quite fractious atmosphere in Rome, and that he was honored by his confreres as Alberti had wished to be, by inclusion in *istorie*. Claudio Tolomei reported in 1554 that "all the painters address him as master, as prince, even as the God of drawing."⁴⁴

Michelangelo's works increasingly appeared in engraved reproduction at about the same time, despite his distaste for the medium. On these engravings, he was again not hailed as divine, but more routinely as Inventor, often as "Florentinus." In posthumous engravings after the *Last Judgment* which included his portrait, he was usually dubbed "Patrius." He was occasionally hailed as "Egregius," or as having achieved "arte perfectum."⁴⁵ An engraving of 1547 by Beatrizet after Michelangelo's *Pietà* of 1500 lauded the artist's having rendered the two figures out of a single marble, divinely ("Michaelangelus Bonarotus flo-

⁴³ "In una di queste storiette fece molte figure di satiri, che a una stadera pesano gambe, braccia e altre membra di figure, per ridurre al netto quelle che sono a giusto peso e stanno bene e per dare le cattive a Michelagnolo e fra' Bastiano che le vanno conferendo; nell'altra è Michelagnolo che guarda in uno specchio, di che il significato è chiarissimo;" Vasari/Marini, 1171.

⁴⁴ "tutti i dipintori, l'adorano come maestro, e principe e Dio del disegno," Bottari, *Raccolta di lettere*, IV, 1822, 7, in a letter to Apollonio Filarete.

⁴⁵ A. Moltedo, ed., *La Sistina riprodotta*, exh. cat., Calcografia, Rome, 1991; Giovanni Morello, "La fortuna degli affreschi Sistini di Michelangelo nelle incisioni del Cinquecento," in *Michelangelo, La Capella Sistina*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Rome, 1990, ed. K. Weil-Garris Brandt, Rome, 1994, vol. III, 245–51; Mario Rotili, *Fortuna di Michelangelo nell' incisione*, exh. cat., Benevento, Museo del Sannio, 1964, nos. 54; 55; 74. De Maio reports that Ambrogio Brambilla's engraving after the *Last Judgment* of 1588 cites Ariosto's verse; *Controriforma*, 448. This is not confirmed by the seemingly thorough entry on the engraving in *Michelangelo e la Sistina*, no. 161, 261–62.

rent. Divi Petri in Vaticano ex lapide matre ac filium divine fecit").⁴⁶ A print of the tomb in San Pietro in Vincoli published by Salamanca in 1554, and so postdating Vasari's *Vita*, praised his divine hand ("divina manu").

Another, rather odd, printed portrait exists [fig. 53].⁴⁷ The artist is seen resting beside a window, his head sunk upon his hand and his eyes closed. He is wrapped in a cloak whose bottom edge is ragged. Printed with the image is a caption: "Micha Ange bonarotanus Florentinus/Sculptor optimus anno aetatis sue 23." The impression owned by the British Museum includes a pen inscription on the lower right giving the date 1522, twenty-four years later than the date given by the printmaker (1498).

The pose has been compared to that of his *Night* in the Medici Chapel [fig. 24], and to the lost *Leda* and *Venus*, all three remarkably sensual figures of women from an artist caricatured even during his lifetime as capable of nothing but the male nude.⁴⁸ It is actually closer in some ways to that of the Danae figure derived from Raphael. The window, the window seat, the hand in the lap, and the uprightness of the posture all recall the Danae pose, though the outer leg's prominent placement is closer to Michelangelo's own compositions. The two prints are of nearly the same dimensions, the *St. Helen/Danae* being slightly taller. Both prints are hard to date precisely, but the etching is likely to be subsequent. Probably the two have in common adherence to a type, whether the prototype of the ancient relief which lies behind the Raphael design, or simply a generic type of slumping dejection, apathy, or dreaminess.

⁴⁶ R.D. IX, 8; see fig. 562, as Beatrizet, in *Il primato del disegno*, exh. cat., Florence, 1980, 236–39; and the copy in reverse by Master IHS, B. XV, 512, 2, where the inscription reads "DIVINI."

⁴⁷ I know of three impressions: British Museum (remote storage), Munich, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. See also *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, I, 1859, 257.

⁴⁸ Steinmann, Tafel 1. David Summers, "Form and Gender," in *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations*, eds. N. Bryson, M. Holly, and K. Moxey, Hanover, 1994, 384–411; see also Frederika Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian: *Femina, Masculo, Grazia*," *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII, 2000, 51–67. The work is also cited by Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's 'Due lezioni' and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor, 1982, 69, as a representation which shows the artist "embodying the contemplative virtues associated with philosophy." See on the painting by Pontormo, destined for a room decorated in honor of the Tuscan love poets, and on the popularity of the design, F. Falletti and Jonathan Nelson, eds., *Venere e Amore/Venus and Love*, Galleria dell'Accademia, exh. cat., Florence, 2002.

The etching is a portrait, for the inscription tells us so, but it gives us nothing approaching a likeness.⁴⁹ Even an approximate date is hard to fix, since 1498 is impossible for both medium and style. 1522 also seems early for this work, which is closest in etching technique to works by the Master LD, or Lèon Davent.⁵⁰

What can be asserted is that Michelangelo is shown here in a pose which recalls that of the receptive female. The ancestry of that pose, head bowed down on back of hand, goes back to the cowering figures of captives on sarcophagi. It is about as opposite as an image could get to the rough woodcut portrait of Michelangelo hacking away on a marble like a workman, which appeared in a margin of Sigismondo Fanti's *Trimpho di Fortuna* of 1527.⁵¹ In the etching he is shown neither as active hero nor as diligent and dignified liberal artist. Though there is textual precedent for associating melancholy with artistic creativity, there is no visual precedent for such a presentation.⁵² The attributes of rank one would instead expect, frame and inscription *all'antica*, are missing. The most comparable example would be the small frontal engraving, a presumed portrait of Raphael, seated humbly on a stair and wrapped in a cloak, attributed to Marcantonio or his circle (B. 496).⁵³ At least that figure had the attributes of a painter.

Either Michelangelo is portrayed here as a meditative thinker, one whose creative process focusses on dreams and interior imaginings, or he is mocked as an ineffectual melancholic whose hand is limp and whose heavenly inspiration has not appeared, someone plagued by "mio melinchonicho, o vero del mio pazzo," as Michelangelo himself wrote to Sebastiano in 1525.

⁴⁹ Charles Cammel, "Authentic Likenesses of Michelangelo," *Connoisseur*, 104, July-Dec. 1939, 119-25, rejected it "absolutely."

⁵⁰ In this I concur with Henri Zerner, *The French Renaissance in Prints*, exh. cat., Los Angeles, 1994, no. 53, 264-65, and others. The Bugiardini copy in in the Louvre includes an inscription just like the etching's printed inscription, on a parapet in front, which I take to have been copied from the etching. It is of course possible that the opposite is true instead.

⁵¹ Steinmann, *Porträt Darstellungen*, Tafel 1. Also reproduced in L. Murray, *Michelangelo*, New York, 1984, 120.

⁵² For a re-examination of Dürer's engraving, *Melencolia I*, see Emison, forthcoming. It is in any case not a portrait, and was not one of his more successful prints in Italy. *La Pazzia*, Venice?, 1530?, mentions how it is possible to confuse "i malenconiche per ingenuosi, i furiosi & temerarij per valenti, & per animosi."

⁵³ Hugo Wagner, *Raffael im Bildnis*, Bern, 1960, 87-88. He furthermore takes the image as Christlike [!].

The inertness, the flaccid hand, the blankness of the window space, the minimal drawing, would all make more sense if in fact the image were not only outside of Michelangelo's purview, but intended by a rival to satirize him as a man of little action—or even to make him into a parody of one of his own slumping figures. The inscription on the etching nearly matches one on a copy of Michelangelo's portrait in a turban by Bugiardini, now in France and possibly newly arrived there when the etching was made. Its inscription, "MICHA ANGE BONAROTANUS FLORENTINUS SCULPTOR OPTIMUS ANNO AETATIS SUI 47," was presumably the model for the inscription printed on the etching, which is the same except that it gives his age as 23. The inscription, which was intended as complimentary in the early 1520s when the painting was made, by the 1540s when the etching was made, might have borne different connotations. In the 1520s Michelangelo often signed his letters with his forename and the label "Sculptor." By the 1540s Michelangelo was declaring to his nephew that he had never kept a shop and wasn't referred to as "sculptor," but by his surname Buonarroti. So the inscription, possibly by denominating him as sculptor rather than Patricius and more reliably by reducing his age to that associated with lovelornness, implies an uncomplimentary function for the image. The figure's slothful and ill-kempt aspect suggests that the etching was intended to mock the dignity of the man portrayed in Bugiardini's portrait.⁵⁴

Baccio Bandinelli's own engraved portraits of not much later show him surrounded by statuettes, well-dressed, his honors prominently displayed, and of commanding presence.⁵⁵ This little etching is as opposite

⁵⁴ The fact that the British Museum impression bears the date implied by the Bugiardini inscription (1522) implies that its owner saw the two as related, and helps confirm the attribution of the etching to Fontainebleau. It is possible that the painting's inscription derives from the etching. In that case, we might wonder whether there was a jibe imbedded in the formulation of his name. "Micha Ange" is neither Italian (Michelangelo or Michelagnolo) nor French (Michel-Ange) nor Latin, and it has a very strange sound to it, as though mocking him for being not at all (mica) an angel. The form of the surname also seems oddly overelaborate, Bonarota being more usual. Surely whoever put the inscription on the painting saw no insult (a Frenchman presumably would pronounce the "ch" softly, but not an Italian like Primaticcio). Only the French version of the portrait has the inscription. But the etching's inscription may not be so innocent.

⁵⁵ B. XV, 279 (1548), Passavant VI, 124, no. 4; and in the studio, B. XIV, 418 (1531), and XV, 305, no. 49 (c. 1550). His large *Self-Portrait*, c. 1540s, in the Gardner Museum, Boston, is independent of composition. See also the marble relief profile *Self-Portrait* of 1556, inscribed "CIVIS FLORENTINUS, Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, which

that as can be, and presumably not by accident. Lèon Davent may not have cared one way or the other, but Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography makes it clear that there was ill will between the Florentines at Fontainebleau and the Bolognese Primaticcio. The latter was sent to Italy to obtain casts of antique statues in 1540. It is possible that he had contact with Bandinelli, who was also in the business of hawking surrogate antiquities and no friend of Michelangelo's. In the 1520s he began to sculpt his copy of the *Laocoön*, now in the Uffizi but according to Vasari intended initially for Francis I. In 1540–41 Bandinelli was working in Rome on a languishing project for the tombs of Leo X and Clement VII. Both were accustomed to drawing for printmakers; both would have enjoyed riling the supporters of Michelangelo. A chalk drawing by Bandinelli formerly at Holkham Hall and traditionally said to be a portrait of Michelangelo [fig. 54], though it is by no means the design used for the etching, is nevertheless suggestive.⁵⁶ It shows a poorly dressed man, seated in profile facing right, his cheek supported by his right hand, and may, like this etching, be an unflattering portrait of Michelangelo. As for our little etching, Primaticcio may have designed it and had Lèon Davent etch it, as a way of fueling the Italian rivalries at Fontainebleau.

This little etching, generally ignored in most of the literature, may be our best piece of specifically visual evidence that Michelangelo's moody, introspective, unkempt presence earned him a degree of disrespect. He was an unusual person and difficult to categorize. Those who called him divine scarcely knew what else to call him, for he certainly was not normal or excellent in the expected ways, whether stylistic or personal. For all his pretense to noble blood, he did not live as a gentleman. He wore no fur-lined coat, as Dürer did. Yet his "divinity," in the sense of

was built into the choir screen and discovered in 1842 during renovations; *Sotto il cielo della Cupola, il Coro di Santa Maria del Fiore dal Rinascimento al 2000*, Milan, 1997, n. 10, 108; Izabella Galicka and H. Sygietyńska, "A newly discovered self-portrait by Baccio Bandinelli," *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIV, 1992, 805–07. On the relationship between the two Florentine sculptors, see Goffen, *Rivals*, 364–67, and Kathleen Weil-Garris, "Bandinelli and Michelangelo: A Problem of Artistic Identity," in *Art the Ape of Nature*, eds. M. Barasch and L. F. Sandler, New York, 1981, 223–51. Titian's 1587 engraved portrait by Agostino Carracci, wearing fur and chain, labelled him "celeberrimus ac famosissimus."

⁵⁶ Roger Ward, *Baccio Bandinelli, 1493–1560: Drawings from British Collections*, exh. cat., 1988, no. 32, 59–61, 117.; cf. no. 33, 118. Ward dismissed the notion of any resemblance to Michelangelo; Steinmann accepted the comparison, but attributed the drawing to Salviati.

his having utterly escaped mediocrity, had to be acknowledged even by those who did not admire him. Though his appearance in this etching has been taken in the twentieth century as rapt and seer-like, a sort of cousin of Dürer's *Melencolia* as interpreted by Panofsky, in all probability the intent was to depict him as a man lacking in diligence, dignity, and vigor.

Michelangelo became vulnerable to criticism only as decorum (or, more broadly speaking, what the eighteenth century would call taste) became more of an issue in the visual arts. With that development, correspondingly, one's manner of living became subject to scrutiny. Even as the Counter-Reformation shrank the boundaries of what was possible artistically, Michelangelo not only anticipated but outmocked his mockers. His enemies' criticisms were more complimentary than his self-descriptions, either in poetry or gaping from the flayed skin of St. Batholomew in the *Last Judgment*. Like the typical lover, his suffering constituted a part of his worth, and so to make him suffer held no threat. He was himself a lyric rather than an epic protagonist.

* * *

Before the Council of Trent, controversy over a work of art occurred rarely. Usually if there was any such, it was over the price. Innovation was presumed by Vasari to be stylistic; subject tended to be presented with decorum and but slight changes in decorum. Mere satisfaction was expected of subject; praise and enthusiasm pertained more to style. When Filarete famously criticized Donatello's bronze doors decorated with pairs of Apostles and saints as looking like fencers, brandishing their palms at one another, it was not Donatello's style or even his finish that Filarete was faulting, but his invention. It seemed to him that the Apostles were unduly agitated, with the result that they appeared like fencers rather than like dignified seers. Vasari talked mostly about style because he wanted to praise.

Even in Dolce's *Aretino*, a dialogue championing Titian over Raphael and Michelangelo, the prime issue was decorum rather than style. His opponents were faulted, and Titian was praised. Sticking close to the text had protected artists, but as their invention developed more freely, they incurred blame—in Michelangelo's case, blame even from Aretino, all the more galling given his accuser's own unbridled licentiousness, infinitely more lewd, yet protected (for a while) by rules of genre. As Dolce has his interlocutor Aretino judge Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, eight years after Aretino's blistering letter condemning the

fresco as fit for a bathhouse: “if these figures of Michelangelo’s were more fully decent and less perfect in their design, this would be a great deal better than the extreme perfection and extreme indecency that one actually views.”⁵⁷ Raphael’s sense of decorum was defended by Aretino, but Fabrini accused him of lacking *onestà*, due to his supposed involvement in the design of the pornographic *I Modi*.⁵⁸ Blame can most authoritatively be levelled on the count of *onestà*; conversely, praise for decorum seems praise of one’s good judgment in general, and therefore a higher species of achievement than attractive coloring, for instance. Titian, in contrast to Raphael and Michelangelo, was hailed as one who “respected propriety suitably (and divinely too).”⁵⁹

Innovation, or as Vasari put it, contributions to the art, operated by contrast as an uncontroversial norm—a norm ruled by the goal of lifelikeness. It was therefore understood mostly as a matter of technique rather than of judgment. Vasari tried at least to see Michelangelo as someone about whom there could be no controversy. As Vasari put it: “Thank God and try to imitate Michelangelo in everything” (“Ringraziate di ciò dunque il Cielo e sforzatevi di imitare Michelangelo in tutte le cose”).⁶⁰ Controversy about the propriety with which religious figures were presented would, however, be ongoing.

Vasari described Michelangelo as an artist consistently divine in his attainment. But even as stylistic innovation was, according to Vasari, withering like the proverbial bourgeoisie because perfection had been obtained, radical change came in a kind of subject matter, change which upset standards of decorum and unbalanced the Horatian seesaw of *docere et delectare*. In particular, subjects derived from the poetry of love became provocative, and figural style, which derived whether immediately or not from the poetical standards of beauty, became itself provocative. Michelangelo, among others, had to cope with a range of consequences. In 1435, Alberti was loathe even to mention the possibility of portraying the private parts; a century later, Riccio was sculpting the intercourse of satyrs and nymphs. And with this change toward the uninhibitedly and rather unsubtly pleasurable came a corresponding shift in the presumption that a good artist must be a good man.

⁵⁷ Dolce/Roskill, 164, 165: ‘E sarebbe meglio, che quelle figure di Michel’Angelo fossero piu abondevoli in onestà, e manco perfette in disegno, che, come si vede, perfettissime e dishonestissime.’

⁵⁸ Dolce/Roskill, 162.

⁵⁹ Dolce, “servò bene (e divinamente) ...la convenevolezza,” 124–25.

⁶⁰ Vasari/Marini, 1221.

A natural correlation for Alberti, following ancient rhetorical theory, the truism was muddled in a world in which the pornographer Aretino angled for a cardinal's hat, and the notoriously debonair and worldly Pietro Bembo obtained one. It was not clear in public opinion that either Titian or Michelangelo, the two most divine of artists, was a good man—only that their works depicting divine subjects (*Mary Magdalen*, *Last Judgment*) challenged established norms of decency. They may have been called divine in part defensively, as though to shift attention from matters of decorum. Paolo Pino in 1548 called Titian and Michelangelo “dei mortali,”⁶¹ and Romano Alberti, writing in the 1590s for the Roman Academy, hailed Raphael and Michelangelo as artists named for angels. What Michelangelo, “divino” from 1532, and Titian, “divino” from 1537, actually had in common were lowbrow promoters, namely Vasari and Aretino. They also both lived at a time in which to err was newly dangerous, and therefore to be put above blame, to be called divine, had real value. Aretino used the ploy himself, calling himself divine on the title pages of scurrilous books, and Ariosto, as he became controversial, also became divine, so proclaimed on his title pages too. One of many implications of the epithet “divino” was the fear of denunciation as “poco cristiane.” On the other hand, once one was accepted as “divino,” there was a tendency to interpret the work in accordance with orthodoxy—willfully to read or see it as orthodox. If Titian was divine, then his bosomy *Mary Magdalen* had to be taken to be devout. Aretino, a divine man whose works far exceeded the bounds of decency, presented a similar case. Certainly Vasari deftly shifted considerations of character to the single axis of dedication to one's art. In that respect, both men passed with ease. For Vasari, “divine” could connote an artist inspired by God to think of nothing but *disegno*.

As Renaissance art became more poetical, it also became both more private and more widespread. What had begun as a public art ended in an age of private collecting. During the sixteenth century, private collecting beyond the ruling class became common, not only of painting and sculpture of various scales, but also drawings and prints. Artists of course did continue to reuse and recycle ideas, but as allusions rather than as stock properties. What has been called the High Renaissance marks this watershed, after which artists could be combed for allusions, just as the poet Ariosto was combed for every allusion to litera-

⁶¹ P. Pino, *Dialogo di pittura*, ed. E. Camesasca, Milan, 1954, 59.

ture ancient and modern. Until Dolce dubbed Raphael and Michelangelo the visual analogues to Petrarch and Dante (a move echoed by Lenzone),⁶² there had been no visual equivalent, no measure of modernity, no artist who had Petrarch's degree of dedication to the antique ideal. Giotto was referred to as a pivotal figure; a drawing after him by Michelangelo has come down to us; but he was more important to the public's idea of painting than to sixteenth-century practitioners'. When Landino wrote his commentary on Dante in 1481, of the passage in the *Purgatorio* in which Giotto is cited as having surpassed Cimabue, just as Guido Cavalcanti in poetry had put Guido Guinizelli in the shade, his response was still to say that perhaps someday someone would replace Giotto. When Alessandro Vellutello wrote his commentary on the same passage in 1551, he took it instead as a prediction by Dante of Petrarch's coming rise. The line about Giotto had lost its interest; indeed he seemed not to realize that Giotto and Cimabue were near-contemporaries. One could not allude to Giotto visually, as one could allude to the Laocoön, or to Raphael and Michelangelo, especially with the help of Ghisi and other print records. In this important respect, allusion both ancient and modern, the analogy between literature and the visual arts could not develop fully until the sixteenth century. Then, Raphael could allude to Michelangelo, or Titian to Raphael, or moderns to the Laocoön, and hope to be grasped.

As painting became more poetical, the decorum of pleasurable art became the dominant issue. Dante and Ariosto were both known as leading practitioners of the *volgare* and as poets who mixed high and low genres. Both were controversial; both were accused of indecorousness. But whereas in Dante's case, this had largely to do with matters of word choice and local politics, in Ariosto's case the entire design of the poem struck some as capricious, from naming the work for Orlando rather than Ruggiero, to flights of fantasy such as Astolfo's trip to the moon, to the graphicness with which he described the coupling of Ruggiero and the enchantress Alcina (notably less discretely than Virgil had described the similar episode involving Dido and Aeneas). For Ariosto as for Michelangelo, license was increasingly the controversial issue. His

⁶² "Petrarch imparò da Dante; & non lo superò, se ben fece divinamente: così Rafaello non ha superato Michelagnolo, se bene paion fatte in Paradiso le sue pitture," Lenzone, 10. On Lenzone and his Florentine context, see Mary Watt, "The Reception of Dante in the Time of Cosimo I," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, Aldershot, 2001, 121–34.

greatest rival, Torquato Tasso, the man who had written a proper and sober epic, *La Gerusalemme Liberata*, first published in 1581, called Ariosto an architect with a bad design:

If an architect through error made a mistake in the design of a palace, and the result was a failure, we would not because of this say that he wasn't an architect, but that he wasn't a good architect. Thus I recall having said to Your Excellency that I don't blame those who call Lodovico Ariosto a heroic poet, since in his *Orlando Furioso* there are many places worthy of heroic dignity, and expressions of truly heroic spirit.⁶³

It was, he allowed, divine in parts, but overall, fundamentally flawed. The analogy to architecture was used frequently, and carried the strong implication that rules had to govern poetical construction. Ariosto and Michelangelo presented comparable challenges. In the debate over Ariosto, the categories by which visual art was judged were listed as *disegno*, *ombre* and *colori*, comparable to the poet's *favola*, *costume*, *sentenza* and *locutione*. But, the argument went on, the matter is more complicated, it extends to foreshortening, musculature, various ages and costumes, various characters and textures. Because it is so complicated—perhaps, implicitly, too complicated for a set of rules to cover—it is very rare to achieve success.⁶⁴ The list of complications might almost have been devised by studying Michelangelo's series of ancestors of Christ in the lunettes of the Sistine Ceiling.

Ariosto was further accused of being too popular. He was said to have revised his verses after hearing them sung in the streets, so attuned

⁶³ “Se 'un architetto havrà male intesa la fabrica d'un palagio, havendo preso errore nel disegno della pianta, onde l'erto poi ne sia falso riuscito, non gia per questo fallo diremo costui non esser architetto, ma non buono architetto. Perciò mi ricordo d'haver detto all'Eccellenza vostra ch'io non biasmo coloro, che chiamano Lodovico Ariosto poeta Eroico, poi che nel suo Orlando Furioso ha molti luoghi degni della Eroica maestà, et detti veramente con spirito divino;” T. Tasso, *Apologia In Difesa della sua Gierusalemme Liberata Con alcune altre Opere, parte in accusa, parte in difesa dell'Orlando furioso dell'Ariosto*, Ferrara, 1585/6, unpag. Cf. Barocchi, 1970, 399–402.

⁶⁴ Accademia della Crusca, *Difesa*, character of Caraffa, unpag.: “credo habbia di bisogno di molte altre eccellenze: si come dimostrasi perfetto artefice ne' scorci, & ne' muscoli saper ben diversificare gli atti, & le positione delle figure, & che secondo il grado fesso, & età delle persone prese ad imitare, vestirle, & dargloi lineamenti, & colorirle; si che appaiano hor piene di Maestà, hor vili, hor feroci, hora robuste, hora delicate, & hor molli: & in somma conviene al pittore osservare tante altre parti dovute ad arte si nobile, che non è maraviglia, che si come nella poesia adiviene, cosi ne la pittura veggiamo rari esser quelli, che conseguiscano vero grido d'honore.”

was he to their popular reception.⁶⁵ This criticism was distinctively of the sixteenth century, though there were intimations of it in the fourteenth century, with respect to Dante. From the divine Serafino Aquilano to Raphael to Ariosto, painters and poets both were faulted for appealing to the *volgo*. Serafino's biographer wrote in 1504 that "all his efforts were bent on achieving fame in his lifetime, even if his repute reached only the mediocre and plebian."⁶⁶ By contrast, when Giovanni Santi in the 1480s had written his vernacular epic on the exploits of Federico da Montefeltro, he had articulated his task to be the spreading of Federico's reputation among the "indocti e vulgari."⁶⁷ He had denominated his own *ingegno* "basso," explicitly not "eccellentissimo e divino"—yet acknowledged God's help ("l'aiuoto del summo Idio").⁶⁸ It had not occurred to him that popular reputation could be a distinct phenomenon from that of the *litterati* and even threatening to the latter's sway, or that a vernacular poet could himself be august. Print had changed the world in a matter of a few years, catalyzed by the rise of the vernacular.

One critic of Ariosto stated it in the following terms:

In the end many err, seeking only the approbation of the mob and praise from the uneducated; benefit for the printers, prizes from patrons, rewards from lords, appreciation from women, and deference from every quarter.⁶⁹

The anonymous author of *La Pazzia* also faulted Ariosto for appealing to the many ("diletta il vulgo"). Vasari would level similar charges against artists who used printmaking to reach the largest possible market and thereby degraded themselves and the art. The *volgare* and artis-

⁶⁵ Haar, 94; see also, Maria Balsano, ed., *L'Ariosto, la musica, i musicisti: Quattro studi e sette madrigali ariosteschi*, Florence, 1981. It was still popular in Montaigne's time; see *The Complete Works of Montaigne*, tr. Donald M. Frame, Stanford, 1958, 1008: "even the shepherd girls with Ariosto in their mouth" (near Empoli); cf. 995, 925. Bronzini, 127, reported still in 1966 that within living memory the peasants had been singing Ariosto. On Michele Savonarola's attention to the poetry sung in the streets, see *ibid.*, 2, n. 4.

⁶⁶ Vincenzo Calmeta, in Strunk, 325. His epitaph, incidentally, was written by Aretino. *La Pazzia*, Venice?, 1530?, mentions how "*Orlando Furioso* diletta il vulgo, ma molte volte manca di giuditio, & nelle adulationi si perde...Il Serafino con alcuni altri che già furono in prezzo, sono humili, & bassi, et appena meritano di esser letti."

⁶⁷ Santi, 2.

⁶⁸ Santi, 3-4.

⁶⁹ "Nel fine peccano molti, cercando solamente applauso dalla plebe, honor dal vulgo; utile da stampatori, premio da Mecenati, guadagno da Signori, gratia dalle Madonne, cortesia da tutte le bande;" Garzoni, *La piazza universale*, Venice, 1585, Discorso xxxii, 288.

tic multiples were both problematic in that they raised the possibility of pandering to the public, of failing to “acquire and beget a temperance that may give it [the whirlwind of your passion] smoothness” as Hamlet warned the players, lest they degrade themselves for the sake of applause from the groundlings.

Ariosto was only popular because he was colloquial, asserted one interlocutor, and if in the future the language changed, Ariosto would be forgotten.⁷⁰ Ortensio Landi in 1550 wrote scathingly of the poet. *La Sferza*, published under the name “M. Anonimo di Utopia,”⁷¹ accuses Ariosto of undue popularity:

Today the masses run with amazing cry and excessive applause from the hands of fools to Ariosto, because he has somewhat more than the others swelled the bagpipe.⁷²

His invention is likewise faulted, as thievery, perhaps partly because it didn’t qualify as good imitation:

I don’t call it imitation, but theft.⁷³

The sensitivity of this issue increased in step with the virtual explosion of commentaries and literary expositions of the expanding printing industry, which made such borrowings more obvious. In one particularly memorable moment of literary criticism, a painter was credited with showing all the poets dipping their fingers in the vomit of Homer.⁷⁴ Originality and popularity became issues together, for the bulk of what was being produced was recognized as derivative—and this in turn made imitation less palatable an artistic method. Landi, for one, was

⁷⁰ “DIA ma se per caso (che Iddio nol consenta) avvenisse della volgar favella quello, che hoggi piu non si parla, ma si concerva ne’ libri, che pensate voi che il mondo giudicherebbe allora dell’Ariosto, & del Tasso? CAR Volete voi dire, che in questo caso il Tasso sarebbe in pregio maggiore? ATT Sig. si: & la ragione è, che la dolcezza, che nasce dal natio, & dal chiaro della sentenza usata dall’Ariosto, non diletta, come hora fa l’orecchie della moltitudine, ragionandosi allora altra lingua, converrebbe, che Orlando Furioso con parti perfette di poesia appagasse l’intelletto de’ pochi: il che non potendo egli fare, per le ragioni dette di sopra, ne segue necessariamente, che in pochissimo, o in niun pregio sarebbe.” Crusca, *Difesa*, 1585.

⁷¹ Grendler, 150–53, 226.

⁷² “Hoggidi corre con mirabil grido, & istremo applauso per le mani de sciocchi, & de plebei l’Ariosto il quale per havere alquanto piu de gli altri gonfiato la piva;” Ortensio Landi, *La Sferzade de scrittori antichi et moderni alla quale, e dal la molta copia de libri confonde l’ingegno & indebolisce la memoria*; Venice, 1550, 20.

⁷³ “non voglio dir imitatione, ma puro furto;” Landi/Procaccioli, *Sferza*, 62.

⁷⁴ Giraldi, 31.

thoroughly cynical about divine poets and sick of “the profusion of books, weakening the mind” (“la molta copia di libri [che] confonde l’ingegno”).⁷⁵

Linguistic issues were very bound up with those of class, for the *volgare* had no norms but those of use, and use was determined by the masses: “the ordinary folk make and control language and words,” as the divine Claudio Tolomei wrote, and *il volgo* was a mess of “ignoranza e errore.”⁷⁶ In other words, the rules of art provided a bulwark against common, low taste, and so to flout rule was to pander to the ignorant public. Underneath the conventionalized debates about unity of action and romance versus heroic genres, so reminiscent in some ways of the *paragoni* that Michelangelo had to put up with, lay a sense of the print market, driven by large numbers, by popularity rather than by the opinions and theories of a lettered elite. Print changed the world, as one author complained in 1553:

these days the convenience of printing has encouraged many to expound, not only about writing and verbal matters, but also allusions, and the secrets of the soul.⁷⁷

Ariosto was both praised for universality and blamed for pandering to a mass public, as had been Dante sometimes in manuscript days, but whereas that had been a Florentine issue, the imprints in the Ariosto debate range from Ferrara to Florence and from Venice to Rome, not to mention Vico Equense.

Implicitly part of the accusation as too popular was the problem of the poem’s sexiness. Aretino’s promiscuous Nanna recommends to Pippa that she be seen reading *Orlando Furioso*;⁷⁸ Landi’s reference to the bagpipe (*piva*) is no doubt purposeful. For Ariosto’s description of the embraces of Ruggiero and Alcina (Canto VII, 28–29), a feature of all three editions (1516, 1521, and 1532), notoriously overstepped the bounds even of literary men’s propriety—not because there were no riper passages to be found in comedies, but because the point of reference here was the divine *Aeneid*. Ariosto wrote:

⁷⁵ Landi, 3.

⁷⁶ “l’volgo è fabro & maestro delle lingue & delle parole;” *Cesano*, 72, 107. Cf. B. Varchi, *Lezioni sul Dante e prose varie*, 2 vols., Florence, 1841, 338.

⁷⁷ “hoggidi la commodità della stampa hà inviato molti à commentar, non solamente le scritture e le parole; ma ancora i cenni, & i secreti dell’animo;” G. Garimetto, *Concetti*, Venice, 1553, 42–43.

⁷⁸ “fa’ vista di leggere il *Furioso*, il Petrarca e il *Cento*, che terrai sempre in tavola,” 276–77.

He jumped out of bed and gathered her into his arms, quite unable to wait for her to undress—/for all that she was wearing neither gown nor petticoat: she had come in a light mantle which she had thrown over a white nightgown of gossamer texture. The mantle she abandoned to Ruggiero as he embraced her; this left behind only the insubstantial gossamer-gown which, before and behind, concealed no more than would a pane of glass placed before a spray of roses or lilies./Ivy never clung so tightly to the stem round which it was entwined as did the two lovers cling to each other, drawing from each other's lips pollen so fragrant that it will be found on no flower which grows in the scented Indian or Arabian sands. As for describing their pleasure, better to leave this to them—the more so as they frequently had a second tongue in their mouth.⁷⁹

Porcacchi (1566)—trying a bit desperately— explained the lascivious passage as an allegory of touch.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Salta dal letto, e in braccia la raccoglie,/ Né può tanto aspettar ch’ella si spolie.//Ben che né gonna né faldiglia avesse;/Che venne avolta in un leggier zendado,/Che sopra una camicia ella si messe,/Bianca e suttil nel più eccellente grado:/Come Ruggiero abbracciò lei, gli cesse/Il manto; e restò il vel sottile e rado,/Che non copria dinanzi né di dietro,/Più che le rose o i gigli un chiaro vetro.//Non così strettamente edera preme/ Pianta ove introno abbarbicata s’abbia,/Come si stringon li dui amanti insieme,/Cogliendo de lo spirito in su le labbia/ Suave fior, qual non produce seme/Indo o Sabeo ne l’odorata sabbia:/Del gran piacer ch’avean più d’una lingua in bocca;” Canto VII, 27–29.

⁸⁰ “Percioche per dilettere all’occhio ha finto Alcina tanto bella, & lasciva, che non s’ha maravigliato, se Ruggiero ne fu preso, poiche per giochi fu aperto ad Amor la via da penetrare al cuore. Per dilettere all’udito, gli fa nel convito ascoltar gaudii & passioni, con altre fantasie piacevoli, & amorse. Nel convito apparecchiato più sontuosamente che non fu mai alcun di quelli di Sardanapolo, o di Cleopatra, diletto al gusto. Co’ profumati lini; ne’ quali entrò Ruggiero; sodisfa all’odorato: & ultimamente compiace al tatto con l’estrema linea d’amore nella st. 28 & 29. Ha da notarsi in questa stanza un’altro aviso del Poeta, dove dice, che cantando rappresentavano grate Fantasie. [Stanza 19: “Non vi mancava chi cantando dire/D’amor sapesse gaudii, e passioni,/O con invenzioni, e poesie/Rappresentasse grate fantasie.”] Percioche la Fantasia, ch’è uno de’ cinque sensi interiori, propriamente compone imaginationi da se medesima; le quali non sono, & non possono essere mai. Però l’Ariosto le chiama fantasie, come quelle ch’essendo inventioni di Poeti, il proprio de’quali è finger favole lontane dalle verità: & per farle conoscer meglio; ha detto anco che queste si rappresentavano con POESIE, cioè con fintioni, con inventioni Poetiche: di quelle dico, che da Platone furon bandite fuor della sua bene ordinata Republica;” “Thus to delight the eye he made Alcina so beautiful and sexy, that no one wonders that Ruggiero was taken in by her, since his eyes were open for Love to find a way to his heart. To delight the ear, he made them listen at the feast to mirth and passions, and other pleasing fantasies. At the feast, equipped more sumptuously than any that ever was at Sardanopolis, or of Cleopatra, there was much to delight the senses. With the perfumed linens, in which Ruggiero gets, the sense of smell is satisfied; and finally he pleases the sense of touch with the ultimate delineation of love in Stanza 28 and 29. One

Ariosto's defenders cited his universal popularity, with *dotti* and *indotti* alike, in his favor:

people like to sing it and to talk about it.⁸¹

Universality was a familiar defense, but it was supposed to be universal acclaim across time by men of letters, rather than universal popularity among the unlettered, especially if it seemed to threaten the esteem of ancient epic. Sperone pronounced the poem fit for the bordello, echoing Aretino's *Nana*.⁸² Dolce complained of another passage (Cantos 35, 39):

The following stanzas on women, in which Ariosto shows that they ought to seize pleasures without hesitation, does not deserve to be admitted into a heroic poem, which in every part ought to be chaste. If once in a while there is some little lascivious part it ought to be put in a way that won't offend decency: as Virgil did, who covered with majesty the copulation of Aeneas and Dido... Here, as in other parts, one sees that Ariosto when he put his work forth the first time, didn't have much of an eye on the rules.⁸³

Ariosto's critics may have been posturing for the sake of being in the limelight, rather than expressing genuine outrage, as seems partly the case with the miffed Aretino, blasting Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in 1545 as fit for "un bagno delizioso." Aretino was making an example of the artist, who had not responded genteelly to his epistolary overtures. Whatever its petty motives, however, Aretino's attack was vicious

should notice in this stanza another mention by the poet, where he says that singing represents lovely fantasies. [Stanza 19: There singing told of love's mirths and transports and poetical invention showed pleasing imaginations.] Since Fantasy, which is one of the five interior senses properly comprises the imagination by itself, the things which are not and can never be. However, Ariosto calls Fantasy, whatever is invented by the poets, whose job it is to fabricate stories far from truth and to make them better known; he has said that he also shows these with poetry, that is, with fictions, with poetical inventions: of which I say, that Plato banned these from his well ordered Republic."

⁸¹ "è stata vaga di cantarlo, o di ragionarlo;" Attendolo, *Difesa*, unpag.

⁸² Specifically the episode with Medoro, though he also castigates the episode with Ruggiero; S. Sperone, *Trattatelli di vario argomento*, in *Opere*, V, Venice, 1740 (Rome, 1989), 520.

⁸³ "Le seguente Stanza alle Donne, nella quale l'Ariosto mostra, che dovrebbero senza rispetto prendersi de' piaceri, non meritava di essere ammessa in un poema Heroico. Ilquale in ogni parte dee esser casto, e, se pure alle volte v'è qualche passo lascivio, si dee dirlo in guisa, che non offenda le orecchie honeste: come fece Virgilio; ilquale coprese con Maestà il congiungimento di Enea con Didone... Qui, come in altri luoghi si vede, che l'Ariosto, quando mandò fuori la prima volta la sua opera, non ebbe molto occhio alle regole;" *Affigurati*, 288-89.

and may have been consequential. Perhaps Michelangelo's later career would have run more or less the same course, but it may also be that Aretino abetted the retreat to architecture, away from the issues figural art increasingly raised toward an art whose structural rules at least were to be obeyed. Michelangelo's earlier art was full of license: the figure of Midas in the *Last Judgment* has as ancestor not only the courtier Michelangelo despised and thus caricatured, but a series of chalk sketches of masks, monsters, and leering faces, some of them placed as learing counterpoint to female figures. Particularly in his chalk drawings, he developed a sense of the composite group, of figures fused into a more complicated form than the single figure (even his many versions of the Bed of Polykleitos pose, oriented in opposite directions) ever could be. It may be that lascivious transgression was a small part of the issue with Michelangelo, but transgression in general was not.

Similarly with Ariosto, the fuss about his lack of propriety, however petty or academic its origins, had consequences. By mid-century no artist or poet, Michelangelo included, could fail to be much sensitized to critical opinion and its increasingly complex toolbox of rules. As Dolce chided:

mellifluous voices shouldn't come into heroic verses, not even those a little serious, because they detract from grandeur. And for this reason the very suave Sannazaro in the eclogues of his *Arcadia* chose mostly delicate verses, to preserve the lowness, both in style and in figures of speech, appropriate to pastoral things.⁸⁴

This commonplace Ariosto had failed to heed. To be blatantly defiant of rules had not been so extraordinary in 1532, but in the midst of the Counter-Reformation it was becoming heterodox rather than gloriously modern. Moreover, there was a political undertone to all the talk of *pazzia*, *furore*, and popularity. Giovio, an elitist if ever there was one, who felt that Florence had been ruined by republicanism, used the phrase, "furore di pazzia" of the mob who had effaced Cosimo il Vecchio's tomb inscription.⁸⁵ The aesthetic values of law, diligence or industry, and high culture, with Latin epic as its epitome, were

⁸⁴ "Le voci sdruciolose non debbono entrar ne' versi Heroici, ne pure un poco gravi: percioche levano ogni grandezza. E per questo il gentilissimo Sannazaro, nelle Egloghe della sua *Arcadia*, esse per lo piu i versi sdruciolli, per serbar la bassezza, cosi nello stile, come la serbava nelle figure, convenevole alle cose Pastorali;" *Affigurati*, 342-43.

⁸⁵ P. Giovio, *Historie*, 1553, 40.

threatened by those of spontaneity and improvisation, rulelessness and caprice, the vernacular and print culture. Ariosto and Michelangelo, whose personal politics presumably had rather little in common, could equally have represented to their contemporaries the unsettling element of license in an increasingly vulnerable peninsula.

License, itself formerly supposed to be licensed by Horace, was becoming indecorous as the cultural wound caused by the Sack of Rome, and bandaged in part by Ariosto and Michelangelo, healed. Sexually explicit subjects were but synecdoche for the larger problem. If art became a popular as well as an elite preoccupation, and a domain of license as well as discipline, this could not help but seem dangerous to authorities of church and state. It had certainly proved provocative in Germany. Coming right after the Council of Trent's pronouncements, the founding of official Academies, literary and artistic, with state support, was intended to re-establish restrictive norms of accomplishment.⁸⁶ The mass market of opinion opened by print culture was curbed by an efflorescence of theorists and their strictures. That choked off the phenomenon of artistic divinity insofar as it was tied to eccentricity, until Romanticism effected the end of the State-sponsored Salon.

* * *

Early in the sixteenth century the mobility of artists created a collision between regional practice and a more universalizing theory. This had helped to precipitate the issue of *maniera*. In painting, the evident disparities among the styles of Giorgione, Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo demanded some resolution other than an arbitrary disposition on an axis of quality.

Individual *maniera* was invoked to diffuse the complex phenomenon of artistic excellences,⁸⁷ partly because that solution was most useful. Individual *maniera* was compatible with divinity, whereas a more complex understanding of cultural milieu would have relativized the work. Calling artists divine licensed them for export, whereas understanding style as also a complex function of local and more cosmopolitan influ-

⁸⁶ But see Karen-edis Barzman, "Liberal Academicians and the New Social Elite in Grand Ducal Florence," in *World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity*, ed. I. Lavin, vol II, University Park, 1989, 459-63, on the Academy as an "instrument of social reform."

⁸⁷ See M. Kemp, "'Equal Excellences': Lomazzo and the Explanation of Individual Style in the Visual Arts," *Renaissance Studies*, I, 1987, 1-26.

ences would have defied the authority of antiquity and undermined the diplomatic usefulness of the arts. The fiction was that good art was like nature, everywhere and always the same in principle though not in *maniera*.

The atrophy of the adjective divine for artists corresponded with a rise in a theory of milieu. In both cases the well-spring was Ariosto. He called Michelangelo divine in a poem which became the focus of sustained debate about the universality of literary standards. Ariosto's defenders argued that his was a modern poem, not to be measured by immutable laws. On the contrary, wrote Ludovico's grandnephew Orazio, the rules of Parnassus were meant to be broken: "breaking the laws of Parnassus, which they allow one may freely disregard in works of brilliance" ("rompendo le leggi di Parnasso, le quali concedono, che nell'opere dell'ingegno, ciascuno possa liberamente sì").⁸⁸ And even Torquato Tasso, more generous than his own partisans, agreed: only children dared not write boldly. One of Ariosto's defenders argued that since nature involved multiple bodies operating in relation to one another, so too could Ariosto allow himself multiple plots, even if this entailed disobeying Aristotle's stricture of a single action.

The prevalent concept of the world was in epochal flux, and concepts of art required some collateral adjustment. Just as advocates of the style *all'antica* had argued that Arcadian simplicity needed to give way to norms of magnificence—that one could not eat acorns forever—the advocates of Ariosto argued against the Aristotelians that the methodical, reliable rules had to give way to an art which could maintain some claim to creativity. If it took divinity to defy "the master of them that know," then divinity they would have.

For those who admired both Dürer and Michelangelo, Dante and Ariosto, the rules of art, both of style and of invention, were less and less fundamental. It had become impossible to satisfy the dual demands of pleasure and teaching because the rights of artistic *ingegno* and of religious orthodoxy had grown into direct opposition. For Michelangelo, having been pushed into being "il divino" by a Ferrarese and a renegade Aretine, having had his native milieu evaporate, leaving him an exile by choice, so extreme a reputation was potentially a threat to his actual status. It smacked of popularity, the same popularity that had tainted the careers of Ariosto and Serafino, and it smacked as well of

⁸⁸ Orazio Ariosto, *Difesa*, unpag.

aristocratic pretense, of the bombastic claims to divine status made by the Dukes of Ferrara and of Florence. Michelangelo reacted by making himself obscure. He was solitary; he avoided printmaking, and he was underwhelmed by the prospect of his poems being sung in the streets like Ariosto's lyrics. It is from the time that he is called divine that we can date his integration into Roman society, his friendships with Cavalieri and Colonna—a context in which he could have shed that hyperbole of compliment in favor of “Michelangelo Buonarroti, Fiorentino.” In Rome, he could instead allude to the aristocratic Tommaso Cavaliere as “divino.”⁸⁹

Not only Michelangelo rejected the concept of the divine artist, or at least its centrality, but his viewers followed suit, by asserting their own importance. This might be done either by a kind of brute force, as when Aretino described how the viewers of Michelangelo's figures were themselves filled with “stupore divino,”⁹⁰ or it might involve a certain conceptual realignment, namely, developing some sense of historical context. To think about the arts in terms of historical context rather than universal laws of art nicely circumvented the impulse to make generational comparisons, at a time in which these were not likely to be flattering to the present. After the death of Michelangelo, as Vasari had feared, history was no longer clearly progressive. The viewer who brought some notion of historical context to viewing the object, like Gregorio Comanini, didn't need to defer to any divine artist, for he understood the production of art as itself a cultural fact. This is exactly the move Comanini makes, tentatively at least, in his dialogue of 1591. Whether there is more honor in placing a figure to the right or left is explained in the dialogue as variable over time. “In early times,” the custom was to consider the left the place of greater honor; moderns practice the reverse, he explains.⁹¹ Early Christian art, hieroglyphics, the elaborate histories by Raphael, and the caprices of Arcimboldo are

⁸⁹ Late December, 1532, *Carteggio*, III, 443: “mostrai maravigliosamente stupir del vostro peregrino ingegno...quanto è da maravigliarsi che Dio facci miracoli, tant' è che Roma produca uomini divini. E di questo l'universo ne può far fede.” Vittoria Colonna was called “divina” on the title page of her *Rime*, 1538.

⁹⁰ Letter of 1554 to the Bishop of Fiesole, Aretino/Camesasca, 452, “stupore divino empirà gli occhi dei riguardanti i vestiti e gli ignudi del Buonarroti in pittura.”

⁹¹ Gregorio Comanini, *The Figino, or On the Purpose of Painting*, tr. A. Doyle-Anderson and G. Maiorino, Toronto, 2001, 74–75. On similar developments in music theory in the late sixteenth century, namely a new interest in the history and in “music as a cultural product,” see Ann Moyer, *Musica scientia*, 200.

not so much different in the skill with which the artist has imitated nature, as similar because they may be understood as analogues of musical harmony, Arcimboldo's work in particular:

painting does approach music, as poetry sometimes does...The painter, putting on canvas an extremely white colour and gradually darkening it with black, has employed the nine-to-eight proportion and the tone itself. He surpassed Pythagoras in doing so...⁹²

Consonance becomes the key word by which style is assessed; and cultural coherence, as determined by the historically aware viewer, serves as the measure of excellence, rather than any correlation with nature, as achieved by the artist. Comanini enlarged the role of the critic of art over that of both theorist and artist, for the viewer who looked at art historically and culturally was a new entity. Dürer's art had ongoing admiration in Italy, despite its acknowledged theoretical deficiencies. Now, if one assigned it to a different milieu, then it need not be compared with Raphael's art, any more than with hieroglyphics or early Christian art. Comanini wanted to rescue the crude representations of the early Church; inadvertently he implied acceptance of the future work of Whistler and Kandinsky.

The project that began the Renaissance had been defined as the imitation of antiquity, but eventually there evolved a new sense of history. Debates over vernacular literature made it clear, not only to Comanini, that quality was not a universal dictated by nature, but constructed within a cultural milieu. Literary Tuscan was distinguishable from Florentine vernacular, and the rules of ancient epic could not necessarily be transferred even to literary Tuscan. Michelangelo could be praised as "TUSCORUM FLOS DELIBATUS," even when his work was not noticeably *all'antica*. It was at least marble and impressive, and so in some sense the visual equivalent of what Michelangelo's literary contemporaries were attempting as they moved out of the shadow of Virgil and Cicero. He was a Tuscan safe to praise, because distanced from the prickly points of literary analysis.

The Renaissance ended when the history of art began. When history became the matrix against which art was measured, nature had been displaced. Even Tasso, when he wanted to excuse Ariosto's license, recalled how very licentious had been the times:

⁹² Ibid., 102-03.

you ought to blame the time more, in which similar, and even worse things were done, than the writer.⁹³

Visual and literary art could, and perhaps should, be interpreted relative to its time, rather than merely judged by outdated rules.

Both Caravaggio and the Carracci would revert to earlier ideas than Comanini's, ones based again primarily on issues of style, on the imitation of nature. Comanini, however, had realized that art not only had the right to break with antiquity, and the right to capriciousness, but that art had to have a history and that rules were necessarily inflected by the societies that employed them. At least on some intuitive level, Michelangelo and Ariosto had realized the same thing. The price of modernity was higher than Vasari acknowledged.

⁹³ "più si deve incolpare quell'età, nella quale simile cose, e peggiori anco erano in uso, che lo scrittore;" Tasso, *Apologia*, 1585 unpag.

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CHAPTER FIVE

LISTENING FOR THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

*And so God has placed man in this world
as a kind of image of himself, so that like
an earthly deity he might provide for the
well-being of all.¹*

Apollo, god both of poetry and music, was portrayed anachronistically playing the *lira da braccio* in Raphael's *Parnassus*. Since Marcantonio's engraving of the same subject depicted Apollo playing the historically more appropriate lyre, it seems that Raphael's anachronism was deliberate. He thereby rendered the god a better cousin to the likes of Baldassare Castiglione, Bernardo Bembo, and Serafino Aquilano, all of whom played the *lira da braccio*.

Dosso's painting of Jupiter at the easel [fig. 55], derives from Alberti's fabricated dialogue of the 1430s in the style of the ancient humorist, Lucian. Virtue implores the King of the gods to attend to humanity's troubles, while Mercury hushes Virtue.² This Ferrarese painting shows, as does *Parnassus*, a god practicing an art favored by humanists rather than by the traditional scheme of the liberal arts. But whereas *Parnassus* is one piece among many that praises poetry literally to the skies, Dosso's subject is both rare and ultimately not very flattering to painters. Jupiter's painting constitutes a trivial distraction that keeps him from his real duties. Raphael's *Parnassus* illustrates the uncontroversial canonical status of music when allied with poetry; Dosso's *Jupiter* betrays even the foremost defender of painting's status taking its essential frivolity for granted.³

¹ Erasmus, "Dulce bellum inexpertis," *The Adages of Erasmus*, M.M. Phillips, Cambridge, 1964, 312; "Proinde Deus in hoc mundo velut simulacrum quoddam sui constituit hominem, ut ceu terrenum quoddam numen saluti prospiceret omnium," *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, ed. Y. Remy and R. Dunil-Marquebreucq, Brussels, 1953, 22.

² Peter Humfrey and M. Lucco, *Dosso Dossi, Court Painter in Renaissance Ferrara*, exh. cat., Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1998, no. 27, 170–74.

³ More so in Dosso's version than in Alberti's, however, since in Alberti's Jupiter is painting the wings of butterflies, and in fact just generally distracted from the affairs of Virtue. See Alberti, *Dinner Pieces*, tr. David Marsh, Binghamton, 1987, "Virtue," 21–22.

Nevertheless, to portray a man plucking a lyre or viol as an image of power was new in Raphael's *Parnassus*. Although in this case the reference was to the power of poetry more directly than to that of music, the two were complementary. Poetry was often performed as song; even when it was not, it was understood as a species of song. Virgil, after all, had sung ("cantai," *Inferno*, I, 73). His shepherds had sung (*carmen, canto*). In his "Proem on [the pseudo-]Plutarch's *Musica* to Titus Pyrrhinus," of 1507, Carlo Valgulio declared that "poetic music, that most excellent and divine music of all," was preferable to "the music that the common people celebrate."⁴ The music theorist Gios-effo Zarlino put it less prejudiciously in 1558, saying that in antiquity, "the musician was not separate from the poet, nor the poet from the musician."⁵ He believed as well that musicians had a right to poetic license.⁶ Musicians, poets and wise men for Zarlino constituted a group, and not only that, but a group with great authority among the people.⁷ Decades after Marcantonio's engraving after Raphael's design for *Parnassus*, in 1555, its protagonist Apollo appeared in an engraving in the guise of Orpheus, the mortal made most powerful by his music [fig. 56].⁸

In the fifteenth century, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) was said to have relished more than any other recreation listening to poetry accompanied by the lyre, or lute. He also played the lyre himself.⁹ Isabella d'Este, as well as Lorenzo de' Medici, his mother, wife, and sisters, and his sons,¹⁰ studied music seriously. Ficino, who himself played

⁴ Claude Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, New Haven, 1989, 44.

⁵ Quoted by Palisca, 369.

⁶ "sarà lecito al Musico alle volte, di poter porre in carte alcune cose, contra le date Regole," Lowinsky, "Genius," 55.

⁷ Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche*, Proemio, 2, "acquistarono appresso i Popoli tale autorità, che furono da molto più tenuti & honorati, che non erano gli altri. Et costoro, che arrivarono a tanto sapere, senza differenza alcuna vennero nominati Musici, Poeti & Sapienti."

⁸ Cf. John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, Syracuse, 2000; D.P. Walker, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, 100–20.

⁹ Raffaele Brandolini, *On Music and Poetry*, ed. and tr. A. Moyer, Tempe, Arizona, 2001 [1513], 19. On Brandolini, see *ibid.*, *Musica scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance*, Ithaca, 1992, 107–13.

¹⁰ See the rich article by Frank D'Accone, "Lorenzo the Magnificent and Music," in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, ed. G.C. Garfanni, Florence, 1994, 259–90; see also

and sang in imitation of Orpheus, reported that Lorenzo sang as though possessed by “divine frenzy.”¹¹

Poliziano was notable among humanists for his musicianship. Giovio’s short tribute described his death, attributed to an unfortunate (“insanis” was Giovio’s word) love affair, while singing and playing the *cithara*.¹² The association of both music and dance with libidinous matters was familiar. The first phrase of Duke Orsino’s declaration in *Twelfth Night* expressed a general premise: “If music be the food of love, play on,/Give me excess of it.” Since love itself was associated with spiritual yearning in the greater Petrarchan tradition, music and dance were also believed to help order the soul—at least, so their advocates believed. In Cosimo Bartoli’s *Ragionamenti*, early in the second dialogue, music is accused of making men weak and feminine, and called a “lure to ignite the fires of indulgence.”¹³

Music had a past to be proud of: it belonged to the quadrivium. Tinctoris (c. 1436–1511) and Zarlino (1517–90), for example, were prompt to assert its importance as a liberal art. Music’s claim to liberal arts status was cemented by the strong tradition of amateur practice. It had also long been integral to religious practice, and no less a figure than Savonarola composed poems that were set to music. Particularly at carnival time, Savonarola’s youthful followers danced and sang laude.¹⁴ Polyphony Savonarola opposed, however.

As Leonardo summarily stated the case, “Since you have put music among the liberal arts, either you should put painting there or else take music away.”¹⁵ His argument was certainly acceptable to his fellow artists. Leonardo argued that since sight was nobler than hearing, painting was greater than poetry and music. Still, his argument betrayed the fact that music was unproblematically a liberal art (and thus of more secure status than poetry, even), and artists could but hope to equal it. The link between music and painting was never as rou-

Anthony Cummings, *The Politicized Muse: Music for Medici Festivals, 1512–1537*, Princeton, 1992, 13 and passim.

¹¹ D’Accone, 273; Fenlon and Haar, *Madrigal*, 12: “furore quondam divino.”

¹² “supremi furoris carmina decantavit,” Paolo Giovio, *Elogia virorum illustrium*, ed. R. Meregazzi, Rome, 1972, 70.

¹³ “una esca da accendere il fuoco de piaceri,” Bartoli, *Ragionamenti*, 34–35.

¹⁴ Patrick Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola’s Musical Legacy*, Oxford, 1998, esp. Chapter Four. My thanks to Stephen Bobick for not only recommending the book, but checking it out for me.

¹⁵ *Paragone*, 247. An argument repeated by Luca Pacioli, *De divina proportione*, 1505.

tine as that between music and poetry. On the other hand, music had a less direct relationship to ancient examples than sculpture, painting, architecture, and poetry.

Dance, music, poetry and painting: all these arts were conceived of as founded on principles of measurement (“misura is part of prudence and of the liberal arts”),¹⁶ but especially poetry and music.¹⁷ Dance piggy-backed on the esteem traditionally granted to music, as painting did with poetry. Guglielmo Ebreo put it succinctly in his tellingly titled *On the Practice or Art of Dancing* (*De pratica seu arte tripudiū*) in 1463: “[music] is profoundly linked and in great part akin to our nature and to the composition of the four elements,” and further, “this particular virtue and science clearly proves itself to be of the most extraordinary efficacy, and most auspicious and sustaining to the human race; for without it there could never be a joyful and full life for mankind.”¹⁸ Even Alberti had not made so fundamental a claim for painting. His attempt to link painting to the liberal art of geometry involved, he freely admitted, both difficulty and novelty.

In other ways, though, Guglielmo’s descriptions of dance came suggestively close to contemporary descriptions of painting. In both the dignity of the art depends upon its relevance to the condition of the soul. As Guglielmo put it: “this virtue of the dance is simply an outward manifestation of the movements of the soul, which must accord with the measured and perfect consonances of that harmony which, as if pent up unnaturally, struggle mightily to escape and display themselves in action.”¹⁹ Painting was likewise defended as an art whose ultimate subject was the movements of the soul. The classic example was that of the Three Graces, whose gestures of giving and receiving were trans-

¹⁶ Domenico da Piacenza, “De arte saltandi & choreas ducendi,” in *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music*, vol. I, ed. A. Smith, Stuyvesant, New York, 15.

¹⁷ See James Haar, *Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600*, Berkeley, 1986, passim, but esp. 11–18.

¹⁸ Guglielmo Ebreo of Pesaro, *De practica seu arte tripudiū*, ed. B. Sparti, Oxford, 1993, 89: “di quella essere alla nostra natura & alla compositione delli quatro elementi grandemente colligata;” “questa tal virtude & scienza essere di singularissima efficacia, & alla humana generatione amicissima & conservativa: senza la quale alcuna lieta & perfetta vita essere tra gli humani giamai non puote.” Since the text belongs to the manuscript tradition, the date is merely that of a version. See also A. William Smith, *Fifteenth-Century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Treatises and Collections in the Tradition of Domenico da Piacenza*, Stuyvesant, N.Y., 1995, vol. I, 108–209.

¹⁹ “la qual virtute del danzare non e altro che una actione dimostrativa di fuori di movimenti sprituali: li quali si hanno a concordare colle misurate et perfette consonanze d’essa harmonia: che per lo nostro audito alle parti intellective & ai sensi cordiali

muted into dance by Botticelli in *La Primavera*. Alberti, quite conscious of its reverberations from ancient rhetoric, articulated this expressive principle for painting already in 1435, and cited the Three Graces as an apt invention for painters.

Guglielmo's basic idea of the movements of the body as expressive of the movements of the soul was memorably reiterated in the manuscript notebooks of Leonardo. Although dance lacked sufficient status to leverage that of painting, the appeal to poetry and to music served better. "Consonances" and "harmony" were words Leonardo used to describe the lights and shadows of his painting: "the proportionality called harmony, which delights sense with sweet *concerto* no differently than the proportionality made by different tones delights the sense of hearing."²⁰ He moved here from a basically linear and typically Florentine way of thinking about visual art, to a more subjective aesthetic, but one which still borrowed the language of mathematical precision. The appeal to music was essential to Leonardo's emphasis on pleasing tonalities for the eye. His theory of painting may well have been stimulated by his work on the pageants at the Milanese court, with their music and dance. Both of these arts all weighed on behalf of a visual art that was more expressive, atmospheric, and lyrical than heroic and monumental.

Since music was more likely to be practiced by persons of status than painting or sculpting, it is not surprising that we know of several instances in which painters enhanced their credentials by competency on an instrument (Leonardo, Giorgione, Sebastiano, Rosso, Titian), but no examples of musicians known also for their abilities in the visual arts. Cellini's father was dismayed when he abandoned the trumpet for goldsmithery.

Though the status of music was secure, the status of individual musicians, and of the profession, was less so. The visual record incorporates some of this ambivalence. In many genre paintings of musicians in refined or idealized settings, more or less realistic ones [fig. 57], a tradition which owes its origins to Giorgione, honor is paid

con diletto descende: dove poi si genera certi dolci commovimenti: i quali chome contra sua natura ri[n]chiusi, si sforzano quanto possano di uscire fuori: & farsi in atto manifesti," Guglielmo, 88.

²⁰ Farago, 220–21: "delle quali ne nasce la proportionalita detta armonia, che con dolce conceto contenta il senso non altrimenti che sifacciano le proportionalita de diverse voci al senseo dello audito."

to the image of the practicing—though perhaps not professional—musician. Pastoral poetry and pictures attested to the fundamental harmony between nature and the poet/musician/shepherd. Portrayals of the generic artist, sketching in the landscape, like a poet/shepherd watching over his sheep, began as early as the Florentine *Chain Map*, approximately a decade before Raphael's *Parnassus*. The artist in that woodcut is not, however, portrayed as the lord of the landscape he surveys. He is young and unpretentious, like the boy Giotto among his sheep. By contrast, in Raphael's *Parnassus* Apollo the poet/musician, imitator of nature, presides over the landscape from its peak, as its lord. The painter himself appears in the background, making a modest claim to poetic status along with his rather bolder though more implicit claim as expositor of poetry's partner, painting. Some of the poets hold pens, whereas Raphael's hand cannot be seen.

When we leave the realm of the idealized type for actual portraiture, we find fewer musicians portrayed, though still more than painters. In a woodcut book illustration which portrayed Luigi Pulci reciting his poem *Morgante* while playing the lira da braccio [fig. 58],²¹ or in Leonardo's *Portrait of a Musician* in the Ambrosiana, a man shown holding a piece of music, honor is paid to particular practitioners.²² The latter painting implies that musicians possessed a well-developed sense of professional pride at least as early as, and probably before, painters. Indeed, formal portraits of painters proudly bearing a professional attribute came much later than those of musicians. Self-portraits of artists are many, beginning with Peter Parler in Prague Cathedral (1375–80), but typically they were shown as thinkers and gentlemen, rather than in the midst of work. Portraits of one's artistic comrades begin with Masaccio's portrayal of Donatello and Brunelleschi in the lost *La Sagra* (1420s). By the sixteenth century, portraits of artists had become fairly common. Dürer did not show himself with brush, and neither did his even prouder and more socially secure Italian confrères. Giulio Romano was portrayed by Titian in 1536 as a gentlemanly architect, plan in hand;²³ and at approximately the same time,

²¹ See Iain Fenlon, "Music and Society," in *Man and Music, The Renaissance, From the 1470s to the end of the 16th century*, ed. I. Fenlon, Englewood Cliffs, 1989, Ch. 1.

²² Cf. a portrait probably of the late 1520s, attributed to Salviati, and thought to represent a lutenist, Jacquet du Pont or Iachetto del Ponte; Catherine Goguel, ed., *Francesco Salviati ou la bella maniera*, exh. cat., Rome/Paris, Milan, 1998, no. 79, 218–21.

²³ The portrait since 1995 owned by Mantua; *Giulio Romano, Master Designer*, ed. J. Cox-Rearick, exh. cat., Hunter College, 1999, 14–15.

Baccio Bandinelli showed himself as sculptor and gold-chained gentleman, the insignia of the Order of Santiago around his neck, again holding a *disegno* and a piece of red chalk, rather than a chisel.²⁴ By the time a painter portrayed himself in the act of painting, as spectacularly was the case with Palma Giovane's Brera self-portrait (1590s) [fig. 32], in which he stands grandly at an easel painting the Resurrection, Morone had shown a tailor working with his scissors (c. 1571, London, National Gallery). The status of painters may have risen, but at the same time the prerogatives of portraiture had fallen.

Regardless of the traditional status of music as a liberal art, personal celebrity was a lesser phenomenon with musicians than in the visual arts. There was no local glory to be had in celebrating music, since the great musicians were predominantly foreigners until Palestrina (1525/26–94).²⁵ The division of labor between composer and performer, which parallels that rather porous divide between print inventor and engraver, did not foster concentrated personal adulation from listeners. Music was more easily possessed, at least once it was distributed through printing, and it was more easily forgotten. We have no music from the once-famous improviser Serafino dall'Aquila, subject of an early biography, nor from the Florentine organist Antonio Squarcialupi, called "viro immortale" at his death by Lorenzo de' Medici.²⁶ Although musicians might be called *virtuosi*, and particularly so later in the century, they were neither paid nor praised as though they were unique individuals, and the music itself is not what we, with hindsight, would characterize as virtuostic. The lack of a written history of music's

²⁴ Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*, New Haven, 1998, 139, dates the work both to the early 1530s and to 1540; P. Hendy, *European and American Paintings in the Isabella Stuart Gardner Museum*, Boston, 1974, 12–13, is confident neither of date nor of attribution, but suggests a similar chronological range. It was recommended by Berenson as a portrait of Michelangelo by Sebastiano del Piombo.

²⁵ Though, N.B., Francesco Landini of Florence (c. 1325–97, great-uncle of Cristoforo Landino), crowned with laurel in Venice in the 1360s, partly as poet, but primarily for his musicianship; Kristeller, "Music and Learning in the Early Italian Renaissance," in *Renaissance Thought*, 145–46. He was the blind son of a Giottesque painter, Jacopo del Casentino. See also the very interesting article by Michael Long, "Francesco Landini and the Florentine Cultural Elite," in *Early Music History, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music*, III, ed. I. Fenlon, Cambridge, 1983, 83–99.

²⁶ J. Wolf, *Geschichtliche Darstellungen*, Hildesheim, 1965, 229. See further, Gabriele Giacomelli, "Nuove giunte alla biografia di Antonio Squarcialupi: i viaggi, l'impiego, le esecuzioni," in *La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. P. Gargiulo, Florence, 1993, 257–73.

progress implied that it had not been particularly remarkable. The new style, more adapted to express its lyrics and more complex of structure, insinuated itself only gradually, rather than arriving spectacularly through the agency of a single individual, as had linear perspective for instance. Musicians and composers were forever replacing one another, whereas the Sistine Ceiling was there to stay—despite Giovio's taunt that Vasari's *Lives*, slated to be dedicated to Duke Cosimo, was a far greater thing than Michelangelo's already crumbling Ceiling.²⁷

For as long as dance and music were thought of as liberal or potentially so, they were valued not as virtuostic exercises which required professional training or special talent, but as proper functions of an educated person. Overmuch diligence was generally shunned, as was the virtuosity which might result. Plutarch's Philip famously had cautioned Alexander against playing the lute too well. The greater success of the amateur tradition in music than in drawing, an obvious corollary of the claim to liberal arts status, may well have had an adverse affect on the success of professional musicians.²⁸

Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* honors music, both amateur and, briefly, the professional work of the singer Bidon. Nevertheless, the role of music is almost taken for granted, whereas that of painting is seen as more controversial, its position less secure. Castiglione's interlocutor Conte Ludovico da Canossa praises music as having been esteemed in antiquity. He is seconded by Giuliano de' Medici, son of Lorenzo (1479–1516, and incidentally the author of a poem in honor of the recently deceased Serafino as immortal now in heaven).²⁹ He calls for a discussion of the practicalities of this and other occupations in themselves worthwhile, but not always praiseworthy in their pursuit. This is postponed in favor of a discussion of the visual arts, and Book I concludes with a dance.³⁰ In Book II, Federico warns that a gentleman

²⁷ Giovio, ever ready to insult Michelangelo, wrote to Vasari in 1547, "sarete piu allegro, piu glorioso e piu richo daver fatto questa bell opera, che se avessi dipinto la capella di Michelagnoli, quale si va consumando con il saniro et con le fessure," *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, ed. Karl Frey, I, Munich, 1923, 198.

²⁸ Zarlino, responding to Horace 333–34 Part I, 3, 4 to delight honestly not because it is a liberal art but as a recreation.

²⁹ Serafino dell'Aquilano, *Opere*, Rome, 1502, "Li dei placati: e tanto ha hora piace e vale/Che chi qua giu lodio: la su l'honora."

³⁰ Book I, xlvi–xlvi; James Haar, "The Courtier as Musician: Castiglione's View of the Science and Art of Music," in *The Science and the Art of Renaissance Music*, ed. P. Corneilson, Princeton, 1998, 20–37: "the appearance of the cultivated amateur on the musical scene in the early cinquecento is an important landmark in the history

ought not be overeager to play his instrument—on the contrary, he ought to be “quasi sforzato”—but once committed, must do so without betraying the study and effort necessary to accomplishment.³¹ A lady ought to perform only seemly music and dances, and then with “una certa timidità.”³²

Despite certain points of contact, sixteenth-century music theory differed from artistic theory. Modern music was celebrated with little regard to that of pagan antiquity, which was only vaguely known. Pythagoras' concept of the music of the spheres had been known whenever Plato's *Tiṃaeus* was, thereby ensuring basic continuity in the theory (or at least the philosophy) of music. In practice, however, the moderns were quite free of ancient example. Giovanni Spartaro, in particular, disdained attempts to conceptualize music in antique terms. Because musical tradition was so relatively curtailed, the stylistic break called Renaissance was less obvious than in poetry or painting.³³ On the other hand, composers like painters were struggling with the issue of adherence to rule versus the exercise of license.³⁴ Zarlino, for instance, cautioned in 1573 that, just as good painters needed to follow rules, so with true musicians.³⁵ Dissonance, particularly as practiced in the realm of secular music, was as debatable as lascivious subject matter

of music, and Castiglione seems to have been its first chronicler,” 25. See also Walter Kemp, “Some Notes in Music in Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano*,” in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance: Essays in Honour of P.O. Kristeller*, ed. C. Clough, Manchester, 1976, 354–69.

³¹ Book II, xii, xiii.

³² Book III, viii. Pietro Bembo advised his daughter in 1541 that writing and cooking should occupy her, rather than music; Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, New York, 1998, 333.

³³ Though see Panofsky's argument that the “ars nova” of Dufay and Gilles Binchois, c. 1400 in Burgandy, provides a valid parallel to the van Eycks and Robert Campin; E. Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, New York, 1971 (1953), vol. I, 149–51.

³⁴ The rules of counterpoint were themselves in evolution; see, e.g., Claude Palisca, “Vincenzo Galilei's Counterpoint Treatise,” in *Studies in the History of Italian Music and Music Theory*, Oxford, 1994, 30–53. See also *ibid.*, “The Artusi-Monteverdi Controversy,” 85, in which Palisca describes Vincenzo Galilei's contrast between “the composers who followed the rules—the *osservatori*—and those who, like the painters Michelangelo and Raphael, were guided only by their own judgement based on both reason and sense.”

³⁵ “a chi vuol esser buon Pittore & nella Pittura acquistarsi gran fama, non è abastanza l'adoprar vagamente i colori; se dell'opera, che egli hà fatto, non sa render salda ragione: così a colui, che desidera haver nome di vero Musicco, non è bastante & non apporta molta laude l'haver unite le Consonanze, quando egli non sappia dar conto di tale unione,” Zarlino, *Istitutioni*, 2.

in the visual arts, and improvisation was as risky as sketchiness. The eventual acceptance of caprice and fantasy in the visual arts may have depended in part on those concepts' corresponding and more precocious roles in music. Certainly the precedent of musical theory assisted academic attempts to reconcile rule and inspiration from the time of Arcimboldo's admirers on. By the eighteenth century, the art of Giambattista Tiepolo and the art theory of Francesco Algarotti both depended significantly on the norms of musical theory. They were thereby relatively liberated from textual sources, and in particular from the tradition of the *exemplum*.³⁶

Hearing music was an experience long associated with heavenly rapture. Pontus de Tyard's elaborate reminiscence of Francesco da Milano's playing, published in 1555, dwelt memorably but not unusually on the listeners. Francesco he described as a:

man who is considered to have attained the end (if such is possible) of perfection in playing the lute well. The tables being cleared, he chose one, and as if tuning his strings, sat on the end of a table seeking out a fantasia. He had barely disturbed the air with three strummed chords when he interrupted conversation which had started among the guests. Having constrained them to face him, he continued with such a ravishing skill that little by little, making the strings languish under his fingers in his sublime way, he transported all those who were listening into so pleasurable a melancholy that—one leaning his head on his hand supported by his elbow, and another sprawling with his limbs in careless deportment, with gaping mouth and more than half-closed eyes, glued (one would judge) to those strings [of the instrument], and his chin fallen on his breast, concealing his countenance with the saddest taciturnity ever seen—they remained deprived of all senses save that of hearing, as if the spirit, having abandoned all the seats of the senses, had retired to the ears in order to enjoy the more at its ease so ravishing a harmony; and I believe (said M. de Ventemille) that we would be there still, had he not himself—I know not how—changing his style of playing with a gentle force, returned the spirit and senses to the place from which he had stolen them, not without leaving as much astonishment in each of us as if we had been elevated by an ecstatic transport of some divine frenzy.³⁷

³⁶ See P. Emison, "The Uses of Mood in Two of Tiepolo's Etchings," *Bulletin*, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995-97, 49-56. See also, on the importance of the *capriccio* to the theory of Federico Zuccari, Brann, *Debate*, 271; and on the difficulties of theorists to be consistent about the role of rule, 243.

³⁷ H. Colin Slim, "Francesco da Milano (1497-1543/44), A bio-biographical study," *Musica Disciplina*, XVII, 1963, 63-84; "homme que l'on tient avoir atteint le but (s'il se peut) de la perfection à bien toucher un Lut. Les tables levées il en prend un,

In Pontus' account the auditors, rather than the performing artist, experience nothing less than "divine frenzy," an unusual twist on the basically Platonic conceit. Viewers of paintings did not make comparable claims. Moreover, this description of the extraordinary spiritual effect of music was not without precedent. From the myth of Orpheus right through Michele Savonarola's advice to his ruler, Duke Borso, the standard recommendation was that inner peace and joy ("alegri e iocundi"), might be achieved by listening to harmonies.³⁸ Others would claim to experience quasi a simulacrum of heaven: "If in paradise one has pleasure, and one could have paradise on earth, then what I have described to you [dance and music] was paradise."³⁹ By 1567, however, Cosimo Bartoli would claim in his *Ragionamenti* dedicated to Duke Cosimo, that patronizing the literary Academy must provide him with a true happiness, nearly comparable to that of his soul's reaching heaven.⁴⁰

It is characteristic that the credit given to music is not concentrated on the musicians themselves, let alone the composers. Music provided an art whose significance lodged in its being experienced, rather than in a quasi-miraculous act of creativity. Its creativity was, after all, split

et comme pour tater les accors, se met pres d'un bout de la table à rechercher une fantasie. Il n'eut esmeu l'air de trois pinçades qu'il romt les discours commencez entre les uns et les autres fetiés, et, les ayant contraint tourner visage la part où il estoit, continue avec si ravissante industrie que peu à peu, faisant par une sienna divine façon de toucher mourir les cordes souz les dois, il transporte tous ceux qui l'escoutoient en une si gracieuse melancolie qu l'un, appuyant sa teste en la main soustenue du coude; l'autre, estendu lachement en une incurieuse contenance de ses membres qui, d'une bouche entr'ouverte et des yeux plus qu'à demy desclos, se cloüant (eust-on jugé) aux cordes, et qui d'un menton tombé sur sa poitrine, desguisant son visage de la plus triste taciturnité qu'on vit onques, demeuroient prvez de tout sentiment, ormis de l'ouye, comme si l'ame, ayant abandonné tous les sieges sensitifs, se fust retirée au bord des oreilles pour jouir plus à son aise de si ravissant symphonie. Et croy (disoit Monsieur de Vintimille) qu'encor y fussions-nous, si luy mesmes, ne scay-je comment se ravissant, n'eust resuscité les cordes et, de peu à peu envigourant d'une douce force son jeu, nous eust remis l'ame et les sentimens au lieu d'où il les avoit desrobez, non sans laisser autant d'estonnement à chacun de nous que si nous fussions relevez d'un transport ecstatiq de quelque divine fureur;" Pontus de Tyard, *Solitaire Second*, ed. C. Yandell, Geneva, 1980, 192–93; quoted in the literature as early as D.P. Walker, "Musical Humanism in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries," *Music Review*, II, 1941, 112–13.

³⁸ *Felice progresso*, 232–32.

³⁹ Smith, I, xvii.

⁴⁰ Bartoli, *Ragionamento*, 7: "si conosceva in lui un certo contento, & una certa vera allegrezza, che io arderei di dire, che poco maggiore la goda forse al presente la benedetta anima sua nel conspetto del sommo Dio."

between composer and instrumentalist or singer. It also was modelled more closely than painting on natural practice, on the songs of birds and peasants. So although music was held to distill the very principles of the cosmos, and the mind which contemplated the harmonies of music was therefore necessarily well-ordered, still, the mind which produced them was analogous merely to a bird's.

From early on music was distinguished by the emphasis placed on listening—more comparable to the viewing of prints than that of painting. Looking at paintings devolved from the basic experience of the altarpiece, from worship. The painters who made this happen (rather than viewers) developed into surrogate gods. Sometimes their own faces looked down from the altarpieces at the suppliants. Prints related more nearly to books, which humanists read as active philologists and linguists, commenting even as they attended; in both cases critical reception was emphasized more than simple recognition. With music too, reception was a more important locus than production. One listened analytically and heard perfect harmony, a taste of heaven. Merely to hear music was to experience the divine. Music had little didactic function; its end was acknowledged to be pleasure,⁴¹ but in sacred music at least, a very pure pleasure.

Divinity lay in the music itself, rather than in any inspired creator's mind. The music itself was immaterial, as paint could never be. Painters certainly tried to describe heaven: angels dance to heavenly music in paintings of heaven. But that painting in itself offered some simulacrum of the experience of heaven because of its formal perfections and the pleasures they provided was beyond anyone's wildest eulogy. It might have reeked of that old demon, idolatry. Painting was a material fiction and the result of approximation, whereas music was deemed wholly immaterial and perfectly or mathematically, true and consonant. The language by which art and artists were praised tended toward praise of the material world it represented, rather than of heaven. Calling an artist or a work of art divine was as close as anyone got to praising the spiritual efficacy of looking at art. Yet that comment generally had little to do with estimating the effect of art, as opposed to its inherent quality and value.

⁴¹ "Song has been sought and invented for the sake of pleasure," Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, vol. II, tr. Clement Miller, 1965, American Institute of Musicology, n.l., 1965, 284.

Pictures of musicians often feature groups, often of persons of rather low estate, so that the ostensible subject is less the object of regard than the imagination of the viewer, who invents the unheard music. The benefit of the work lay not in seeing the producers of music (one's own inferiors, presumably), but in hearing in the mind's ear the unheard melodies, rather like the old theory of the icon as that which deflects from itself to the implicated reality. As in Pontus' striking account, these paintings function oddly, flattering not who is portrayed but who is hearing, though that person is hearing not the music of the spheres, but the equally inaudible music of the canvas. In Raphael's *Parnassus*, it is Apollo's music that those divine poets hear—a kind of Platonic case relative to which the normal concert was mere shadow, but a shadow in which the auditors still aspired to a state of inspiration.

* * *

When in 1492 Gaffurio (1451–1522) defended music—“The wisest poets have acknowledged that music is a friend of the liberal disciplines and necessarily agrees with them”⁴²—he was making an uncontroversial claim, one imbued with tradition. The training of the musician might be made easier by the addition of talent, but respect was due primarily to the discipline:

If nature is joined and cemented to art, will not the songs be pleasanter, sweeter, and more acceptable to our ears by far? What is more, they will not be considered human but divine, and they will display those sounds of the heavenly orbits that the Pythagoreans proclaim so much...By the same token, no one should think it ridiculous if all very learned men have unanimously defended in public that art contributes much more to the musician than nature does. This [fact] was [even] agreeable to Fabius [Quintilian] where he proves that music can in no way exist without art.⁴³

It was the peculiar trait of music that its effects were held to be divine, yet its production lay within the range of art, i.e., the product of training primarily, and in-born talent secondarily.⁴⁴ Tinctoris in 1477 had

⁴² Franchino Gaffurio, *The Theory of Music*, tr. W. Kreyszig, New Haven, 1993, 24.

⁴³ Gaffurio/Kreyszig, 44.

⁴⁴ A sentiment perhaps not forgotten when Kant, in the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, 46–50, asserted that “Genius is the talent (natural endowment) which gives rule to art;” see Peter Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius*, New Haven, 2001, 106ff. See also Edward Lowinsky, “Musical Genius: Evolution and Origins of a Concept,” reprinted in *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance, and Other Essays*, Chicago, 1989, vol. I, 40–66.

simply hedged when it came to crediting either the stars or diligence for recent progress in the divine art of music:

At this present time...there flourish, whether by force of some celestial influence or by the force of assiduous practice, countless composers, among them Jean Ockeghem, Jean Regis, Antoine Busnoys, Firmin Caron, and Guillaume Fauges, who glory in having studied this divine art under John Dunstable, Gilles Binchoys, and Guillaume Dufay, recently deceased...As Virgil took Homer for his model and that divine work the Aeneid, so I, by Hercules, have used these composers for my modest works.⁴⁵

While explaining the rules of counterpoint, Tinctoris allowed for the judgment of the the ears.⁴⁶

By the mid-sixteenth-century, less was said about music as a liberal art. For if the person who practices the most is the best, perhaps it is not so far from mechanical after all. Availing himself of an analogy between sculptors and composers, Pietro Aaron declared in his treatise of 1545 that composition was a “divina arte” and that:

Good composers are *born*; they are not the result of study and long practice; but they derive their gifts from Heaven, gifts, that is, which Heaven grants fully only to a few.⁴⁷

The sentiment was articulated even earlier by Spartaro in a letter to the Florentine Aaron on 6 May 1523: “Composers are born, like poets.”⁴⁸ He wrote in another letter, of 1529:

The written rules can well teach the first rudiments of counterpoint, but they will not make the good composer, inasmuch as good composers are born just as are the poets. Therefore, one needs almost more help than the written rule; and this is apparent every day, because the good

⁴⁵ Tinctoris, *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (1477), quoted by I. Fenlon, “Music and Society,” in *The Renaissance*, ed. I. Fenlon, Englewood Cliffs, 1961, 61.

⁴⁶ Lowinsky, 59.

⁴⁷ “i buoni compositori nascono, et non si fanno per studio, ne per molto praticare, ma si bene per celeste infusso, et inclinatione, Gratie veramente, che a pochi il ciel largo destina;” Albert Einstein, *The Italian Madrigal*, tr. A. Krappe, R. Sessions, O. Strunk, I, Princeton, 1949, 54; Lowinsky, 52. On the sculptors see Moyer, 125: “And so, as we see that if different sculptors in marble or some other material produce the same figure or form, nonetheless one of them will be much more perfect than another, by as much as one’s artifice is better than the other. I say it happens likewise with our harmonic faculty.” And for Aaron’s defense of music as necessary to the other arts, and on its antiquity, see Pietro Aaron, *Toscanello in Music, Book I*, tr. Peter Bergquist, Colorado Springs, 1970, 4–13.

⁴⁸ “li compositori nascono come nascono i poeti,” *Ibid.* See also *A Correspondence of Renaissance Musicians*, eds. B. Blackburn, E. Lowinsky, C. Miller, Oxford, 1991, 295.

composers (through natural instinct and a certain manner of grace [per instinto naturale e per certa gratia et modo] which can hardly be taught) bring at times such turns and figures in counterpoint and harmony as are not demonstrated in any rule or precept of counterpoint.⁴⁹

The many images of musicians set in landscape emphasize music's importance as a supremely natural art, inherent in brooks and irrepressible in birds, and for gifted humans, a native talent.

Lives of Dante and Petrarch were among the first of non-saintly, modern biographies. Then Vasari more or less singlehandedly made the visual arts into a literary phenomenon. When he claimed that the boy Giotto drew well on rocks while tending sheep, or that Michelangelo was favored by the stars at birth, his readers would have readily believed him. For by the mid-sixteenth century, even the pretense that mere human reason apart from native talent sufficed for excellence in the musical and visual arts was extinct. By the time that music exchanged the security of its liberal arts status for a serious investment in the concept of natural inspiration, the rise of artistic reputation intervened, that of Michelangelo in particular. In 1547 Heinrich Glarean (1488–1563), in a text published in Basel but known in Italy, set the idea of the natural talent of musicians side by side with that of painters and sculptors:

neither talent [inventing tenors, adding voices] is really possible for a man unless he is born to it, and, as is commonly said, unless he received it from his mother. This is likewise true of painters, also of sculptors, and preachers (*concionatores*) of the Divine Word (for this is undoubtedly an expression of poets), in short, of all works dedicated to Minerva.⁵⁰

However, unlike the case with writers and artists, the commemoration of great composers and musicians tended to amount to little more than the occasional musical tribute or, once treatises were being printed, a line or two of recognition, usually Cennino-like through the descent of apprenticeship.

An autobiographical essay by the fifteenth-century dance master Guglielmo Ebreo has survived,⁵¹ but it is essentially a list of weddings he attended, accounts of upper-class luxury interspersed oddly with mentions of coincidental lower-class deaths, some accidental, some not. In a much more self-conscious and monumentalizing tone, Josquin (d. 1521)

⁴⁹ 5 April 1529, to Giovanni del Lago, Lowinsky, "Genius," 51; *Correspondence*, 364.

⁵⁰ Glarean, I, 205, Ch XXXVIII.

⁵¹ Smith, I, 175–85.

memorialized his master Ockeghem (d. 1495). He set the words of Jehan Molinet (1433–1507), in which the wood nymphs lament “le vray tresoir de musiqu’ et chief d’oeuvre.”⁵² This followed standard practice for mourning the death of a poet, typically done in the pastoral mode, in which music and poetry readily blend. In pastoral the death of the poet is lamented against the backdrop of nature’s seasons, with a certain confidence in art as a source of eternal life. The divine artist is identified with Nature, which dies and yet lives. In pastoral the antinomy between art and nature has vanished. There is no tradition, no history—only a timeless world in which art is perfectly natural and love the primary emotion. At the same time, the counterfactuality or fictiveness of the pastoral world is implied by the dominant mood of melancholy, as though the poetry were mourning its own insubstantiality.

For both artists and musicians, the business of vaunting one’s colleagues flourished appreciably more in the sixteenth than in the fifteenth centuries. Nevertheless, and despite Ferrara’s role as a center of musical patronage, Ariosto did not praise its composers as he did its painters the Dossi, which praise he paid for when Vasari railed at him for poor judgment. As for the court musicians, whether because they were not so highly regarded by his patrons (despite the fact that they included the likes of Josquin), because they were not locally born or shifted around too much, or because the rivalry between poet and musician was too close for comfort, Ariosto preferred to praise painters, warriors, and women.

Twenty-six years after Josquin’s death, in 1547, Glarean wrote:

there stands out most particularly in talent, conscientiousness, and industry (unless I am mistaken in my affection), Jodocus a Prato, whom in his native Belgian language the ordinary people endearingly call Josquin, just as one would say Jodocus. If the knowledge of twelve modes and of a true musical system had fallen to the lot of this man, considering his natural genius and the acuteness of intellect through which he became esteemed, nature could have produced nothing more august, nothing more magnificent in this art. His talent was so versatile in every way, so equipped by a natural acumen and vigor, that there was nothing in this field which he could not do. But in many instances he lacked a proper measure and a judgment based on knowledge and thus in some places in his songs he did not fully restrain as he ought to have, the impetuosity of

⁵² For a very helpful survey of the sources, see Jessie Ann Owens, “Music Historiography and the Definition of ‘Renaissance’,” *Notes*, XLVII, 1990, 305–30. See also James Haar, “Self-consciousness,” 219–32.

a lively talent, although this ordinary fault may be condoned because of the otherwise incomparable gifts of the man.⁵³

Though as a biographical notice for a composer pioneering, the circumspection of the notice is as memorable as its praise. For art historians, it is very reminiscent of Vasari writing about Titian—if only this man had been better educated (in Titian's case, this refers to the art of antiquity, rather than in the twelve modes, a criticism Vasari attributes to Michelangelo), Titian would have been truly great. Josquin, like Titian, is criticized for overreliance on natural talent. Josquin, however, was a founding rather than a culminating figure, and perhaps it is in the composers of the more established tradition that we should look for the patterns of less inhibited praise.

Whereas artists were promoted by one another and by humanists, musicians relied more on their printers' prefaces, which were virtually advertisements. Josquin was credited early on with a divine quality ("divinum et inimitabile quiddam"), by a printer in 1537. (Decades before, Serafino had hailed his "*sublime ingegno*").⁵⁴ Giovanni del Lago (c. 1480s–1544), a Venetian priest and music theorist, wrote a letter to Spartaro, a Bolognese composer and singer, and referred to Josquin as "divino" ("è stato divino nel componere")—probably emulating Aretino's usage of painters.⁵⁵ Josquin had been hailed c. 1490 as "compagno musico" by Serafino Aquilano, poet and singer, who was also heralded as divine in print after his death.⁵⁶ Arcadelt (c. 1505–1568) was accorded the epithet "divino," also by his printer, in a letter of dedication for an edition of 1539 ("la gloria del Divino Arcadelte," "il divino intelletto").⁵⁷ Nevertheless Michelangelo, in a couple of letters written at about this time to Luigi del Riccio, treats Arcadelt like an underling,

⁵³ Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, 264–65, Ch. XXIV; and "our Josquin was a man indulging too much in skill," 276.

⁵⁴ Lowinsky, "Ascanio Sforza's Life: A Key to Josquin's Biography and an Aid to the Chronology of His Works," in *Music in the Culture of the Renaissance*, vol. II, 554.

⁵⁵ *Correspondence*, 498. The letter is dated 1532, but this phrase seems to be a marginal addition from after 1538; see n. 15.

⁵⁶ Nino Pirrotta, "Music and Cultural Tendencies in 15th-Century Italy," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XIX, 1966, 127–61, esp. 138.

⁵⁷ The first edition 1537(?) and a pirated one having both been lost, Einstein, 163; Frey, 173–76. See also the portrayal of this volume of music in a strange painting, location now unknown: H. Colin Slim, "Arcadelt's 'Amor, tu sai,' in an Anonymous Allegory," reprinted in *Painting Music in the Sixteenth Century*, Aldershot, 2002, XIII. Nicolas Gombert, a Flemish composer in the employ of the Emperor, is called "huomo divino" in a book published in Venice in 1542; Lowinsky, 52.

whose settings of a couple of his poems need to be recompensed with a gift of money or cloth.⁵⁸ Moreover, Arcadelt seems to be claimed as divine in a different sense: more simply, as given grace by God. This was also thought of Michelangelo, though in the latter's case it was braided together with other significances. Michelangelo was not only talented in the sense that he was endowed by God with certain skills, but when he was called divine he was deemed the equal of the ancients and beyond rule—neither of which was implied for Arcadelt.⁵⁹ The musician's divinity connoted not much more than that he was the best to be found, and in that rather minor league sense a special gift from God to man. Still, Francisco de Hollanda has an interlocutor declare, citing Pythagoras as he does so, that “in three things alone were men like unto immortal God: in knowledge and painting and music.”⁶⁰

That Arcadelt's volume was published in Venice, by Antonio Gardano,⁶¹ is potentially significant: it suggests the possibility that the printer's appellation of Arcadelt as divine derives at least indirectly from Aretino, who in these very years was promoting himself and Michelangelo, later Titian, as divine. But in Arcadelt's case—in every musician's case—the compliment did not stick. It was neither so novel as in the case of an artist, since the idea of the music of the spheres was of such long standing, nor so appropriate, since music was an art moving in the direction of more rule rather than less. For Michelangelo to be more “divine” in the public eye than Ockeghem or Arcadelt, followers of

⁵⁸ *Carteggio*, IV, 99, Nov./Dec. 1538–May 1539. In a follow-up letter (100), also to Luigi del Riccio, Michelangelo indicates apologetically that he does not want to seem ungrateful and will do what is appropriate, “e' mi parebbe di far di non parere ingrato verso Arcadente; se vi pare usargli qualche cortesia, subito vi renderò quello che gli daretè.” “Quelle corde che legan gl'uomini senza discretione;” Einstein, 162; Iain Fenlon and James Haar, *The Italian Madrigal in the Early 16th Century, Sources and Interpretation*, Cambridge, 1988, 60–63, as c. 1537.

⁵⁹ In 1649, Marco Scacchi's *Brief Discourse on Modern Music* referred to “this almost divine modern school. I shall call it so, because it ravishes the soul of men and renders itself admirable among the liberal arts” (“questa dirrò quasi Divina scuola moderna, poichè rapisce l'animo de gl'uomini, e si rende ammirabile tra l'altre Arti liberali”), Palisca, “Marco Scacchi's Defence of Modern Music,” 1994, 110–11. Here the almost divine, the Platonic irrational, and the liberal art are, *per forza*, reconciled.

⁶⁰ Francisco de Hollanda, *Dialogos em Roma, 1538*, 82.

⁶¹ In 1537–38, Gardano was familiar with Nicolò Franco, crony of Aretino (though they later fell out). See Mary Lewis, *Antonio Gardano, Venetian Music Printer, 1538–1569*, vol. I, 1988, 19–22, and “Antonio Gardane's Early Connections with the Willaert Circle,” in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources, and texts*, ed. I. Fenlon, Cambridge, 1981, 209–26.

the “divine” Pythagoras,⁶² reflected not only the relative prestige of the arts, but cultural attitudes toward ruleboundedness. Michelangelo was the more divine because the more mysterious and terrible in his operations, like the God of his own *Last Judgment*.

Adrian Willaert (c. 1490–1562), who worked in Rome, Ferrara, and Venice, was extolled in his lifetime as “spirto divin” by one of “basso intelletto,” a formula familiar from love poetry. He was also called “sforza di natura” (reminiscent of “mostro”), “nuovo Pitagora,” and “huomo divino.”⁶³ Like Arcadelt, he was sent by God, though in this case it was his loyal pupil, Zarlino, writing in 1558, rather than his printer, who made the claims. In both cases, though, such extravagant compliments remained just that—occasional, flourishes of an exuberant moment rather than an integral part of the public persona.

It is a mark of Michelangelo’s artistic prestige that the way music and musicians were talked about changed in response to what was being said about him. He was himself poet and, indirectly, musician, since by 1518 Michelangelo’s poems had not only been set to music but published in a collection of compositions.⁶⁴ The praises lavished by publishers on composers seems to stem at least in part from Michelangelo’s lavish epithet. In some cases, notably Anton Francesco Doni and Cosimo Bartoli, the same authors commented on both arts, visual and musical, so some overlap was almost inevitable. Michelangelo was divine, music was divine, and so, of course, were women: they had been since Dante was led to paradise by Beatrice. Doni mentioned the divinity of women and of music in one breath, writing a dedicatory letter to Ottavio Landi in the *Dialogo della musica* of 1544: “I wish that you could be here, to see the divinity of the women, of the musicians, of the instruments.”⁶⁵ Little more seems to have been meant in this instance than that music and women were delightful.

Among performers, Francesco da Milano (1497–1543/44) and Antonio da Lucca (d. 1554) were both known as exceptionally proficient. Francesco was even known as “divine,” for the first time apparently in Marcolini’s introduction to a book of lute music in 1536: “the suavity

⁶² Valgurio calls him such, for instance; Palisca, 99.

⁶³ Einstein, 321–22.

⁶⁴ H. Frey, “Michelagnolo und die Komponisten seiner Madrigale: Bartolomeo Tromboncino, Jean Conseil, Constanzo Festa, Jacob Arcadelt,” *Acta musicologica*, XXIV, 1952, 147–97, esp. 151; Michelangelo, *Rime*, ed. E. Barelli, Milan, 1975, 53.

⁶⁵ Haar, *Science*, 278; “vorrei che V.S. fosse qua per udir, e veder la divinità delle dame de musici, e degli stromenti,” Doni, 6.

of the sound which is born of the lute, touched by the divine hands of Francesco Milanese...by making itself heard in the soul, robs the senses of those who hear it." Marcolini was Aretino's publisher, and in the first volume of his letters, January 1538, Francesco is mentioned, though not specifically as divine.⁶⁶ That step followed in Aretino's *Carte parlanti* of 1545; Cosimo Bartoli extended similar praise in the *Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante*, published in Venice in 1567, though composed as early as c. 1539. Antonio da Lucca, too, was called "nostro divino,"⁶⁷ posthumously, and the like was said of Antonio da Cornetto, perhaps during his lifetime.⁶⁸ Musicians might be associated with divine fury because of their ability to improvise, as was true of poets. Paolo Giovio, not a man inclined to admiring *furor divinus*, did so in the case of Andrea Marone (Maro), who could improvise in Latin and was credited therefore with "impetu prope divino."⁶⁹ Bernardo Accolti, "l'Unico Aretino" before Pietro became "divino," was known as an impressive improviser of poetry, and was praised in the *Cortegiano* for "ingegno divino."⁷⁰ On this ground and others, great fame, fame as divine—one might say ersatz nobility when the mouthpiece is Aretino—was possible for performers as well as composers. Musicians of either stripe might be held up for comparison with the divine Michelangelo, but no one musician was held up as Michelangelo was among artists. Their art was still developing as quickly as had been painting when Dante wrote of Cimabue's fading fame.

The analogy to Michelangelo was made explicit in 1567 by Cosimo Bartoli (1503–72), expositor of Alberti's work in the *volgare*. In the third dialogue of the *Ragionamenti Accademici* he compared Donatello to Ockeghem (c. 1430–95) and Michelangelo to Josquin (c. 1440–1521). He was a bit more level-headed about Michelangelo's divinity than Vasari, which both led him to make the comparison and, in making it, to shift some of its connotations:

I know well that Ockeghem was almost the first who in these times found the music almost entirely lost: just as Donatello for his part refound

⁶⁶ Slim, "Francesco," 63–84; Victor Coelho, "The Reputation of Francesco da Milano (1497–1543) and the Ricercars in the *Calvacanti Lute Book*," *Revue belge de musicologie*, I, 1996, 49–72.

⁶⁷ Lenzone, 1556, Rag. II, 39.

⁶⁸ Antonfrancesco Doni, *Dialogo della musica*, ed. F. Malipiero, Milan, 1972 (1544), 281.

⁶⁹ *Ritratti*, 162.

⁷⁰ Danilo Romei, "Pietro Aretino, 'Erede' di Bernardo Accolti," in *Pietro Aretino nel Cinquecentenario della nascita, Atti del convegno, 1992*, Rome, 1995, 185–87; Castiglione, I, ix.

sculpture; and that Josquin, pupil of Ockeghem, one could say that that one was for music a monster of nature, just as Michelangelo was in architecture, painting, and sculpture; because just as Josquin had nobody who had achieved in composition what he had, so Michelangelo among all those who practiced his arts was alone and without peer; and both the one and the other opened the eyes for the future of all those who delight in these arts.⁷¹

That “mostro della natura,” the extraordinary, is also the divine. We might translate the word “mutation,” because the implication is that Josquin and Michelangelo usher in a new era rather than remaining *unica*. The issue, in other words, is periodization, rather than aesthetic sainthood. “Rari & divini Sonatori della età nostra” seem to Bartoli to be not hard to find, no harder than divine women, for instance.⁷² For Bartoli, Michelangelo’s successors—Ammanati, Bandinelli, Cellini—are worthy ones, not mere epigones, provided that the Duke supports them as he ought. Bartoli presents both Josquin and Michelangelo as leaders, rather than geniuses *sans pareil*. Michelangelo has opened the way to a new era of *maniera*, in which Rome and the ancients matter less than Florence and a style, however licentious, which can achieve universal satisfaction.⁷³ By contrast, artists, Vasari chief among them, had difficulty portraying the solitary and long-lived Michelangelo as an inauguratory figure. Vasari, who doubtless knew Bartoli’s views, did give it a try, when, in writing about the Medici Chapel he described Michelangelo as having broken the chains and knots of precedent, for which he deserved infinite and everlasting tribute.⁷⁴ For both of them,

⁷¹ James Haar, “Cosimo Bartoli on Music,” *The Science and Art of Renaissance Music*, ed. Paul Corneilson, Princeton, 1998, 38–75 (48): “io so bene che Ocghem fu quasi il primo che in questi tempi, ritrovasse la Musica quasi che spenta del tutto: non altrimenti che Donatello ne suoi ritrovò la Scultura; & che Iosquino discepolo di Ocghem si puo dire che quello alla Musica fusse un mostro della natura, si come è stato nella Architettura Pittura & Scultura il nostro Michelagnolo Buonarroti; perche si come Iosquino non hà però ancora avuto alcuno che lo arrivi nelle composizioni, così Michelagnolo ancora infratutti coloro che in queste sue arti si sono esercitati, è solo & senza compagno; Et l’uno & l’altro di loro ha aperti gli occhi a tutti coloro che di queste arti si diletto, o si diletteranno per lo avvenire;” Einstein, *Madrigal*, 21–22.

⁷² Bartoli, *Ragionamenti*, 51, 54.

⁷³ Bartoli, 2, “del suo ingegno di trovare un’nuovo ordine; & però con maestà, con grandezza, con leggiadria, & con satisfazione universale;” 20, “ha aperti gli occhi a questa età di maniera, che hora mai per molti non si hà più invidia a gli Antichi.”

⁷⁴ “fece assai diverso da quello che di misura, ordine e regola facevano gli uomini secondo il comune uso e secondo Vitruvio e le antichità, per non volere a quello agiugnere. La quale licenzia ha dato grande animo a quelli che hanno veduto il far suo di mettersi a imitarlo, e nuove fantasie si sono vedute poi alla grottesca più

“divino” implied the impossibility of varying opinions about the value of the work: “satisfattione universale” was taken for granted, despite the acknowledged mutability of opinion. To be subject to taste was human; to be forever admired was divine.

The cultures of music and of visual art each contributed to the other. Artistic theory provided musicians with a model for achievement and its celebration relatively independent of poets, yet with more emphasis on natural talent than on training. Musical theory provided painters with a way out of the conventions of the *istoria*, a maneuver which operated intermittently over centuries, until Whistler’s condemnation of narrative claptrap in favor of a more musical model, and beyond. The term *capriccio* was formally introduced in the literature of music in 1561, when that same Antonio Gardano of Venice published Giachet Berchem’s *Capriccio*, a three volume work setting stanze of the *Orlando Furioso* as madrigals, some of them thought to date as early as the 1540s, and dedicated to Duke Alfonso II of Ferrara. The dedicatory letter referred to “il divino ingegno d’un tanto poeta,” “vostro volgar Homero.”⁷⁵ So even in music, Ariosto led the way to modernity. The first formal usage of the word *capriccio* for works of art came decades later, as Callot’s title for his medley of print subjects on a small scale dedicated to Lorenzo de’ Medici in 1617: “Capricci di varie figure.” But in Cosimo Bartoli’s *Ragionamenti*, paintings are described which Bartoli invented and got some unnamed painter to execute, and his allegorical inventions are termed *capricci*. The *capriccio* developed by musicians as a minor foil to their increasingly complicated rules of composition became in the hands of artists a concept which licensed the least academic forms of visual art—usually small scale, unorthodox, whimsical, and clever rather than learned.

Not only did musicians help to validate the concepts of *capriccio* and *fantasia*, but beyond this, of the concordance and harmony of

tosto che a ragione o regola, a’ loro ornamenti. Onde gli artefici gli hanno infinito e perpetuo obligo, avendo egli rotti i lacci e le catene delle cose, che per via d’una strada commune eglino di continuo operavano,” Vasari/Marini, 1224. See further, Alina Payne, “*Mescolare, composti* and monsters in Italian architectural theory of the Renaissance,” in Tarugi, *Disarmonia*, 273–306.

⁷⁵ James Haar, “The *Capriccio* of Giachet Berchem: A Study in Modal Organization,” *Musica Disciplina*, XLII, 1988, 129–56. See also idem, “The ‘madrigal Arioso’: A Mid-Century Development in the Cinquecento Madrigal,” *Studi musicali*, XII, 1983, 203–19. See also Maria Maniates, *Mannerism in Italian Music and Culture, 1530–1630*, Chapel Hill, 1979, 67, 226, 325.

coloring. In music these were matters of precise numerical definition, and hence of high prestige; in painting their prestige was less tied to rational calculation. “*Colore*,” used by musicians and painters, was more subjective than matters of *disegno*, which might be reduced to issues of proportionality. The culture of *maniera* newly emphasized more subjective factors, and with that, the potential tyranny of taste. In the longer term, the alternative to a learned, academic practice also depended either on what ultimately developed into the *capriccio*, the whim of the exceptional character, or on a more gritty, down-to-earth realism, as in the art of Chardin.

Although Vasari quite deliberately chose to cast Michelangelo as divine rather than as capricious, as a master of *disegno* rather than of deviance, he did so against the grain of common sense. Michelangelo made a strange choice as the founding father of the Florentine Academy. As the French, not least Poussin, would understand better than the Italian academicians, and so would prefer Raphael, Michelangelo’s art was distinctly more Mercurial than Apollonian, his self-image more modern Florentine than antique Roman.

Both visual and musical *capricci* share a descent from Ariosto’s admired unruliness. They share as well a homology back to fifteenth-century Florentine culture, specifically to its non-aulic character, and even more specifically, to the barbed, jocular discourse of the marketplace. Michelangelo’s sense of license, in particular, represented a confluence of musical-poetical culture and the hardnosed mercantile culture of his home town. It was not high-handed and arbitrary in character, like a divine monarch’s caprice, but spirited, independent, contemptuous toward timidity, and quite unorthodox. That which Diderot would praise when he expanded the realm of good taste beyond the precedent of the ancients—the down-to-earth modesty and realism of Chardin, for instance—has a certain affinity with the side of Michelangelo which Vasari was most unwilling to acknowledge. The side which spurned the Duke and befriended Menighella, a hack as Vasari would have it, who painted for the peasants, was also the side which showed the hero David as apprehensive, Bacchus as debauched, and Night and Eve as physically worn out. Michelangelo had something in common both with Chardin’s realism and with Callot’s capriciousness. More than that, he had a prescient sense of what Callot and Chardin shared. If he was made the founding father of the Florentine Academy, it was not because he had restricted his own thought to academic paths. He drew elongated ears and learing mouths, sagging breasts and obtru-

sive moles, as well as the purest, simplest outlines. His academically-minded contemporaries reduced his eclectic taste for unruliness down to the formula, palatable for them, of surpassing the ancients. He was more modern than they recognized. When Delacroix wrote, “Michel-Ange est le père de l’art moderne,” he did so of Michelangelo’s aberrant rather than of his classicizing aspect, of the earthiness and poetry both that made Michelangelo for Delacroix “like Homer among the ancients.”⁷⁶

* * *

Michelangelo shared the compliment “divino” and the developing concept of “capriccio” with musicians, but a certain respect for a deliberately unpretentious yet magisterial wit – another form of capriciousness – he already knew from his Florentine upbringing. Cosimo, *Pater Patriae*, was witty in place of being learned in the liberal arts sort of way. He was known as a man of savvy and dextrous intellect. He dressed and lived without undue pretention. Brunelleschi did likewise, as did Michelangelo. Speaking to Brunelleschi was like speaking to St. Paul, the intellectual among the apostles, according to one early source. The same source reported that Cosimo de’ Medici counted Pippo the most ingenious of his contemporaries.⁷⁷ Michelangelo was also known for his caustic remarks, which pertained more to his Florentine identity than to his upper-class pretensions. He wrote his longest poem (*Rime* 67) extolling simplicity, “happy Poverty” (“la lieta Povertà):” “Poor and nude and alone Truth goes along, gaining great respect among humble folk.”⁷⁸ All three men were gruff and plain, and avoided self-aggrandisement through portraiture or ostentatious clothing. Brunelleschi wore clogs; Michelangelo a peasant’s hat and old boots;⁷⁹ Cosimo arranged for the fancy brocade of a pretentious courier to be spoiled. Each spoke of himself demeaningly, and spurned the pretensions of peers, yet each exhibited a tetchy sense of dignity. All three were admired for *ingegno*. The type goes back further, at least to Giotto, whom

⁷⁶ E. Delacroix, “Sur le Jugement Dernier,” *Revue des deux mondes*, XI, 1837, 343.

⁷⁷ “non li parve mai parlare a uomo di maggiore intelligenza,” *Libro di Antonio Billi*, ed. F. Benedettucci, Rome, 1991, 34. Also, “soleva dire maestro Pagalo astrologo [Paolo Toscanelli] che udendolo parlare gli pareva san Pagolo,” 31.

⁷⁸ “Povero e nudo e sol se ne va ’l Vero,/che fra la gente umile ha gran valore.” Although the date is somewhat speculative, the poem has been put before 1534 most recently, which makes its chronological relationship to Ariosto’s poem unclear.

⁷⁹ Of Michelangelo, “lassatemi stare ne i miei panni rinvolto,” Gianotti, 8.

Boccaccio described as an unpretentious and incisive, even blunt, man, a characterization followed by Vasari. Although the image of Dante has been much worked on by his successors, he too seems to have been of cantankerous character, given to the barbed witticisms of a republic rather than to courtly flattery.

Whereas Michelangelo and Cosimo are characterized in short anecdotes as asserting their power through wit, a whole short story features Brunelleschi as such a protagonist. Written in the 1480s about an episode purported to have taken place in 1409, Antonio di Tuccio Manetti's well-known "La Novella del Grasso Legnaiuolo," describes a practical joke played by Brunelleschi and his cronies on a carpenter, Manetto Ammannatini.⁸⁰ In revenge for the victim's having missed a party held by his fellows, "almost all of higher rank and station," they convince him that he has changed identities with a certain Matteo Mannini, a ne'er-do-well and debtor.⁸¹ Brunelleschi (and the society he keeps) are characterized as spirited, lively, respectable, as "men from the governing class and from among the masters of the more intellectual and imaginative of the crafts, such as painters, goldsmiths, sculptors, woodcarvers, and the like." Donatello is among them, as is the wealthy patron of the arts, Giovanni Rucellai. Brunelleschi, a man deemed to be of "marvelous intellect and genius" ("uomo di maraviglioso ingegno ed intelletto"), is the mastermind of the plot. Exactly like a ruler who has been slighted, the ingenious Brunelleschi punishes presumption.

The whole story is presented against the backdrop of the befuddled carpenter's later spectacular successes in Hungary, working for Pippo

⁸⁰ An anonymous engraving of the *Sacrifice of Isaac* (Hind A.I.5) is known only in a single impression. It is roughly based on Brunelleschi's competition panel for the Baptistry doors but made around the time Brunelleschi's cupola was completed with ball and cross (1471). As Manetti would explain it, Brunelleschi's was the winning panel on moral grounds, but because of the complicity of the judges, tied for first place. Ghiberti and Brunelleschi were both dead by the time the engraving appeared, but their two panels from among the field of six had been preserved, Ghiberti's in the Guild Hall of the Merchants and Brunelleschi's in the altar dossal of the [Old] Sacristy of San Lorenzo. No doubt there were Florentines curious about this controversy, recent enough still to be the stuff of conversation, yet long enough ago to be unfamiliar, and Brunelleschi's panel was the more difficult of access, his sculptural style the less known.

⁸¹ Lauro Martines, ed., *An Italian Renaissance Sextet: Six Tales in Historical Context*, New York, 1994, 172, 220, 239; "erano quasi tutto di migliore qualità e condizione di lui;" *La novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, Cernusco, 1998, 5. See also idem, "The Italian Renaissance Tale as History," in Alison Brown, ed., *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy*, Oxford, 1995, 313–30.

Spano. After he had slunk away from Florence, having been humiliated by the artist Pippo [Brunelleschi], the wood carver achieved respect and riches in the employ of the military leader Pippo Spano, a famous condottiere featured in Castagno's fresco decorations of the Villa Carducci. Since Master Manetto of Florence, as he was known in Hungary, was the butt of jokes by his artistic confrères when in Florence, Manetti implies that fame outside of Florence correlates with being the plaything of Brunelleschi at Florence. There Brunelleschi and his friends "eat better than kings." Success in Florence is the only success that counts.

Brunelleschi appears as the heir of Sacchetti's worldly and sardonic Giotto, who had similarly shamed an upstart peasant by painting him a mock coat of arms.⁸² Brunelleschi is not only clever and mischievous, but able to do what his peers have deemed impossible. He is thus implicitly, yet creditably, divine. His cupola is barely mentioned in the story; the impossible that Brunelleschi achieves in the story is the more everyday or marketplace sort of feat of befuddling a man to the point that he believes whatever you tell him. The Brunelleschi who overpowers the point of view of a single citizen is also the Brunelleschi whose invention of systematic perspective has the potential to affect every person's perception: as Alberti reminds us in *De pictura*, "however small you paint the objects in a painting, they will seem large or small according to the size of any man in the picture."⁸³ Brunelleschi comparably rearranges Grasso's sense of reality. Ultimately it is Brunelleschi who has made Grasso rich, rather than his famous Hungarian patron, by shaming him into fleeing Florence. In short, Brunelleschi, by virtue of his *ingegno*, is kingly.

The type to which Giotto and Brunelleschi both belong in these *novelle*—the earthy, no-nonsense, unpretentious, plain and fiendishly clever, canny, crafty type—is also the type to which Cosimo Pater Patriae adhered, at least in the fifteenth-century accounts. It is a quintessentially Florentine type, businessman and politician, small town and mercantile rather than magnificent and regal, very unlike Borso d'Este, *Divus* from 1460, or Pius II, to whom this side of Cosimo was invisible, so resentful was he of Medici grandeur. The mercantile strain of the Medici line, however, was remembered even a century later when it could be used as a taunt: Cellini, when angry with Duke Cosimo,

⁸² Sacchetti, 146–47.

⁸³ Alberti/Grayson, 18.

claimed in his autobiography that he had “more the manner of a merchant than a duke.”⁸⁴ Similarly, when the emissary for Duke Alfonso had his testy interchange with Michelangelo over the *Leda*, the term of insult was “mercante,” in implicit contrast to “gentiluomo.”⁸⁵

Cronies are essential to the early portrayals of both Brunelleschi and Giotto, for they function, chorus-like, to give the popular approval that convention ordinarily denies to aberrancy. Michelangelo belonged to this type, minus the gang of friends. Circumstances forced him to transfer out of the context of a city small and informal enough for such intimacy. In Rome he continued to act the Florentine scamp, but sans cronies who would record and echo his every cutting remark (such as the famous insult that the finishing trim on the Florentine cupola looked like a cricket cage, which promptly brought the project to a halt). This geographical dislocation contributed much to his image as an eccentric and even peculiar person, a perception Vasari tried to counter by stamping Michelangelo so obstinately with the epithet divine. The disparity between the crusty Cosimo, Pater Patriae, and the imperious Julius II is one measure of Vasari’s distortion of Michelangelo, for Vasari casts him in the image of the terrible Roman pontiff, rather than in that of the Florentine archetype which arguably was more pertinent. Michelangelo signed himself “Florentinus” on his first great Roman sculpture and persistently so also in his correspondence. Among the connotations of that appellation was the general culture of Vasari himself named in the *Life of Perugino* as among the root causes of the rebirth of art in Florence: “the constant criticism expressed by many people, since the air in Florence naturally produces free spirits who are generally discontent with mediocre works and who always judge them more on the basis of the good and the beautiful with regard to their creator.”⁸⁶ Vasari failed, however, to apply this insight to his *Life of Michelangelo*, giving us instead a master of all the arts, sent from on

⁸⁴ Gallucci in Eisenbichler, 44; Jane Tylus, *Writing and Vulnerability in the Late Renaissance*, Stanford, 1993, Ch. 2, “The Merchant of Florence: Benvenuto Cellini, Cosimo de’ Medici, and the *Vita*.”

⁸⁵ On which episode, see Wallace, “Michelangelo’s *Leda*,” 473–99; Charles Rosenberg, “Alfonso I d’Este, Michelangelo and the man who bought pigs,” in *Revaluing Renaissance Art*, eds. G. Neher and R. Shepherd, Cambridge, 2000, 89–99. Gilio, in criticizing the *Last Judgment*, compared the figures to ones in a market and the artist’s passion to a lover’s; see S. Campbell, “Fare una Cosa,” 612.

⁸⁶ Vasari/Bondanella, 257; Vasari/Marini, 529: “il biasamare che fanno molti e molto, per fare quell’aria gli ingegni liberi di natura...sempre più ad onore del buono e del bello, che a rispetto del facitore considerarle.”

high as a divine example. Vasari's terrible Michelangelo deliberately subsumes the capriciousness of an unruly man who refused to curry favor with his betters—the quintessential Florentine—to the type of a divine king of art, a type designed to be pleasing to his patron Duke Cosimo.

When Sacchetti called Giotto “gran maestro di dipignere, ma... ancora maestro delle sette arti liberali,” the latter phrase was not to be taken literally. The implication was merely that Giotto was as clever as he was capable. Boccaccio tells both about Giotto's wit, and his modesty. He is hailed as the finest painter in the world, though himself very plain. He is praised for his humility, specifically for refusing the title of maestro which his lesser successors had assumed:

Giotto had so excellent a genius that there was nothing of all which Nature, mother and mover of all things, presents to us by the ceaseless revolution of the heavens, but he with pencil and pen and brush depicted it and that so closely that not like, nay, but rather the thing itself it seemed. Insomuch that men's visual sense is found to have been oftentimes deceived in things fashioned by him, taking that for real which was but depicted. Wherefore, he having brought back to the light this art, which had for many an age lain buried under the errors of certain folk, who painted more to divert the eyes of the ignorant than to please the understanding of the judicious, he may deservedly be styled one of the chief glories of Florence, the more so that he bore the honors he had gained with the utmost humility and although, while he lived, chief over all others in his art, he always refused to be called master, which title, though rejected by him, shone so much the more gloriously in him as it was with greater eagerness greedily usurped by those who knew less than he, or by his disciples.⁸⁷

Like Giotto, though presumably more by cultural magma than by conscious reference, Michelangelo maintained a certain modesty, and unpredictability, throughout his rise in status.⁸⁸ He signed his letters, at his most grandiloquent, as “Michelagnuolo Buonarotti,” after years of merely “Michelagnuolo schultore,” even while others hailed him as *divino* or *magnifico*. He clearly found Aretino's ready adoption of the epithet “divino” absurd.

⁸⁷ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, John Payne, tr., C. Singleton, ed., Berkeley, 1982, 459–60.

⁸⁸ For a meticulous account of which, see William Wallace, “Michael Angelus Bonaratus Patritius Florentinus,” *Innovation and Tradition, Essays on Renaissance Art and Culture*, eds. D. Andersson and R. Eriksen, Rome, 2000, 60–74, 162–63; Gerhard Strauss, “Über Michelangelos Verhältnis zum Volk,” in *Atti del convegno di studi michelangioloeschi*, Rome, 1966, 469–75.

The artist is properly modest and fails to please the many: these themes stay remarkably constant from Giotto through Michelangelo, who considered himself disfigured by his broken nose, if perhaps not quite as oafish in appearance as Giotto is said to have thought himself. Stories about putting down an upstart peasant act as corollaries to the basic idea that the true artist hates pretense and disdains popular opinion. He retains the freedom to act capriciously. In Michelangelo's case the "peasant" thus put down is sometimes a courtier (as in the emissary of the Duke of Ferrara), and even a Pope, as in that crucial story of Michelangelo's retort to the impatient Julius II, who wanted gold all across the Sistine Ceiling, that the Apostles were poor men. That was an extraordinary moment; if it never happened, then merely its invention as a story was an extraordinary moment. Michelangelo treated that Ligurian upstart Rovere as a proper, self-respecting Florentine would—as Cosimo Pater Patriae had when he made his characteristic ripostes "col sale,"⁸⁹ not according to any rules but with the freedom allowed by wit.

The story of Michelangelo and the poor Apostles is an episode indebted to the ideology of the liberal arts, in which intellect, rather than money or worldly power, is prized. But it goes beyond that. As with Petrarch and his ink-stained cloak, distraction could be confused with incivility. It was as one distracted and capricious that Michelangelo acclimated to Rome, a place in which the Quattrocento Cosimo's model of modesty couldn't work. Michelangelo's Roman art was ostentatiously bizarre by the standards either of antiquity or the recent past. The Domus Aurea licensed grotteschi; but Michelangelo went beyond composite license to a more architectural and musical notion of formal play and counterpoint. In architecture he didn't always diminish the second story relative to the bottom story, for instance, but allowed them to compete with one another, just as the components of the Sistine Ceiling jostle one another rather than fitting into an organic, rule-abiding whole. He refused to let the painter's *istoria* function as effective backbone for the whole composition, but set out nearly to prove the inadequacy of painting without architectural and sculptural enhancements, albeit painted ones.

Capricci entered the history of art together with the strengthening of the idea of rulelessness. Grotesques broke only the rules of conjunction;

⁸⁹ Vespasiano, *Vite*, 197.

capricci obeyed only the rule that nature could be defied. Michelangelo's most spectacular foray into *capriccio* produced the Sistine *ignudi*, those elaborate and distinctively modern ornamentations, figures whose poses relayed a sense of their complicated and thereby Christian souls.⁹⁰ The composition of the Sistine vault transformed the Florentine tradition of verbal wit into one of visual caprice. Both impishly pricked any staid sense of hierarchy. Support, scale, and significance became mutually independent variables. Callot's fan [fig. 59], done in the next century, with its spectators perched on the grotesque framework, watching the Ducal fireworks on the river Arno, and the overlay of one fiction into another, is reminiscent in some ways of the Sistine Ceiling, with its marble, bronze and living *ignudi*, perched next to God's greatest display of creativity.

* * *

Furia and *capriccio*, those two alternatives to *scientia* and *arte* in the old sense, played out a tacit paragone.⁹¹ One was identified with a very personal and expressive art, the other with the arbitrary and its close cousin, the allegorical. In the long term, pageantry won out over personal expression. Music, poetry, and dance, which had combined typically in wedding celebrations, became staples of political pageantry, while the celebrity of individual artists and their particular personal geniuses waned after Michelangelo's death until Romanticism.

Michelangelo, a solitary man, was promoted as divine from a distance, generally by those not particularly in sympathy with him. After his death in 1564, the place of "il divino" was not filled by any new and divine artist. It is almost true that Michelangelo's divinity died with him. Calling artists divine scarcely survived the 1568 edition of Vasari's *Lives*. The praise was appropriated, instead, by rulers making new and stronger claims to divine right, notably by the Medici in Florence, by the Medici and their replacements in France.

What Burckhardt called "the state as a work of art" was the product of a long evolution traceable back to Petrarch's *Trionfi*, which, although their theme was metaphysical, served to reactivate the imagery of imperial triumph. Their visual progeny include Piero della Francesca's versi to the Urbino diptych; Mantegna's *Triumph*, engraved as well as

⁹⁰ P. Emison, "The *Ignudo* as *Proto-Capriccio*, *Word and Image*, XIV, 1998, 281–95.

⁹¹ On the importance of Platonic notions of divine inspiration as new in the musical theory of Brandolini and Aaron, see Moyer, 135.

painted; and then, as art became life, the weddings and entries of rulers beginning with Lorenzo de' Medici's wedding to Clarice Strozzi and Leo X's elaborate entry into Florence in 1513.⁹² The enormous sums expended on sixteenth-century pageantry imply that some political benefit was at the very least anticipated.

The pageant became a realm of enacted *fantasia*, typically in celebration of an absolute, a "divine," ruler.⁹³ Renaissance rulers who had aspired to the title *Divus* in the fifteenth century, before the rise of the super-Petrarchan beloved and the poetically-lauded artist, had not always succeeded in carrying off their pretensions. Borso d'Este had been called "quasi deus" as early as 1446 and was denominated *Divus* on his portrait medal by 1460, as Alfonso had been in 1449 (though Alfonso was Duke at the time and Borso wasn't). As Pope Pius II put it, "Borso loved nothing so much as praise."⁹⁴ The Pope reported that outside of Ferrara scorn for this overweening pretension was general.⁹⁵ Yet a century after Borso d'Este, popular resentment of rulers' claims to divinity was reduced to the almost foregone issue of expense.⁹⁶ The title "Divus" could no longer seem so presumptuous, having been normalized in a cognate form for artists, among others.

⁹² In the Medici wedding celebrations of 1565, 1579, and 1589, the assertion of the ruler as divinity becomes more and more blatant, culminating in the appearance of Apollo in the last spectacle wearing a crown "reminiscent" of Grand Ducal regalia; see James Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, New Haven, 1996, 242–43, no. 65. See also Paola Tinagli, "Claiming a Place in History: Giorgio Vasari's *Ragionamenti* and the Primacy of the Medici," in Eisenbichler, 63–76; and Aby Warburg, "The Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi of 1589," in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, tr. David Britt, Los Angeles, 1999, 349–401, 431–35. What had been barely intimated in Cosimo's wedding in 1539 (*A Renaissance Entertainment: Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, eds. A. Minor and B. Mitchell, Columbia, Mo., 1968, 209; for a reference to Cosimo as Neptune calming the waves of civil disturbance, and 230, where Cosimo is flattered for "his rare grace and his virtues, which are not human but indeed celestial"), was blatant fifty years later.

⁹³ On rulers and the concept of divinity, see E.H. Kantorowicz, "*Deus per Naturam, Deus per Gratiam*: A Note on Medieval Political Theology," in *Selected Studies*, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1965, 121–37; and *ibid.*, "Dante's Two Suns," 325–38; and *ibid.*, "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and its Late Medieval Origins," 381–98. See also Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, tr. R. Litchfield, University Park, 2001, Ch. 1.

⁹⁴ *The Commentaries of Pius II*, Books II and III, tr. F. Gragg, Northampton, Ma., 1940, 182; W. Gundesheimer, *Ferrara, The Style of a Renaissance Despotism*, Princeton, 1973, 134.

⁹⁵ Gragg, Book III, 227.

⁹⁶ The Medici wedding celebration of Francesco to his mistress, Bianca Capella, in October 1579, took place during famine; Bastiano Arditi's diary records disapproval: "questa impresa fu molta biasimata da tutta la città per avere aconsentito allo appetito

Catherine de' Medici, although she would be judged rather more harshly by posterity, was hailed in 1551 "persona divina,"⁹⁷ presumably on account both of her gender and her rank. The divinized humans to which the pageants were dedicated carried on the pagan tradition of earthly apotheosis in more proper *all'antica* fashion than had ever been true of divine artists. Once Michelangelo was out of the way, the funerals (and weddings) of extraordinary pomp would be royal rather than Academic. For artists to become popular figures violated the new political decorum; it was for rulers to receive public acclamation.

Both Alberti and Vasari had resisted the possibility of a political art of propaganda, Roman though it could claim to be, in favor of painting as an expression of *ingegno* and the painter as the peer of princes. But the rise of nation states in Europe, and on a lesser scale, of Dukes in Florence, brought the realization that, although spectacle cost much more, it was also worth much more than painting. Through spectacle, the artist was reduced again to employee, invisible by comparison with his patron. Print imagery helped to catalyze the rise of the spectacle, because it served to preserve the imagery and thus amortize its extravagance. Moreover, prints after Michelangelo's drawings, which he condemned, could be made to adhere to the mannered, allegorical, and elegant visual culture of ducal Florence. In this way, Michelangelo's career and art were used for purposes inimicable to him. His supporters in Florence, not only Vasari, had to smooth this over as best they could—and they generally did it with considerable success. Benedetto Varchi (1503–65) lowered the standard of discretion somewhat when he reported a widespread rumor that Michelangelo had said in 1528 that the Palazzo Medici should be torn down and turned into a piazza called "of the Mules"—a rumor Varchi said with torturous tactfulness he could not corroborate of a man who owed benefactions to the family, despite the fact that Michelangelo himself affirmed he had said so.⁹⁸

d'una donna veneziana la quale, per adempiere il suo volere, ne seguitassi tanto gran biasimo al Duca e danno insieme e con grandissimo disonore di Dio e suo dispregio, ispendendo ogni giorno tanti migliaia di scudi...." Bastiano Arditi, *Diario di Firenze e di altri parti della cristianità, 1574–1579*, ed. R. Cantagalli, Florence, 1970, 218.

⁹⁷ Innocentio Ringhieri, *Cento giuochi liberali, et d'ingegno*, Bologna, 1551.

⁹⁸ "da molti ancor oggi si crede, questo essere stato prima consiglio di Michelagnolo Simoni de' Buonarroti [ardere e spianare il palazzo], il quale aveva detto, dicono, che rovinato quella casa, si dovesse della via fare una piazza, laquale la piazza de' Muli si chiamasse [insultingly]; non voglio lasciare di dire, per levare a tanto e tale uomo tale e tanta macchia dal viso, e massimamente essendo egli allevato e beneficato da quella casa, che io, con tutta la diligenza che ho saputo usare, mai non ho trovar

Michelangelo's art was deeply implicated in the rise of spectacle. The artists and latter-day humanists who devised the pageants of absolute rulers practiced a kind of Pygmalion-like enactment of the kind of allegorical space he had devised in the Medici Chapel. When Michelangelo asked what it would matter in a thousand years what the Dukes had looked like, he may have remembered how Dante asked in the *Purgatorio*, in the passage immediately following that in which the illuminator Umberto Oderisi names Giotto as successor to Cimabue, what good pride will do anyone after a thousand years have passed? Michelangelo had perhaps thought to lessen the dynastic credit of that Chapel by his impersonal portraiture of the dead Dukes, as well as by refusing to finish it. Perhaps, however, he had also intuited to his dismay that the opposite was possible, that his attempt at lessening the individual fame of the Dukes might nevertheless do them honor. He could not have been pleased when in 1536 the notorious Alessandro de' Medici, the man whose assassination he had celebrated by carving his bust of *Brutus*, was buried in the New Sacristy. The grotesque punctuation around the walls of the Chapel, if it is not merely capricious, provides a subversive counterpoint.

The development of spectacle rendered the idea of *fantasia* politically even more useful than that of the *istoria* or portrait. *Fantasia* acted as sign, pointing to secular power. The fifteenth-century Cosimo had been known as down-to-earth and sardonic in a typically Florentine way. Stories, verging on parables, were told about him, but no formal portraits were made until after his death, beginning with his portrait medal. Duke Cosimo I, a century later, was portrayed in the type of a Roman imperial bust, except for the fantastic ornamentation of his cuirass [fig. 60]. That was Michelangelesque in its stylistic origins, a kind of formalization of ruler's wit into a visual, rather than an oral, attribute. Cosimo I could appear there in all his dread glory, adorned by grotesques, because caprice was an attribute of power so absolute it could not be bound by rules. In this case, political power mirrored, amplified, and displaced artistic. The freedom to create capriciously was reduced to the power to act autocratically, until Jacques Louis David reformed spectacle in the interests of a rationalized State.

potuto, ch'egli quelle parole dicesse, ma bene che apposte gli furono, come disse allora, e ancora dice egli stesso," *Storie*, VI, xxv, in *Opere*, vol. I, 116. Though dedicated to Duke Cosimo, the *Storia* was not published until the eighteenth century.

Despite the twists whereby the grotesque and capricious in art were co-opted for the purposes of asserting courtly elegance, Michelangelo's particular interest in the non-normative owed its origins to the very opposite of flattery—to the incisive repartee of the piazza. His gruff *Day* and *Dusk*, his visions of women past their prime and of grotesque skulls, abnegate any normative art. Even his divine heads are latent with the stuff of damnation.

* * *

Musical compositions were a kind of multiple, and sixteenth-century performance, either of music or of dance, was not highly virtuostic; hence the success of the amateur tradition. As famous as Josquin or Arcadelt (c. 1505–c. 1560) might be, one could have their music without employing the person. Josquin owed his reputation in no small part to the printed distribution of his compositions.⁹⁹ Francesco da Milano's reputation was, likewise, largely posthumous and due to the press. Michelangelo, by contrast, nearly outlived his reputation, having outlived both the republic of Florence and the humanistically inclined Papacy.

The crux of the matter by the sixteenth century was whether an artist or musician was replaceable. The well-respected soprano Bidon found himself without a patron when he tried to move from Ferrara and Rome. In letters signed, "Humillis et indignus servitor," he entreated unsuccessfully for reinstatement.¹⁰⁰ At such times the issue of status was a dire one. But alas for Bidon, another soprano could be had; the best singing seemed, after all, to be more trainable than the best painting.

The divine artist could not be sacked and replaced. Michelangelo's flight from Rome and reacceptance in Bologna was a pivotal moment in his career, doubtless known to Ariosto, which marked him as irreplaceable. Moreover, working for Popes provided him the opportunity to outlast his patrons, as court artists were less likely to do. His long career created the impression that Papal patrons were the ones who were replaceable.

Michelangelo was careful not to replace himself. He aided and abetted the contemporary deterioration of effective apprenticeship. Perhaps

⁹⁹ See Owens, 326, and James Haar, "Orlando di Lasso, Composer and Print Entrepreneur," in *Music and the Cultures of Print*, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis Lockwood, "A Virtuoso Singer at Ferrara and Rome: The Case of Bidon,"

remembering how it had been said at the death of Raphael that his pupils would carry on just as well without him, Michelangelo left no *eredi*—a fact for which he was castigated by Francesco Sansovino, son of the Florentine sculptor Jacopo:

Michelangelo Buonarotti was, in his day, held to be master of all those who make pictures. They say he was a very perfect draughtsman. He served the Popes in Rome, and painted that famous *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, held to be the best of all his things, and of great importance. In sculpture also he had the highest renown: in this he left in Rome the tomb of Julius II, and the *Virgin* in Santa Maria delle Febbri, very notable. In Florence he made the *David*, colossal marble statue, put at the entrance to the Ducal Palace, and in the Medici Chapel in San Lorenzo many figures of great worth. This man had the reputation of having been the best of all sculptors and painters since antiquity. He lived seventy-nine years, and among his disgraces this was held to be the main one, that he did not want, he delighted in not leaving any pupils after him, in the virtue of which one would find again his reputation, so much did he want to have his reputation to himself.¹⁰¹

Although the term *virtuoso* was applied to musicians, and seldom to artists, in fact Michelangelo had appropriated the function of the *virtuoso*, the person of unique natural talent and singleminded technical mastery. From the time he rescued the abandoned block that became the colossal *David*, and used its entire length, Michelangelo qualified de facto as a virtuoso, as one of amazing technical mastery. The theory of art was not yet ready to give full credit to virtuosity, for it clashed with the liberal arts ideal. Nevertheless, although marble carving can't be done quickly, not even by Michelangelo, prodigious facility soon became part of the legend, partly collaterally, because of the speed with which he painted the Sistine Ceiling. Armenini tells of how Michelangelo, as a favor, drew a Hercules:

Papal Music and Musicians in Late Medieval and Renaissance Rome, ed. Richard Sherr, Oxford, 1998, 224–39, for the dashed ambitions of a singer featured in Castiglione's *Courtier*.

¹⁰¹ “Michelangelo Buonaroti, fu a' suoi di tenuto Maestro di tutti color, che fanno Pittura. Questi dicono, che fu perfettissimo disenatore. Stette al servizio de' Pontifici in Roma, & dipinse il famoso giuditio nella Capella di Sisto, fra tutte l'altre sue cose tenuta la migliore, & di somma importanza. nella Scultura par che haveste parimente il supremo grado: nella qual lasciò in Roma la sepoltura di Giulio Secondo, la Vergine a Santa Maria delle febbri molto notabile. In Fiorenza fece il Davit, colosso marmoreo, posto alla porta del Palazzo del Duca, & nella Capella de' Medici in San Lorenzo molte figure di molta eccellenza. Hebbe questo huomo nome di esser stato il maggior di tutti gli altri Scultori, & Pittori, da lui fino a gli antichi. Visse novanta sette anni, & tra le sue

He put his right foot on the bench, his elbow on his raised knee, and his hand against his face, and remained a while in thought. Then he began to draw the figure, and finished it in a short time...The drawing, insofar as I could tell at the time, seemed to me so well lined, shadowed, and finished that it surpassed anything that could be done with red lead. Those who had seen him do the work in such a short time, a work which others would have judged could be made only with a month's effort, were completely amazed.¹⁰²

Before he died, Michelangelo himself destroyed the evidence of his "practicing," that is, working drawings—as Virgil had wished to destroy the incomplete manuscript of the *Aeneid*. At his funeral, Giovanni Maria Tarsie hailed him as a virtuoso, referring more to his ability than to his facility: "he is grandly virtuosic, not distancing himself so from nature like almost all the other artists do."¹⁰³

Debates about professional musicians echoed many of the cruxes about artists: the roles of training versus talent, the value to be accorded innovation, the stigma of popularity. Antonio da Lucca, "divino," is recorded by Doni putting an upstart in his proper place, as had Giotto and Apelles before him:

Antonio da Lucca was working out fantasies and doing the most divine things when a ignorant layman suddenly jumped up and said: "O Antonio, play a bit of accompaniment for singing strambottoli..." Antonio replied: "Away with you, go sing *strambotti* to the braying of an ass."¹⁰⁴

Art was supposed to require intelligence in the recipient as well as in the maker. That had been the real substance of the liberal art issue, rescuing the visual arts from their role in teaching the illiterate. Like Apelles chiding the shoemaker to keep to his last, Antonio showed that his music could only be appreciated by the knowledgable.

Ariosto's romance was controversial in large part because it was excessively popular. Verses were set to music and sung in the streets

disgratie fu tenuta questa una principale, ch' egli non volle, nè si diletto di lasciar dopo se discepoli, nella virtù de' quali si ritrovasse il suo nome, tanto gli parve d'esser fatto immortale col suo proprio valore;" Dante, 1564.

¹⁰² Armenini/Olszewski, 147.

¹⁰³ G.M. Tarsie, *Orazione fatto nell'essequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, Florence, 1564, unpag.: "egli è grandamente virtuoso non si discostando tanto dalla natura come quasi la maggior parte delli artifici fanno."

¹⁰⁴ Haar, *Science*, 293; "Ben sapete che la plebe fa levar loro il ceffo tal volta, come sarebbe a dire: 'Anton da Lucca ricerca sopra il liuto di fantasia e fa cose divine'; e subito un plebo salta su e dice: 'O Antonio, fate un poco da cantare gli Strambottoli' ...Disse il Lucca: 'Va, strambotta al suon dell'asino, pecora;'" Doni, 23.

and hills, beginning soon after initial publication and continuing until the onset of twentieth-century modernity. His version of artistic divinity was newly accessible, being both vernacular and also amusing, like Serafino's. Ariosto felt little compulsion to make literature a substitute for religion. He lauded his local patron, and otherwise felt free to amuse his audience, the bigger the better. Like seventeenth-century Dutch painting, Ariosto's verses appealed to a broader public than classicizing works did. The fear that painting would be seen merely as the books of the illiterate was gone, and with it the need for painting to be ostentatiously learned. Ariosto's business was *delectare* more than *docere*.

Michelangelo had a different temperament. He shared an adjective with Ariosto, Serafino, and Antonio da Lucca, yet the culture of artistic divinity was rather incoherent. Though his art bore certain similarities to theirs, it was also very different. For instance, he resisted the popularization of his art and discouraged its imitation.

Michelangelo's preference for the male figure accorded with his resolution not to popularize his art. He avoided engraving; he ultimately did not publish his poetry; he despised Raphael's likable *grazia*. He was a loner. In the dialogue of Donato Giannotti, he refused luncheon with comrades in order to meditate on death. He also resisted the cult of antiquity, visual and textual. He defied precedent and rule in an age which honored both. Antiquity was eminently imitable and assimilable; the modern Michelangelo quite the opposite. If he had not been absorbed into the culture of artistic divinity, he might very well have been as neglected as Piero di Cosimo or Pontormo.

Yet "divine" was an adjective that united poets, musicians, and artists. All of these practices claimed to be sprung from nature, and all claimed to have obtained a level of excellence that was free from artificiality, yet as distinct from the merely natural as God himself. When either musicians or artists are called divine, it is as though the practitioner is seen as personifying the art—a rare instance of male personification. Rulers, who were thought of as personifying the state, provide the closest analogy. Whereas Michelangelo was closely identified with ruler figures, in particular the successive popes who were his patrons, and especially Julius II his match for *terribilità*, the same was true neither of musicians nor of poets. Their divinity was accordingly more ad hoc, Michelangelo's divinity more primary.

Eventually, late in the sixteenth century and with Michelangelo's successful career already a *fait accompli*, music began to be used as an alternative, and more abstract, model than texts for understanding the visual arts. Issues of color and tonality, with obvious analogies in music, came to predominate over those of line and contour. Nevertheless, despite the traditional respect for music and for musicians, for decades in the mid-sixteenth century the language in which they were portrayed reflected that used for artists, who had come to dominate even the ultimate source of all the praises, the poet.

Despite the initial advantages of the liberal art of music, its reputation tended to follow the precedent established for the visual arts. Music did not fit well into that basic schema for poetry and painting, namely, the revival of good style *all'antica*. Whereas the state profitted from having prominent artists, superb music did not make the ruling elite more effective. Gentlemen wanted to play instruments, not to be outshone by the professionals; they wanted the art they collected to be without peer and estimable by future generations. Art became an international currency, and divine art seemed guaranteed against being devalued. Spectacle, the performance art of choice, outdid both music and painting. The specifics of the allegory might not be as important as an abstract faith in allegory itself. In pageantry, the iconography mattered less than the modality, which served to establish simple hierarchies, dominated, ultimately, by the divine potentate.

Michelangelo's art achieved a certain hierarchical ordering without sacrifice of naturalism, by virtue of his thinking of a complex of figures rather than a framed field. It was a sculptor's way of thinking, practiced by Michelangelo as early as his angel kneeling on the right of the Arca di San Domenico in Bologna [fig. 61]. When applied to painting, this disparity of scale and material (fictive or real) allowed him both capricious and regular parts, which could be combined by the perceiver like the parts of a grotesque. In the Sistine Ceiling the architectural illusion is regular; the *istorie* are regular; the *ignudi* are capricious, the fictive bronze ones even more so. The whole functions as a colossal grotesque, in the sense that disparate parts are boldly juxtaposed.

The Ceiling is in certain ways a very Florentine work, in that it turns the narrative strategies of Florentine short story writers into visual strategies: instead of double entendres we get reversed cartoons and instead of plot twists, discontinuities in scale and space. The woodworker seen in the frame of Florence versus that of Hungary, invoking multiple inversions of status, offers a kind of precedent for the odd

overlapping of *ignudi* into the Genesis episodes. Michelangelo produced a work of caprice rather than a standard narrative cycle, not least in the reversed order of the last two scenes from *Genesis*.

Elsewhere Michelangelo performed a sort of layered rather than conjoined grotesque. In the Louvre drawing of a *Faun's Head* Michelangelo drew over the head of a beautiful woman to transform it into a slightly monstrous one [fig. 22].¹⁰⁵ One could see beauty and agony at once, as one could see Christ of the Resurrection through Michelangelo's drawing of the tortured Tityus (recto, Windsor Castle). In the case of the *Brutus*, the Caracalla bust type existed again as palimpsest rather than as model in the familiar sense. This seeing through, a kind of allegory without deference, a juxtaposing of realities rather than their mutual ordering, may or may not have any musical correlate in either Michelangelo's mind or those of his contemporaries. It is like seeing the sculpture when looking at the rough block of marble, or like Savonarola seeing only dust and ashes when he looked, wearing what he called the eyeglasses of death, at powerful men; perhaps one need not add the possibility that it is like hearing counterpoint as well as melody. What can be said is that an essentially formal inventiveness characterized both Michelangelo's distinctive art and the musical developments of his time, that music theory began to play a part in art theory during the later sixteenth century, and that by the twentieth century this symbiosis had become synergy. The model of music and the idea of the artist as legitimately capricious acted as complements, just as, earlier, the model of humanistic invention and the idea of the artist as bound by theoretical principles had been dynamically paired. Michelangelo's art, though it was spectacularly an art of *disegno*, contained an undercurrent of sympathy with a less fully rational, and less idealizing, concept of art. He was both anatomist and poet.

Heir to the irascible trickster Brunelleschi and, more generally, to the wry wit of savvy men of business, Michelangelo's art was both playful and profound, and in that way his art was musical as well as poetical. He was irreverent toward authority, whether that of Church, State,

¹⁰⁵ A. Perrig, *Michelangelo's Drawings, The Science of Attribution*, New Haven, 1991, fig. 52, assigns the sheet to Antonio Mini; see also, 157, n. 167. Of similar interest is the British Museum sheet in black chalk of the *Count of Canossa*, called "after Michelangelo," which plays between the ideal and the quasi-monstrous in a subject very close to Michelangelo's self-image. In this case, too, one might ask whether the image of the Faun did not have resonance back to Michelangelo's early sculpture in the Medici Garden.

Antiquity, or public opinion and the printing press. His art was fundamentally capricious—but because he was so persistently Florentine, rather than because he had been deemed divine.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ARTIST AS *HUOMO FAMOSISSIMO*

*Apparently I have dealt with princes,
but in reality princes have dwelt with me.*¹

Were there nothing left of the Renaissance but its tombs, our generalized knowledge of the period would be substantially the same. We would still know of a shared love for the antique, as well as devotion to learning and the concept of virtue. We would know of the sporadic honoring of even non-noble women and of non-local men. We could reconstruct some notion of humanism and of the cultural place of art by the tombs wrought and their epitaphs, and by the very existence of the occasional tomb for people generally not of the patron class. We would understand that memorials tend toward idealization, or downright ostentation, and we would have to rely on skepticism, and some calculation of the potential disparities between self-aggrandizement and relatively disinterested commemoration, by which to correct for this.

Fortunately, the record is considerably richer than this. We have not only the tombs built which survived, but records of some which did not survive, and others which were contemplated but never built. We have written records of fame, specifically signatures, inscriptions, biographies, and autobiographies. We have portraits independent of tomb projects. Taken in combination, we have a daunting supply of evidence about the vein of “self-fashioning” most directly addressed to posterity, all of which is relevant to our quest to understand the general patterns of praise within which artists were discussed.

Our strategy here has been to consider especially the fashioning done by others of artists. Art, as the part of material production traditionally most clearly earmarked for longevity, often serves the perpetuation of fame, and can be co-opted by artists to serve their fame more readily than by any other class of persons excepting patrons. Accordingly, artist’s self-portraits, houses, and self-designed tombs, are less the object of analysis here than other, less material measures of

¹ Petrarch, quoted by E.H. Watkins, *The Life of Petrarch*, Chicago, 1961, 238.

the degree of distinction awarded to individuals from outside the ruling class, artists in particular.² Vasari reported that Giotto had been buried in the Duomo, the spot in the left aisle marked by a white marble (now unknown), until Lorenzo de' Medici erected a more notable monument. Masaccio he reported buried in the Carmine without marker. But the rich and famous Raphael arranged, indeed bought, his own prestigious burial in the Pantheon, lying in the company of saints, and adorned by epitaphs written by his friends in the humanistically inclined Curia. Other artists would follow his precedent and be buried in this most antique of Christian churches, including Perino del Vaga, Baldassare Peruzzi, and Giovanni da Udine.

Humanists' phraseology was more easily adapted to the task of praising a person than an object. Partly for this reason, during our period the fame of the artist came to overwhelm that of the work of art.³ We might suppose that, at mid-century, Raphael's most revered painting was the *Transfiguration*, hung above him as he lay dead and then displayed on the high altar of San Pietro in Montorio rather than being sent to its originally intended destination of Narbonne; that Leonardo's was the *Last Supper* for the Duke of Milan, which was the first work of art made famous abroad by engravings, and which Louis XII reportedly wanted to take back to France with him, though eventually he was dissuaded; that Michelangelo was best known, at least in Florence, for the *Battle of Cascina*, called the school of the world ("la scuola del mondo") by Benvenuto Cellini,⁴ and Titian for

² The first instance of an artist building himself a notable house is Mantegna. On this and other examples, see E. Hüttinger, ed., *Le case d'artista dal Rinascimento a oggi*, Turin, 1962, and Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Das Künstlerhaus: Anmerkungen zur Socialgeschichte des Genies*, Braunschweig, 1990; also R. Lightbown, *Mantegna*, Berkeley, 1986, 120–26. On the courtly exaltation of artists, see Warnke, *The Court Artist*, 156–57. On self-portraits, see recently Johanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*, New Haven, 1998.

³ Cf. E.H. Gombrich, *Story of Art*, Oxford, 1989 (1950), Introduction: "There really is no such thing as Art. There are only artists." The sentiment can be traced to Schlosser; see W. Hofmann's obituary for Gombrich, *The Art Newspaper*, no. 120, Dec. 2001, 4. See also, Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence, A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, Chicago, 1994. See also, Walter Cahn, *Masterpieces: Chapters in the History of an Idea*, Princeton, 1979.

⁴ Cellini, *Opere*, ed. G. Ferrero, Turin, 1971, 82 (*Vita*, I, xiii). The work is also praised by Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, Hildesheim, 1969 [1584], I, 61. Francesco Sansovino preferred the *Last Judgment* in the Vatican, as "fra tutte l'altre sue cose tenuta la migliore, & di somma importanza; "Vita di Dante," Proemio, 1564, and Benedetto Varchi, for not very subtle reasons, makes much of the Medici Chapel: "maravigliosa," *Storia Fiorentina*, XIV, lxxiv, in *Opere*, Milan, n.d., I, 407.

the *Death of St. Peter Martyr*, praised at the opening of Ludovico Dolce's dialogue *L'Aretino* and admired for its landscape and its violent action, so unexpected of an altarpiece.

Such pronouncements cannot be definitive, in part because the fame of these artists took on a life of its own, relatively independent of particular works. In the last few years of his life, Raphael was less active as a painter, being the head of a large shop which could carry on his fresco projects in the Vatican without his direct participation, and being busy with an archaeological survey of Rome in cooperation with the humanists Fabio Calvo and Baldassare Castiglione, as well as assuming the mantle of architect of St. Peter's. Even more strikingly, Leonardo, despite his inactivity, had been honored at the court of Francois Ier from 1516 until his death in 1519. The last document pertaining to a commissioned work is dated late in 1508, when the protracted negotiations over the *Virgin of the Rocks* dwindled away. Throughout his career Leonardo had avoided the normal mode of operation for an artist, i.e., contractual commissions. Leonardo never signed a work, and never finished a work which was then put on prominent display. Nevertheless, his name appears recurrently in published writings of the sixteenth century, beginning with Giovanni Santi's epic vernacular poem in praise of Federico da Montefeltro and continuing as late as Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography (in which he says to Duke Cosimo, "I know that Your Excellency knows who Donatello was, and who the great Leonardo da Vinci, and now who is the admirable Michelangelo Buonarroti"⁵) and Gregorio Comanini (1591).⁶ Michelangelo when he died in 1564, admittedly at a great age, had not made a work of painting or sculpture on commission since 1550; his works of architecture remained incomplete,

⁵ "io so che l'Eccellenzia Vostra ha saputo chi fu Donatello, e chi fu il gran Leonardo da Vinci, e chi è ora il mirabil Michelagnol Buonarroti," B. Cellini, *Opere*, ed. G. Ferrero, Turin, 496; see also 82, 819, 823, 849. See on the autobiography recently, Margaret Gallucci, "Cellini's Trial for Sodomy: Power and Patronage at the Court of Cosimo I," in Eisenbichler, *Cultural Politics*, 37-46.

⁶ "nella pittura, sotto il genere dell'apparato, si riducono i vestimenti de' quali s'adornan l'imagini; la cui imitazione è stata diligentissimamente fatta da Michelangelo, da Rafaello, da Gaudenzio, da Leonardo e da altri di questa bossola, diversamente però e conforme a quella imagine che hanno coluto vestire, osservando sempre in questa, si come in ogni altra cosa, il decoro, e dando pochissime pieghe e grosse a veste d'uomini rozzi e d'aspra vita, mezzane a' panni d'uomini di mezzano stato, e mezze tra grosse e sottili; piccole spese agli abiti degli svelti e dei delicati," Comanini, 368.; recently available in translation, *The Figino, or On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance*, tr. A. Doyle-Anderson and G. Maiorino, Toronto, 2001.

and few were originally his conception rather than the projects of others which he had inherited.

It is indicative of the Florentine inclination to admire artists generically, that is, for their style, like writers, that Vasari wrote biographies rather than a guide book to Florentine monuments. By contrast, Francesco Sansovino, albeit the son of a Florentine, in 1556 issued the first in a succession of editions of an extensive guide to the artistic monuments of Venice, which had long been the norm for writing books intended for pilgrims about the monuments of Rome. In Florence, however, the birth of *la maniera moderna* entailed the birth of the artist as worthy of fame, whereas the concept of masterpiece is, strictly speaking, medieval.

Fame and productivity functioned in a good deal of independence from one another, though it would be going too far to suggest that artists deliberately limited the availability of their work. Nevertheless it is at least roughly true that the more famous an artist became, the less work he produced, especially autograph work which might possess the aura of a relic. Rather than funneling reverence onto relics touched by the divine artist, respect for the artist's *ingegno* endowed non-autograph versions with worth. The increasing presence of copies and reproductions of various kinds ensured that certain works were widely known beyond the limited circle having immediate access to commissioned works. The names of a few artists circulated much more widely yet. A select list of names of famous artists became a quasi-topos in contemporary letters, like catalogues of warriors or ships in epic—usually five at least; Paolo Giovio is an exception with only three, implicitly matching thereby artists with the Three Crowns of Tuscan letters. Yet viewers before the works themselves did not always know to whom to attribute the work. Vasari tells, perhaps spuriously but evidently plausibly, that Michelangelo was not recognized as the author of the Vatican *Pietà* in 1500; the distance from anonymity to divinity was a matter of decades.

Praise directed at the artist rather than the work was couched in generality, and was transferrable to various works in different locations. By 1520 or 1530, the latter being the year of Titian's *Peter Martyr*, the new style was a diffuse phenomenon. Personal reputation carried across distance more easily than paintings, more juicily than engravings. Nevertheless, the image as the focus of worship had long been entrenched as the backdrop to the Eucharist, its color and gleam tied closely with the most sacred moments of life. The old theories, namely that an

image served as a crutch for the illiterate, articulated most famously by Gregory the Great (540–604), and the idea that the image should be thought of as if it did not exist, but as if it were the reality it pretended to be, enunciated memorably by St. Basil (330–79),⁷ had given way a century before to Alberti's Plinian legends of origin. Alberti (1404–72) had cited the dubious example of Narcissus. Daedalus and Apelles soon enhanced the ranks of founding or fostering figures, Proteus somewhat later. Both fear of idolatry and its correlate, respect for the primacy of text, had faded in the face of an expanding curiosity about nature and its representations, sometimes folded back into the justification that nature was itself the book of God.⁸ In place of St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1069–1132) riding along Lake Geneva and never noticing the scenery, Petrarch celebrated Mont Ventoux (not without an element of guilt) and, more than a century later, in 1473, Leonardo drew the Arno Valley. The change in mental habit signalled by Petrarch preceded the change in the culture of art. Before artists could become reputable, vision had to be. Then and only then was the artist asserted culturally over his objects, even to the point of "divinity." Works themselves were seldom called divine. Artists were dubbed divine, also their hands, their brushes, their drawings, or a motif within an image, but substantial objects only rarely.

The idea of the beloved as a surrogate for the Virgin Mary, instituted in Italy principally by Dante, proved one of the most fruitful in western civilization: since chaste love poetry celebrated vision, eventually the poetic tradition expanded from the exaltation of human beauty to hymns in honor of natural beauty, a development conducive to the enhanced role of the poet as the animate member of the second duality. That rather novel sense of the seriousness of the business of visual perception was as necessary to Leonardo's sketch of the Arno Valley as it was to Lorenzo il Magnifico's "Comento ad alcuni sonetti d'amore," begun at approximately the same time.⁹ There he argues

⁷ See L. Brubaker, "The Sacred Image," in R. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker, *The Sacred Image, East and West*, Urbana, 1995, 1–24. And on the image not made by human hands, see H. Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, Ch. 4.

⁸ See E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. W. Trask, Princeton, 1953, 319–26; E. Garin, *La cultura filosofica del rinascimento italiano*, Florence, 1961, Ch. IX; R. Lee, *Names on Trees: Ariosto into Art*, Princeton, 1977; on Galileo's *Letter to Castelli* of 1613, see Richard Blackwell, *Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible*, Notre Dame, 1991, 66–69.

⁹ Jon Thiem, tr., *Lorenzo de' Medici, Selected Poems and Prose*, University Park, 1991, 116, suggests the work was begun as early as 1473 and worked on as late as 1491.

that love, that is, the desire for beauty (“chi cerca diligentemente quale sia la vera difinizione dell’amore, trova non essere altro che appetito di bellezza”) originates in sight (“il principio d’amore nasca dagli occhi e da bellezza”) and leads to all that is good in human existence:

love between people not only is not culpable, but almost necessary and a very effective spur to and loftiness of spirit, and above all it induces men to worthy and excellent things, and to put into practice and to exercise the powers that are in latent in your soul.¹⁰

Vision obtains a primary status in the culmination of the courtly love tradition. This, fertilized as it was by rhetorical theory, engendered the kind of thought about art that we call Renaissance.

Instead of a scholastic preoccupation with the ontology of objects of art, viewers began to accept these objects as lenses through which one saw things of interest, that is, things which affected the soul. As Isabella Sforza put it, describing her reading of Virgil, when she came to the line in which Anchises prays to Jupiter as Troy falls, and receives reply in the form of a thunderbolt (Book II, 689ff.): “there comes to me the impulse to throw myself on my knees and to worship the everlasting Father with great fervor.”¹¹ The status of *istorie* as fact or fiction was scarcely at issue, at least until the mid-sixteenth century. Resemblance to fact, or partial resemblance to fact, sufficed. For humanists, though not for the Council of Trent, and not for the scientists who followed soon after, *fantasia* was always cousin to *imitatio*. The object was assumed to be comprehensible, whether thoroughly natural or not; mimesis the basic project; and knowledge of some sort the result. Knowledge of the workings of the mind, of the artist’s *ingegno*, was taken to be edifying in itself, whether or not the content of the image could be so counted.

Pliny had acknowledged the existence of art which was not beautiful—though under the rubric of foreign pictures, about which he felt no need to be polite:

¹⁰ “l’amore tra gli uomini non solamente non essere reprehensibile, ma quasi necessario ed assai vero argomento di gentilezza e grandezza d’animo, e soprattutto cagione d’invitare gli uomini a cose degne ed eccellenti, ed esercitare e ridurre in atto quelle virtù che in potenza sono nell’anima vostra;” Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Opere scelte*, ed. B. Maier, Novara, 1969, 127–28.

¹¹ *Lettere*, Venice, 1548, 13: “viemmi voglia di gittarmi incontanente in ginocchione, & con fervor grande adorare l’eterno Padre.”

In the Forum too was the picture of an old shepherd with his staff, of which the envoy of the Teutons said, when asked what he thought it was worth, that he would not take such a man as a gift, even if he were alive and well.¹²

Humanists such as Guarino of Verona, the influential scholar resident in Ferrara from 1429 until his death in 1460, did for Pliny's notion of distasteful subjects what Brunelleschi did for the ancients' perspective, constructing something fundamental out of meager precedent. His lesson ranks as all the more noteworthy since it could be learned neither from Pliny, nor from Quintilian or the other orators:

If they [painters] have depicted worms and serpents, mice, scorpions, flies, and other distasteful creatures, will you not admire and praise the artist's art and skill [*artem artificisque solertiam*]?¹³

No mere borrowing from rhetoric, this new theory of art established a more reflexive tone, a meditation on the nature of human creativity, in which realm the existence of evil or ugly products was more easily understood than in the case of the Divine Creator. It may have owed something to Aristotle's *Poetics*, with its description of the poet as like a painter, needing to imitate even the imperfect in nature.¹⁴

Gregorio Comanini in the late sixteenth century still sounded a similar note, though more cautiously, as befitted a canon in post-Trentine Milan. His interlocutor Martinengo, the ecclesiastic, explained that pagan statues were tolerable "only for the skill and refinement of the maker,"¹⁵ and deemed the use of allegory in "profane imagini" to be an "clever and praiseworthy thing."¹⁶ Another interlocutor, the writer Stefano Guazzo, proposes that *ingenium* serves to give clothing to ideas. It is, then, on this basis that visual art should be employed for the benefit of the Church:

In conclusion, it is true that good minds know to clothe the ideas of our religion with poetical garb so that they compete with the devices of the best poets of the pagans.¹⁷

¹² *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, tr. K. Jex-Blake, Chicago, 1968, 93.

¹³ Baxandall, *Giotto*, 40.

¹⁴ "we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are. It is the same in painting," Aristotle, *Poetics*, tr. S.H. Butcher, New York, 1951, 1448a, 11.

¹⁵ Comanini, 319, "solamente per la maestria e per la finezza dell'artificio."

¹⁶ Comanini, 337, "ingegnosa e lodevole cosa."

¹⁷ "In somma, egli è vero che i begli ingegni sanno vestire i concetti della religion

Clothing, like building, was a common metaphor in both literary and visual analysis. This was itself a mark of the increased importance of imagery to thought. The basic issue was whether unchanging rule dictated what should be done, or evolving fashion, which was nearly synonymous (at least in Guazzo's usage) with things poetical. Individual fame became more important in an aesthetic system which did not trust to eternally valid rules, because the individual accomplishment acquired an element of uniqueness. This in turn implied an unravelling of the standard of the liberal arts, as disciplines which could be taught, in favor of a standard of nonstandardization. In this sense, the period called the Renaissance marks the beginning of the importance of cultural memory. What could be preserved of individual works could never be reduced to rule and repeated by subsequent artists.

What marked Comanini as different in orientation from Guarino, and intellectually allied instead with his nearer contemporaries Montaigne or even Galileo (despite the obvious differences), was their common independence from the notion of the ideal, beautiful woman as personification of the *anima*. Previously this common metaphor had unified objective and subjective experience. The poet-lover had so seen himself in the object of his affection that no truly distinct object existed. For Lorenzo de' Medici and others in the Petrarchan mold, external beauty mirrored the individual soul in its ideal state, and just as the lovers aspire to perfect union, so no real division between objective and subjective realities was acknowledged. There functioned a kind of latent semi-mysticism. By contrast, Michelangelo did not worship the object of his *anima*, so much as assimilate the type of the beloved into the marble onto which he vented his anguished creativity. The ruleless Michelangelo, despiser of dutiful mimesis, was obsessed with a less ideal version of his own *anima*. He was thus like the later thinkers in removing the ideal beloved as a staple of thought. Beautiful women might now excite monsters of the mind rather than only thoughts of heavenly bliss.

Michelangelo was himself threatened by the very beauty his work was dedicated to, precisely because he could not see himself in it. Leonardo fretted proverbially that "ogni dipintore dipinge se stesso;" Michelangelo conversely depicted only what he couldn't recognize as like himself. Marble (or the cold, hard beloved) reminded him, by

nostra coi modi poetici in guisa che stanno al pari nell'artificio con quelli de' poeti più nobili degli infedeli;" Comanini, 340.

contrast, of the fragility of his own flesh. The beloved, beautiful and evil (“la donna iniqua e bella” he calls her, not unlike Angelica), aroused the fear of death in one who felt himself, for decades, to be old and sick. In Michelangelo’s thought, Lorenzo’s latent semi-mysticism has not been displaced by a more objective, early scientific theory of perception, but instead by an imagination which breaks the rules of the standard conventions. It was not merely that he disdained to do portraits of the two Medici Dukes [fig. 18], as that what he carved was more real to him than they ever had been. But what he carved was in some sense a replacement for the beloved—beautiful, at least somewhat evil, and at least somewhat resented. The statues of the Dukes provided no straightforward representation of rulers, even allegorized ones. They were anti-idols, carved with grotesque ornaments.

The tradition of courtly love poetry had for centuries fostered a sense of style that was ornamental and conventionalized, a practice that had transferred and transformed in the effort to write *all’antica*. Matteo Bandello, and later others, resisted both, not only by developing a more realistic take on the theme of love, but by turning on the value of style itself. Bandello, a writer of short stories, when he acknowledged, “io non ho stile,”¹⁸ foreshadowed Montaigne, who would aver:

If my design had been to seek the favour of the world I would have decked myself out better and presented myself in a studied gait. Here I want to be seen in my simple, natural, everyday fashion, without striving or artifice: for it is my own self that I am painting. Here, drawn from life, you will read of my defects and my native form so far as respect for social convention allows: for had I found myself among those peoples who are said to live under the sweet liberty of Nature’s primal laws, I can assure you that I would most willingly have portrayed myself whole, and wholly naked.¹⁹

Montaigne’s dedication to stylelessness, like Bandello’s, was an early signal of an emerging determination to see or tell things in a way that was at once more immediate and less filtered through interpretation. They shared a disinterest in either Ciceronian elegance or Petrarchan compliment. One path to early modernity lay in this very disinterest in ancient models, indeed in the notion of normative models at all. Michelangelo did not practice “stylelessness,” but he had something in common with those who did.

¹⁸ Matteo Bandello, *Novelle* ed. G. Ferrero, Turin, 1974, 58.

¹⁹ Michel del Montaigne, *The Essays*, tr. M.A. Screech, London, 1991, lix.

Once works of art came to serve as tokens of artistic *ingegno*, that mental capacity rather than the object was the ostensible focus of respect. From early on the works were acknowledged as fully adequate tokens, comparable to writings.²⁰ The idea of a work of art as a token, not a representation only, but as a token in the way that a manuscript or a printed book is a token, was an important element in breaking the hold of idolophobia. Before, the fear of idolatry had weighed against reverence for the object; now, respect for the artist diminished the aura available to the object. Conversely, the prestige of the object was tied to its placement on an altar; anyone outside the church who wanted a share in art's power needed strategies whereby to diversify that same power. Reinvesting it from object to creator offered one such strategy. By this account, the difference between medieval and Renaissance cultures of the image is less that the object became a kind of relic of an extraordinary, saint-like artist, as that the object itself became relatively inessential. The artist's invention could be appreciated in ekphrasis, in engraved reproduction, in a copy. Not coincidentally, the artist bypassed sainthood for divinity.

The artist, or at least the exceptional artist, was newly valued by virtue of his appropriation to other, pre-existing categories, humanistic and poetical. It was not so much that the political sphere mimicked the church and set up an analogous though secularized structure of worship (at least not immediately), as that monumental art objects continued to be controlled in large part by the paradigms of the church, while new varieties of aesthetic experience were developed beyond the purview of the church. To promote artistic authorship was to erode the power of the altarpiece in favor of more collectable forms of art. As a consequence of the emphasis now placed on smaller scale objects including prints, medals, and statuettes, the viewer began to think in other terms than the primacy of illusionism. The seemingly jumbled inventories that list art objects inconsistently, some by artist and some still by subject, reflect this gradual evolution.

²⁰ "parum recte, humana eos [writing versus painting and sculpture] ratione distinguunt, quos natura tantopere coniunctos esse voluerit, ac quodam, ut diximus, necessitudinis vinculo fecerit esse cognatos," Lucas Gauricus, *De sculptura* (1504), eds. and tr. A. Chastel and R. Klein, Geneva, 1969, 45. On the parallel revival, and notions of revival, of the literary and visual arts, see Erwin Panofsky, "'Renaissance'—Self-Definition or Self-Deception?" *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*, New York, 1972 (1960), 1–41. Cf. Nicholas Mann, "Petrarch and Portraits," in *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance*, London, 1998, 15–20.

Before such works as the Deluge drawings by Leonardo or the engraving of *Lucretia* after Raphael's design or Michelangelo's *teste divine* could be made, recognition of another's *ingegno* became closely tied with the experience of art. These were works which neither delighted nor taught in the traditional manner. Like grotesques, they were admired for the sake of their makers. Furthermore, works admired as products of *ingegno*, were they sold at all, spurred higher prices to reflect admiration for something more valuable than rich materials. This in turn eventually encouraged the production of fakes, duplicates, and multiples, variously reliant still on the original premiss that the true value of the new art lay in its symbolic function, the spectacle of the rich potentialities of the human mind. This was not a development likely to share the longevity of the also new interest in naturalism, and indeed, the return to the lavish expenditures of politically motivated patronage in the guise of celebratory spectacle corresponded with the reassertion of the patron as both the ultimate inventor and the subject of that spectacle, which once again both delighted and taught.

But during the earlier phase, while the work was still valued as a sign of *ingegno*, art might function essentially as a gift rather than as a commodity, regardless of the actual circumstances of its disposal. The crucifix that Brunelleschi made to show his friend Donatello was a gift; portrait medals, we may suppose, were typically gifts. These were objects believed to represent an idea, and valued qua abstraction; they did not function primarily as a prop for prayer (although in the case of the Crucifix, it could also be that). The idea of the drawing or print as gift thus had ample antecedents, its homology going back to the idea of the work as token of an entity inherently unbuyable, i.e., *ingegno*, rather than as something functional, a talisman or a sign of power. Copies began in this period precisely because connoisseurship and material value were dormant issues, whereas fraud heralded the era of passionate collectors the like of Scipio Borghese in the seventeenth century. But in that fragile interval between the absolute aura of the altarpiece and the rapacity of powerful collectors, artists could give as well as sell what they made, and even what they sold they could conceptualize as gift, in emulation of Zeuxis before them, whose works had been too valuable to sell. And having acquired the god-like, patron-like power of dispensation, they could, like Cellini, present their works and wait for a reward suitable to the liberality of the patron. The traditional contractual relationship made a mere business of art; the soliciting of premiums in return for a present made an art even of art's disposal.

Miracle-working paintings could not receive any higher esteem than they already had; little enough veneration could be added to that typically received by even an ordinary altarpiece.²¹ Statues by Michelangelo were placed in gardens after his death, though he himself was called divine and they had been intended for church settings. Once it was deemed that their unfinished state precluded their intended use, their authorship was not sufficient to cause some more prestigious setting than a garden to be invented for them. Yet was not *divino* as prestigious an appellation as could be found? The artist was more valued than the art, the chance to put on a spectacular funeral more important than collecting his sculpture, the politics of reputation more weighty than questions of connoisseurship. Though Michelangelo was called divine in his lifetime, his works of art were not dignified with the appellation *non-finito* until the era of professional art history, again a clue that more attention was paid to maker than to object.²² In the very year after the artist died, in 1565, the Duke of Florence was busy usurping for himself the title of divinity in the mythologized fictions of his son's wedding spectacle.²³

* * *

Particularly during the period from Brunelleschi's lifetime through Michelangelo's, the apparent status of artists changed radically—more rapid and more radical alteration than in any other period in the western tradition and possibly in any tradition.²⁴ This redefinition of status hinged, as we have already said, on the issue of the intellectual

²¹ See, e.g., R. Trexler, "Florentine Religious Experience: The Sacred Image," *Studies in the Renaissance*, XIX, 1972, 8–14. Cf. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, tr. E. Jephcott, Chicago, 1994.

²² Inter alia, Teddy Brunius, "Michelangelo's 'non-finito,'" in *Contributions to the History and Theory of Art*, Uppsala, 1967, 29–67, with bibliography back to 1930, and Piero Sanpaolosi, "Il 'Non finito' di Michelangelo in scultura e architettura," 228–40, and R. Bonelli, "Michelangelo e il non-finito," 403–19, both in *Atti del Convegno di Studi Michelangioleschi*, Rome, 1966 (1964).

²³ On which, see Rick Scorza, "Vasari, Borghini and Michelangelo," in *Reactions to the Master*, eds. Ames-Lewis and Joannides, 180–210.

²⁴ On individual artistic reputation in the Greek world, see J.J. Pollitt and O. Palagia, *Personal Styles in Greek Sculpture*, Cambridge, 1996. For a revisionary look at the tradition of the Chinese amateur and inspired artist, see J. Cahill, *The Painter's Practice: How Artists Lived and Worked in Traditional China*, New York, 1994, 5–11, 123–26; Wu Tung, *Tales from the Land of Dragons: 1000 Years of Chinese Painting*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1997, no. 92, 197–200, documents the handscroll *Nine Dragons* (first half of thirteenth century), the mythological subject of which was considered divine. Of this work the artist claimed for

claims of visual art and its creators, but it also depended initially on a fundamentally new matrix for the reception of art, namely, Florence. As a small city, mercantile and at least officially republican most of the time until 1530, a place of constant and evident change, it was a place in which people interacted in different ways than in a traditional, narrow court, which functioned essentially as an extended family, largely static until traumatized by death. Republican Florence, instead, was what Paolo Giovio (1483–1552), addressing Duke Cosimo, called viciously equal:

full of so much ambition, and of proud envy that each one of them wants to be in charge and head of the republic and in some way to benefit from the control of the shared resources, and in private convenience to exploit the public wealth; they all burn with an insatiable greed, and a virtually insane will; that they are unwilling to suffer either peers or that any citizen be superior to them in possessions or rank.²⁵

It was a place full of rivalries, of pride unnormalized by strict social hierarchies, rife with argument and class ferment, and frequently subject to boom and bust on various levels and in various sectors of the economy. The revolt of the Ciompi in 1378 was remembered by Marx and Engels because it had, indeed, been an exceptional occurrence, made possible by a new economy which corresponded with a range of cultural innovation.²⁶

The republics of Italy, Florence and Venice, had a vested interest in the celebration of their regimes' longevity. In the continuity of government across spans of time outlasting an individual life, they could assert a superiority to more totalitarian regimes. The individual life was not the measure of the health of the state. And so, in perpetuating the memory of an artist as a kind of immortal citizen celebrated across centuries (as Giotto at least was, and perhaps, more faintly, Guariento), they indirectly hailed their own republicanism, for no dynasty could

himself, "one suspects that only a god could have painted these dragons." The artist who achieved the highest court position was Yan Liben of the seventh century, a court portraitist (23).

²⁵ "pieni di tanta ambitione, et di superba invidia che disiderando ciascuno d'essi sedere al maneggio, & governo della Repub. & in qual si voglia modo goder l'imperio della patria comune, & à privato commodo abbracciar le ricchezze del publico; ardono tutti di quella insatiabile cupidigia, & vim pazzano affato; che come del pari non vogliono sopportare, ch'alcun cittadino gli sia superiore ò di roba ò di dignità;" Giovio, *Historie*, vol. II, Book XXV, 24–25.

²⁶ See also *Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael in Renaissance Florence from 1500–1508*, ed. S. Hager, Washington, D.C., 1992.

claim a similar devotion to a single individual traversing the reigns of multiple rulers. A similar claim may be made of ancient Rome: that the discovery of the importance of apotheosis lay post-republic, when the mortality of a government newly centered on a single individual lay exposed. In this way, the assertion of divinity in the context of absolutism may be seen to imply weakness as much as it does strength, for it responds to the potentate's mortality by denial. In the case of Florence, the de facto immortality of Giotto led to the explicit divinity of Michelangelo under a totalitarian regime, followed swiftly by the divinization of the duke in the context of artistic spectacle.

Florence, before it was tamed by the Medici, was a locus of relatively fluid wealth and relatively unstable social class. To the persistent question of why the Renaissance happened, or more exactly put, why an artistic tradition which had been dedicated to dogma and faith in the main, began to engage, on a primary level, a variety of ideas, themes, and emotions, no simple answer will suffice. But there can be no doubt that Florence played a role as incubator. The visual example of antiquity was fainter there than in many Italian cities; there was no particularly vibrant pre-existing tradition of patronage to maintain. Why, then did these merchants and bankers choose to expend so much of their wealth on art? If their aim was simply to purchase prestige, more gold and ultramarine rather than less would have been the order of the day. How did the Florentines learn to prize *ingenium* in the visual arts?

From the beginning, Florentine humanism had emphasized respect for *ingegno*, which implied a more natural excellence than advantaged birth, one bright with the promise of permanence. But they did so circumspectly. Leonardo Bruni had Niccolò Niccoli praise Coluccio Salutati's "almost divine ability" in the *Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum* early in the fifteenth century:

But I'll tell you what I feel about you—and not, by Hercules, for the sake of flattery. It seems to me that by your extraordinary and almost divine ability you have been able to achieve this [to surpass, or surely to equal, the ancients].²⁷

²⁷ "Sed dicam quod sentio de te, nec mehercule aasentandi gratia. Tu mihi videris isto tuo praestantissimo ingenio ac paene divino, etiam his rebus deficientibus, sine quibus alii non possunt, haec [sapientia atque eloquentia veteres illos...vel anteiveris vel certe adaequaveris] assequi potuisse;" *Prosatori Latini del Quattrocento*, ed. E. Garin, Milan/Naples, 1952, 60; *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, trs. G. Griffiths, James Hankins, David Thompson, Binghamton, 1987, 69.

“Almost divine” is the phrase used by Lorenzo de’ Medici to laud the sonnet form.²⁸ And, not coincidentally, “almost divine” is the accolade awarded by Alberti to the *vis* of painting (“habet in se vim admodum divinam”).²⁹ To call someone’s intelligence almost divine in the fifteenth century was a rare distinction; to use the same phrase a century later would have sounded anemic praise.

Already in the fifteenth century similar praise is readily found outside of Florence, and even applied—perhaps eventually especially applied—to women of esteem. Their appearance is deemed divine, their virtues, their studies likewise. The practice did not immediately extend to calling women—in prose—themselves divine. A prophetess in antiquity, one Eriphila, was hailed in 1488 as possessing a divine mind, but she was so acclaimed by a female humanist—exceptional praise from an exceptional source. A few decades earlier, in the early 1450s, Isotta Nogarola referred to herself as divine.³⁰ And in 1487 Cassandra Fedele declared: “Deeds of genius...are immortal, as is the soul.”³¹ In the fifteenth century, the ancients could be called divine, but moderns were typically “almost divine” at best. The soul was surely divine; the mind was only beginning to be thought of in such terms.

Vasari, advocate that he was of the divine *ingegni* and divine works of artists, did not explain the revival of art in those terms. Rather, he claimed famously in the Life of Perugino that the Renaissance (or rather, *la maniera moderna*) happened in Florence because compliments were so foreign there, criticism so natural. His analysis is not without some foundation; Florence was a place of peers, devoid of overarching authority. For him, of course, the new style was very much a Florentine phenomenon; but for Julius Held, in a noted essay on the early collecting of drawings,³² the question of epochal change was not particularly Florentine, nor traceable back to the fourteenth century. It was not

²⁸ ‘È sentenza di Platone che il narrare brevemente e dilucidamente molte cose non solo pare mirabile tra gli uomini, ma quasi cosa divina. La brevità del sonetto non comporta che una sola parola sia vana...,’ Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Opere scelte*, 138–39.

²⁹ Beginning of Book II.

³⁰ See Margaret King and Albert Rabil, Jr., *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected works by and about the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy*, Binghamton, 1992, for references to divinity 36, 73, 114, for references to near divinity 40, 48 (of a Pius II by a girl), 54, 72, 76.

³¹ *Immaculate*, 71.

³² J. Held, “The Early Appreciation of Drawings,” *Studies in Western Art: Latin American Art, and the Baroque Period in Europe*, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art, III, Princeton, 1963, 72–95.

even clearly a matter of a new style. Held argued that a change in attitude on the part of consumers as well as makers of works of art marked a shift into more modern times, an interest in form rather than subject, and in what we might call efficient rather than material cause. It took collectors to create a situation in which a sketch could be valued as highly as an altarpiece (though the case might better be stated via analogy: the drawing was to the private collector as the altarpiece was to an order, a prince, or a family in its formal, public instantiation). Held suggested that the secularization of the function of art lay at the root of the transformation, and cited Pietro Aretino's reference to a drawing by Titian as a relic.³³ The artist becomes the new saint-surrogate, and the physical detritus of his fertile spontaneity our closest link to inspiration. In buying a work of art, one is no longer purchasing labor plus materials, but a token of genius. Because of its focus on reception and consumption, Held's essay belongs in some ways to an arc of interpretation extending from Friedrich Antal to Richard Goldthwaite and Lisa Jardine, in which the Renaissance is taken as the ancestor of our own consumer culture and Florence as its core. Even if one is willing to accept some or all of that, the question remains, why did *ingenium* matter enough to bend the social structure, and, in time, to make "gods" out of sons of the *popoli minuti*?

* * *

Two tombs which have not come down to us frame the period conveniently and lend its awards of praise that air of controversy which we would have supposed properly belonged to it. One was never built and the other has since been lost. Cristoforo Landino reports somewhat acidly on a failed project to honor Dante in the Duomo of Florence. Dante's exile, he explains, was the fault of a mismanaged republican government:

that effect was fault of the times, and not of the nature of the people. And the power of a few, that at that time governed that Republic,³⁴

and when the present regime tried to amend things by building a suitable tomb, a "sepolchro marmoreo con la sua statua" (marble tomb with his [Dante's] statue), Envy made it impossible. Nevertheless:

³³ Held, 81; letter of April 1544.

³⁴ "quello effetto fu vizio de' tempi, & non della natura del popolo. Et la potenza di pochi, che allhora governava quella Republica..."

the piety of the Florentine people and the merit of the poet very much requires that not only in a public place but in a holy and dignified place there be a permanent marker for him. This the divine laws stipulate, human laws command it and fairness desires, and it pertains very much to the public utility that the prizes and honors for the dead incite the living to imitate them, so that they may become immortal through their immortal virtue. And who does not know that the fame and flory of they who are dead is the most ardent flame which always sparks human breasts to every honor and worthy accomplishment? And certainly that city could never be miserable in which the men of desert are given various rewards, since the saying of Plato is very true, that the republics in which philosophers govern, or those that govern begin to philosophize, will always be salutary. But because I know that it is too much to spark who burns, or to spur someone who already runs fast, I will not belabor my point further, illustrious gentlemen, in persuading you of that to which your gentle nature inclines and leads you.³⁵

In the eyes of Landino, Plato's (and Florence's) exiled poet appears in the guise of philosopher-king. The trouble Landino relates was never resolved to Florentine satisfaction; the body remains to this day in Ravenna. Dante has been commemorated in the Florentine Duomo by a painting on panel since June of 1465, shortly after the death of Cosimo il Vecchio [fig. 6]. This was paid for by the Signoria and supplied with distichs possibly authored by a Medici partisan, the humanist Bartolomeo Scala. Dante's journey was shown schematically on one side, and his place of origin, a topographical view of Florence, on the other side of the background.³⁶ The artist was the otherwise obscure

³⁵ "sommamente richiede la pietà del popolo Fiorentino, & i meriti del Poeta, che non solo in luogo publico: ma in sacro, & augusto apparisca di lui perpetua memoria, percioche vogliono questo i precetti divini, lo comandano le humane leggi, & lo desidera ogni equità, & molto s'appartiene all'utilità publica, che i premij, & gli honori de' morti, accendino i vivi ad imitargli coloro, che per le loro immortali virtù, son diventati immortali. Et chi non sà, che la fama, & le gloria di coloro, che son morti, è ardentissima fiamma, la quale accende sempre i petti humani ad ogni honorata, & illustre operatione? Et certamente che quella Città, non può mai esser misera, nella quale siano preporti a gli huomini di valore diversi premii, porche le sententia di Platone è verissima, che sempre saranno bene le Republiche, nelle quali, o governeranno i Filosofi, o coloro, che governano, cominceranno a filosofare. Ma perch'io conosco, che è di soverchio l'accendere chi arde, o incitar chi per se stesso corre veloce, non m'affaticherò con più lunga oratione, Illustrissimi Signori, in persuadervi a quello, che la vostra benigna natura v'incita, & vi mena;" *Comedia*, Venice, 1564, unpag., under "Della mercatura;" the text in Procaccioli/Landino/Dante, *Proemio* (1481), vol. I, 246, is slightly different.

³⁶ Erich Loos, "Das Bild als Deutung von Dichtung, Zur Darstellung Dantes von Domenico di Michelino in Santa Maria del Fiore, Florenz," in *Festschrift für Otto von*

Domenico di Michelino. In appearance, Domenico's composition was intriguingly like some of the imagery that would be generated under Savonarola, mixing as it did the temporal and the divine, and, furthermore, implying that Florence was a place of destiny. This was the rather puny outcome of projects to commemorate poets in the Duomo that began as early as 1396, followed by a painted memorial to Dante put up between 1413–39, and replaced in 1465 by Domenico di Michelino's surviving painting.³⁷ It was an awkward solution—Florence's version of the abortive Julius II tomb project. The painting must have seemed a relatively slight commemoration of a figure who for hundreds of years played a more crucial role in Florentine culture than any theologian or politician. In Cosimo Bartoli's *Ragionamenti* published in 1567, Michelangelo was "divino" but Dante was "divinissimo."

The other equally acerbic remarks come from Venice almost two centuries later, again from after the death of the person whose reputation is disputed. Francesco Sansovino, commenting on the tomb of Pietro Aretino in San Luca, called him presumptuous, barely Christian, and ignorant of letters. Sansovino claimed that Aretino would have been utterly forgotten were it not for Ariosto's facetious mention of the scurrilous author.³⁸

This intriguing accusation that Ariosto titled Aretino divine in jest has been little noted or at least little heeded. It runs counter to the evidence of Aretino's own boastful medal of 1553 [fig. 20], which proclaims him *DIVUS* and shows the world upside down of monarchs paying tribute to the enthroned son of a cobbler. This world upside down is exactly the comic world, a world in which Aretino was at home, and Ariosto as well. It is conceivable that one or both of their tongues were in cheek, that they were, in the Shakespearian phrase, "merry." Certainly in Aretino's case, his reputation was unstable, and so too the connotations of his epithet "divino." He was despised as often, and sometimes while, he was being admired—or at least treated with deference. He could get away with being called divine while he was useful to the powers around him; but his reputation not only vanished but became

Simson zum 65. Geburtstag, eds. L. Grisebach and K. Renger, Frankfurt, 1977, 160–72. See also Nelson, "Dante Portraits," 59–77, esp. fig. 11.

³⁷ Gombrich, "Giotto's Portrait of Dante?," 31.

³⁸ See Ch. 4, above. See also, more generally, Elena Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino, Imprenditore librario e letterato*, Venice, 1994. *La Pazzia*, Venice?, 1530?, unpag., mentions how vulnerable is Aretino's reputation: "Si ridono dell'Aretino dicendo non esser arguto, se non in punger quando non gli è turata la bocca con qualche presente."

ridiculous, even to the son of his friend Jacopo Sansovino, when his usefulness was over.

Reputation was volatile, and more so in the sixteenth century than before. In Dante's case the constant of local pride was ever complicated in a minor way by the changing political and critical issues; Pietro Aretino's posthumous lack of reputation is one indication that what was said while he was alive was not always what was thought. Michelangelo's example resembles Aretino's in that after his death and funeral, his name was much more rarely invoked.³⁹ After death, Michelangelo's continuing importance lay in a combination of his own achievements and Vasari's, two far-from-parallel vectors.

Seven years after Michelangelo died, Francesco Pecci wrote a letter to Duke Cosimo de' Medici about how the moderns had with their *industria* equalled the ancients, and about the "chiaro ingegno" of Donatello (a man very close to the Medici), with nary a mention of Michelangelo.⁴⁰ Twenty years after Michelangelo's death, Francesco Bocchi (1548–1613/18) wrote in praise of Donatello's *St. George*, in particular its "divino costume," or mien, its "sembiante più che humano." He compared it with Pheidias' Zeus, made with the aid of Homer's descriptions; and Michelangelo's Charon, made after Dante; and Leonardo's Christ at the *Last Supper*, left unfinished—whereas Donatello from "una divina magnanimità" made *St. George*, complete, from marble. The statue itself is termed "molto gentile e divino," and also "quasi divina."⁴¹ Michelangelo is a presence in the text, cited almost defensively—"all artists, really everyone, admires Buonarroti"—but the

³⁹ Cellini's *Vita*, for instance, was mostly written before Michelangelo's death; he calls Michelangelo divine (see Cellini, *Opere*, ed. E. Carrara, Turin, 1971, 82, 159, 574, and Rime VIII, 849). Both Raphael and Michelangelo were added to the second edition of Guillaume Rouille's *Promptuarium des médailles* in 1577, as were Dürer, Ariosto, and even Aretino; see John Cunnally, *Images of the Illustrious: The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance*, Princeton, 1999, 100–02. Raffaello Borghini calls Michelangelo "divino," *Riposo*, 163, 509. Michelangelo was lavishly commemorated by his great-nephew, Michelangelo il Giovane, in the Galleria in the Casa Buonarroti of 1613–35; Adriaan W. Vliegthart, *De Galleria Buonarroti, Michelangelo en Michelangelo il Giovane*, Rotterdam, 1969, not least in the inscription which alludes to his being called divine: "Michaeli Angelo Bonarrotæ pingendi sculpendi atque architectandi præstantia divinum nomen adepti," 54. See also 169, 177, for other references to the divine Michelangelo. *Cose meravigliose dell'alma città di Roma*, Rome, describes the *Moses* as displaying the "maraviglioso artificio dal divinissimo Michelangelo Fiorentino" in 1565 and 1591; in 1666 the "divinissimo" has been dropped.

⁴⁰ Bottari, IV, 253–54.

⁴¹ Bottari, 259–363.

shift in attention to Donatello, carrying with it the compliment of divinity, is unmistakable.⁴²

The reasons for the aboutface were different than in Aretino's case, however. The living Michelangelo had been a locus of Florentine republican feeling; the dead Michelangelo was co-opted by the Duchy. The living Michelangelo had epitomized freedom from artistic precedent; the dead Michelangelo could only become part of restrictive tradition. It was the courtier Vincenzo Borghini, after all, who pronounced sententiously, "A man such as he should never die."⁴³ It would be overly generous to suppose his sentiment, and his concern for carrying on the tradition in the next generation of artists, was motivated purely by a disinterested love of sculpture. Florence has lost a valuable property, and needed to recoup what it could. Nevertheless, whereas some individuals, not only Dante but also Serafino and Francesco da Milano, were only hailed as divine principally or only after their deaths, Michelangelo proved divine primarily in life. Tomaso Garzoni, in a book published in 1585, referred to Michelangelo as "unico," though he still remembered Ariosto's verse.⁴⁴

Fame, even as registered by something as expensive and public as one's tomb, was not totally tamed by convention. It was distributable, at least in rare instances, to the sons of working class fathers, even ones who had not become artists (e.g., Aretino, Lodovico Dolce), whereas some of the great figures of the age failed to be memorialized, not only Dante in Florence (Bernardo Bembo tended to his burial site in Ravenna), but notably Lorenzo il Magnifico, who was to have had a memorial in the never-completed New Sacristy. Although Lorenzo de' Medici ended up tombless, he paid for a memorial to Giotto and the tomb of Fra Filippo Lippi [figs. 62, 63], as well as those of his father and uncle. Ariosto, who had so spectacularly served the fame of the d'Este, could afford only a modest burial, one which was aggrandized only long afterwards, by an inscription forty years later, and reinterment in 1612, refurbished again in 1801.⁴⁵

The Renaissance might be defined as a time in which fame and class intersected in very unpredictable ways, in contrast to the periods pre-

⁴² "Tutti gli artefici, anzi ogni uomo, ammira il Bonarroto, non sollo per lo senno nobile e grande, che in tutte le figure sue si conosce, ma ancora per questo accorgimento, ove egli riguardò e sempre pose molto studio," Bottari, 355.

⁴³ Wittkowers, *Divine*, 10.

⁴⁴ Garzoni, *Piazza*, 1996, II, 1075, 1092.

⁴⁵ Catalano, 159–60.

ceding and succeeding. Arguably only in the Renaissance did this occur, until such time as class consciousness began to dissolve in the twentieth century. By this definition, as by others, Michelangelo is a central figure. Raphael and Michelangelo both were entombed spectacularly, Raphael at his own arrangement and expense,⁴⁶ Michelangelo by the Academicians of Florence and his nephew [fig. 64]. Renaissance tombs record worldly success and a certain kind of foresight more directly than they do fame; nevertheless the record of artists' burials shows clearly the cultural readjustment that has long been called the Renaissance.

The set of persons memorialized by tombs intersects with that of persons listed as *uomeni famosi*, or *illustri*, though they are far from identical. For the one was a form of praise typically, though not exclusively, from one man of letters to another; the tomb, typically, required significant personal wealth. Alberti, hailed by Landino in his Proemio to the *Divina comedia* under the heading of "eccellenti nella dottrina," as a man beyond category—"ma dover lascio io LEON Battista Alberti? ò in che generatione di dotti lo ripongo?"—asked to be buried in S. Agostino in Rome, but any trace has been lost. Mantegna, a mere artist by comparison to this well-lettered humanist, had a magnificent memorial chapel in Alberti's own masterpiece, San Andrea in Mantua, including a bronze portrait bust.⁴⁷ So important a commodity was fame that in some cases a memorial tomb was donated, beginning as early as that of the Anti-Pope John XXIII, in which case peninsular politics prompted generosity (which had the flavor, moreover, of a *quid pro quo*). Leonardo Bruni and Carlo Marsuppini had tombs paid for by the Republic. Michelangelo's may well be the most magnificent of these donated (or partially donated) tombs.

The expectation was that "il divino's" significance would outlast death. And so it did, but the very building of the tomb changed the significance of "il divino's" reputation. It made him the icon of Florentine *ingegno*, that bourgeois crustiness finally apotheosized into something highly dignified, but coincidentally at the historical moment when Florence disappeared from the map of importance. And because he was remembered in the language of Ducal toadies, of Vasari in particular, the significance of his career became muddied. He who had

⁴⁶ T. Buddenseig, "Raffaels Grab," in *Munuscula Discipulorum, Kunsthistorische Studien Hans Kauffmann zum 70.*, ed. T. Buddenseig and M. Winner, Berlin, 1968, 45-70; Gesa Schütz-Rautenberg, *Künstlergrabmäler des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts in Italien*, Kiel, 1978.

⁴⁷ See the thorough and helpful Schütz-Rautenberg, Ch. 3.

been quasi-heretic, aesthetically speaking, or at the very least, eccentric, became the stuff of Academic discourse. It was as though Courbet had been buried with pomp in le Pantheon. Fame and class were forced back into sync by Ducal decree, and an age of small town politics and small town abrasiveness was replaced by extravagance and formality. The *Pietà* Michelangelo had intended for his tomb, destined for Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome,⁴⁸ was displaced by a minor spectacle in pomposity, his portrait bust done by someone who had never seen him, and his bones attended by allegorical women representing the Vasarian scheme of the arts of *Disegno*. His memorialization was not unique, only the degree to which it was foisted upon him. Likewise in Florence, Baccio Bandinelli (d. 1560) succeeded in having, and Benvenuto Cellini (d. 1571) in Florence aspired to have, tombs nothing short of lavish.⁴⁹ In Venice in 1576, Titian's intended memorial painting never made it to his grave in Santa Maria dei Frari, but went instead to the now-destroyed church of Sant'Angelo, due at least in part to the exigencies of the plague.

The record of tombs runs parallel to that of literary tributes, with pictorial tributes as a third strand, each with its own natural biases, but interlocked by the pressure of the importance of suitable tributes, or to quote Landino on the plans for Dante's memorial, the conviction that "it is crucial to the public good" ("molto s'appartiene all'utilità publica"). Particularly in Florence, a place that prided itself, under Lorenzo de' Medici at least, as one in which "there flourished famous minds of every kind of beauty,"⁵⁰ the matter was political as well as personal, and not restricted to the ruling elite. In this as in other ways, the artistic class, that rather indeterminate group as far as social status, imitated and reflected the patron class, acting in effect as commentators on their betters (not as critics—that lay far in the future).⁵¹

⁴⁸ Lavin, "Last Will," 16.

⁴⁹ See Schütz-Rautenberg, Ch. 5.

⁵⁰ "fiorirono nobili ingeni in ogni spetie di bellezza," Landino/Dante, under "Fiorentini eccellenti nella Mercatura," unpag.

⁵¹ When Federico Zuccaro drew Michelangelo in the guise of Moses (versions in Uffizi and Louvre), we could claim, even without the help of Freud, that the implicit reference was not only to Old Testament patriarchy but to local patriarchy, specifically to the Dukes of the Medici Chapel, similarly seated and twisted rather than straightforwardly enthroned. Cf. Steffi Roettgen, "Die Maler als Principe: Realität, Hintergrund und Wirkung von Zuccaris Akademischem Programm," in *Der Maler Federico Zuccari: Ein römischer Virtuoso von Europäischem Ruhm*, eds. M. Winner and D. Heikamp, Munich, 1999, 301–15.

Artists of the Cinquecento, because they were essentially a licentious group, of precarious social standing, might be cast with criminals as easily as with rulers. Benvenuto Cellini was not the only artist who spent time in prison, nor Leone Leoni in the galleys, and Michelangelo was not the only one threatened by an outraged patron. Even as early as 1455, Fra Filippo Lippi had been tortured (he was accused of forging a receipt to another painter).⁵² Art was, after all, widely acknowledged to be a deception, and deceivers could be dubbed artists. Luigi Pulci wrote of the traitor Ganellon, “the traitor was an artist in all things,/and even cared to be believed a saint.”⁵³ Any artist who failed to perform like a dutiful servant toward his patron ran the risk of punishment to one degree or another. Yet despite this, over time the norm was increasingly to reject obsequiousness or even deference. The story of Parmigianino during the Sack of Rome, ignoring the intruding German soldiers like Archimedes ignoring the Roman ones, was told by Vasari to prove the power of art, but it demonstrates as well the self-importance of artists, even one so young and relatively unproven.

Artists were self-important because they were famous, or ambitious of fame, but—if we may allow ourselves so impertinent a query—why were they famous? This is our most basic question, asked most boldly of Michelangelo himself: why was he famous, other than the obvious reason, that he was good, or as they might have said at the time “uomo in tal arte eccellente”?⁵⁴ How did he get to be “divino” instead of merely “eccellente”?

* * *

Artists could be famous because they were praised. Alternatively, they might be praised simply because they were famous, as *uomeni famosi*, rather than—what the designation as liberal artist implied—because they were learned and virtuous, or even, made virtuous by their *arte*. The *uomini famosi* developed from set groups of legendary heroes in medieval culture to a more dynamical and varied population during the Renaissance, comprised in part of ancient and/or legendary figures, but also more recent rulers, warriors, and the occasional woman, as

⁵² M. Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi, The Carmelite Painter*, New Haven, 1999, 104; J. Ruda, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, New York, 1993, 11, 311.

⁵³ tr. J. Tsiani, 584; L. Pulci, *Il Morgante*, XXV, 41; “ Tutto faceva il traditor con arte,/ch’un certo santaficca parer vuole.”

⁵⁴ Condivi, 22.

well as some humanists. The category of *uomini e donne famosi* was not so ritually conventionalized as to preclude discrepancies, debate, and, occasionally, an element of parody—as memorably in *Love's Labor's Lost* with its bumbling Pompey and doomed Hector. Because the category was pliable, it was also meaningful. By the time Lomazzo wrote his *Libro dei sogni*, in which famous men hold dialogue with one another, the list could include so motley a crowd as Ariosto and Paolo Giovio, Pythagoras and Euclid, Leonardo and Pheidias, Albertus Magnus and Pietro di Abano, as well as women of definitely dubious report, Angiola of Piacenza and Francesca Ruffiana of Siena.

Petrarch reinvigorated the concept of fame, and the category of *uomini famosi* with it. He was himself included in a painted program of *uomini famosi* at Padua, at his desk, presumably more as the inventor of the scheme than as a full-fledged member.⁵⁵ One might be included in such lists on account of either *virtù* or virtue (hence the vital inclusion of *condottieri*, among whom Federico da Montefeltro was admired for virtue, most of the others for *virtù*). Ancients and moderns alike were eligible. Medieval author portraits, especially sets of them as in frontispieces to the Gospels, may be considered the antecedents of Federico da Montefeltro's collection of the portraits of famous men [fig. 7], in which a group of great authors, ancient, medieval and modern, pagan and Christian, is assembled as though on an iconostasis. Those half-length portraits made possible a kind of ideal ancestor worship, creating a narthex close to his studiolo, the sanctuary of learning. Studying is conceived of as a kind of filial devotion appropriate even for a Duke. But he did not go so far as to include any artists, not even ancient ones.

In Florentine catalogues of *huomini famosi* artists figured very early on. The lists responded to the pressures of local and current public opinion; they were unabashedly written in the vernacular, indicating that this was something the ordinary citizen read with interest. The subject of fame had, almost by definition, relevance across many sectors of society, from low to high.

Filippo Villani, writing a chronicle of Florence in the years 1381–82, one known to us only in Italian, came close to calling painters liberal artists, as noted earlier. The occasion, significantly, was their unqualified inclusion in a list of *uomini famosi*. The chapter “Di Francesco Cieco ed altri musici fiorentini” was followed by “Di Giotto ed altri dipintori

⁵⁵ Martha Hansmann, *Andrea del Castagnos Zyklus der 'Uomini famosi' und 'donne famose': Geschichtsverständnis und Tugendideal im Florentinischen Frühhumanismus*, Hamburg, 1993.

fiorentini.” The blind Francesco, incidentally, was the son of a painter, and Cristoforo Landino’s greatuncle (“fratello del mio avolo”). There are twenty-nine principal lives, men of learning rather than of blood, a distinctively Florentine group. A couple of warriors are included, but they are the exceptions amidst poets, rhetoricians, and philosophers.

Villani’s text was continued by Antonio Manetti in the mid-1490s with fourteen additional brief lives, eight of them artists.⁵⁶ Brunelleschi was hailed as the master of three arts and more (“getti,” “intagli”). “Maraviglioso” is the adjective of choice, on its own and specifically of his *ingegno*, which is also deemed “mirabile.” “Maraviglioso” is applied to three other painters; Donatello is deemed *mirabile* instead. *Ingegno* is cited only of Brunelleschi, though Luca della Robbia is credited with “grande intelletto.”

By contrast, Vespasiano da Bisticci’s much more comprehensive and elaborate *Vite* of the last two decades of the fifteenth century dedicates not a single one to an artist. The Lives written by this anti-Medicean Florentine feature popes, archbishops, and bishops, dukes, prominent citizens and men of letters from the whole peninsula. Only Cosimo among the Medici is deemed worthy of a *Vita*. Within that biography Donatello is mentioned:

If he mixed with painters or sculptors he understood very well about it, and he had some things in his house by the hand of very singular masters. Concerning sculpture, he was very well informed, and he much favored sculptors and all worthy artists. He was great friends with Donatello and all painters and sculptors, and because in his time this art of sculpture was a little neglected, Cosimo, so that Donatello wouldn’t be stalled, he ordered from him certain pulpits of bronze for San Lorenzo, and made him make certain doors that are in the Sacristy, and he commanded that at the bank every week that he would have a certain amount of money, as much as he needed for himself and for the four lads that he maintained, and in this way he supported him. Because Donatello didn’t dress the way Cosimo would have liked, Cosimo gave him a red mantle with a hood, and got him a gown for under the cloak, and clothed him all new, and one holiday morning he sent him them

⁵⁶ Peter Murray, “Art Historians and Art Critics—IV, XIV Uomini Singolari in Firenze,” *Burlington Magazine*, XCIX, 1957, 330–36. Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, ed. H. Saalman, University Park, 1970, 35; Schütz-Rautenberg, 12–53. Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, ed. H. Saalman, tr. C. Enggass, University Park, 1970. Three manuscripts survive, but the life cuts off without conclusion. The text was first published, and ascribed to Manetti, in the nineteenth century. Saalman dates it definitely before 1489, and possibly even before 1482.

so he could wear them. He wore them one or two times, and then he responded, that he did not want to wear them any more, because he said he seemed ridiculous. Cosimo customarily was liberal like this with men who had some talent, because he esteemed them very much. As for architecture he was very canny about this, as you can see in the many buildings he had made, which he supervised closely, and some who were building would come to him for his opinion and advice.⁵⁷

Cosimo's liberality is the primary point, rather than Donatello's artistry.⁵⁸ In death, similarly, Donatello would be buried in the orbit of Cosimo, near his tomb in San Lorenzo, a bit reminiscent of how the poet Ennius had his portrait included in the burial monument of his patron Scipio Africanus (according to Cicero in *Pro Archia* and repeated in the Renaissance; Landino had him buried there as well).⁵⁹ The fifteenth-century record of his burial refers to him as "Maestro Donato nobilissimo scultore," given his spot "per commissione Del. mag.^{co} piero di cosimo."⁶⁰

Another mention of artists occurs in the Life of Nicolaio Nicoli, again merely in relation to the collector:

Not only did Nicolaio make grants to literary men, but he was knowledgeable about painting, sculpture, architecture, with all of which he had great familiarity, and he lent very great help to Brunelleschi, Donatello, Luca della Robbia, and Ghiberti in their work, and was great friends

⁵⁷ "Se praticava con pittori o scultori egli se ne intendeva assai, et aveva alcune cose in casa di mano di singolari maestri. Se di scultura, egli n'era intendentissimo, et molto favoriva gli scultori et tutti artefici degni. Fu molto amico di Donatello et di tutti e' pittori e scultori, et perché ne' tempi sua questa arte degli scultori alquanto venne che gli erano poco adoperati, Cosimo, a fine che Donatello non si stessi, gli alogò certi pergami di bronzo per Sancto Lorenzo, et fecegli fare certe porte che sono nella sagrestia, et ordinò al banco ogni settimana, ch'egli avessi una certa quantità di danari, tanto che gli bastassino a lui et a quatro garzoni che teneva, et a questo modo lo mantenne. Perché Donatello non andava vestito come Cosimo arebbe voluto, Cosimo gli donò uno mantello rosato et uno capuccio, et fecegli una cappa sotto il mantello, et vestillo tutto di nuovo, et una matina di festa glieli mandò a fine che le portassi. Portolle una volta o dua, di poi gli ripose, et non gli volle portare più, perché dice gli pareva essere dilegiato. Usava Cosimo di queste liberalità a uomini che avessino qualche virtù, perché gli amava assai. Venendo all'architetura egli ne fu peritissimo, come si vede per più edifici fatti fare dallui, che non so murava o faceva nulla senza parere et giudizio suo, et alcuni che avevano edificare andavano per parere et consiglio allui;" Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. A. Greco, Florence, 1976, II, pp. 193-94.

⁵⁸ Vasari tells a related story, that Piero gave Donatello a farm, which he refused due to his "semplicità."

⁵⁹ Landino/Procaccioli, Proemio, 263.

⁶⁰ R. Lightbown, *Donatello and Michelozzo: An Artistic Partnership and its Patrons in the Early Renaissance*, vol. II, London, 1980, 327-28.

with all of them. He was well-rounded in all worthy things because he had universal expertise in them.⁶¹

The artists are conceived of as resembling collectable objects; the author's interest in them resides in the credit due to Nicoli because he fosters excellence.

Vespasiano's basic project is to put masters of the liberal arts (not including artists) and other Florentines on a par with rulers. Given that already a cardinal and a chancellor of Florence might have comparable tombs, a Florentine banker and the pope have twin palazzi, this was a reasonable proposition. Artists and their works were peripheral to his vision, since he was, after all, a book seller dealing with prestigious clients. Yet he has the following to say about them:

Painting, sculpture, architecture, all these arts came then into high estimation as one sees by the works they made, and of theme you can name an infinite number. Concerning these their fame is lacking only by no one having written about them, not by lack of writers, since there were many very eloquent and learned ones,, but because of their not wanting to take on this task knowing at the outset that no one had a taste for it or valued it, as such a task would merit, as one sees in the time of Pope Nicholas and King Alfonso of happy memory, because they were rewarded and held in high esteem, how many good writers there were and how many worthy writings there were translated and composed due to the incentives given by these so worthy princes, so much so were these two, that their fame remains eternal, and not only the prizes but the honor given and the having esteemed them.⁶²

What begins as a Borghini-like plea for a fifteenth-century Vasari, ends with a whimper in favor of lavish patrons of letters, the like of Nicholas

⁶¹ "Non solo Nicolaio prestò favore a uomini litterati, ma intendendosi di pitura, scoltura, architettura, con tutti ebbe grandissima notitia, et prestò loro grandissimo favore nel loro exercicio, Pip di ser Brunellesco, Donatello, Luca della Robia, Lorenzo di Bartoluccio, et di tutti fu amicissimo. Era universale in tutte le cose degne per universale peritia n'aveva;" Vespasiano, II, 237.

⁶² "Venendo di poi la pitura, scoltura, architettura, tutte queste arte sono istate in sommo grado come si vede per l'opere loro hanno fate, et di queste se ne potrebe nominare infiniti. De quali è mancata la fama loro solo per none avere chi abbi iscritto di loro, e non è mancato per non exerci iscrittori, che ci sono istati eloquentissimi e dotissimi, ma non hanno voluto pigliare questa fatica conoscendo in prima non c'essere chi la gusti nè chi la stimi, come merita una tanta fatica che si vede che nel tempo de la filice memoria di papa Nicola e de' re Alfonso, perchè erano premiati e avuti in sommo grado, quanto degni iscrittori furono e quante degne opere furono e tradotte e composte mediante i premi dati da sì degni principi, quanti furono i dua nominati, la fama de' quali è rimasta eterna, e non solo i premi ma l'onoraragli et tenergli in sommo grado;" Vespasiano I, 32-33.

V, Alfonso of Aragon, and Federico da Montefeltro. The implication is that Lives of the Artists could be written, and that the result would be to raise both the artists, and, especially, the writers, to the fame which their learning and eloquence deserves. It may be fair to infer further that Vespasiano subtly faults Lorenzo for not sponsoring such a project.

Lorenzo had doubtless encouraged Landino in writing the Proemio of 1481 to the divine Dante's *Comedia*, which included a section on "Fiorentini Eccellenti nella Pittura e Scultura." A generous handful of artists received a line or two each.⁶³ The lament about Dante's tomb, mentioned previously, came under the description of citizens "eccellenti nella Mercatura," proximate to the description of Cosimo, of "ingegno più che humano," a support to the already obvious suspicion that Landino's edition conformed to Medici policy.

Antonio Manetti (1423–97) disputed certain details of that commentary in his *Dialogo al sito* finally published in 1506, during the Medici exile, and dedicated, like his *Life of Brunelleschi*, to Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542), a *piagnone*, or follower of Savonarola. That *Life* was never finished and was not published until the nineteenth century, but merely its having been written is of great significance, the more so because it was not imbedded in a series of Lives. An independent biography would not again be accorded to an artist until Michelangelo, nor had it ever been done before, though Ghiberti had already written a short autobiography embedded within his also remarkable *Commentari*. Manetti's *Life* featured a person well-known as an architect and through the already circulating *Novella* of Grasso, which incident is cited in the *Life* as having occurred in 1409. Brunelleschi, in short, was a person with a reputation, rather than merely an artist of note. He was in a category of his own, as Michelangelo would be, and he resisted absorption into the Medici enterprise, as would Michelangelo when he could.

That Brunelleschi was considered by his contemporaries to lie outside the norm for other masters of sculpture and architecture is confirmed in the *Zibaldone* of Giovanni Rucellai. Writing privately c. 1457 but referring back to the 1430s, he constructed a list of four outstanding Florentines both exclusive and intriguing inclusive: Palla Strozzi, Cosimo de' Medici, Leonardo Bruni, and Filippo Brunelleschi. As he succinctly put it:

⁶³ See the well-known analysis by Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy, A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford, 1972, 118ff.

At this time in our city of Florence there were four great citizens great and worthy of lasting fame.⁶⁴

Of Brunelleschi in particular, Rucellai wrote:

it is said that from the time the Romans ruled the world until now there was no more exceptional architect than he and excellent in geometry and perfect master of sculpture; and in such things he had very great intelligence and imagination, and the ancient walls in the Roman manner were excavated by him.⁶⁵

Rucellai's list should be compared with a contemporary one by a detractor of the Medici, Pope Pius II, who in 1459 wrote:

The most distinguished Florentines of our time have been thought to be Palla Strozzi, Niccolò Uzzano, and Ridolfo Peruzzi. Palla surpassed all others in wealth, Niccolò in wisdom, Ridolfo in military prowess.⁶⁶

All were anti-Medicæan figures. Rucellai's list seems less politically biased; it may very well represent a more objective judgment than that of the Pope. In any case, it puts Brunelleschi into very interesting company indeed, the politics of which is complicated.

Brunelleschi was cited by Rucellai for his "very great ingenuity and imagination...supreme in geometry." Coming from a non-artist, in fact from an architectural patron who had employed Alberti for his family projects, this short list offers extremely valuable information about Brunelleschi's prestige, twenty years after Alberti had dedicated *De pictura* to the engineer of the great cupola. Alberti's dedication, in a treatise that explains systematic linear perspective in detail without ever mentioning Brunelleschi in that connection, may serve better to remind us of that prestige cited by Rucellai than to register personal esteem between the insider and the outsider theorists. Alberti's treatise was written the year after Cosimo returned from exile; the last thing he wanted to do was to ally himself overly with an architect whose place with the Medici he might hope to usurp in whole or in part.

⁶⁴ "Sono stati in questa età nella nostra città di Firenze quatro cittadini grandi e dengni di fama da farne memoria di loro;" A. Perosa, ed., *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo Zibaldone*, London, 1960, 55; see also 61.

⁶⁵ "si diceva dal tempo ch' e' Romani signioreggiorono il mondo in qua non fu mai più sì singulare huomo d'architettura di lui e sommo in geometria e perfetto maestro di scoltura; e in simile chose aveva grandissimo ingiegnio e fantasia, e lle muraglie antiche alla romanescha furono ritrovate da llui;" *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Gragg, 161.

The Florentine apothecary Luca Landucci, less exclusive than the Pope and less in the thick of patronage than Rucellai, recorded in his journal:

at this time the following noble and valiant men were living: Archbishop Antonino, who had been a monk in the monastery of San Marco, and always continued to wear the habit of the Dominican Order, a man who may be called *Beato* (holy); Messer Bartolomeo de' Lapacci, a bishop and preacher excelling all others in our day; Messer Paolo [Toscanelli], a doctor, philosopher and astrologer, of holy life; Cosimo, the son of Giovanni de' Medici, who was called the great merchant, as he had places of business in every part of the town; and to compare anyone to Cosimo de' Medici was as much as to say that no richer or more prosperous person existed; Donatello, the sculptor, who made the tomb of Messer Leonardo d'Arezzo in Santa Croce; and Desidero the sculptor, who made the tomb of Messer Carlo d'Arezzo, also in Santa Croce. Later came Rossellino, a very small man, but great in sculpture; he made the tomb of the cardinal in San Miniato, which is in the chapel on the left; Maestro Antonio [Squarcialupi], an organist, who surpassed everyone in his day; Maestro Andreino degli Impicciati [Castagno], a painter; Maestro Domenico da Vinegia [Venice], also a painter, was beginning to be spoken of; Maestro Antonio and his brother Piero, called the Pollaiuolo, goldsmiths, sculptors and painters; Maestro Mariano, who taught book-keeping, and also my master Calandra, who taught the same subject, and was a very kind and courteous man.⁶⁷

This provides us with a valuable “man in the street” point of view from a crucial decade in the ambition and reputation of Florentine artists. On this evidence, the building of tombs could be as crucial to an artist's reputation as to that of the deceased. The number of artists cited by Landucci is relatively large, and the heading is clearly that of *huomini illustri*, i.e., those “noble and valiant.” That such opinions were held when Leonardo was a boy may have much impressed him.

Despite this record of the encroachment of artists into lists of *uomini illustri*, their visual appearances in the company of the *illustri* are rare. Masaccio's lost monochromatic fresco of 1424 or so, the so-called *Sagra* in Santa Maria del Carmine, featured Donatello, Masolino, and Brunelleschi—the last shown in *zoccoli*, or clogs—amidst the prominent citizens following the monks.⁶⁸ This was presumably a small and modest affair (though Vasari claims an infinite number were shown in the

⁶⁷ The exact entry is not dated and may be retrospective, but the author places these reflections c. 1460; Luca Landucci, *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516*, tr. A. Jervis, London, 1927, 2–3.

⁶⁸ Joannides, L3, 443–46.

crowd), since it fit over the door from the cloister to the convent. It placed the artists among well-known contemporaries rather than historical heroes. A triple family portrait of the Gaddi [fig. 65],⁶⁹ and the pair of portraits of the Sangallo, musician father and architect son, now in Amsterdam, establish a peculiarly Florentine tradition of professional portraiture.

Portrait medals could function as components in an ever-shifting assemblage of more or less contemporary *uomini e donne illustri*, a little reminiscent of the lost *Sagra*. Artists were neither wholly excluded from the type, nor principal participants. Michelangelo had his rather thrust upon him late in life, by an admiring and grateful Leoni.⁷⁰ Bramante made himself a medal, c. 1505, and perhaps slipped one into the foundations of St. Peter's. Titian had one, also made by Leoni, but fifteen years earlier than Michelangelo, in the mid-1540s. Even earlier in Venice, Giovanni and Gentile Bellini had medals by Victor Camelius; Giovanni Boldù made a self-portrait. Pisanello, originator of the portrait medal, had one, now attributed to an anonymous Ferrarese medalist. In the sixteenth century it became not uncommon elsewhere in Italy: Valerio Belli, Bandinelli, Vasari, Federico Zuccaro—any artist of pretention had one. Michelangelo was not in advance of his contemporaries when it came to self-congratulation.

A problematic panel in the Louvre groups four artists and a geometer [fig. 66], and seems to imply that all five are *illustri*. This pastiche has been dated either in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries and shows the five en buste, their names inscribed below: Giotto, Paolo Uccello, Donatello, Antonio Manetti, and Filippo Brunelleschi. The inscription is believed to be a later addition and untrustworthy.⁷¹ Vasari in the edition of 1568 wrote as follows:

Although he was a man of abstraction, Paolo loved the virtue of inventiveness in his own fellow craftsmen, and in order that they should be

⁶⁹ Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: A Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, Columbia, Mo., 1982, frontispiece, inscribed "Taddeus Zenobii Angelus," and attributed to an anonymous painter of first quarter of the fifteenth century. See also Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi*, Oxford, 1977, 4.

⁷⁰ In 1561; *Currency of Fame*, no. 52, 155–57. He was sent two silver and two bronze medals.

⁷¹ Though sometimes given, following Vasari, to Uccello, the panel was dated c. 1500 with later restorations by Pope-Hennessy and attributed to the shop of Filippo Lippi; John Pope-Hennessy, *Paolo Uccello*, London, 1969, 157–59; Joannides, R4, Louvre 267, as Uccello(?), 465–66, cf. L5, 449; Franco and Stefano Borsi, *Paolo Uccello*, tr. Elfreda Powell, New York, 1994, 353–55.

remembered for posterity, he painted the portraits of five outstanding men on a long panel that he kept at his house in their memory: one was Giotto the painter, for the luminous beginning of art; Filippo di ser Brunellesco, the second, for architecture; Donatello for sculpture, and himself, for perspective and animal painting; and for mathematics, Giovanni Manetti [in 1550, he had said Antonio], his friend, with whom he often conferred and argued over Euclid's theories.⁷²

Vasari reports that this panel was owned by the Sangallo (Francesco Sangallo, son of the architect Giuliano, was his friend), and that in this house there also hung those paired portraits of Sangallo's father and grandfather.⁷³ The Louvre panel, the Amsterdam double portrait, and the triple portrait of the Gaddi [fig. 63] all suggest acts of self-nomination as *uomini illustri*.

For Vasari the Louvre panel was evidently a manifesto of the visual arts as liberal arts, justified by their kinship with geometry above all else. He used the likenesses as the basis for his woodcut portraits in the second edition of the *Lives*.⁷⁴ A variant now in the Fitzwilliam Museum

⁷² Ibid., 353; "Amò Paulo [Uccello], se bene era persona stratta, la virtù degli artefici suoi, e perché ne rimanesse a' posteriori memoria ritrasse di sua mano in una tavola lunga cinque uomini segnalati, e la teneva in casa per memoria loro: l'uno era Giotto pittore, per il lume e principio dell'arte, Filippo di ser Brunelleschi il secondo, per l'architettura, Donatello per la scultura, e se stesso per la prospettiva et animali, e per la matematica Giovanni Manetti suo amico, col quale conferiva assai e ragionava delle cose di Euclide;" III, 70. In 1550, as Masaccio: "e che e' mostrò col giudizio suo, quasiché per un testamento, in cinque teste fatte da lui, a chi per lo augumento fatto nelle arti si avesse ad avere il grado di quelle, lasciandocene in una tavola di sua mano, oggi in casa Giuliano da San Gallo in Fiorenza, i ritratti quasi vivissimi, che sono questi: Giotto per il principio della pittura, Donato per la scultura, Filippo Brunellescho per la architettura e Paulo Uccello per gli animali e per la prospettiva; e tra questi Antonio Manetti per eccellentissimo matematico de' tempi suoi."

⁷³ Mina Bacci, *Piero di Cosimo*, Milan, 1966, 83–84, as c. 1505, both now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Giuliano holds compass and quill, Giamberti a sheet of music. Cf. Andrew Ladis, *Taddeo Gaddi: A Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, Columbia, Mo., 1982, frontispiece, inscribed "Taddeus Zenobii Angelus," and attributed to an anonymous painter of first quarter of the fifteenth century. See also Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi*, Oxford, 1977, 4.

⁷⁴ Wolfram Prinz, "Vasaris Sammlung von Kunsterbildnissen," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, Beiheft zu XII, Florence, 1966; Sharon Gregory, "'The outer man tends to be a guide to the inner': the woodcut portraits in Vasari's *Lives* as parallel texts," in *The Rise of the Image, Essays on the History of the Illustrated Art Book*, eds. R. Palmer and T. Frangenberg, Aldershot, 2003, 51–85; Cecil Clough, "Italian Renaissance Portraiture and Printed Portrait-Books," in *The Italian Book, 1465–1800, Studies presented to Dennis E. Rhodes*, ed. Denis Reidy, London, 1993, 183–223.

and sometimes associated with Francesco Salviati [fig. 67],⁷⁵ replaces Manetti and Uccello with Michelangelo at the center and Raphael. It thereby sits less easily with the type of the *uomini illustri*; it is closer to a guild group portrait—except that Raphael and Michelangelo outshone geometricians. This small work must postdate Jacopino del Conte's portrait of Michelangelo from the mid-1540s [fig. 46] and Bonasone's engraving of Raphael of the late 1540s (B. 347), based on the so-called *Raphael and his Fencing Master* (Louvre), both used as models. It implies burgeoning reputations, and a sense of professional pride not entirely tied to *paese*, both of which would also characterize the forthcoming first edition of Vasari's *Lives*.

Giovio, off in Como, included three artists amidst his *uomini famosi*, his museum of *vera effigies*. He was chary of praise, however. There was no divinity in his account of Leonardo, Raphael, or Michelangelo. Divine was not an adjective Giovio used lightly of *ingenii*, though he allowed the accolade to Dante, Pico della Mirandola and Claudio Tolomei, and Duke Cosimo he allowed, had a divine name.⁷⁶ Yet before long, the vernacular printed page and the printed image rendered his museum forgettable. Michelangelo became what Vasari proclaimed him to be, rather than the subordinate figure he was for Giovio. When Simone Fornari went to annotate Ariosto, and came to Canto XXXIII, he turned to Vasari to explicate who these artists were.⁷⁷

* * *

Antonio Manetti mentions Brunelleschi's prestigious burial in the Duomo in the opening lines [fig. 68]:

he was granted such honor that he was buried in the Cathedral, and his likeness, very lifelike, as is said, was put up there, carved from marble, for everlasting memorialization, with such an inscription.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Luisa Mortari, *Francesco Salviati*, Rome, 1992, n. 140, 153–54 (including illustration), rejects the attribution.

⁷⁶ P. Giovio, *Historie del suo tempo*, 1553; Meregazzi, *Elogia* [1546–51].

⁷⁷ See Appendix.

⁷⁸ “fu fatto tanto onore d'essere seppelito in Santa Maria del Fiore, e postovi l'effigia sua al naturale, secondo che si dice, sculta di marmo, a perpetua memoria, con uno tanto epitaffio,” Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, ed. H. Saalman, University Park, 1970, 35; Schütz-Rautenberg, 12–53. He was cited in Bartolomeo Scala's *De historia Florentinorum*, Rome, 1677 (1480s–1497), Book I, 23–24, for “magnum ingenium.”

Brunelleschi's monument had been erected shortly after his death in an act of extraordinary homage. He died in mid-May of 1446, at which time the Operai agreed to provide the marble for a monument.

The Cathedral documents refer to him as very eloquent and intelligent ("ingeniosi"), industrious, virtuous, and deserving of perpetual fame and honor. They acknowledge that God had cooperated with Brunelleschi's schemes, and that the Virgin Mary had assisted ("coadiuvante"). The overseer of the Works stipulated that the slab should read merely "FILIPPUS ARCHITECTOR."⁷⁹ But when, nine months later, the body was moved from the campanile to the pavement of the cathedral, the gravestone was inscribed "CORPUS MAGNI INGENII VIRI PHILIPPI BRUNELLESCHI FIORENTINI." The bust on the wall, by Buggiano, followed shortly, and by a year after his death the great inscription *all'antica*, composed by Chancellor Carlo Marsuppini, had been put in place. Cristoforo Landino had written two less extraordinary epitaphs that were rejected in favor of the more senior humanist's:

Just how eminent Filippo was in the arts of Daedalus is shown by the wonderful dome of this very famous temple, and by the many machines invented by him with ingenuity, And because of the excellent qualities of his soul, and his exceptional abilities, his well-deserving body was buried in this ground 15 May 1446 by order of his grateful fatherland.⁸⁰

Between the documents from the discussions of the Lana Guild and Marsuppini's humanistic inscription, the Virgin Mary's help got edited out and Daedalus was brought in. Daedalus was a somewhat problematic example. In medieval times, he served as a type for pride. That connotation was still viable in fifteenth-century Florence: Brunelleschi's detractor Giovanni da Prato referred in his *Paradiso degli Alberti* to Daedalus as an example of failure, someone whose cleverness resulted in the death of his son, Icarus. On the other hand, Daedalus, as the inventor of marvelous machines, had been shown on a relief for the Duomo's own Campanile, not far removed from that commemorating

⁷⁹ Hyman, 23.

⁸⁰ "D.S. QUANTUM PHILIPPUS ARCHITECTUS ARTE DAEDALEA VALUERIT CUM HUIUS CELEBERRIMI TEMPLI MIRA TESTUDO, TUM PLURES MACHINAE INGENIO AB EO ADINVENTAE DOCUMENTO ESSE POSSUNT. QUA PROPTER OB EXIMIAS SUI ANIMI DOTES, SINGULARESQUE VIRTUTES, XV KAL. MAJAS MCCCXLVI EJUS B.M. CORPUS IN HAC HUMO SUPPOSITA GRATA PATRIA SEPELLIRI IUSSIT;" Eugenio Battisti, *Filippo Brunelleschi: The Complete Work*, New York, 1981; Antonio di Tuccio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, tr. C. Enggass, ed. H. Saalman. The Wool Guild gave the right of burial.

Architettura. By the mid-fifteenth century the positive connotation had been reinforced by knowledge of Plato, for Socrates invokes the technical mastery of Daedalus in the *Ion*, *Euthyphro*, and *Meno*. Even there the reference is ambivalent, since consummate artistry is also deft deception. However, for humanists who had no trouble interpreting Platonism as compatible with poetry and painting, it was small work to convert Daedalus into a wholly positive reference. In one of the orations at Michelangelo's funeral, he would be compared both to Brunelleschi and to Daedalus.⁸¹

Brunelleschi's burial and monument were nothing less than extraordinary. Even allowing for a medieval tradition of burying an architect in a cathedral, famously trumped by Christopher Wren at St. Paul's, Brunelleschi had been greatly honored. The inscription is epoch-making: for the first time the *ingegno* of a master of what Vasari would later call the arts of *disegno* and what Manetti similarly called "il fondamento del disegno," was deemed divine. Nevertheless, it should be considered in the context of contemporary sepulchral tributes. Marsuppini's own, for instance, would read even more impressively:

INGENIO CVIVS NON SATIS ORBIS ERAT

one for whose mind there was not world enough.⁸²

He was, moreover, hailed as "KAROLUS AESTATIS GLORIA MAGNA SUAE (Carl, great glory of his age). Marsuppini was a man outstanding in the most outstanding field, that of the liberal arts.

In this time of extraordinary tributes to human accomplishment, Brunelleschi's extraordinary praise has its proper context. It stands out primarily on account of the lesser social rank of the person so honored. If we ask why Renaissance artists were famous, the career of Brunelleschi is as crucial to that phenomenon as Michelangelo's. Brunelleschi was divine when to have "ingegno divino" was still rare. It seems he was divine mostly for his engineering skills, certainly not for his literary accomplishments (though he did write sonnets) or their near correlates in the visual arts. He was divine in the Daedalean sense, for marvelous engineering, whereas Michelangelo was divine by association with poets. Neither one was divine by association with *grazia*.

⁸¹ Giovanni Maria Tarsie, *Orazione fatto nell'essequie del divino Michelangelo Buonarroti*, Florence, 1564, unpag.

⁸² John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, New York, 1985, 287.

Lorenzo de' Medici later inaugurated a campaign of memorialization of other notable and lower-born men. These later monuments were based on the monument to Brunelleschi and thereby obliterated its uniqueness, whether deliberately or not. Giotto's was sculpted by Benedetto da Maiano, and Fra Filippo Lippi's in Spoleto was probably designed under the eye of Filippo's son, Filippino, who had been ten when his father died. Fra Filippo died while at work on frescoes in Spoleto in 1438, and the Opera there paid for his funeral. According to Vasari, varying in the two editions, Fra Filippo's death particularly grieved Eugenius IV and Cosimo. Fifty years later, in 1488, Lorenzo de' Medici asked for the body to be buried in the Duomo at Florence. The Spoletans replied:

That having a dearth of that in which the town could take pride, and especially of excellent men; on this account they pleaded with him by his grace to honor them, adding that in Florence they had infinite famous men and almost a superfluity, and they could do without this one, and thus otherwise they wouldn't have gotten him.⁸³

So Lorenzo sent Filippino to Spoleto, papal territory, to supervise the construction of a marble tomb prestigiously placed before the central door, under the organ and above the sacristy. The expense was a handsome one hundred gold ducats, and the project was supervised by the Cardinal of Naples. Poliziano wrote the epitaph:

Here am I brought, Filippo, painting's fame,
To nought unknown my wondrous grace of hand.
With craftsman's fingers I gave colour life
And fooled the living with its long-awaited voice.
Nature herself by my expressive figures stilled
Confesses me the equal of her arts.
Lorenzo Medici placed me in this marble tomb,
Who before was covered in the humble earth.⁸⁴

⁸³ "avevano carestia d'ornamento, e massimamente d'uomini eccellenti; per che per onorarsi gliel domandarono in grazia, aggiugnendo che avendo in Fiorenza infiniti uomini famosi e quasi di superchio, che e' volesse fare senza questo, e cosi non l'ebbe altrimenti;" Vasari, 412.

⁸⁴ "CONDITUS HIC EGO SUM PICTURAE FAMA PHILIPPUS/NULLI IGNOTA MEE EST GRATIA MIRA MANUS/ARTIFICES POTUI DIGITIS ANIMARE COLORES/SPERATAQUE ANIMOS FALLERE VOCE DIU/IPSA MEIS STUPUIT NATURA EXPRESSA FIGURIS/MEQUE SUIS FASSA EST ARTIBUS ESSE PAREM/MARMOREO TUMULO MEDICES LAURENTIUS HIC ME/CONDIDIT ANTE HUMILI PULVERE TECTUS ERAM;" Ruda, 41-43; Holmes, 103, 157-59.

The red and white marble tomb was adorned with Florentine and Medici arms, as well as one apparently devised for the Lippi, showing a cross, a pen, and a brush [fig. 63].

The monument for Giotto in the Duomo of Florence was commissioned and completed during the same period, c. 1490, likewise with a portrait bust, in this case by Benedetto da Maiano for fifteen gold florins, and likewise with an epitaph by, as Vasari reports, the “divino uomo messer Angelo Poliziano” [fig. 62].⁸⁵

After the Medici were restored to power in 1512, the series was continued. In 1519 by a similar wall niche with bust in honor of Antonio Squarcialupi (1416–80), organist at the Duomo and the son of a butcher.⁸⁶ Lorenzo’s biographer, writing soon after his death, mentioned Squarcialupi:

a musician very famous in his time and very skilled on the organ; and not being able to criticize his musicianship, some faulted his habits and manner of living; Lorenzo turned to them and said, ‘If you knew what reward there is in excelling in some science or liberal art, and generally in them all, you would speak of him more modestly and with more kindness.’⁸⁷

Squarcialupi was also cited by Landucci as one of the outstanding men of the day.

There followed in 1521 by a similar monument to Dominus Marsilio Ficino (1433–99) by Andrea de Ferrucci (c. 1465–1526). The monuments to Squarcialupi and Ficino honored men closely associated with the Medici, and tied them to those core Florentine touchstones of *ingegno*, Giotto and Brunelleschi, thereby enacting on a small scale what Vasari’s *Vite* would do on a large scale, that is, the construction of cultural continuity as an implicit support for the notion of political, i.e., Medicean, continuity.

That Michelangelo would eventually be buried in his parish church of Santa Croce instead of the Duomo, is unexceptional in that Santa

⁸⁵ Edgar Lein, *Benedetto da Maiano*, Frankfurt, 1988, pp. 149–50. “Ille ego sum, per quem pictura extincta revixit,/cui quam recta manus, tam fuit et facilis./Naturae deerat nostrae quod defuit arti:/plus licuit nulli pingere, nec melius. Miraris turrim egregiam sacro aere sonantem?/Haec quoque de modulo crevit ad astra meo./Denique sum Jottus, quid opus fuit illa referre?/Hoc nomen longi carminis instar erit.”

⁸⁶ Lein 151, attributes the bust to Benedetto’s shop.

⁸⁷ “musico a’ suoi tempi assai famoso e nell’organo eccellentissimo; e non potendosi in questo detrarli, qualcuno ne’ costumi e nella vita lo biasmò; ai quali rivoltosi, Lorenzo disse: ‘Se voi sapeste quanto ricompensò è eccedere in qualcuna scienze

Croce was his parish church and his father was buried there. It may nevertheless be significant, as may also be his burning of drawings before his death, possibly including drawings made for the facade of San Lorenzo, which Duke Cosimo had been after and was annoyed not to get. Neither the Duke nor any members of his family attended the funeral, though Benedetto Varchi had planned to say in his funeral oration that Francesco, son of Cosimo, had “honored with his heavenly and divine presence the obsequies of this heavenly and divine man.”⁸⁸

Michelangelo must have been aware of the Medici’s ongoing designs to control the public memorialization of artists, particularly in the Duomo, the locus of insurrection against the family in 1478. Brunelleschi, whose plan for San Lorenzo had been accepted before Medici control had become a major issue, was not in the Medici camp. The matching of his formerly exceptional monument in the Duomo by a string of others, including the fairly ordinary Squarcialupi, seems—though we cannot say for sure—a device whereby to diminish Brunelleschi’s reputation, lest he become a rallying point for Florentines who remembered the pre-Medicæan days in which the cupola was devised. Manetti’s *Life of Brunelleschi* can then be seen as a counter to the Medicæan push to promote Medicæan culture. It was being written, as far as we can tell, over a span of time, but most probably it was actively worked on during the very years in which Lorenzo was trying to build a tomb to Fra Filippo in the Duomo, and was building Giotto’s memorial. In Manetti’s account, Giovanni de’ Medici, who decided to rebuild San Lorenzo according to Brunelleschi’s plan, is conjoined consistently and pointedly with “i popolani” and “i cittadini.” Manetti’s *Life*, is, at the very least, detached from Medici partisanship.

If we allow ourselves freely to speculate, factoring in that the Medici did what they could to construct our view of Laurentian Florence, we can hypothesize a sort of fifteenth-century Florentine culture wars, between the advocates of the Medici and what we might term the residual Guelphs, those who opposed the tendency toward absolutism. The literary debates about Dante were always also political ones, since Dante had punished the republican Brutus at the lowest level of Hell, forever mangled in the mouth of Lucifer, a serious error in decorum

o arti liberali, e generamente in tutte, più modestamente e con più affezione parlereste di lui;” Niccolò Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Palermo, 1992, 80.

⁸⁸ Wittkowers, *The Divine Michelangelo*, 18, n. 20.

from which Michelangelo, among other republicans, had to defend him. After Boccaccio's death, the sense of a more or less immediate connection to the man was lost, and Dante's fortunes sank among the humanist republicans with their scorn of the vernacular. It began to rise with Florentine absolutism and its somewhat doublefaced endorsement of the "vox and lingua popoli." Dante was revered in the second half of the fifteenth century both by Medici partisans and detractors, yet the objections cited by Landino by those unnamed opponents of the tomb project for Dante indicate that even those who may have admired the *Commedia* as the most ambitious work of the Tuscan language did not necessarily condone his appropriation by the Medici. By the sixteenth century, when Pietro Bembo championed Petrarch over his countryman, the later Medici had found monuments to visual artists to be a viable alternative to Trecento nostalgia. Even if Dante's body remained at Ravenna and Lippi's at Spoleto, they could match Brunelleschi's bust and epitaph, not once but, in time, thrice.

After Brunelleschi the next artist to receive impressive entombment was Fra Angelico, a Florentine who died in 1455 while working in Rome for Nicholas V. His patron and fellow Dominican arranged for his burial in the chapel of St. Thomas Aquinas ("doctor angelicus") in S. Maria sopra Minerva [fig. 69]. According to a slightly later source, the Pope even provided two epitaphs, which may have counted for more to his contemporaries than the effigy, full-length and sculpted, it is thought, by the same man who did the tomb of Eugenius IV, Isaia di Pippo of Pisa:⁸⁹

Because I was another Apelles no praise to me but because I was giving all to you, Christ. Some of my works remain on earth, others in heaven. The city which bore me, Giovanni, is the flower of Etruria.⁹⁰

There are also four Latin couplets on wall above tomb.

Glory of painters, and mirror of virtue, Giovanni, Florentine, is laid in this place. He was a religious, a friar of the holy order of Saint Dominic and a humble servant of God. His pupils lament their loss of such a learned man: who could ever find another brush like this? The country

⁸⁹ According to Domenican Girolamo Borselli (d. 1497) in a chronicle; Spike, *Fra Angelico*, 81.

⁹⁰ III, 278–79: NON MIHI SIT LAUDI QUOD ERAM VELUT ALTER APELLES/ SED QUOD LUCRA TUIS OMNIA CHRISTE DABAM./ALTERA NAM TERRIS OPERA EXTANT ALTERA COELO./URBS ME IOANNEM FLOS TULIT ETHRURIAE.

and the order weep to have lost their master to whom there was no equal in the art of painting.⁹¹

The roughly contemporary chronicle seems to attribute both inscriptions to the Pope, but because he was already ailing when Fra Angelico died, they have recently been attributed instead to Fra Domenico di Giovanni da Corella.⁹² In any case, at the time it was believed that the Pope had so honored the painter, and he was, both in those inscriptions and in that giving the simple identification and date, called venerable, a glory, another Apelles.

Only gradually did Giovanni the painter of angels become Fra Angelico, a process in which, not surprisingly, Medicean promotion of artists played a crucial role. Fra Domenico da Corella in a poem, “Theotocon,” of 1469 called the painter “angelicus pictor,” analogous to Aquinas’ sobriquet, “doctor angelicus:”

the angelic painter named Giovanni, who was not inferior to Giotto and Cimabue whose fame was sung in the Tyrrhenian cities by Dante with sweet language.⁹³

In 1481 Landino made the leap to “Fra Giovanni Angelico lovely and devout and very ornate with very great facility,” an inflation in nomenclature made fixed and permanent in Vasari’s *Lives*.⁹⁴ That short essay of 1481 was pivotal in other respects as well. Although it fell short of establishing Florentine artists as full-fledged *uomini illustri*, it integrated Brunelleschi into a type, as the wall monuments in the Duomo would do a few years later. He was placed amidst the Florentines Excellent in Painting and Sculpture, far from Alberti who was in another section, and immediately after, of all people, Pesellino. He is grudgingly allowed to be expert in perspective and said by some to be its inventor or rediscoverer. Manetti had allowed for no such hedging: Brunelleschi might be the inventor, or he might be the rediscoverer, but in either case he had established the rule by which the new art was made—“da lui è nato la regola, che è la importanza di tutto quello che di ciò s’è fatto da quel tempo in qua.”⁹⁵ In Landino’s text again, Brunelleschi is

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Stefano Orlandi, *Beato Angelico*, Florence, 1964, 148.

⁹³ Spike, 8.

⁹⁴ “Fra giovanni angelico & vezoso & divoto & ornato molto con grandissima facilità,” Spike, 81–82.

⁹⁵ “from him the rule was born, which is the gist of all that which has been done since,” Manetti, 54.

followed by Donatello, an artist close to the Medici, who is much more highly praised (“da essere connumerato fra gl’antichi, mirabile in composizione e in varietà”). Vasari allows him “ingegno divino,” but says Brunelleschi feared to be called “pazzo” as he walked the streets.⁹⁶

Brunelleschi’s treatment by Landino, given his celebrity as marked by multiple sources, is downright shabby.⁹⁷ Manetti’s *Life* attempted to rehabilitate Brunelleschi as Condivi did for Michelangelo, with Landino and Vasari playing similar Medicean roles in each case. Furthermore, when Landino promoted the notion of the divine fury of Dante in that same text, in direct contradiction to Bruni’s characterization of the poet, he was coopting the superhuman *ingegno* which by public inscription belonged to Brunelleschi, the champion of the new rules of perspective. Poetry originated, Landino asserted famously, “not from mortal mind, but from divine inspiration” (“non da mortale ingegno, ma da divino furore”). Dante was elevated to “divino” by Landino, with limited and far from compelling precedent, as part of an implicit campaign to lessen the lingering renown of Brunelleschi as a hero of non-Medicean Florence. It is in Landino’s text that Masaccio is revived as an artistic force, then to be made pivotal in Vasari’s text, but again with the consequence that Brunelleschi’s glory must be shared. The effort to mitigate respect for Brunelleschi’s “magnum ingenium” had as one of its furthest consequences the popularizing of Michelangelo’s divinity, though his rulelessness was later perceived by the Medici of the sixteenth century as potentially associable with rebelliousness and its “furore di pazzia.” In both cases the backdrop was Medici efforts to control public opinion.

* * *

Two years before he died Brunelleschi’s adopted son, Buggiano, made a bust of the architect, wearing a toga, inscribed: ARCHITECTUS CELEBERRIMUS (Museo dell’Opera del Duomo).⁹⁸ This is an early example of independent portraiture of an artist, again a precedent followed in Michelangelo’s case. His friend Daniele da Volterra modelled a bust of Michelangelo, cast multiply after the death of the artist,

⁹⁶ Vasari/Marini, 334, 349.

⁹⁷ The sense of Brunelleschi’s disappointment when his model for the Palazzo Medici was rejected is stronger in the *Libro di Antonio Billi* than in Vasari: “haveva in esso messo tutto il suo ingegno,” “mai fu visto tanto allegro quanto nel tempo che lo fabbricava,” *Libro*, 34.

⁹⁸ *Atti del Convegno su Andrea Cavalcanti, detto “Il Buggiano”*, Buggiano, 1979.

whose portrait had been circulating in paintings and prints already since at least the 1540s [fig. 49].⁹⁹ Self-portraiture was fairly commonplace, and often sly, whereas to be portrayed in marble (or, in the case of Michelangelo, life-size bronze) was virtually to transcend the genre of *uomini famosi*, the representation of which was typically two dimensional. Mantegna had had a bronze portrait bust for his funeral chapel, but Michelangelo's bronze portrait (although a source for the marble portrait on his tomb), was not so limited in its significance. It was cast in multiple examples and collected. Nevertheless, he was called "divino" only on the provisional casket, not on the public tomb inscription.¹⁰⁰

Artists had always required burial; what we observe in the Renaissance consists merely of certain spectacular instances of particular ostentation, which culminated in the fledgling Florentine Academy's burial of Michelangelo.¹⁰¹ That event, orchestrated by Vasari and inimicable to Michelangelo's taste, belongs to the history of bombast rather than the history of the type of *uomini illustri*. Important as it was for the profession, it is not clear that the funeral was a vital civic event. On the contrary, it seems to have taken place because Vincenzo Borghini warned the Duke about his own self interest:

it would be well if an imposing funeral service could be held where someone could speak a few words in his praise and honour of the arts and to inspire the younger men. Consider what I tell you, for sometimes the malice of certain people who are envious of the talents of others prevents one from doing certain things which bring more repute to him who does them than to him for whom they are done.¹⁰²

Accordingly, the Academy was allowed to make a fuss.

There was nothing new about professional self-vaunting, which goes back at least to Dante's time. In 1301, after duly praising his ecclesiastical patron, Giovanni Pisano carved the following epoch-making inscription:

⁹⁹ Paul Barolsky, *Daniele da Volterra: A Catalogue Raisonné*, New York, 1979, no. 27, 112.

¹⁰⁰ Schütz-Rautenberg, 215; Vasar/Frey, *Nachlass*, II, 52, letter from Borghini. Baccio Bandinelli's tomb inscription touted his "divina pietà," possibly a slight dig at Michelangelo's divinity, which his detractors did not see as pious. Given the competitiveness he felt toward Michelangelo (on which, see Weil-Garris, "Identity"), it is a curious circumstance.

¹⁰¹ *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy's Homage on his Death in 1564, A Facsimile Edition of 'Esequie del Divino Michelangelo Buonarroti,' Florence, 1564*, ed. and tr. R. and M. Wittkower, London, 1964.

¹⁰² Wittkowers, *Divine*, 10–11.

Giovanni carved it who performed no empty works. Born of Nicola, but blessed with greater science, Pisa gave him birth and endowed him with learning over all visible things.¹⁰³

Perhaps fortunately, Nicola was already dead. To proclaim in marble oneself as “knowledgeable over all visible things” is surely a lesser claim than that of divinity (despite how each may sound to our own ears), yet in its day it must still have been a startling claim.

In the inscription on the Pisa Cathedral pulpit, ten years later, the querulous note is clearer:

Giovanni who is endowed above all others with command of the pure art of sculpture, sculpting in stone, wood and gold, splendid things. He could not carve base ones even if he wished. There are many sculptors but to him only remain the praises and honour. He has made noble sculpture and varied figures. Let those who marvel at them give him their rightful approval. Christ have mercy on him to whom such gifts are given.¹⁰⁴

His contemporary Duccio had a more modest approach. On the *Maestà* for the Duomo of Siena in 1311 he proclaimed: “Holy mother of God be thou the cause of peace for Siena, and, because he painted thee thus, of life for Duccio.”¹⁰⁵ “Ita” (thus) is the boldest word, for it implies that Duccio is not just another humble worshipper, but one whose works are exceptional. Duccio succeeds in being both modestly absent, and present, amidst the most illustrious assemblage of all—as Dürer would later accomplish again, somewhat more obtrusively. Pheidias put his self-portrait on the shield of Athena, and Dürer put his effigy in his *historie*.¹⁰⁶ Duccio’s was a rather circumspect approximation to assimilation among the *uomini e donne illustri*. It was followed even more modestly by

¹⁰³ “SCULPSIT JOHANNES. QUI RES NON EGIT INANES,/NICOLI NATUS SENSIA (SCIENTIA) MELIORE BEATUS/QUEM GENUIT PISA, DOCTUM SUPER OMNIA VISA;” Michael Ayrton, *Giovanni Pisano, Sculptor*, New York, 1969, 123 (translation modified slightly).

¹⁰⁴ “JOHANNES ISTE DOTATUS/ARTIS SCULPTURE PRE CUNCTIS ORDINE PURE/SCULPENS IN PETRA KIGNO AURO SPLENDIDA, TETRA/SCULPERE NESCISET VEL TURPIA SI VOLUISSET./PLURES SCULPTORES; REMANENT SIBI LAUDIS HONORES./CLARAS SCULPTURAS FECIT VARIASQUE FIGURAS./QUISQUIS MIRARIS TUNC RECTO JURE PROBARIIS./CRISTE MISERERE CUI TALIA DONA FUERE,” Ayrton, 160.

¹⁰⁵ “MATER SCA DEI/SIS CAUSA SENIS REQUIEI/SIS DUCCIO VITA/TE QUIA PINXIT ITA;” John White, *Duccio: Tuscan Art and the Medieval Workshop*, London, 1979, 100.

¹⁰⁶ “Alberto Durero tanto celebrato pittore ne tempi nostri, quante poche historie hà egli dipinte che non vi habbia disegnato & posto la sua stessa effigie?” Bartoli, *Ragionamenti*, II, 42.

the pious Fra Bartolommeo and his school. They established a comparable (though anonymous) practice in the sixteenth century, carefully painting the letters *ORATE PRO PICTORE* onto canvases.¹⁰⁷

In 1474, Mantegna used a fictive inscription to proclaim his rights as “*incomparabilis*” amidst the presence of the famous Gonzaga clan, more famous when he was done with them (as Pliny would have been happy to note).¹⁰⁸ And in 1496 at the Collegio del Cambio, Perugino slipped a self-portrait on the side of fresco decorations featuring the *uomini illustri* of Valerius Maximus [fig. 70]. The inscription interestingly echoes Manetti’s formula on Brunelleschi and perspective, expressing ambivalence about how original the work might be, but no ambivalence about its value:

IF THE ART OF PAINTING HAD DISAPPEARED, HE RESTORED IT. IF IT HAD NOT BEEN INVENTED ANYWHERE, HE PRODUCED IT.¹⁰⁹

Michelangelo’s inscriptive reticence is clear by comparison. Neither in life nor in death did he put himself forward in the customary ways, as gentleman or even as artist. He inscribed two works of art: the *Pietà* of 1500 with his name and “Florentinus” and a late drawing of the same subject, with a line from Dante, “non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa.”

* * *

The 1530s were a pivotal time in the formation of artists’ reputations. The Sack we may suppose was the *sine qua non* for the mutation in the praise lavished on artists, for it produced a great sense of loss and an accompanying nostalgia. The burgeoning of print produced authors like Aretino and Vasari, and they also were essential to the inflation in the rhetoric of reputation.

¹⁰⁷ Serene Padovani, “Fra’ Bartolomeo Rivisitato,” *L’Età di Savonarola: Fra Bartolomeo e la scuola di San Marco*, Venice, 1996, 42–43. The practice of including a prayer was common in miniature painting, where the association of image with private devotional practice was more immediate.

¹⁰⁸ “ILL. LODOVICO IL M.M./PRINCIPI OPTIMO AC/FIDE INVICTISSIMO/ET ILL. BARBARAE EIVS/CONIUGI MVLIERUM GLOR./INCOMPARRABILI/SVVS ANDREAS MANTINIA/PATAVVS OPVS HOC TENVE/AD EORV[M] DECVS ABSOLVIT/AN(N)O MCCCCLXXIII,” Lightbown, *Mantegna*, 415.

¹⁰⁹ “petrus pervsinsv. egregivs pictor./perdita si fuerat pingendi;/hic rettulit artem./si nusquam inventa est/ hactenus; ipse dedit,” Chastel, *Art*, 129–30.

Ariosto's text was largely complete in 1516, but the stanze in which Michelangelo's name appeared were included only in the final edition, and in the context of mural paintings depicting horrific wars. Aretino had retreated before the Sack to Venice, and it was in his letters from there that he wrote to Michelangelo, appropriating the epithet they shared, and presumably hoping to promote himself along with the Florentine. Michelangelo demurred, wanting as little to be a creature of the scummy Aretino as of the Florentine usurpers. Aretino's medal (one of several) showed him as king of kings [fig. 20], and Michelangelo's as a blind pilgrim. They had little in common. Yet these two diverse men were both called divine by Ariosto. After the famous flare-up in which Aretino denounced Michelangelo as a painter for bathhouses, Titian became his partner in divinity instead. Vasari was content to call both Michelangelo and Titian divine, as long as the Florentine was more emphatically ("divinissimo") and more densely divine.

Value and permanence had become more acutely problematic in the 1530s, and an artist who would not fade, who could claim the same agelessness as the ancients, was essential not only to collectors growing in numbers and in the amount they invested, but also to insecure regimes and to humanists nostalgic for the recent past. "Divinity" could imply timelessness. It flourished as a strategy by which to cling to the recent as well as to the distant past. As time moved on, so did the rhetoric of praise. The post-Vasari generation of artists was praised by reference to the previous generation, but not necessarily as their equals, as is demonstrated by a cycle of drawings by Federigo Zuccaro of his brother Taddeo's life, one of which shows the honor done his brother by Michelangelo's stopping, on horseback, to watch him at work painting the facade of the Palazzo Mattei c. 1548 [fig. 71].¹¹⁰ According to his brother's accompanying verse, the young Taddeo had stunned every more learned mind ("fa stupir' ogni più dotto ingegno").¹¹¹

In one of the funeral orations, Giovanni Maria Tarsie made much of the name Buonarrotti, punning on the favorable turn of the "buona rota," but nearly ignored (the title excepted) the established pun on the forename. Instead he went on at length about how inimitable

¹¹⁰ From a group of twenty-four drawings, probably intended for the decoration of his house; John Gere, *The Life of Taddeo Zuccaro by Federigo Zuccaro, From the Collection of the British Rail Pension Fund*, Sothebys, Jan. 11, 1990, n. 19.

¹¹¹ Sergio Rossi, "Virtù e fatica. La vita esemplare di Taddeo nel ricordo 'tendenzioso' di Federico Zuccari," in *Federico Zuccari, Le idee, gli scritti, Atti del convegno di Sant'Angelo in Vado*, ed. B. Cleri, Milan, 1997, 53–69.

Michelangelo was, and even incomprehensible, as though to say he should be honored as a formality only, without being taken as an exemplum.¹¹² He goes quite beyond Condivi, for instance, on the theme of Michelangelo's inimitability. Francesco Bocchi (1548–1613/18) praised Michelangelo as the master of three arts and often as “miracolosa,” but scantily as “divino artefice.” He respects the *Madonna* of the New Sacristy as an object able to make its viewer a better person, rather than concentrating his attention on Michelangelo himself as icon.¹¹³ The object had regained at least some of its prominence, and a new sensitivity about the word “divine” was developing.¹¹⁴ Filippo Baldinucci (1625–96) referred often to “il miracolo dell’arte,” but not to artists themselves as miraculous or divine.¹¹⁵ Not all that much later, in 1633, Galileo reported that an officious censor had replaced instances of the phrase “divine spirit” with “sublime spirit” in an early attempt to render the *Dialogue concerning the two chief systems of the world* more palatable.¹¹⁶

The fame of prominent artists needed particular control. Otherwise it might have been construed as admirable aberrancy, a concept now out of favor. After the Sack and before the rise of the Jesuits, with

¹¹² G.M. Tarsie, *Oratione fatto nell’essequie del divino Michelangelo Buonarroti*, Florence, 1564, unpag.: “sta cose impossibile appeno intendere il Buonaroto,” “raro, individuo, particularizzata, quasi miracolo, non imitabile. Questi quanto più apre la via alla virtù, tanto maggiormente la rende inaccessibile, à chi non appieno lo intende.”

¹¹³ “Dinanzi à questo sembiante si dilegua ogni viltà, & di avvisi santi, come conveniene, si accende: spira egli bontà divina, & devozione: infonde un vigor nobile, & pregiato, che mirabilmente informa l’animo à pieno di santi pensieri,” Bocchi, *Le Bellezze della Città di Firenze*, Florence, 1677 (reprint), 279, see also 273.

¹¹⁴ Francesco Bocchi, *Sopra l’immagine della Santissima Nunziata du Fiorenza*, 1592, in Barocchi, *Scritti*, I, 1010, lauds that simple work in the highest terms: “si veggono le fattezze come cosa umana, ma, fatte vive dal celeste sembiante, spirano divinità e meraviglia...si lascia che il cuor pensi, dalla dolcezza che in sé prova ineffabile, che non sia se non divinità e cosa sopra umana!”

¹¹⁵ Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, Florence, 1847 (1974), V, 585, refers to Bernini as having “l’egregie doti dell’animo, a lui di special grazia concescute.” Guido Reni was dubbed divine during his lifetime. Yet the phenomenon is quite different. In 1632 the heading of a poem in honor of Reni uses the title “Divino.” This is the sole instance of the adjective being applied to the artist; a handful of times his art, his brush, or his hand are deemed divine; see Richard Spear, *The ‘Divine’ Guido: Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni*, New Haven, 1997, 260–63. Spear allows that the reference may well salute Reni’s subject matter, personal piety, or distinguished patrons rather than his artistic accomplishment. He dates the “dramatic rise in appreciation of artistic “genius” in the sense of enthusiasm, *fantasia*, and “divine furor” somewhat vaguely to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also dates Brunelleschi’s epitaph to 1466, twenty years later than is customary.

¹¹⁶ Dava Sobel, *Galileo’s Daughter*, London, 2000, 236.

their new batch of saints, and before the rise of science with its new geniuses, the divine artist was accepted as himself part of the definition of orthodoxy. He was protected by the label, but also controlled. He was divine because his divinity helped to regularize and to limit the significance of his fame. Michelangelo in particular was difficult to categorize, and so the category of divine artist developed around him, encasing him in what was by then familiar phraseology. Ironically, being dubbed “divino” rendered him more familiar and comprehensible than he would otherwise have been.

Yet Michelangelo did not properly belong in the category of *uomo famoso*. The *uomini famosi* typically were a group of men respected for their virtue, with nothing in common but their virtue. They came from different places in different epochs. Michelangelo lived, and was generally celebrated, singularly. He was hailed as divine, though not as virtuous. Rather like Picasso in post-World War II Paris, he outlived his enabling historical context but was too useful to be allowed to sink into obscurity.

Michelangelo was famous neither for power, nor wealth, nor virtue, nor learning. There was no one work on which his fame rested, like Praxiteles. Few, if any, really believed that he was more divinely inspired than other men. But he did act metonymously for a lost era of greatness. He provided a taste of the Laurentian Golden Age almost a century after it had flourished. Accordingly, he made a late appearance as a sort of *ragazzo illustro* in a fresco by Ottavio Vannini of 1638–42 in the Salone degli Argenti, Pitti Palace, showing *Lorenzo among the Florentine artists*.¹¹⁷ There Michelangelo presents his faun’s head to Lorenzo in the garden at San Marco. It is clear that precedence belongs with the Medici.

¹¹⁷ See Malcolm Campbell, “The original program of the Salone di Giovanni da San Giovanni,” *Antichità viva*, XV, 1976, 3–25, esp. 15. On the artist, see Claudio Pizzorusso, in *Il Seicento Fiorentino*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, 1986/87, vol. III, 1986, Florence, 180–83.

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EPILOGUE

THE ROMANTIC DELUGE

Michelangelo, when a very old man, was seated one day amidst the ruins of the Colosseum. In my opinion, he was only loafing and waiting his opportunity. A friend finding him said, "Buon' giorno,"—to which the old man at once replied, "That's not right; you must ask me—Cosa fai?" (what are you doing?) "else what becomes of my celebrated answer, 'I am still studying?'"¹

Art began to have a new kind of history when theorists in various disciplines began to question the hegemony of immutable rules and to allow on a theoretical level for the contributions of individual talent. What Cosimo Bartoli called the age of *maniera* ("questa età di maniera") was inaugurated in large part by Michelangelo, who was less divine than unique. He, together with Mantegna, Leonardo, Giorgione, and Raphael (to borrow Castiglione's list) had styles resistant to assimilation to ancient precedent, like the works of Ariosto and other vernacular poets, and like the works of Josquin and other musicians. Not only did they become the focus of regional pride, but they were unforgettable, in the sense that it was no longer expected that their successors would be able to continue their projects. They did not so much found modernity as initiate a new, much more complicated phase of cultural memory, which would last until the iconoclastic modernity of the early twentieth century. Francesco Sansovino may have criticized Michelangelo for not training pupils, but the fact of the matter was that once art was as much a matter of caprice as discipline, one needed to establish a new, more encyclopedic cultural memory. Rather than treatises which passed down rules, biography, exposition (typically in the form of dialogues), and engravings documented that which could not be passed down. Renaissance "genius" was not so much divine as newly mortal.

¹ Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions, Written for his own Fun and that of his Friends*, Boston, 1910, 400.

In the nineteenth century, art's history became a formal discipline. At the same time a lasting conceptualization of the Italian Renaissance, as something more than Vasari's rival of the antique, was born. Jacob Burckhardt published the *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* within a year of the founding of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1859. The effects of this general coincidence are still with us, not least in the basics of our understanding of Michelangelo. Some of the issues which characteristically preoccupied nineteenth-century thinkers became issues supposedly embedded in the visual evidence of the High Renaissance. Michelangelo's art became all the more classical and all the more divine in reaction to the immediate contemporary context of threatening industrialization and urban mass culture.

A Renaissance defined by its vigor and secularity, its rebellion against the Church, and its singleminded dedication to the antique, became the backbone of the new discipline. Advocates of the Renaissance portrayed it as the beginning of modernism (and implicitly rejected any later, replacement definition of modernity). J.A. Symonds opened his magisterial opus on the Renaissance in Italy with the words:

It has been granted only to two nations, the Greeks and the Italians, and to the latter only at the time of the Renaissance, to invest every phrase and variety of intellectual energy with the form of art...painters helped to humanise religion, and revealed the dignity and beauty of the body of man...Christian and pagan traditions came into close contact, and contended for the empire of the newly liberated intellect...The rise of sculpture and painting indicated the quickening to life of new faculties, fresh intellectual interests...a new freedom of the mind.²

He also eulogized Michelangelo as the premier hero of the modern world:

he lives forever as the type and symbol of a man, much-suffering, continually labouring, gifted with keen but rarely indulged passions, whose energies from boyhood to extreme old age were dedicated with unswerving purpose to the service of one master; plastic art...we cannot cite another hero of the modern world who more fully and with greater intensity realized the main end of human life, which is self-effectuation, self-realization, self-manifestation in one of the many lines of labour to which men may be called and chosen...Michelangelo, then, as Carlyle might have put it, is the Hero as Artist.³

² J.A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, 1-8.

³ J.A. Symonds, *The Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, London, 1901, vol. II, 372. The reference is to Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, lectures given in 1840 on the Hero as Divinity, Prophet, Poet, Priest, Man of Letters, and King.

On the other hand, the period's detractors used the medieval period as a foil both to the industrial age and to the Renaissance. Tolstoy, decrying the prevalence of female nakedness in French art and commenting on the loss of the popular basis art had benefitted from in the Middle Ages, could find in art of the Renaissance and since nothing more than "feelings of pride, discontent with life, and above all of sexual desire."⁴ Renaissance art, like the modern art of his time, was for him irreligious and decadent. Later, Clive Bell similarly described the displacement in the Renaissance of Christian popular art by the self-indulgent pleasures of the isolated lord:

The mediaeval lord in his castle and the mediaeval hind in his hut were spiritual equals who thought and felt alike, held the same hopes and fears, and shared, to a surprising extent, the pains and pleasures of a simple and rather cruel society. The Renaissance changed all that. The lord entered the new world of ideas and refined sensuality; the peasant stayed where he was, or, as the last vestiges of spiritual religion began to disappear with the commons, sank lower...A Renaissance picture was meant to say just those things that a patron would like to hear...My lord is lascivious? Correggio will give him a background to his mood. My lord is majestic? Michelangelo will tell him that man is, indeed, a noble animal whose muscles wriggle heroically as watch-springs.⁵

The sensuous female nude constituted a troublesome element in nineteenth-century Salon painting, vouched for both by the antique and by the Renaissance, yet sometimes disturbingly realistic. As Mark Twain famously commented of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, admittedly in the context of a paragone with literature (not to mention in a book overflowing with camp):

Without any question it was painted for a bagnio and it was probably refused because it was a trifle too strong. In truth, it is too strong for any place but a public Art Gallery.⁶

If high art was by definition uplifting, what was one to make of such a canonical Renaissance work?

One tactic was to argue that Twain was wrong and that even the most charming of Renaissance female nudes qualified as spiritually enhancing, because her beauty was ideal. This strategy was applied particularly to Raphael, whose lack of realism promised to rescue the

⁴ Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, 155.

⁵ Clive Bell, "The Cultural Renaissance and its Diseases," *Art*, New York, 1958 (1913), 111-14.

⁶ Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, New York, 1921 (1879), 245.

respectability of his art. Raphael's *Three Graces* show themselves "so beautiful and so chaste in their nudity" ("si belle et si chastes dans leur nudité").⁷ Moreover, the female nude offers in the hands of this divine artist no mere recapitulation of the antique, but instead:

a grace more austere and more chaste than pagan graces. This is the gift which no effort can achieve and which no research can discover, it is the divine flame which illuminates, animates and transforms work and science here.⁸

Conversely, because he offered a solution to this critical problem, Raphael's art was particularly prized: Raphael "fut le peintre."⁹ That which could seem threateningly low became safely high again in his hands.

Panofsky generalized this well beyond Raphael, most famously in praising Sacred Love's nudity in the painting by Titian as a sign of the ideal.¹⁰ As Diderot had said first, followed famously and with some adjustment by Kenneth Clark, "A nude woman is not at all indecent. It is a well-turned out woman who is."¹¹ By this gauge, classical figures could conveniently maintain their status as morally uplifting, and modern, realistic ones could be categorized as quite the opposite.

As for the male body, the analogous problem was to revise the ancient hero as Raphael had the female nude, a challenge particularly acute in rendering the likeness of Christ. According to Daniel Stern, writing in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1862, the single greatest challenge of Italian Renaissance art consisted in representing Christ: "the characterization of Christ has been, you understand, the great prob-

⁷ F.A. Gruyer, "Apollon et Marsyas tableau de Raphael," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XIII, 1857, 16.

⁸ "une Grace plus austère et plus chaste que les Grâces païennes, c'est ce don que nul effort ne peut atteindre et que nulle recherche ne peut trouver; c'est la flamme divine qui éclaire, anime et transforme ici le travail et la science," F.A. Gruyer, "Raphael et l'antiquité," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XII, 1862, 403–18.

⁹ L. Viardot, "Ut pictura musica," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, I, 1859, 27.

¹⁰ Panofsky's early work on this subject dates to 1930, the date of the founding of the Institute for Advanced Studies, so it is tempting to wonder whether Panofsky had some sort of hand in the devising of that institution's seal, representing Truth (nude) and Beauty (clothed). Panofsky waxed uncommonly formalistic when it came to the *Venus of Urbino*.

¹¹ "Une femme nue n'est point indécente. C'est une femme trousseée qui l'est;" D. Diderot, *Salons*, ed. J. Seznec and J. Adhémar, III, 1767, Oxford, 1963, 94. He goes on to say, "Ce'st la différence d'une femme qu'on voit et d'une femme qui se montre;" Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, Princeton, 1956 (revised lectures of 1963), Ch. 1.

lem of Italian Renaissance art.”¹² To do that well, one would have to meld the scientific and the sensuous, said Stern, and Michelangelo and Leonardo both failed through being too scientific in their approach. Michelangelo’s idea of Christ was, at least for Stern, brutal rather than terrible. His greatest accolade, like Dolce’s Aretino, was reserved for Titian, who was able properly “to express the human divinity of the Messiah” (“exprimer la divine humanité du Messie”).¹³

To some degree Stern echoes Michelet, for whom Dürer was great not because he played the part of a powerful hero, but because he was oppressed and long-suffering. When Michelet visited Munich in 1842, he saw the *Self-Portrait* of 1500 [fig. 30] and found a:

young Christ of art, hard-working, suffering, sublime worker;...if he was not, like Michelangelo, a Titan of art, he was its Christ; he had the passion.¹⁴

Dürer presents the [clothed] male body as godlike yet vulnerable, beautiful yet sensitive. Raphael similarly was seen as presenting the female body as chaste yet graceful, ideal yet accessible. In both cases artistic genius is defined as that which gives a divine character to human form (“imprimer un caractère divin”).¹⁵ Art acts as a religion, in that it transforms humans into gods:

Man is made in the image of God, and art ennobles him in taking him as model.¹⁶

This transubstantial language is common currency:

nudity ought to be here taken as an artifice which allows the generalization and the divinization of humanity, like a means of transformation which shows God in man and identifies one with the other and which makes visible the power of the creator in the idealization of his creation.¹⁷

¹² “La personification du Christ a été, vous le savez, la grande difficulté de la Renaissance italienne,” Daniel Stern, “Titien à la Galerie de Florence,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XII, 1862, 558.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ “jeune Christ de l’art, laborieux, souffrant, sublime ouvrier; ... [and later, in Nuremberg]...s’il ne fut pas, comme Michel-Ange, un Titan de l’art, il en fut un Christ; il en eut la passion,” Jules Michelet, *Journal*, ed. P. Viallaeix, Paris, 1959, 441, 452. It is not clear that he intends the identification of Dürer with Christ to adhere exclusively to the *Self-Portrait*, though see also Bialostocki.

¹⁵ Diderot, 60.

¹⁶ “L’homme est fait à l’image de Dieu, et l’art s’ennoblit en se le proposant pour modèle,” Gruyere, “*Apollo et Marsyas*,” 9.

¹⁷ “la nudité doit être ici considérée comme un artifice qui a permis de généraliser

The typical way around the problem of the nude for these nineteenth-century writers is to see it as the opposite of realism. The nude is an ideal form, just as the antique is an ideal style. Even Titian is seen as presenting the ideal, a slightly less scientific ideal than Michelangelo's, but no less ideal for that. The Renaissance nude progresses over the classical nude by some admixture from Christianity, which renders the result more human, though no less divine.

Admittedly, these are journalistic voices rather than philosophical ones. Yet in them we hear some of the fervency about the antique which had been lost during the prim Enlightenment with its insistence on the adequacy of reason. The new enthusiasm for a quasi-religious experience via works of art was grounded in a sensibility which was newly troubled by nudity, partly because the audience for art was expanding beyond the class of conosciuti. The pivotal idea, explicit in Diderot and then later in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, and Kenneth Clark, implicit elsewhere, identified chaste nudity as the oxymoronic mark of divine artistic genius. From there, one could generalize. Even that which seemed least transcendental became morally uplifting, from Titian's delectable females to Dürer's vanity. If the Renaissance human figure provided an experience tinged with a sense of divinity, whence could this derive but from a divine artist? In the nineteenth century, one needed the divinity of the artist in order to sanctify the nude and otherwise uncomfortably realistic figures. It had not been so in the Italian Renaissance. No such qualms had existed then, and accordingly the divine artist had been a less critical idea.

Nineteenth-century observers were peculiarly intent upon this theme of naturalism which transcends into the supernatural.¹⁸ Freud, describing the *Moses* of Michelangelo, found in the style (and implicitly in the artist) something more than human (something Vasari had already called "divinità"):

he has added something new and more than human [Übermenschliches] to the figure of Moses; so that the giant frame with its tremendous physical power becomes only a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully

et de diviniser l'humanité, comme un moyen de transformation qui montre Dieu dans l'homme en les identifiant l'un à l'autre et qui fait voir la puissance du Créateur dans l'idéalisation de la créature," *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ They were, thereby, inadvertently testing the way for surrealism.

against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he devoted himself.¹⁹

That internal struggle he identified as Moses' and Michelangelo's both (art appeared more self-expressive in the nineteenth-century than in the sixteenth). Freud's phrase, "more than human," echoes (with a difference) the Quattrocento phrase, "più che umano" and the Cinquecento term of preference, "divino." Renaissance writers typically used the phrase "più che umano" of the mind (or in Vasari's case, Moses' holy visage); Freud uses it of mind and body—as did the staff writers of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. The difference was epochal.

The nude/naked distinction, like its correlate, the strong idea of the divine artist who is "più che umano," who rescues art from excesses both of nature and of science, is a function of Victorian culture (broadly speaking, and with its origins reaching back at least to Diderot)—rather than anything inherent in sixteenth-century style. Yet because these issues were thought to adhere in the style itself rather than only in the minds of art historians, they linger with us in the familiar dichotomy of Italian Renaissance idealism versus northern realism. The tendency in Italian art to idealize form was made its defining characteristic, but to satisfy nineteenth-century preoccupations (by northern authors at that). In the nineteenth century an alternative to realism was avidly sought after; in the Renaissance itself, the same issue had not existed. Then Titian's art had been praised as "vero."

A worried nineteenth-century author in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* observed the increasing incoherence of his world, with its contrasts of "the fervor and the disbelief, the pride and lowliness, the great passions and the beastly lusts, the ignorance of rights and the forgetting of duties." He feared "finally that absence of common faith, that anarchy of spirits and souls, which causes trouble and makes the torment of society," and he identified those problems with "the lowering of public taste."²⁰ An art which infused divinity into the human form could

¹⁹ Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo," *Standard Edition*, ed. James Strachey, London, 1958, XIII, 233; "Damit hat er etwas Neues, Übermenschliches in die Figur des Moses gelegt, und die gewaltige Körpermasse und kraftstrozende Muskulatur der Gestalt wird nur zum leiblichen Ausdrucksmittel für die höchste psychische Leistung, die einem Menschen möglich ist, für das Niederringen der eigenen Leidenschaft zugunsten und im Auftrage einer Bestimmung, der man sich geweiht hat," *Imago*, III, 1914, 34.

²⁰ "la ferveur et l'incrédulité, la hauteur et la bassesse, les grandes passions et les viles cupidités, l'ignorance des droits et l'oubli des devoirs;" "enfin cette absence de

accomplish a modern version of the morality Christianity at its best had inculcated. It would teach the masses respect through good taste, and empower the state, which ran museums and the Salon, rather than the church.

The fledgling history of art was designed to glorify coherence and stability in this time of unprecedented change, of the birth of industry and the science that underlay it. The authors of the early *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* were much exercised about the new and expanding role of science. In the face of the camera and its presumed stylelessness, representation became less a principle of art than the lever whereby the history of style was transformed into a vaguely Darwinian phenomenon in which classicism was a form of fitness. The camera made it possible, or even necessary, to think about style more analytically. Arguably that strain of art historical reasoning most associated with E.H. Gombrich, namely, that art history which attempts to take as its subject the entire evolution of the history of style rather than only its high points of good taste, derives from the effects of the introduction of photography not only as an artistic medium but as a tool for art history. But the science which had worried sixteenth-century commentators on art was instead the rules of Aristotle, a science threatened by artistic developments rather than vice versa.

In the nineteenth century Raphael was newly accessible to the masses through multiple reproductive technologies. Dürer, too: already Michelet admitted that he went to the museum to see what he knew through reproduction (as Baudelaire had yet to decry).²¹ When he saw the Munich *Self-Portrait*, he not only thought, but even wrote in his journal: “I recognize the originals of the beautiful lithographs” (“je reconnais les originaux des belles lithographs”). Those “belles lithographs,” the *Gazette’s* staff anticipated, would comfort the dreary financier and rescue women from ennui.²² They would provide moral assistance to those who most needed it. (The editor of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* sounds not unlike St. Gregory.) The ideal cast of the official nineteenth-

foi commune, cette anarchie des esprits et des âmes, qui causent le trouble et font le torment de la société;” “l’abaissement du goût public,” Viardot, 27–29.

²¹ “The world—and even the world of artists—is full of people who come to the Louvre, walk rapidly, without so much as a glance, past rows of very interesting, though secondary, pictures, to come to a rapturous halt in front of a Titian or a Raphael—one of those that have been most popularized by the engraver’s art,” Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, tr. Jonathan Mayne, London, 1964, 1.

²² Charles Blanc, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, I, 1859, “Introduction,” 15.

century view of Renaissance art primarily reflected their contemporary anxieties, and only secondarily any historical insight.

The project of seeing divinity in the nude had never been of the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Not all Renaissance *furia* was divine; not all divinity implied *furia*. Beauty yes, Renaissance writers told us they found in the nude, and beauty could be connected either with God as creator or with fleshly temptation. But it was no different in art than in life for the Renaissance viewer; art was transparent in the sixteenth century in a way it was no longer in the nineteenth. No Renaissance writer, and as far as we know, no Renaissance viewer, ever looked at *Galatea* and got religion. Isabella Sforza may have had a religious response to a devout passage in the *Aeneid*, but from that to praying in response to a picture of a nymph is quite a step. Yet this is what, in the nineteenth century, Gruyer averred on his own behalf. Looking at *Galatea*, specifically as a work of art, Gruyer ruminated thus:

each man is he other than a thought of God...ineffable trace of that divine thought?²³

The same goes for Dürer in his fur collar: magnificent yes, presumptuous yes, but no more dressing himself up as God than Raphael was undressing Galatea as goddess. He may have appealed to “una certa idea” in order to paint her, but he wasn’t praying when he had it, only snubbing flesh and blood models. Divinization through the spell of art came only later.

Michelet only identified Dürer and Christ because he was no Christian, and Kenneth Clark only failed to see the flesh of the *Venus of Urbino* because it had become for him an icon of the great, epical history of style. For him it referred primarily to the history of art, and only secondarily to nature. It was Art for him, yet the Renaissance had no Salon, no Academy, no “Art” in the sense of viewers attempting that disinterested interest which has plagued European culture since Kant.

No healthy unclothed figure ever looked naked to a Renaissance male viewer, pace Clark;²⁴ Victorianism accomplished more than mere Christianity in that regard. So the nude/naked dichotomy in which authors of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Clark, and Panofsky all believed

²³ “chaque homme n’est-il pas une pensée de Dieu...trace ineffable de cette pensée divine?” Gruyer, “Galatée,” 424.

²⁴ That Michelangelo’s *David* was equipped with a loincloth reflects, I presume, not on his nakedness, but on the modesty of the female citizenry, as in Raphael’s risposte to the woman offended by his Mercury’s nudity on the Farnesina ceiling.

misled them. Historically it had no basis; they saw with the eyes of a relatively prudish age, all the while struggling, like Petrarch, to honor what was alien. Similarly, thinking of Dürer's *Self-Portrait* as a representation of the artist as God the creator displays a nineteenth-century taste for the Hegelian dialectic, with its twinning of the material and the spiritual in mutually cancelling cycles. Such intellectual taste goes hand-in-hand with conceptualizing the artist as "un bohemian civilisé."²⁵ In the Renaissance, however, the artist came closer to being a gentleman manqué. God, as Bartoli assured his readers, was like the sitter himself, not like the picture of the sitter, and we might add that artists merely resembled gentleman, as pictures resembled sitters.

Walter Pater found in *Mona Lisa* a dialectic (an implicit one) between her pagan sensuality and her bourgeois appearance. His interpretation is cousin to Gruyer's of *Galatea*, in which the woman is both common and divine. This, too, has important spores in the Renaissance itself, most obviously in the type of the beloved, who at once inspires divinity and personifies the libido that destroys men's reason and leads them to death, whether physical or spiritual. Woman is the type which conjoins opposites, saint and sinner, fire and ice. The duplicity of woman, a theme as old as the Bible, underlies not only Renaissance characterizations of women but the naked/nude dichotomy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Angelica offers a prime example: her name and beauty portend the positive aspects of women, but her sexuality drives Orlando, the hero, to utter madness when she, a Muslim, pairs off with a shepherd of her religion. Alcina, the sorceress, is revealed as a hag after she has seduced the hero—as Michelangelo had done long before with Eve on the central episode of the Sistine Ceiling [fig. 23]. The artist who could distill sensuality from the female nude had done what to the nineteenth century was most impossible, and hence divine. But in the fifteenth century, as we have seen, convincing a woodcarver that he wasn't himself, counted as doing the impossible.

Renaissance thinkers show little tendency to conceive of reality as deeply antithetical; it is the early art historians who divide the whole into the classical and the anti-classical, the idealizing and the realistic. The fundamental trope in Renaissance thought is analogy, rather than the synthesis of antitheses. The artist is like God, but that does not make him God; the nude is beautiful and desirable, but that does not

²⁵ E. Viollet-le-Duc, Letter to editor, 1859, I, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 30–33.

sanctify lust. The convention whereby *colore* is feminine and *disegno* masculine, a convention with its roots in the Renaissance and current still in the nineteenth century, might sound like an antithetical structure. But when *disegno* is melded with *colore*, in Tintoretto or El Greco, the result is not synthesis, but mere combination.

The dialectical patterns of thought current in the nineteenth century rendered the concept of divine artist more meaningful than it had ever been in the Renaissance. Rather than a casual epithet, the phrase became a claim of profound synthesis between the spiritual and the material. The Romantic divine genius had about as much in common with even Vasari's idea of Michelangelo as the eternal feminine had in common with the Petrarchan beloved.

The Renaissance has been conceived as a period of religious ferment prompted by awakening materialism. But religion, even during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, was less of an issue during the Renaissance than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sometimes we have, sympathetically, made their primitive secularism disproportionately important.²⁶ Yet there was nothing particularly new in Renaissance appeals to divine favor, even if they did come during a time in which Luther was making grace something of a sore spot theologically. From the Book of Kells, said in the later middle ages to have been made by angels; to Bach, who wrote "SDG" ("Soli Deo Gloria") on every manuscript, "To God Alone the Glory;" to E.H. Shepherd,²⁷ what was good in art was commonly credited to God. One can credit divinity for what is good in art sans Neo-Platonism.

The Romantic artist was a surrogate god for a god-less epoch; yet Michelangelo was not called divine in the sixteenth century because he was thought to be particularly like God. To be called divine was, more than anything else, to be compared with the ancients. In a handbook for expressing oneself on various topics, an author of the mid-sixteenth century explained that in order to praise someone's life, you should say:

If you had been born in that antique era in which men were rewarded according to their merits, you would have achieved even the veneration which they used to give to the gods.²⁸

²⁶ Luigi Pulci, though, seems to be an exception, someone whose religiosity was an issue for contemporaries, and so it is of interest that he was an author of some significance for Leonardo.

²⁷ "Kipper quite simply believed that any gift he had came from God," *The Work of E.H. Shepherd*, ed. Rawle Knox, New York, 1980, 210.

²⁸ "Se to fussi nato in quell'antica età nella quale gli huomini erano premiati

Michelangelo consciously struggled to make an art which could be compared not only with the ancients' but with Dante's and Petrarch's as well. Being made "divine" emasculated his more controversial loyalty to things modern, republican, and vernacular.

Although they didn't put it in these terms, sixteenth-century writers' principal cultural preoccupation was modernity. Petrarch had converted the medieval troubadours' tradition of courtly love poetry into something which bespoke genuine and more generalized anguish, resolvable only on a spiritual level. Sixteenth-century writers, beneficiaries of a booming printing industry, were not always similarly dedicated to things spiritual. In that exceptional and brief moment of equilibrium between the authority of church and state, the artist could act as fulcrum between the two. The status of artists reflected in part their very real capacity for augmenting the prestige of either, as it also made them freer to ignore both. Burckhardt was so convinced that his Renaissance protagonists were modern (meaning like him, with his classical, bourgeois upbringing) that he could not see modernity (discontent with ancient and/or didactic precedent) as their problem. But to forsake ancient models was the momentous challenge that made the Renaissance itself a period of transition, rather than simply of inauguration as Burckhardt and others supposed.

As with the problem of interpreting the nude, male or female, understanding the epithet "divino" requires a broad cultural history, one ranging well beyond the history of style. Vasari gives ample proof that almost any work of art might be dubbed divine; its analytical value was nigh nil. Being called "divino" may not have mattered to Michelangelo much, since the epithet did not come from those to whom he was close. In any case, the cultural factors that caused him to be so dubbed were unavoidably consequential for him, for his art, and for the future of praise. As Michelangelo became the most esteemed non-aristocrat of the sixteenth century, so Newton would be in the next century. Newton, in turn, would be compared with the gods of antiquity.²⁹

* * *

secondo i meriti, tu havresti conseguito ancor gli honori, che si sogliono dare à gli dei," Garimberto, *Concetti*, 258–59.

²⁹ In the ode to Newton by Edmund Halley, "NEWTONUM Musis charum, cui pectore puro/Phoebus adest, totoque incessit numine mentem:/Nec fas est proprius mortali attingere divos;" "Newton, dear to the Muses,/The one in whose pure heart Phoebus Apollo dwells and whose mind he has filled with all his divine power;/No

Giovanni Morelli (1371–1444), a generally unexceptional Florentine merchant, left *Ricordi* which contain but the barest mention of visual art, yet each one is richly suggestive. Morelli still invoked Giotto when praising the beautiful hands of his sister well into the fifteenth century:

she had hands like ivory, so well made that they seemed painted by Giotto.³⁰

This is an extraordinary testimonial, one hundred years after the death of the artist, and long before the business of promoting personal artistic reputation had begun. The other mention of art comes in describing the excruciatingly painful and prolonged death of his eldest, ten-year-old son, an agony of sixteen days, during which the victim beseeched a painting of the Madonna for help, hugging it as he prayed:

He recommended himself very many times to God and to his mother the Virgin Mary, and had them carry the panel showing the Virgin in front of him, and hugging it with countless prostrations and so many prayers and vows, that there was not so hard a heart that wasn't moved to great pity to see him.³¹

The chance juxtaposition of these two references to art on the part of an ordinary citizen of Florence bespeaks a great deal about the modal change that has often been termed the Renaissance. This entailed a natural shift from a paradigm fraught with failure (namely, asking for miracles) to a possible paradigm, namely, that of local or family pride, and in the case of Florence, local pride all the more effective because it was not filtered by the ego of an absolute ruler. Instead of a transhistorical use of art, a historically specific and local one operated; instead of a petitionary use, a descriptive and laudatory one. The new art was engineered for success: no longer was the object expected to perform a miracle; instead, the artist was appropriated as an attribute of the citizenry. Even if the look of the art had not changed at all, its place in society would have improved, for instead of associating

closer to the gods can any mortal rise," *Principia Mathematica*, tr. Bernard Cohen and Anne Whitman, Berkeley, 1999, 380. See further, Patricia Fara, *Newton, The Making of Genius*, New York, 2002, Ch. 6.

³⁰ "ell'aveva le mani come di vivorio, tanto bene fatte che pareano dipinte pelle mani di Giotto," Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, *Ricordi*, ed. V. Branca, Florence, 1969, 178.

³¹ "si raccomandò moltissime volte a Dio e alla sua madre Vergine Maria, facendosi recare la tavola della Donna innanzi, quella abbracciando con tante invenie e con tanti prieghi e voti, che non è sì duro cuore che non fusse mosso a gran pietà di vederlo," Morelli, 455–56.

art with one's weakness and need, art served to flatter the viewer in his or her role as member of a family, a confraternity, a parish, or a city. The new art was not merely more lifelike; it implied a stronger, prouder viewer. And the maker of that new art fell naturally heir to a certain gratitude from the newly empowered viewer. It was a dynamic that did not survive the rise of totalitarian governments; specifically, the spectacular festivals of the Grandducal Medici reasserted the primacy of the divine object, now a political rather than theological object, while reducing the spectator to the amazed anonymity of the crowd.

* * *

The class issues which Tolstoy and Clive Bell saw in the transition from medieval to Renaissance cultures were surely there, in a way; and they were tied to secularity and to sensuality, as those writers maintained, but Tolstoy and Bell both saw the historical framework devoid of a bourgeoisie, a class which they took as a contemptible and recent societal development. Both championed the proletariat against the sickly self-indulgent aristocracy. It took Friedrich Antal to see that an element was missing.

The Renaissance may not have been as purely the product of bourgeois culture as Antal supposed either, but that factor is nevertheless essential. Even if Michelangelo was both better born than other artists and exceptionally ill-kempt and rude, he nevertheless was no "bohème civilisé" (to borrow a phrase from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*), but an artist who did well partly because he was better-born, i.e., more bourgeois than most artists. The Renaissance artist functioned more as a complement to the merchant type than to the courtier—Michelangelo included, and especially when he rebuked the emissary of the Duke of Ferrara. Michael Baxandall recognized how closely tied values of *ingegno* were to mercantile culture. Renaissance artists needed to create a market for what they were making when what they were making no longer promised salvation. They did so by selling themselves as *uomini illustri*, if they could. That was a better option for most of them than aspiring to recognition as liberal artists or poets.

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries mark the beginning of that epoch which stretches from the denigration of aristocratic culture at the hands of Florentine bankers to the denigration of bourgeois culture, famously by Marx and Baudelaire, but more generally too. The guilds and the merchant class were more crucial to the period than any "Renaissance man" or any divine genius. The stress Burckhardt put on

individuality had more to do with defensiveness about the bourgeois, conformist culture conditioned by the Industrial Revolution than with the age which created biography for the sake of the exemplum and the portrait medal with its generalizing verso.

Panofsky presented the Renaissance artist as complement to humanist culture, a wrong steer except insofar as humanists were poets. Renaissance vernacular poets challenged precedent; humanists, insofar as they were distinct from poets, were guardians of precedent. Divinity, moreover, was an attribute both of poets and of princes. Michelangelo among artists, as Lorenzo de' Medici among princes, was both secondarily and significantly a poet, but there was nothing typical about either case. Lorenzo, it was claimed after his death, had an "ingegno universale," and delighted not only in liberal arts but practical ones ("dilettandosi non solo nelle liberali ma eziandio nelle pratiche").³² He was Magnifico; he was Magnanimo; he was "worthy of being counted among the rare miracles of nature."³³ If there was a "Renaissance man," it was Lorenzo.³⁴ Coincidentally, he functioned outside the class structure, neither bourgeois nor aristocrat. He was not typically hailed as divine,³⁵ nor was Michelangelo deemed "universale."³⁶ Michelangelo was addressed as "Magnifico" as early as 1518, and frequently as "Molto magnifico" in the 1550s, even by his social superiors. Vittoria Colonna called him "più che magnifico."³⁷ To be a lord who aspired to poetry and architecture enhanced one's image as powerful; to be a sculptor who aspired to poetry and fortification enhanced one's social status. To be "divine" was merely to be like the beloved; to be "universale" was to be like God.

Renaissance parlance meant less profound, and more various, more casual things by "divine" than nineteenth-century criticism did. The divine artist was conventionally defined in the nineteenth century as the one who can produce a chaste nude, an injunction Eduoard Manet, for instance, deliberately defied. In the Renaissance, the general atti-

³² Valori, 80. The same had been said of Cosimo; Vespasiano, *Vite*, 193.

³³ "degno d'esser numerato infra i rari miracoli della natura," Valori, 24, 27.

³⁴ See, inter alia, *Lorenzo dopo Lorenzo: La fortuna storica di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. P. Pirola, exh. cat., Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, 1992. On the prince—later—as a divine figure, see G.B. Pigna, discussed in Brann, 233–34.

³⁵ Matteo Franco in a sonnet of c. 1475 hails "o sacro lauro, o spirto alto e divino," Luigi Pulci-Matteo Franco, *Il Libro dei Sonetti*, ed. G. Dolci, Milan, 1933, 61.

³⁶ When Vasari once calls him that, he means a quite restricted version of universality.

³⁷ *Carteggi*, IV, 170.

tude toward the nude, in art or in nature, pertained little to concepts of chastity. Art was not fully a liberal art, let alone a religion. "I have always much loved the reputation and greatness of this art," was the simple statement of one of Michelangelo's admirers.³⁸ By contrast, Apollinaire would say of Picasso:

How can we judge what honour should be done to a man of such stature? How at such close quarters can we estimate the greatness of his genius? Picasso is among those of whom Michelangelo said that they merited the name of eagles because they surpass all others and break through the clouds to the light of the sun. And today all shadow has disappeared. The last cry of the dying Goethe: 'More light!' ascends from his work sublime and mysterious.³⁹

* * *

Now we need to rethink what the history of Renaissance art should be, now that it need not serve the specific needs of an epoch troubled by the task of maintaining continuity with both the classical and the Christian past. Art history stands in a moment rather similar to that of art in the nineteenth century: an established academic discipline, sometimes deficient in passion, waiting for its own genuinely "modern" movement.

Michelangelo, "*il divino*" to others, chose to call himself "*povero*" and "pazzo." In the fifteenth century a future Pope could declare, "O rerum Amor domitor omnium!" (Oh Cupid, ruler of all things!).⁴⁰ This more diffuse and varied Renaissance, capable of forgetting to moralize, fairly temperate when it came both to artist's reputations and their self-images, late Romantic art historians chose to overlook in favor of a period created largely in their own image, overwrought about religion and about how to control the masses without it.

Michelangelo may not have been more honored than Giotto—the differences may be largely attributable to differences in the societies doing the praising. Nor is it clear that Michelangelo's style was more ideal—only that nineteenth-century writers were sensitized to the representation of the nude figure. Not a particularly idealizing period in

³⁸ "Ho sempre amato molto la riputazione e grandezza di quest'arte," Giovanni Battista Armenini, Proemio, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Ravenna, 1586, dedicated by the publisher to the Duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga.

³⁹ Quoted by Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, New York, 1958, 377–78.

⁴⁰ Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Euryalus und Lucretia (De duobus amantibus historia)*, Stuttgart, 1993, 54.

any significant aspect at all, the Italian Renaissance saw the creation of the unsaintly, daringly uninhibited woman, a distinctly less ideal type best known to us through Shakespeare's Thespian incarnations, but whose cultural origins lead back to Italy, for instance to the ironically-named Angelica. The throwaway mention in her poem of "Michel più che angelo divino" became a cultural topos not only because of the importance of that poem, but also because of the importance of the various genres of vernacular love poetry, and the entire range of admiration and its complements which they fostered and from which they themselves derived. Michelangelo's divinity signified subordination as much as it did respect. He was being made to fit into a culture larger than Vasari's.

In his own time, Michelangelo knew both admiration and envy. He knew that his "divinity" was as fabricated as the fake antiquity, the *Sleeping Cupid*, he himself had made as a young artist—though fabricated for him, rather than by him. What he could not know was how useful the idea of the divine artist would prove to the distant future. As Mark Twain would report in 1878, paraphrasing a Venetian artist:

the Old Masters often drew badly; they did not care much for truth and exactness in minor details; but after all, in spite of bad drawing, bad perspective, bad proportions, and a choice of subjects which no longer appeal to people as strongly as they did three hundred years ago, there is *something* about their pictures which is divine—a something above and beyond the art of any epoch since—a something which would be the despair of artists but that they never hope or expect to attain it, and therefore do not worry about it.⁴¹

The myth of the self-made non-aristocrat, with its supporting idea that excellence was normally recognized and rewarded in this world, had developed into a prized cultural property by Twain's time, and the title of divinity was one of its markers. In Michaelangelo's time, instead, it had been pronounced less sententiously and had signified a greater variety of ideas. It did have meaning: as Dolce said in a letter, after calling a painting by Titian divine, "no other word will do."⁴² Yet neither Michelangelo nor his contemporaries had felt so daunted by "divinity."

⁴¹ Twain, *Tramp*, 222–23.

⁴² Dolce/Roskill, *Aretino*, 216–17.

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APPENDIX

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF *INGEGNO*

*Nec tamen est admirandum, si propter
ignotitiam artis virtutes obscurantur.*¹

During the nineteenth century, not only Renaissance artists were credited with genius, but the Renaissance itself. Michelet (1798–1874) wrote of “la génie de la Renaissance, en sa plus âpre inquiétude, en son plus perçant aiguillon.” Leonardo, “génie de mystère et de découverte,”² stands as its exemplar; his mystery and greatness offering the antithesis of the bourgeois pettiness which Michelet loathed.

Michelangelo, who signified a part of the Renaissance never much assimilated by France, was accorded by Michelet a place not merely secondary but downright abhorrent. Michelet accused Michelangelo of painting monsters, of having forgotten the essential project of portraying beauty.³ The still familiar disparagement of Michelangelo’s female figures, with its origins in the sixteenth century, became in the hands of Michelet in the nineteenth a whip whereby to castigate the artist for destroying divinity. Leonardo, on the other hand, is associated with the mystery and deep implication we English-speakers know so well from Walter Pater’s description of *Mona Lisa*, and thus with the religion of art.

The case of Burckhardt (1818–97) differs. *Genie* is a word he used generously across history, but not of artists. As a cultural though not a social historian, and himself an unambitious, even a deliberately obscure person, Burckhardt took a great but less personal interest in Renaissance infatuation with fame. Fame concretizes individuality, and individuality was primary for him, but Burckhardt did not focus on the case of artists. His chapter on Fame (“Die Ruhm”), is preceded by

¹ Vitruvius, Book III, Preface; tr. Frank Granger, Loeb, 155, “Yet we must not be surprised if excellence is in obscurity through the public ignorance of craftsmanship.”

² Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France, IX, La Renaissance*, Paris, 1879, 87–88, “the spirit of the Renaissance in its most biting restlessness and its sharpest goad,” “genius of mystery and of revelation.”

³ Michelet, 324.

one on The Perfection of the Personality (“Die Vollendung der Persönlichkeit”), which includes the example of artists, most prominently Leon Battista Alberti for his manysidedness, a capacity brought fully to fruition by Leonardo da Vinci.⁴ In the following chapter, “Die moderne Ruhm,” artists are conspicuously absent. To be sure, the material for such an essay is abundant, but one wonders whether, despite the hushed tones with which Leonardo’s *Vielseitigkeit* is invoked, this cordoning off of artists from the rest of the run of admired men does not imply a taint of the mechanical about manysidedness. To be handy is almost by definition to be versatile, and is easily opposed to intellectual gift, which typically has a single main direction. Burckhardt dismissed Michelet’s hero Leonardo abruptly, despite his manysidedness: “Die ungeheuren Umrissse von Leonardo’s Wesen wird man ewig nur von ferne ahnen können” (one will always only from a distance be able to imagine the vast contours of Leonardo’s being). Although he may not have exactly ghettoized artists, the treatment of their fame is oddly curtailed, given the importance of the theme of Fame for Burckhardt’s thesis. In general Burckhardt was more interested in individuality than in individuals, and more so in Fame than in its ostensible cause, namely genius. His work helped to contain Michelet’s gushing enthusiasm; it helped to end Romanticism. Ironically, he thus made possible some of the neo-Romanticism of the twentieth century, notably that of Rudolf Wittkower.

Ernst Curtius (1886–1956), an associate of Burckhardt who shared with him that skepticism toward the concept of genius which divided them from Michelet, established the eighteenth century as a boundary between the Renaissance and modernism. During antiquity, and the Renaissance, indeed until Longinus became more influential than he ever had been in antiquity, the poet, argued Curtius, was understood as mimetic, not creative. Divine poets they had, but the idea of innate, intuitive artistry which inspires “religious veneration for the poet”—that belonged in Curtius’ eyes to the eighteenth century, and the hitherto utterly minor, as well as late, Lucretius and Macrobius.⁵

⁴ Jacob Burckhardt, *Kunst und Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, Cologne, 1953 (1860), 65–67.

⁵ E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, tr. W. Trask, Princeton, 1973 (1948), 397–401: “It [Macrobius’ analogy between the structure of the *Aeneid* and the cosmos] is based upon a religious veneration for the poet. Hence there is a deep historical meaning in the simple fact that the Virgil cult of late paganism first expressed the idea of the poet as creator, if only gropingly. It gleams like a lamp in the

Explicitly reacting against Ernst Curtius' thesis of discontinuity between ancient and eighteenth-century notions of *auctoritas*, Ernst Kantorowicz (1895–1963) argued on behalf of a direct line of descent from medieval jurisprudence to Renaissance and later conceptions of the artist as a being superior to rule and analytical judgment. He found a positive construction of the concept of fiction, a kind of metonymy for human creativity: "something artfully 'created' by the art of the jurist; it [fiction] was an achievement to his credit because fiction made manifest certain legal consequences, which had been hidden before or which by nature did not exist."⁶ Initially the pope had been compared with god ("he makes something out of nothing like God," c. 1200); eventually the legislator, particularly an emperor, was commonly characterized "sicut deus in terris." Although the word *ingenium* does not figure in the documents until Petrarch's time, Kantorowicz's contention was that the "arrogation of a *plenitudo potestatis* was true of the offices of the spiritual and secular powers, and it became true for the offices of poet and, by transference, of painter and artist at large."⁷ He translated "ingenium" straightforwardly as "inspiration," and claimed the roots of this use of language long in advance of the documentary evidence.

Rudolf Wittkower, unlike Kantorowicz, scrupled at any translation of "ingenium" or "ingegno" as "genius."⁸ In defiance of Kantorowicz's attempted revisionism, he followed Curtius in assigning a fully-developed notion of artistic genius only to the eighteenth-century—though for him the critical issue was historical continuity following the Renaissance rather than preceding it. For Wittkower the High Renaissance, in particular its *non-finito* and individualism to the point of eccen-

evening of the aging world. For almost a millenium and a half it was extinguished. It shines once again in the dawning radiance of Goethe's youth;" "Getragen ist es von einer religiösen Verehrung des Dichters. Daher liegt ein tiefer historischer Sinn in der unscheinbaren Tatsache, daß der spatheidische Virgilkult zum erstenmal, wenn auch tastend, den Gedanken vom schöpferischen Dichtertum ausspricht. Er glimmt auf wie ein mystisches Lämpchen am Abend der alternden Welt. Fast anderhalb Jahrtausende hindurch war er erloschen. Im morgendlichen Glanz von Goethes Jugend leuchtet er wieder auf."

⁶ Kantorowicz, "The Sovereignty of the Artist. A Note on Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art," 355.

⁷ Kantorowicz, 365; cf. Jan Bialostocki, "Terribilità," *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, III, Berlin, 1967, 223: "it is certain that we should not try to find extremely precise meanings in the critical concepts used in [the] Cinquecento," in explicit contrast to the eighteenth century.

⁸ *Dictionary of Ideas*, 305.

tricity, provided the precedent for a sort of renaissance of the Renaissance reborn as Romanticism, separated by the gentleman artist of the eighteenth-century cast in a more Raphaelesque mold—never mind that Delacroix, for instance, had no admiration for Michelangelo's *non-finito*.⁹ But this was not to say that the Renaissance and Romanticism were similar, let alone *la maniera moderna* and modernism. The essential for Wittkower was that modern art be connected with Romanticism rather than with the Renaissance. The “degree of subjective and moral freedom that would bewilder even their romantic precursors” which for him characterized the post-Freudian artist,¹⁰ was not to be justified by reference to the Renaissance.

Wittkower believed that before the eighteenth century, *ingenium* and *ingegno* described a natural disposition, or talent; afterwards, in particular after Romanticism, genius began to convey an extraordinarily powerful creativity, far beyond the more prosaic realm of talent. Even the divinely inspired, Platonically mad, Saturnine and melancholic artist of the sixteenth century is for Wittkower but that upon which the Romantics derived their theory of genius, and moreover ungratefully, rather than a fundamentally similar phenomenon. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Blake and others inaugurated “a shift away from intellectualism toward an intuitive approach” together with an egomania:

recognizable in the untrammelled individualism of many twentieth-century artists and in their personality and social problems, though it must be admitted that the freedom they arrogate to themselves is in the last analysis derived from the revolution of the Italian Renaissance, the period in history on which they heap the fullness of their scorn.¹¹

In Wittkower's scheme, Romantic dedication to “spontaneity, outstanding originality, and exceptional creativity” acts as a kind of Dionysian opposite to the more Apollonian Renaissance. The distinctness of the two can be articulated in the contrast between talent and genius, individualism and originality.

An underlying issue is the teachability of art, largely subscribed to during “the long period of the individualism of style, deliberately derived from and based upon the serviceable repertory of a homoge-

⁹ “too hasty work, caused either by the fire with which the artist engaged upon it or else by the fatigue which probably seized him at the end of a labor impossible of completion,” *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, tr. W. Pach, New York, 1937, 308.

¹⁰ *Dictionary*, 304.

¹¹ *Dictionary*, 304.

neous artistic culture” versus the shift subsequently to “a gulf...between the great individualistic works of the chosen few and an impersonal [academic] art production,” which Wittkower dates to the nineteenth century. The Academy is in Wittkower’s eyes the enemy to individualism; Wittkower declines to date the origins of the Academy to the Renaissance, instead carefully drawing the line such that the Florentine Academy belongs to the next phase, that of the gentlemanly artist. The project of making artists into liberal rather than mechanical artists is an aspect of the period of less interest to Wittkower than to Kantorowicz: for the latter, comprehensive knowledge is an important step in making the analogy between the divine and the human agent, whereas for Wittkower, introspection is the source of originality and the universalizing claims of the learned artist remain for him as subsidiary as the academies that evolved to support those intellectual claims.

In general, Wittkower’s account is innocent of the theological and political implications Kantorowicz had emphasized. The metaphors of *deus artifex* and *alter deus* are mentioned but in passing.¹² Individualism, with explicit deference to Burckhardt, displaces questions of inspiration, which are deemed more appropriate to the nineteenth-century phenomenon and its “German aesthetic speculations,” rather than to the more rhetorically-based theory of invention in the Renaissance. Wittkower’s is a very secular, though very reverential, Renaissance.

Kantorowicz’s study had barely slipped into the fourteenth century; Wittkower’s account was telescoped in favor of the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. The historical gap was soon filled by Michael Baxandall and Martin Kemp, who each wrote important treatments of fifteenth-century Italian definitions of artistry within a few years of Wittkower’s article.¹³ Despite the closeness in date, the latter two inau-

¹² The former is a medieval formulation; the latter is attributed to Alberti by E. Zinsel, *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Antike und des Frühkapitalismus*, Tübingen, 1926, 276, although what he actually writes is “quasi alterum sese inter mortales deum praestaret,” *De pictura*, II, 25.; “sé porgesse quasi uno iddio,” Grayson, 1973, 46. Zinsel was working from a facing page German/Italian translation; the German omitted the “almost.” Charles de Tolnay covers the topic of Michelangelo’s divinization with a reference to Zinsel; *Michelangelo: The Final Period*, V, Princeton, 1960, 11.

¹³ Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition*, Oxford, 1971; Martin Kemp, “From ‘Mimesis’ to ‘Fantasia’: The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration, and Genius in the Visual Arts,” *Viator*, VII, 1977, 347–98. With regard to the Cinquecento, Jan Bialostocki in 1964 (published 1967) had suggested that *terribilità* needed to be understood in

gured a new, less reverential scholarship, one less confident that the Renaissance artist was unconstricted by social and cultural conventions of his time, one less convinced than Erwin Panofsky, for instance, of the equation between *all'antica* and a kind of super-historical realm of freedom and beauty. Complemented by Peter Burke's work on the social and cultural context of the artistic profession, also dating from the early 1970s, and since supplemented by Martin Warnke, the whole presents a revision of Panofsky's and Charles de Tolnay's more Platonic view of the artist-philosopher, a tradition most persistent in the work of David Summers. Although these more recent authors each provided a distinct point of view on the problem of describing why Renaissance artists were esteemed by their contemporaries more than their predecessors had been, they were united in sharing a degree of reserve relative to the heroization of Michelangelo in particular, which began to appear a somewhat Romantic and outdated opinion. The sixteenth-century was truncated at 1540 by Burke and spurned by Baxandall. Vasari, who in the nineteenth-century had been perhaps more beloved than Michelangelo, could now be so hedged with commentaries that the Renaissance would no longer feature Michelangelo's career as apotheosis. It was time to replace a Wagnerian art history with a more minimalist one. Yet the very place of Michelangelo in this less Michelangelo-centered universe remained indeterminate. Burckhardt's, Curtius', and Wittkower's conviction that Romanticism and the Renaissance should be kept distinct from one another, began to crumble with Kantorowicz, and ended definitively with Baxandall's and Alpers' *Tiepolo and Pictorial Intelligence* (1994), Koerner's *Moment of Self-Portraiture* (1993), and Kemp's "The 'Super-artist' as Genius" (1989). The result, however, was nothing short of paradox: a Romantic conception of the Renaissance from which the Artist as Hero had been largely expunged.

For Baxandall the crux of the matter was humanists' extension of the phrase "ars et ingenium" to visual artists: did they really mean it, or was it a reflexive formula?¹⁴ Was everything they said about artists more or less formulaic? Furthermore, was everything that was said in conventional terms automatically self-negating?

relation to the Greek *deinos*; 222–25. See also B. Schweitzer, "Der bildende Künstler und der Begriff des Künstlerischen in der Antike, Mimesis und Phantasia, Eine Studie," *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, II, 1925, 28–132.

¹⁴ Cf. Irving Lavin, "Memoria e sensi di sé. Sul ruolo della memoria nella teoria della psicologia dall'antichità a Giambattista Vico," in *La cultura della memoria*, eds. L. Bolzoni and P. Corsi, Bologna, 1992, 298.

The standard formulas (*cedat Apelles; ars simia naturae; pictura poema tacitum* in its unreflective sense; *signa spirantia* or *vultus viventes*) had become literary gestures without much active reference, and they tell us less, clearly, about attitudes to art than they do about the limitations of low-pressure humanism.¹⁵

Baxandall examined a humanist text, *De politia litteraria variisque poetae Virgilii laudibus* by Angelo Decembrio, a text which he himself did not rate at the highest (“a sort of Ferrarese commonplace book with dramatized episodes”). Nevertheless, his study elevated a portion of that rather extensive text to the rank of important counterexample in the flow of standard formulae of praise—though at a point in time (mid-fifteenth century) at which the praise was not yet standard. It was standard in Baxandall’s eyes because it involved phrases derived from ancient authors. Yet calling painting either poetical or more generally ingenious, even in phrases borrowed from the ancients, had no history at that time.

Angelo Decembrio was the brother of Pier Candido Decembrio, the opponent of Leonardo Bruni in a celebrated debate about liberty and the flourishing of artistic culture, in which Pier Candido Decembrio defended Milan and Bruni Florence.¹⁶ In this dialogue Ferrara in the person of Leonello is presented as the intermediary between the republic of Florence and the absolutism of Milan, the idea being that the form of government need not be crucial, provided that *civilitas* reigns.¹⁷

Leonello d’Este, well-known as a patron of painting, expounds to intimates of his court, prime among them the famous humanist Guarino, his view that poetry is more intellectual than painting:

The poets, Homer and Virgil particularly, often describe the appearance of natural objects: harbours, islands, pastures, trees, wild animals, human beings and figures of every kind. And besides, those things that cannot be shown by painting but can only be perceived by the mind—things that

¹⁵ M. Baxandall, “A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d’Este,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXVI, 1963, 304–26, with a suggested date of the 1450s, *terminus ante quem* 1462.

¹⁶ See James Hankins, “Rhetoric, history, and ideology: the civic panegyrics of Leonardo Bruni,” in *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections*, ed. J. Hankins, Cambridge, 2000, 143–78.

¹⁷ Albano Biondi, “Angelo Decembrio e la cultura del principe,” in *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, eds. G. Papagno and A. Quondam, Rome, 1982, II, 645–46; Stephen Campbell, *Cosmè Tura of Ferrara: Style, Politics and the Renaissance City, 1450–1495*, New Haven, 1997, 18.

nature alone can paint—they represent with so much accuracy that the art of the poets in description, just like that of the painters in coloring or of the sculptors in carving, may be seen as if put before our eyes. Indeed, even more clearly and subtly. For what painter could ever depict thunder and lightning, clouds and winds and the other elements of tempests as well as the poet does? What painter could draw the hissing of snakes, the concert of birds, the roar of men fighting, the groans of men dying? What painter has reproduced any of so many different kinds of sounds, even those of inanimate things? Or the colors of dawn, one moment red, the next yellow? Or the rising and the setting of the sun? They may try sometimes to portray these things, but in vain. Who will ever show through skill in colouring the darkness of night, or the shining moon, the many different movements of the constellations, the changes of the time of day or of the seasons? But let us say no more of the *ingenium* of writers: it is a divine thing and beyond the reach of painters [age nunc scriptorum ingenia uti rem divinam et pictoribus incomprehensibilem omittamus]. Let us return to things that are within the capacity of the human hand.¹⁸

As the concluding sentence implies, the visual arts are far from dismissed; they are in fact the primary topic at this point in the dialogue. That they are placed second to works of writing in a humanistic dialogue need scarcely startle us. To compare painters and sculptors, even disadvantageously, with Virgil and Homer was to compliment them, for it was to open the door to denying that what they did involved solely manual skill. Leonello himself more or less immediately puts his foot in that door. In this same dialogue, he allows, as though inadvertently, that an artist may possess *ingenium*:

the most commonplace poets describe anything they want more precisely and fully than any painter or gem-cutter can. What is Polycleitus compared to them, or Euphranor, or Athenodorus, called Palladius for the fineness of his modelling, or even Pyrgoteles with all the inner fire of his *ingenium* [quis pyrgoteles ardentis penitus ingenii].¹⁹

A fine gem-cutter may be lesser than a commonplace poet, but he is not without *ingenium*. If there is some cavil with the Horatian adage *ut pictor poësis*, we must remember that in the 1450s it is surprising to find this enunciated even in the homeland of Dante and Giotto; in Milan

¹⁸ Baxandall, 318–21. And further, “the *ingenium* of poets, depending as it does more upon the intellect, far surpasses the work of painters, realized as that is by skill of hand alone,” [poetarum ingenia: quae ad mentem plurimum spectant: longe pictorum opera superare: quae sola manus ope declarantur], 324–25.

¹⁹ Baxandall, 322–23.

it would presumably have met with stunned and uncomprehending silence.

Moreover, Leonello does not win the day. The conclusion is accorded his interlocutors, including Guarino and the court poet, Tito Vespasiano Strozzi, both of whom rather magnanimously laud painting. Guarino asserts that:

both painting and writing tend to one end: the encouragement of learning and the desire for knowledge. It was for this reason that the Greeks and the Romans often referred to both as *scriptura*. As Leonello will remember, we covered this point thoroughly when he was showing how almost the same principle underlay the *ingenium* of both poets and painters [cum de poetarum et pictorum ingeniis eandem fere rationem demonstraret].²⁰

Leonello concedes that indeed he does take an intellectual pleasure in the effigies on bronze coins (“quod intellectu solo precipitur”). Giovanni Gualengo cites the reverence he feels for a painting he owns of St. Jerome (“summa cum veneratione domi observo”), and Tito Strozzi opens a small box to reveal “no ancient Roman monument, but one of the modern glories of our Ferrara girls,” for whom he had recently penned an elogy in the tradition of *ut pictor poësis*. This witty move (he does it *facete*) on the part of the courtier provides pleasure (*dulce*) to all. Leonello has in a sense been undone, his intellectualism tweaked first by Gualengo’s pious reverence, and then by Strozzi’s pleasure—a true *docere et delectare*. The prince is led to the conclusion that he can and should admire painting, since paintings present objects of contemplation just as do both reading and the refined experience of nature.

Baxandall concedes that Leonello’s demurs are uncharacteristic of the time and inconsistent within the dialogue itself.²¹ The dialogue comes, moreover, from a court in which a member of the ruling family painted and made medals, namely Baldassare d’Este (1432-c. 1506), known as da Reggio but believed to be an illegitimate son of Niccolò III. Among his portrait subjects was Tito the poet. But Baxandall fails to conclude that Leonello’s seeming willfulness may be largely a literary device, intended to set up Guarino’s defense of *ingenium* wherever it may be found, in painter as in poet.

²⁰ Baxandall, 324–25.

²¹ Baxandall, 320–21, n. 53: “*Ingenium* was the personal, individual element in creation, making use of and vitalizing the impersonal *artificium* common to all poets ... Leonello’s position is against the run of mid-century opinion.”

Baxandall noted that a century before Decembrio's indirect and incomplete disavowal of painters' intellectual respectability, Boccaccio in the *Decameron* called Giotto's *ingegno* of such excellence that he could paint anything with such similarity to nature that often people believed "esser vero che era dipinto."²² For Baxandall the implication was that vernacular culture spewed out sincere compliment to artists earlier and with less attention to traditional social and intellectual hierarchies than the Latin.

Filippo Villani, in his "semi-humanist account" of great Florentines written in 1381–82,²³ praised the *arte et ingenium* of painters in general, as well as of Cimabue, Giotto, and others in particular. Baxandall discounted this as a formulaic response by a second-rate intellectual, a rather significant and potentially contentious reinterpretation of what had previously been taken as a landmark declaration—by a man of letters—in favor of the artistic profession. The avowal Panofsky had deemed "bold," a direct ancestor to Vasari's exultation of the arts of design, is here reduced to "notorious commonplace."²⁴ Similarly, Baxandall takes Filippo Villani's inclusion of *buffoni* immediately following the essay on painters and similarly citing antique precedent, as evidence that Villani's eulogy of Giotto and other fourteenth-century painters (Maso, Stephano, Thaddeo) does not count. For Baxandall, Villani simply had no other way to discuss them than by making a comparison he did not really mean—neither Giotto, nor Gonnella, nor the astronomer Pagolo de' Dagomari did he really judge to be superior to the ancients. Villani wanted more to use the ancient formula of praise than to express genuine regard for painters, or so Baxandall would have us believe.

For Baxandall, the proximate placement of painters and buffoons carries great significance. That Roscius really was a famous comedian in ancient Rome, that Matteo Bandello hailed Gonella for his "acutezza e sublimità de l'ingegno,"²⁵ that *De politaria litteraria* ends in wit (*facete*), that Dosso Dossi was later described by Vasari as being favored by Duke Alfonso of Ferrara not least because he was "uomo affabile molto e piacevole," that Castiglione reported how the painter

²² "to be true that which was painted," *Giotto*, 74.

²³ *Giotto*, 78.

²⁴ *Giotto*, 72.

²⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, "Le peintre et le bouffon: le 'Portrait de Gonella' de Jean Fouquet," *Revue de l'art*, III, 1996, 25–39.

Messer Andrea dressed up as Pasquino and performed for the amusement of Pope Clement VII together with the buffoon Ambrosio,²⁶ that Burckhardt considered “der moderne Spott und Hohn” to be a necessary “corrective” of the emphasis on fame and individualism characteristic of the period,²⁷ cannot erase for him the indignity of such a position. Artists are preceded by musicians, rhetoricians, physicians, lawyers, theologians, and, in the first place, poets. A hierarchy is surely implicit; the issue is whether genuine respect does not extend to the very bottom of the list. Lodovico Domenichi supposed in the mid-sixteenth century that “great rulers very much enjoy men of this sort [simple, cheerful, peasants],” and by extension, presumably, buffoons as their surrogates, the Shakespearean clowns.²⁸

When Villani compared Giotto to Cimabue, Baxandall saw this as a routine re-working of Pliny’s comparison of Apollodorus and Zeuxis. Villani’s invocation of *ars et ingenium* as a “compound quality for praise,”²⁹ Baxandall denotes as a clumsy appropriation of humanist categories which in the tradition of Quintilian were meant to differentiate quite exactly the prerogatives of rule and discipline from those of innate talent. As Quintilian pregnantly put it:

the greatest qualities of the orator are beyond all imitation, by which I mean talent, invention, force, facility, and all the qualities which are independent of art.³⁰

Villani’s elision of *arte* and *ingenium* as applied to painters betrays carelessness, according to Baxandall. He simply couldn’t have meant the latter.

In Baxandall’s hands *De politia litteraria* becomes a telling moment of reckoning, a corrective of all the formulaic praises, beginning in the fourteenth century, of painters for *arte et ingenium*, or *arte e ingegno*. The two words, taken from Quintilian, were so glued to one another, Baxandall argued, that humanists often applied them to painters almost by rote, and without really meaning what they said. Yet Quintilian himself

²⁶ J. Cartwright, *Baldassare Castiglione, The Perfect Courtier*, II, London, 1908, 218.

²⁷ *Kultur*, 115.

²⁸ L. Domenichi, *Facezie*, ed. G. Fabris, Rome, 1923 [1548], 249: “i principi grandi sogliono dilettersi molto degli uomini di questa sorte [contadino...d’animo semplice e schietto].”

²⁹ *Giotto*, 74.

³⁰ “quod ea, quae in oratore maxima sunt, imitabilia non sunt, ingenium, inventio, vis, facilitas et quidquid arte non traditur;” Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, X, II, 12, tr. H.E. Butler, London, IV, 1922.

had been quite capable of using these terms fluidly—independently of one another; contrasting *arte* (theory) and *studio* (diligence); using *ingenium* to mean that which is immortal, but also to refer to that native intelligence which the young have and which education must perfect if they are to amount to anything. For instance, “the man who is not hampered by lack of natural ability [ingenium] will by dint of persistent study be enabled, when it comes to speaking, to rely no less on what he has thought out than what he has written out and learnt by heart.”³¹ Here *ingenium* figures as the *sine qua non* for the good works of *studio*: Baxandall’s scheme insists that *ingenium* is prior not chronologically but in prestige, and allows for no significant distinction between *arte* and *studio*. Quintilian himself, in fact, does not routinely twin *arte et ingenium*; this is an artifact of the medieval tradition of poetical exegesis. For the Romans, Cicero excelled above all others partly because he combined both the ability to teach rhetoric (*arte*) and a talent (*praecipua lux*) for being himself eloquent.³² Ariosto in the sixteenth century would praise Alberti, Brunelleschi, and Vitruvius for “l’artificio e ’l senno.”³³

Without Decembrio, Baxandall could still have claimed that the discourse about the visual arts was a meaningless echo of ancient compliment by people who wanted to voice the sentiments of the ancients more than they wanted to think about painting. But armed with Decembrio’s text, he could validate resistance to the idea of artists’ *ingenium* to such an extent that the customary opinion—the view, one might say in 60’s terms, of the Establishment—was treated as though inconsequential. Only nonconformity seems to matter, in Baxandall’s account. As he puts it with presumably intentional McKluenesque echo: “the [classical] words [*arte et ingenium*] were the system.”³⁴ Yet the dialogue itself belies the existence of any very effective systematic structure for conceptualizing creativity. Decembrio and his interlocutors seem to be grappling with cultural change, rather than, as Baxandall would have it, stiffly intoning old phrases.

³¹ *Ibid.*, X, vi, 4.

³² Quintilian, *I.O.*, III, 20: “Praecipuum vero lumen sicut eloquentiae ita praeceptis quoque eius dedit, unicum apud nos specimen orandi docendique oratorias artes.”

³³ Ariosto, *Cinque Canti*, 97.

³⁴ *Giotto*, 17. Baxandall frequently cites Francesco Tateo, *‘Retorica’ e ‘Poetica’ fra medioevo e rinascimento*, Rome, 1960, in support of his argument. Tateo cites the same passage in Quintilian X, 2, 12; see 116–17, n. 1; and Curtius. See also 87: “L’*ingenium* è il genio poetico.”

Well before Baxandall wrote there existed a scholarly consensus that ancient rhetorical treatises underlay Alberti's landmark treatise *On Painting*.³⁵ Baxandall succeeded in extending the rhetorical model to the visual arts beginning with Petrarch and implying its extension into the sixteenth century. But he also took the crucial step of identifying the scope of innate *ingenium* with matters of invention, whereas those pertaining more purely to style he paired with the acquired skills of *ars*.³⁶ Thereby Alberti's directive that invention might be left to men of letters (*eruditus ingenii*) became implicitly an expression of misgiving about the *ingenium* of artists.

Baxandall argued for a fair amount of discontinuity between the vernacular and Latinate cultures of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, observing that Quintilian's vocabulary and phraseology carried much authority with humanists such as Bartolomeo Fazio, but that when Landino (1424–1504) discussed artists in the vernacular, in his Preface to Dante in 1481, he chose not to employ the cognate Italian words from his own translation of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*. Instead he spoke of contemporary artists in his own terms. The art became "puro," "gratioso," "ornato," "vezzoso," or "devoto" rather than "austero," "florido," "duro," "grave," "severo," "liquido," or "quadro." The technique might show "rilievo," "facilità," "prospettivo," or "scorci." The artist he might choose to laud as "imitatore della natura," "disegnatore," or "amatore delle difficoltà;" the art itself as displaying "varietà," "compositione," or "colorire;" the figures as "prompto."³⁷ So although Quintilian's phrase *ars et ingenium* determined some of the categories by which painting would be analyzed by the learned from Petrarch's time through what Baxandall refers to as "the heavy-footed sixteenth-century theoretical discussion,"³⁸ the vernacular culture was capable of inventing more at will. Not least among these would be, eventually (and beyond Baxandall's purview), *divino*.

Use of the epithet "divino" of artists raises similar methodological issues to those raised by Baxandall's appeal to Decembrio: again a topos, and therefore easily—though not necessarily rightly—dismissed

³⁵ On which, see, Bialostocki, 225, n. 22; and, more recently, Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Renaissance*, New York, 2000.

³⁶ On the latter term, see the classic article by Paul Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," in *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays*, Princeton, 1980 (1965), 163–227.

³⁷ *Painting*, 117.

³⁸ *Giotto*, 17.

as a routine and thoughtless verbal label. But for Baxandall, *ingenium* implies what came from nature, not from God. In this, again, Quintilian will not serve him as adequate precedent, since Quintilian speaks of Homer as one who “transcend[s] the limits of human genius” (*humanii ingenii modum excedit*), and who achieves, in a pre-eighteenth-century sense, sublimity [*sublimitate*].³⁹ The questions of what range of things the compliments meant, an artist’s having *ingenium* or *ingegno* and an artist’s being divine, are linked, once we admit that not all sixteenth-century discussion was particularly theoretical and not all fifteenth-century dialogue was fleet-footed only when it skirted classical tags, that sometimes familiar words, even pairs of words, served malleable ideas rather than static systems of thought.

Baxandall did not raise the issue of how humanists’ attitudes toward artists might have varied from court to republic, from successful men to dissatisfied and even resentful ones, from those with more Greek bias in their learning to those without. He provided no evidence other than Decembrio’s ambivalent dialogue that *ingenium* was refused to artists, though there is a famous instance in the sixteenth century. Mario Equicola, a Mantuan humanist (though writing in Italian) denied in 1541 in no uncertain terms that painters were intellectuals:

Painting is the accomplishment and effort of the body more than of the soul, practiced by cretins most of the time.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, a history of explicit denials of *ingenium* and *ingegno* to artists would be short.

The vernacular culture interacted constantly with that of ancient languages; this Baxandall does acknowledge. But for him the significant point is to challenge the notion that artists were gradually and unproblematically accorded praise by humanists. Instead, he intends to show how the reference to classical formula inhibited meaning. He emphasized how rigid were the conceptual categories humanists were willing to use, to the point of self-defeating; art criticism in Italian, by contrast, is deemed “triumphantly vernacular.”⁴¹

Baxandall’s work attempted to push into the sixteenth century the moment of any resolute and deliberate use of the term *ingenium* of artists—and thereby into the time in which the prerogatives of ancient

³⁹ X, i, 50.

⁴⁰ “È la pittura opera e fatica più del corpo che dell’animo, dagli idioti esercitata il più delle volte,” *Scritti d’arte del Cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi, I, Milan, 1971, 259.

⁴¹ *GiOTTO*, 11.

languages were often challenged and sometimes defied. Indeed by the sixteenth century the issue of the use of the Latinate concept, *ingenium*, although not null and void, certainly carried none of its earlier urgency. Baxandall, however, meant, and he made this explicit, to analyze the language of humanism, thereby sacrificing any estimation of the cultural place of humanism itself in the larger society, or any elaboration of cogent subcategories of humanism. The degree to which the language of compliment might reflect a larger social and political ambient is discounted relative to its reference to the most sophisticated intellectual ambient, that is, humanism. In this he acts as indirect heir to Panofsky, who elevated the heuristic value of humanism, deliberately or not, as an antidote to Nazi appropriation of classicizing culture. Whatever their claims upon the classical heritage, the Nazis could never be confused with humanists. Even before that became a sensitive issue, he had rejected the art history of Walter Friedländer with its emphasis on the classical and anti-classical, using humanism and neo-Platonism to obviate Friedländer's dichotomy.

Baxandall had skirted entirely the issue of more elaborate High Renaissance eulogy and its resemblance to Romantic claims on behalf of artistic creativity, confining himself to a period in which remarks about the status of the visual arts were, by his own estimation, typically casual, concise to the point of laconic, and highly conventional. Ensconcing the phrase *arte et ingenium* more solidly than ever Quintilian had and insisting upon specifics of its interpretation suited Baxandall's own theory of art. The "period eye," a modernist renovation of the term *Zeitgeist*, permitted "a newly impersonal sense of what artistic style can be," to borrow a phrase from Baxandall's own quiver.⁴² That phrase was the foundation stone of what became in *Painting and Experience in Renaissance Italy* the theory of the "period eye," or "cognitive style."⁴³ "Period eye" was a clear opposite to the cult of personality in the history of art. For Baxandall, *ingenium* was a personal quality, and therefore not to be emphasized.

Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) too had been sparing in his use of the word *ingegno*, which he had translated variously as "genius" or "men-

⁴² The same may be said of his treatment of northern art, in that he finds in social factors c. 1500 (namely, the attempt to establish a stylistic identity as German or Italianate); Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven, 1980, 142.

⁴³ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Oxford, 1972, Ch. II.

tal gift.”⁴⁴ Perhaps because he grew up in a period significantly closer to Romanticism, the idea of special talent he took more or less for granted, but for him the more interesting story was that of changing culture, specifically the development of art and its theory in response to humanism. For humanists the example of antiquity loomed large, and for Panofsky the Renaissance artist appeared all the more like the artist of antiquity as he looked less like the troubled, brooding and self-centered oracles of Romantic art. Panofsky’s Michelangelo is distinctive in the field for his philosophical rather than aggravatedly artistic temperament: he is immensely great, without being anything other than wholly exemplary; he is tormented, but more by human weakness than by any trait peculiar to himself—certainly not by any sexual proclivity. His Michelangelo thrives on a dialectic between the Christian and the classical, the synthesis of which is identical with Michelangelo’s thoroughgoing (according to Panofsky) Neo-Platonism. Michelangelo’s special talent, his *ingegno*, is not yet imbued with Baroque subjectivity: it lies in his philosophical orientation itself. *Ingegno* is not an important concept for Panofsky’s analysis because—oddly enough—it is so little different from Reason. Neo-Platonic inspiration automatically sublimates individuality.

Antiquity is distinguished for Panofsky not only as idealizing art but ideal art. Panofsky’s Hegelianism validated for him the importance of the dialectic between nature and art, which forms the essence of art *all’antica*—including its impersonality. It also sponsors continuity as one of the essential themes in history. What could Renaissance artists be other than proto-Romantic, if all of history tends toward that which comes after? And indeed Panofsky finds Dürer to be just that, one who:

could fuse the Neo-Platonic theory of genius with the axioms of German mysticism—the acceptance of the irrational, the idea of a direct communion or even fusion with the mind divine, and the respect for the irreducibly individual—into what may be called, with all due reservations, a Proto-Romantic interpretation of art.⁴⁵

Dürer, the very artist who would for Kemp exemplify the controlled aspect of Renaissance creativity, bound by the dictates of decorum and notions of the disciplinarity of the liberal arts, for Panofsky personified a somewhat alarmingly absolute force. As he expressed it in the language of the post-war period:

⁴⁴ E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, New York, 1972 (1960), 14, 15.

⁴⁵ E. Panofsky, *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer*, Princeton, 1955 (1943), 282.

it was by means of the graphic arts that Germany finally attained the rank of a Great Power in the domain of art, and this chiefly through the activity of one man.⁴⁶

For Panofsky—and he is distinctive in this—individuality very definitely is not the crux of understanding Renaissance creativity; nor is the subjective imagination. The point, he tells us, is transcendence above individuality, achieved by only the rarest of individuals. What might look like individual achievement carries more elemental weight. Its excellence is to be understood as a rarification rather than an individuation. To some of his successors, the Nietzschean and Wagnerian flavor of this was a bit strong; to others the humanistic emphasis used to counterbalance the *Übermensch* idea was itself old-fashioned by the standards of the Viet Nam era.

David Summers, in another prominent recent exposition of Renaissance *ingegno*, this one based on sources of the sixteenth century, observes the same juxtaposition of *ingegno* with *arte* as Baxandall, but places this in a hierarchy rather than a dichotomy.⁴⁷ *Arte* occupies the lowest rung, *ingegno* the middle, and *grazia* the highest. In Summers' view, the theory of art and its instantiation by various academies designates a role for the irrational, and therefore the dichotomy between inspiration and learning is a false one.

Ingegno pertains, in Summers' understanding, to form rather than to matter.⁴⁸ Its etymological link to engineering is important, for it describes the ability of the artist to make things seem alive. The artist when praised for *ingegno* is more valued than the technician who practices *arte*, but still lies well within the realm of ordinary human accomplishment. Summers translates the word somewhat idiosyncratically as "striving."⁴⁹ It implies for him a very human kind of rational endeavor; art as a science, which the level involving *grazia* precisely is not. One may engineer lifelikeness, whereas achieving the more elusive quality of

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3. See also Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History*, Ithaca, 1984.

⁴⁷ David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, 1981, 218. See also, *idem*, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics*, Cambridge, 1987, 99–101, on Avicenna's usage "on a continuous scale running from mere cleverness to prophetic vision." For Noel Brann, *The Debate over the Origin of Genius during the Italian Renaissance: The Theories of Supernatural Frenzy and Natural Melancholy in Accord and in Conflict on the Threshold of the Scientific Revolution*, Leiden, 2002, the phrase plays no part.

⁴⁸ *Language*, 207, following Benedetto Varchi. Baxandall had instead associated *ingegno* with invention, *ars* with style; *Giotto*, 15.

⁴⁹ *Language*, 132.

beauty involves what would later have been called a certain *je ne sais quoi* and belongs to the realm of *grazia*. The crux of the problem posed by Summers' work is the historical legitimacy of that intuitive realm. Curtius might well ask, what is meant by references to *grazia* and *terribilità* in art before eighteenth-century dedication to the notion of the sublime?⁵⁰ And is it so neatly divisible from references to *ingegno*, and from rationality, as Summers claims? Quintilian, for example, praises the *ingenium* and the *grazia* of Apelles.⁵¹ Some distinction is clearly intended—the former is closer to intelligence, the latter to good instinct—but we may long speculate about the degree and the transferability of that distinction, particularly when Apelles' praises were shrunk to his Plinian citation for *charis*. Was the *ingenium* then implicit, or not?

Summers echoes Panofsky's metaphysics, but without the ballast of dedication to humanism as a fairly practical endeavor, au fond. His description of Renaissance theory is itself academic, at the same time that it attempts to reconcile sixteenth-century academies with metaphysical extravagance in a way that never occurred to Wittkower, for instance. Summers' Michelangelo is as neurotically introverted as Wittkower's, but he functions as the exemplar of theory rather than its frustration.

Martin Kemp's work on Quattrocento construals of *ingenium* followed closely upon Baxandall's, but with two important distinctions: he established a Greek rather than a vernacular alternative to *ingenium*, namely *fantasia*,⁵² which conveyed a stronger element of originality than of imitation; and secondly, he went on to analyze notions of divine genius in the sixteenth century. *Arte* and *ingenium* were presented as a pair rather than as opposites; Kemp refers to the "universal insistence of all art theorists during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that rational learning, studious application and manual discipline are absolutely essential if inborn talent is to reach fruition."⁵³ But whereas the theory of *ingenium* fostered an art dedicated to *imitatione*, Kemp contended that an art theory which encompassed *fantasia* led toward the cult of originality. The distinction between Renaissance and eighteenth-century thought that had been fundamental to Wittkower and to Paul Kristeller began

⁵⁰ For disputes about the legitimacy of the upper registers of that hierarchy, see Charles Dempsey's review of Summers, *Burlington Magazine*, CXXV, 1983, 624–27.

⁵¹ "ingenio et gratia, quam in se ipse maxime iactat, Apelles est praestantissimus," Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, XII, x, 6.

⁵² Certainly known to Romans; see Quintilian XII, x.

⁵³ "From 'Mimesis,'" 49.

to dissolve in Kemp's formulation: "a few supremely gifted individuals, whom I have called "super-artists" were seen as having achieved a near-immortal status through their transcendent talents."⁵⁴

For Martin Kemp the concept of *ingegno* made it possible for humanists to admire artists.⁵⁵ By humanists' standards, artists counted as uneducated; for the proponents of educational reform to champion the uneducated, some device for conceptualizing non-manual talent other than by sheer intellect was needful. To cite artists' *ingegno* was to laud their abilities without giving them direct credit for their accomplishments. The humanists prided themselves on long nights of arduous study; as with poets, the reputation for in-born talent was a two-edged sword and might just as well count against you as for you. Dürer, educationally inferior to humanists but more learned by far than New World savages, in his turn expressed admiration for the subtle *ingenia* of the people in the New World who had made the gold objects he saw in Antwerp in 1521. Because *ingenium* was unearned, to recognize it arguably took more credit than to have it.

Ingegno refers in Kemp's account to an innate quality or individuality which may yet be quite earthbound in its bent. Vernacular or Latinate, fifteenth or sixteenth century, the term is ever complex in his account. Kemp's primary exemplars of the quality are Dürer and Michelangelo, each of which he portrays as having been seen as somewhat problematic a figure, if only by definition in being beyond the governance of teachable rules of art. That, after all, remained the norm. Yet Dürer and Michelangelo were aberrant more on account of inborn talent than a full-blown Romantic frustrated will to transcendence. Kemp's version of Renaissance *ingegno* validates a sketch; it does not drive one to suicide. Dürer's engraving of *St. Jerome*, he suggests is more acceptable as a meditation upon Dürer's own cognitive universe than the *Melencolia I*, which Panofsky had famously termed a spiritual self-portrait.

Indeed, according to Kemp, *ingegno* may be allied with *arte* and with *scientia*. He argues that what ultimately distinguishes the Renaissance usage of the word *ingegno* is its essential harmony with, or at least counterpoint with, rule. The word *ingegno*, among others including *fantasia*, *invenzione*, *intelletto*, *spirito*, and *furore*, refer to artistic inspiration, but a mild and reasonable kind of inspiration, closer to enthusiasm

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Martin Kemp, "The 'Super-Artist' as Genius: The Sixteenth-Century View," in *Genius: The History of an Idea*, ed. Penelope Murray, Oxford, 1989, 32–53.

than to a fit, at least during the fifteenth century. Michelangelo represents an extreme. In particular, Michelangelo's Florentine funeral, that orchestrated recouping by the Duchy of the tetchy republican's remains, afforded the occasion for lavish language of eulogy, the like had been heard previously only for Charles V, Kemp asserts.⁵⁶

Kemp uses, then, the familiar pairing of *ingegno* with *arte* to regulate Dürer's genius as distinct from Romantic flamboyance; it is less clear that he succeeds in separating, or even intends to separate, Michelangelo's divinity from Romantic prerogatives. Indeed, he cites Dürer's *Melencolia I* as a more apt gloss on Michelangelo's creativity than on Dürer's. As explanation he observes that Pietro Aretino, the notorious and pioneering publicist, carried the practice of compliment far outside the bounds of Vasari's *campanelismo*, and, secondly, that Dante's much-discussed reputation offered a precedent. If Kemp's account does distinguish between Michelangelo's extravagant reputation and that of Romantic genius (pre-eminently Beethoven rather than Delacroix), it does so by emphasizing the innate abilities of the Renaissance sculptor in combination with his Neo-Platonic intellectual context versus the antipathetic relationship of the Romantic artist with his socio-economic realities—one might say, his materialistic rather than his philosophical grievances with the world.

For Kemp, the crux of understanding what was meant in referring to the *ingegno* of figures such as Dürer and Michelangelo lies in an unteachability that was not necessarily so extravagant a quality as proto-Romantic genius. The academies developing as early, possibly, as Lodovico Sforza's Milan and more reliably by the later sixteenth century, reflected trust in the arts as teachable, moreover as teachable en masse in an institutional setting. This development runs counter to a cultural promotion of artistic genius. Michelangelo, *ingegno divino*, was a loner. Indeed, the tension between the Albertian ambition to integrate painting into the liberal arts and the Vasarian program of elevating the notion of artist to hagiographical heights is largely ignored by Baxandall because of chronological restraints. Kemp follows Wittkower in acknowledging the demands of academic regulation as a boundary for sixteenth-century theories of creativity unheeded in the nineteenth

⁵⁶ See *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy's Homage on his Death in 1564, A Facsimile Edition of "Esequie del divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti,"* Florence, 1564, tr. and ed. R. and M. Wittkower, Greenwich, Ct., 1964.

century. By breaking with the Academy, Romantic artists accomplished what Renaissance artists had chosen not to.

Martin Kemp succeeded in broadening the scope of the issue chronologically and linguistically. Yet for him, too, the problem of interpreting *ingenium*, and its correlate terms, such as *fantasia*, lay in gauging whether a personal and individualized essence was thereby invoked, or some more universal quality better translated as intelligence. Whereas for Baxandall, the fact that *ingenium* did entail an innate, personal element raised obstacles for its genuine application to artists, for Kemp a similar understanding of the term led to a more direct confrontation with the Romantic conception of artistic genius, a development even more pronounced in Joseph Koerner's book of 1993, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture*. Both Kemp and Koerner established a stream of scholarship that implicitly countered Erwin Panofsky's emphasis on the essential Neo-Platonism of Renaissance aesthetics, the striving for a perfect beauty reconcilable with, indeed the product of, rational thought. Panofsky's theory of the Renaissance as a time that harked to the distant antique past—not casually or intermittently, but systematically and fundamentally—matched his interpretation of Renaissance art as alluding to Platonic ideals. For him, the purification of nature by antique artists mirrors the distillation of material imperfection by Platonic Forms. With Baxandall the period eye corresponds to a fairly impersonal notion of artistic selfhood, which relies more on an incipient sense of ethnic identity (*all'antica* or *Welsch*) than on individuality. Koerner magnifies the notion of *Welsch* which Baxandall had introduced, to the point where it denominates the artistic ferment of c. 1500. Denominated *Gewalt*,⁵⁷ it becomes the font of untrainable artistic selfhood that renders the program of integration with the liberal artists absurd.⁵⁸ In both Baxandall's and Koerner's accounts, *ingenium* is relatively unimportant; *vis* has moved above *ingenium* in Quintilian's list of inimitable elements of artistry.

Joseph Koerner, like Kemp, focuses on the relationship between early modern and Romantic genius. Not to be contented with Panofsky's phrase, "with all due reservations," as used above to compare Renaissance and Romantic genius, his entire book on Dürer and the also ingenious but somewhat diabolical Baldung Grien responds to and chides

⁵⁷ "*Gewalt*, suggesting both strength and violence...he [Dürer] attributed it particularly to the artists of Germany," Koerner, 332.

⁵⁸ This is done with acknowledgment of Foucault: see esp. 40, 53, 353.

Panofsky on this count among others. Following Baxandall, he takes as ordinary a pairing of “art” with rule, versus *ingenium* as implying an indissolubly personal talent. *Ingenium* refers to that which cannot be the result of training. And like Summers, he introduces a notion of the artist as one empowered: not in this case like an engineer who uses reason, but like a peasant realizing that he who had been servile might now dominate.⁵⁹

Koerner’s account takes the apparent claim to creativity analogous to God’s and declines to ask the obvious: is this a pious statement or not? Neither Dürer’s intention, were it perfectly reconstructable, nor contemporary commentaries offer much that seems to him to the point. That is to be found, instead, in Dürer’s role-taking itself, in the act of looking at himself being looked at. Neo-Platonic doctrine becomes in Dürer’s mind not a source for a theory of inspiration, but a catalyst for rethinking the whole project of art. Dürer is seen not merely as imitating Christ in his Munich self-portrait but as appropriating divine creativity. Since Dürer’s new creativity with his sense of self is mediated most importantly by the ongoing historical process of religious Reformation, the German experience lies now closer to the core of the epochal development than the Italian (as it was arguably, also for Panofsky, who likewise dwelt on the admixture there of the Neo-Platonic philosophy with German spirituality).

The phrase “arte et ingenium” runs throughout the stream of scholarship that counters Panofsky’s dependence upon “Idea,” together with a rather rigid exposition of it as balancing the rule-bound and the intuitive (in twentieth-century terms, nurture and nature), qualities which Panofsky had reconciled in a Platonic hierarchy. The notion that *ingegno* dignifies the irreducibly personal is bound up thereby with a commitment to a fairly static understanding of that word and its Latin cognate. Baxandall’s commitment to various impersonal understandings of Renaissance style, i.e., the period eye, is a consequence to his identification of *arte* with style, and of both art and style with rule. This position would have been very hard to carry into the sixteenth century, particularly a sixteenth century in which Mannerism was the focus of much attention, but was tenable for the fifteenth and eighteenth.

⁵⁹ Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, Chicago, 1993, esp. 213, and 490, n. 56: “In the *Bauernkrieg* of 1525, *Gewalt* means something like “freedom” and is often what the rebelling peasants demand.”

Burckhardt, for all his brilliance and accomplishment, muddied our grasp of the esteem available for artists with his notion of universality, “the Renaissance man.” In Burckhardt’s book the chapter on the manysidedness of Leonardo and Alberti followed immediately one on cosmopolitanism, as a kind of corollary. Yet Burckhardt’s criterion of “l’uomo universale” hardly matters to any Renaissance writer on art. Vasari certainly praises Michelangelo’s stretch across media, and beyond, to poetry, but he dispraises those who get distracted from their art, such as Pontormo, Parmigianino, and even Leonardo.⁶⁰ “L’uomo universale” served as Burckhardt’s antidote to the enthusiasm for untrammelled poetical genius; it was his defense of the learned painter, but a somewhat partial defense by a latter-day humanist. As part of the same tack, Burckhardt cast the three crowns of Florence as “Poet-enphilologen,”⁶¹ thereby allying them more with the antique than with irrational inspiration.

Burckhardt’s *Vielseitigkeit* rivals the anachronism of Romantic genius, so promoted by Michelet, as a block to our understanding of Renaissance notions of being an artist. *Ingegno* even in the sixteenth century may connote merely mind, earthbound and artbound. Neither catchword—individuality nor universality—can reconcile us with the written and visual evidence pertaining to the issue of what made artists ordinary or not, in the opinion of their contemporaries.

Our scholarship has been slowly working its way out of the dichotomy established so eloquently by Michelet and Burckhardt, the Renaissance of the inspired individual versus the universal man, with Panofsky carrying on the Burckhardtian tradition, and Kemp and Koerner partially reviving Michelet’s. Baxandall gave us a rather Panofskian or classicizing view, but one in which reception theory in combination with a focus on the fifteenth century had nearly obliterated the artist-hero, and a mistrust of classical formulae had vitiated the force of classical thought.

It has been my intention here to avoid the dichotomy between a more Romantic conception of the history of art, in which the historian’s task is to trace the increasing personalization of the artist’s contribution,

⁶⁰ Vasari, IV, 19, of Leonardo: “e tanti furono i suoi capricci, che filosofando de le cose naturali, attese a intendere la proprietà delle erbe, continuando et osservando il moto del cielo, il corso, de la luna e gl’andamenti del sole.”

⁶¹ *Kultur*, 151.

and a more classical one, which implies some transhistorical perfection not merely in one or more artists' minds but with some metaphysical essence (in Panofsky's case, Platonic; in Baxandall's, the evolving period eye). At the same time that we acknowledge the long continuity of artistic theory between the Renaissance and the nineteenth century as one of the fundamental facts of western culture, we need to find a usage of *ingegno* and *ingenium* that does not bear the burden of that later history but which is distinctive to the breadth of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A perpetually fluid, yet far from chaotic, understanding of the words *arte* and *ingenium* promises an alternative. The rigidity with which that phrase became ensconced in the scholarship transformed the formula into an unacknowledged analogue of our own nature/nurture controversy, rather than merely revealing a distant precursor. *Arte et ingenium* was a phrase not routinely intended to be derogative of either quality, but usually intended instead to promote moderation via their admixture. The mutual antagonism that Baxandall read into the pairing—their use as opposites rather than as complements—is not of the Renaissance.

Art historical analysis of *ingenium* and *ingegno* has been plagued by dichotomies and hierarchies that defy the seeming casualness and idiosyncrasies, not to say the sheer range, of sixteenth-century references. Vasari at times uses the word to convey little more than cleverness, for instance, in a description of a painting by Fra Bartolommeo, the figures shown listening to music are called “avvertenzie e spiriti veramente ingegnosi” (“well-devised”, one might translate this as, or “lively”, as Summers suggests).⁶² Michelangelo, in a dialogue written by a fellow Florentine, Donato Gianotti, blamed strife on the operation of *ingegni*.⁶³ Leonardo, when he labored long in front of the head of Christ in the *Last Supper* without ever touching a brush, was displaying the realm of *ingegno* identifiable neither with technique (*arte*) nor inborn ability, but rather, an inhibiting critical acumen, a sign of intelligence but not of ability in any simple sense. Pirckheimer's engraved portrait by Dürer refers to the sitter's deathless intellect (VIVITUR INGENIO CAETERA MORTIS), a reference seemingly closer to Panofsky's analyses than to those that tie *ingenium* to the personal self. In the fifteenth

⁶² Vasari, Bettarini and Barocchi, IV, 96.

⁶³ Giannotti, 3: “da questi ingegni così fatti forse sono nate l'alterationi, et ruine della Toscana nostra.”

century, a young man was said to be “gentile e di buono ingegno,” not implying any god-given talent, but simply a pleasant and willing disposition.⁶⁴

If *ingegno* had uniformly conveyed the idea of innate talent, the epithet *divino* might have lent emphasis and an air of religiosity at best. For Quintilian, as a pagan with a different estimation of the line between divine and mortal, to compare a man and a god, or to call so human a mental capacity as memory divine, was not a big step.⁶⁵ But in a Christian culture, the issue was more sensitive. The construal of *ingegno* itself was complicated.

If what might be implied by *ingegno* could encompass intelligence without distinguishing native versus learned components, dexterity whether verbal or manual, talent be it in elocution, musicianship, or draughtsmanship, or simply a caniness about knowing what will work in given circumstances, then the interaction of the concepts *arte* and *ingegno* is a topic rather than a formula. They become less antitheses than highly interactive partners. To take the further step of dubbing an artist or an artist’s *ingegno* and/or *arte* divine is to invoke an unstable configuration of political, social, literary, philosophical, and religious significances.

Can we set praise of artists within an overall economy of compliment? For surely in order to understand epithets of praise for artists, we have to know how those words were used of other people? How did changing self-consciousness about social artifice affect artistic production, quite beyond the history of style already much studied? Are we guilty of giving the term *ingegno* so illustrious a pedigree that we have blinded ourselves to how informally the word was bandied about, and, if so, where can we find evidence to help us reconstruct the normal range of early modern attitudes toward the intellectual abilities and aspirations of artists?

In a recent study William Wallace described Michelangelo as “a designer and and a building supervisor, a genius and an artisan.”⁶⁶ In Hubert Damisch’s book on beauty, Michelangelo is not mentioned. Not just a change in taste, this represents instead a change in the notion of norm. Michelangelo’s particular art does not serve his thesis well for

⁶⁴ Morelli, 146.

⁶⁵ See Quintilian, *I.O.*, XI, i, 62: “divine Cicero servavit;” XI, ii, 7: “quanta vis esset eius, quanta divinitas illa [memoria].”

⁶⁶ Wallace, 4.

vaguely Freudian reasons, but beside that, Damisch thinks in terms of “regimes of production,” and presumably that opens the possibility of regime change. He uses the word masterpiece in quotation marks, and the word genius too.⁶⁷ Michelangelo simply is not great for Damisch in the sense for which he was to Vasari and others; no one artist could be.

Twentieth-century cultural upheavals—from the decline of Latinity to Freudianism, from Nazism with its attempted appropriation of the classical past to communism, from the atomic age to computerization and the development of genetics—have variously affected our aims and emphases in writing a history of artistic *ingenium* during the Renaissance. The stated goals of such studies have metamorphosed in ways that clearly have more to do with the twentieth century than with the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At times, “the entire meaning of Western art”⁶⁸ has seemed to be at stake, at other times “the historical source of the self.”⁶⁹

The period extending from Michelet’s ardent Romanticism through the more cynical, fundamentally materialistic attitude of the present has great interest in itself. James Hankins dubs the Renaissance a post-ideological era (like our own), meaning that it lies chronologically in the aftermath of the great struggle between Pope and Emperor (which was, for Dante, so crucial a divide).⁷⁰ When, nearly forty years ago, Frederick Hartt cast Florence as a capitalist republic of crusty bourgeois citizens,⁷¹ it followed as patriotic duty to put Donatello or Michelangelo in the role of civic hero. We have since metamorphosed from faith in the artist as seer or hero to a new preoccupation with the idea of the essential artifice of being an artist—one might say, from artists’ social alienation to society’s self-alienation. The word “genius” is no longer pronounced either often, or with genuine awe. Nevertheless, the concept of *ingegno* that was pervious to the effects of *arte* might still prove a useful concept, useful not only in understanding art theory during

⁶⁷ Hubert Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, tr. John Goodman, Chicago, 1996, 83, 91. Contrast the also psychoanalytic approach of Robert Liebert, *Michelangelo: A Psychoanalytic Study of His Life and Images*, New Haven, 1983.

⁶⁸ *Saturn*, 292.

⁶⁹ Koerner, 39.

⁷⁰ James Hankins, “Humanism and the origins of modern political thought,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye, Cambridge, 1996, esp. 119.

⁷¹ Frederick Hartt, “Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence,” *Marsyas: Supplement I, Essays in Honor of Karl Lehmann*, 1964, 114–31.

the period in which art theory was itself a new idea, but also in understanding the period itself. For it should be constellations of ideas which define the Renaissance, rather than vice versa. Compliments change as they evolve from new to routine, and ideas more generally change as do their applications and their frequency of application. Our history of Renaissance artists has tended to assume a kind of uniformity of ambition and of expectation, which begs now to be replaced with a more complex set of possibilities. It has also emphasized long continuities more than the multifacetedness both of language and of days, the convenient phrase “universal man” rather than the flexibility regularly demanded of even the mediocre artist, humanist, and courtier. It is time to address the question of how many things *ingegno* and *ingenium* might imply, and how many ways the adjective *divino* might be applied to art, to artists and to non-artists, rather than to find in each case the one interpretation which best fits our preconceptions.

It is hard to interpret the word *ingegno* when it occurs, hard to reconstruct a pattern whereby lost usages may be recreated under tincture of surmise, hardest of all perhaps to connect what is written to that which was made. If *ingegno* may be most acceptably defined as whatever is natural, or we might even say, primitive, about human accomplishment, studying how the word was used should bring us closer to both the theory and the practice of being an artist. If we allow for the possibility that the theory of Renaissance art was less coherent, less uniform than either Panofsky or Baxandall ever let us suppose, surely so too was reputation, and the business of constructing reputation a risky one, not only for the artist. Emphasizing *divino* of an artist's *ingegno* did not so much push the concept to the superlative as unnaturalize it, which again raises basic questions about the parameters of any intellectual framework a Renaissance viewer might have brought to works of art. What has too long been presented merely as an evolution from the mechanical to the liberal artist needs to be set in the broader cultural perspective of a shift in a culture's favored pockets of prestige. From saint, to artist, to scientist: it is within that succession, like a complicated prism, that the epithets of praise must be seen to be reflected. It is time that we at least try to let our understanding of Renaissance appeals to *ingegno* teach us about the period, rather than vice versa.

The thesis of this book has been straightforwardly this: that in simplifying the history of reputation we have flattened the period. We have lost, not any reputations—for this after all must be, cumulatively speak-

ing, the most glorified of periods in art history—but the topography of reputation, its meanderings in the general course down to the ocean of that rather deadening fame the great names now bear. Those meanderings remain of some interest.

APPENDIX

FORNARI'S GLOSS ON ARIOSTO'S CANTO XXXIII

Fu Leonardo Vinci Fiorentini di bellezza di corpo, & gratia, di forza, & destrezza dalla natura mirabilmente dotato. Fu da uno suo zio indirizzato ad imprendere l'arte della pittura come colui, ilquale a molte, & lodevoli scienze mettendo mano, & riuscendone benissimo, & con istupore di chi l'entendeva, ne suoi primi disegni mostrava ingegno, & inventione. Essercitò con molta laude non solamente una professione, ma tutte quelle, ove il disegno s'interveniva: in tanto c'hebbe ardire di concorrere co'l divinissimo Michelangelo. Fu capriccioso, & vario: & formavasi nel concetto delle cose, che far dovea, la Idea tanto mirabile, che rade volte gli avvenne di poterla condurre à fine, & perfettione. Fu havuto in pregio, & stima dal Duca Francesco [sic] di Milano, & dal Re di Francia, & in braccio di lui finalmente rese l'anima à Dio ne gli anni di sua età LXXV.

Naque Andrea Mantegna in una villa del contado di Mantova, & quantunque di bassissima stirpe fusse, & che ne suoi primi anni pascesse gli armenti: egli nondimeno fu tanto dalla sorte aiutato, che venuto in contezza di Lodovico Gonzaga allhora Marchese di Mantova, & essendo honorata, & premiata da quel Signore la sua virtu, egli nell'arte della pittura potè far tanti, & tali avanzi, che divenne in quella eta sopra ogni altro eccellente, & egregio. Tra l'altre sue molte dipinture è molto lodata quella, che egli nel palazzo di S. Sebastiano in Mantova ripresentando il triumpho di Cesare dipinse. Fu da Innocentio VIII chiamato a Roma, dove egli con molta diligentia lavorò una cappella minutissamente. Dilettosi dell'Architettura: Fu invention sua il modo dell'intagliare in rame le stampe delle figure, & la difficulta degli scorti delle figure al disotto in su, modo senza fallo difficile, & capriccioso. Havendo adunque visso honoratamente, & con lodevoli costumi, & essendo il mondo ripieno delle sue opere si morì nell'eta d'anni LXVI nel MDXVII.

Hebbe Iacopo Bellini Pittore Vinitiano duo figliuoli, l'uno Giovanni, & l'altro Gentile nominati, iquali si come amendue avanzaro nell'arte il padre loro, così Giovanni il suo fratello Gentile superò di memoria, d'ingegno, & di giuditio. Acquistossi gran nome co'l ritrarre dal

naturale molte persone massimamente il Doge Loredano, & l'amata Donna di M. Pietro Bembo, primo che e fusse di Leon Decimo Secretario. Ilquale oltre il pagamento celebrò l'eccellentia del pittore con uno immortale sonetto, che così comincia, O imagine mia celeste, & pura. Fe costui molte bene intese, & degne opere, & in gran numero: lequale, & per la città di Venetia, & per lo suo Dominio sparse si veggono. Dipinse la sala del gran consiglio de fatti piu notabili della Republica Vinitiana. Et essendo una delle sue pitture portata innanzi à Maumetto Re de Turchi, se ne invaghi talmente quel Signore, che quatanque dalla sua legge gli fusse proibito d'havere appresso di se imagini & figure: egli non solamente ve le volle havere, ma ancho il facitor d'esse chiese con molta istanza al Senato Vinitiano. Il quale non contentandosi che v'andasse Giovanni, vi mandò il fratello Gentile: ilquale dopo liete accoglienze, fu dal Barbaro Re come cosa divina con ammirazione risguardato, massimamente havendo il pittore à suoi prieghi, & il Re & se stesso molto vivacemente posto in ritratto. Il rimandò finalmente alla desiderata patria carico di pretiosi doni, & dhonoratissimi privilegi. Ma tornando à Giovanni, egli doppo la morte di Gentile, in età di novant'anni passo di questa vita, & fu sepolto nella medesima tomba co'l suo fratello.

Il Dosso Ferrarese Pittore fu dal Duca Alphonso amato & per le belle qualità nell'arte, & per le sue piacevolezze, che al Duca fortamente aggradivano. Hebbe in Lombardia titolo da tutti i pittori di contrafare meglio i paesi o in muro, o in olio, o a guazzo, che pittor che fusse. In Ferrara lavorò al Duca nel palazzo infinite stanze insieme co'l suo fratello Battista, colquale sempre visse come nimico. Di costui ancho intende l'Ariosto nominando duo Dossi, come si vede. Lavorarono in Modona, in Faenza, in Trento per il Cardinale, & in Pesero per il Duca Francesco Maria. Mori il Dosso già vecchio, & fu seppellito in Ferrara, lasciando doppo se il suo fratello Battista, che anchor vive mantenendosi in buono stato.

Michelagnolo nacque à Lodovico Simon Buonaroti nel 1474. Et imposegli questo nome il padre con presagio, che piu che a un huom mortale non è lecito, sormontar dovea. Mostrò, meravigliosi segni dell'ingegno, & della gratia datagli dal cielo subito n su'l principio della sua fanciullezza: percioche nelle pitture avanzava sempre il maestro, che fu Domenico Ghirlandai. Fu del Magnifico, & gran Lorenzo il vecchio conosciuto il divino spirito di questo giovane: In modo che essendo egli magnanimo, & delle belle arti studiosissimo con premii, et favori inanimato sommamente Michelagnolo. Si trasferi poi a Roma per vedere

l'antiche statue di marmo, lequali con diligentia imitando si condusse a quella grandezza dell'arte, che hoggi si vede. Acquistò una gran fama ne principii co'l sculpire una Pieta in Roma, un Gigante in Fiorenza, & co'l dipingere in un cartone certi ignudi, ch'erano per lavarsi in Arno discesi, & intanto il campo sonando all'arme, s'affrettavano di riverstirsi. Dove tutte l'attitudini et affetti, che possibil fusse, che in simil caso avvenissero, naturalissimamente si vedeano. Fe la sepoltura di Papa Giulio, che di bellezza, di superbia, & d'inventione avanza qualunque imperiale sepoltura. Et si come d'un gran numero di statue ha fatto ornata Fiorenze, cosi arricchì Roma di pitture bellissime, & meravigliose. Ha fatto molti eccellenti disegni d'architettura per molti principi, & privati amici suoi. Vive anchora pieno d'anni, & di gloria godendo del giusto, & dignissimo nome, che gli si da, del piu eccellente pittore, & scultore, che mai sia stato.

Fu Sebastiano Vinitiano pittore eccellentissimo, ma negligente, & poco sollecito nel lavorare: nondimeno durando la gara, che egli hebbe con Raphaello, s'affaticò di continuo, per non gli parere inferiore nell'arte. Prese la protection di Sebastiano Michelagnolo: in modo che appresso i Principi, et capi di corte lodandolo, et con la fatica istessa del suo disegno aiutandolo, fe ch'egli divenisse da dovero celebre, & famoso pittore. Et per cio di molte opre degne di costui se n'attribuisce la maggior parte della gloria à Michelagnolo. Meritò per molte vivacissima dipinture fatte à Clemente, d'esser dallui creato Frate del Piombo, ch'è uno ufficio in Roma di molte centinaia di scudi di valore. Per ilche egli vedendosi di poter fare senza il sostegno, che l'arte gli dava, tornò alla inclination sue, ch'era d'attendere à lietamente vivere scarico di pensieri, & fatiche: talmente che da indi innanzi ne cominciò opra nuova, ne le cominciate vole condurre al suo fine. Mori l'anno 1547. havendo nel testamento lasciato, che à povere persone di dispensasse per l'amore di Dio quel, che nell'essequie altri harebbe dispeso.

Nacque Raphaello in Urbino, l'anno del Signore 1483, da un Giovanni di Santi pittore non molto celebre. Fu posto dal padre suo sotto la disciplina di Pietro Perugino: il quale in poco spatio di tempo Raphaello andò sì bene imitando, che quasi nulla, o poca differenza era delle sue alle pitture del suo maestro. Studiò in Fiorenza con molta attentione prima sopra l'opere, & lavori di Masaccio, & poi di Leonardo, et di Michelagnolo, & in Roma sopra le cose del medesimo, & degli antichi: sì che ne divenne perfetto, & eccellente. Lavorò in Roma, oltre una infinità di quadri, & figure diverse, & tutte belle: nelle stanze di Giulio Secondo molte cose vivacissime, & gratiose: Et cosi

seguì al tempo di Leon Decimo. Gli fu à propria, & somma lode recato l'aria dolce, & vaga, che egli sopra ogni altro pittore dar seppe alle figure da se composte. Fu nell'architettura intendente, & ne diede molti disegni. Il Cardinal Bibiena per la bontà dell'animo, & per l'eccellenza dell'arte il costrinse à prendere una sua nipote per moglie. Ma egli il matrimonio non volle mai consumare: Percioche aspettava il capel rosso dalla generosa liberalità di Leone; ilquale gli parevam & le sue fatiche, & la virtu haverlo meritato. Ultimamente per continuare fuor di modo i suoi amori, se ne morì in età di 37 anni l'istesso dì, che nacque.

Titiano nacque in Cador, che è nel Frioli sopra Trieste. Ilquale dimorando in Venetia, che dir si puo universale albergo di tutto il mondo, con la sua divinissima mano, & meraviglioso ingegno riempie ad ognhora non solamente quella città, ma tutto 'l mondo della sua gloria, & del suo nome.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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INDEX

- Aaron, Pietro, 228
- absolutism, 17, 72–73, 82, 130, 144,
160, 267–68, 293
- academy or Academy, 15, 38, 48, 65,
118, 209, 225, 237, 246, 275–76,
296, 311, 325, 337–38, 340
- Accademia della Crusca, 109, 150,
154, 202
- Accolti, Bernardo, 234
- Agamemnon, 30
- Alberti, Leon Battista, 21, 23, 26–27,
29–35, 38, 43, 51, 53, 60, 64, 73–
78, 81, 83, 85, 88, 90–91, 93–94,
98–99, 119, 124, 151, 193, 199,
215, 218–19, 234, 240, 246, 259,
269, 275, 283, 294, 322, 332–33,
343
tomb of, 275
- Alberti, Romano, 95, 99, 200
- Albertus Magnus, 278
- Albicante, Giovanni Albert, 143
- Alcimedon, 20
- Alexander the Great, 22–23, 26–27,
37, 69, 84, 122, 135, 146, 222
- Algarotti, Francesco, 61, 135, 224
- Alkamanes, 23
- allegory, 244, 246, 252, 261, 263, 276
- Allori, 193
- amateur, 69–70, 76, 161, 222, 248,
266
- Ambrose (St.), 176
- Ammannatini, Manetto, 239
- ancients, antiquity, *all'antica*, 8–12,
15–16, 19–21, 26, 37, 49–51, 54–
55, 57, 74, 84–85, 87, 90, 97, 100,
107, 113, 118, 123, 132–34, 140,
143, 151–52, 156, 160, 164, 166–
68, 171, 173–74, 179, 189, 210, 212,
216, 219, 223, 231, 237–38, 246,
249, 251–53, 255, 261, 263, 268–
69, 299, 304–06, 308, 313–14,
322, 326–27, 330, 332–33, 335–36,
343, 346
- Andrea Pisano, 97
- Angelica, 174, 186, 189, 263, 312, 319
- Angelico, Fra, 88, 293
- Antal, Friedrich, 16, 270, 316
- Antonino, Archbishop, 284
- Antonio da Cornetto, 234
- Antonio da Lucca, 233–34, 250
- Apelles, 20, 23, 27–32, 36–37, 41, 43,
45–47, 49–50, 57, 72, 85, 95, 100,
104, 106, 108, 134, 146, 250, 259,
293, 327, 338
- Apollinaire, 318
- Apollo Belvedere, 10
- Apollodorus, 331
- Aquinas, Thomas, 293
- Aragon, Alfonso of, 245, 281–82
- Arcadelt, 232–33, 248
- Arcady, 20, 157, 210
- Archimedes, 19
- architect(s), architecture, 1, 3, 20, 64,
73–74, 83, 91, 99–100, 102, 105,
109, 138, 151–52, 158, 169, 174,
188, 202, 208, 220, 243, 283, 288,
295, 317
- Arcimboldo, 212, 224
- Arditi, Bastiano, 245–46
- Aretino, Pietro, 4, 5, 8, 12, 41, 61,
75, 94, 104, 106–07, 118, 125, 137,
141–43, 145–48, 151, 154, 160,
168, 187, 189, 198–200, 203, 205,
207, 210, 231–32, 234, 242, 270,
273–74, 299, 340
tomb of, 272
portrait medal, 272, 299
- Arezzo, 87
- Ariosto, Ludovico, 7, 12, 21, 45,
56, 106, 108–09, 114, 116, 128,

- 133–42, 144–45, 148, 151–56, 158,
 166–70, 182, 186, 189, 200–213,
 230, 236–38, 248, 250–51, 272–74,
 278, 299, 303, 332
divino, 149–50, 152
 “Pro Bono Malum”, 157
 portraits of, 150
 Ariosto, Orazio, 210
 aristocratic, see courtly
 Aristotle, 64, 69, 71, 93, 95, 100, 118,
 124–25, 138–39, 150, 167, 210,
 261, 310
 Armenini, Giovanni Battista, 6, 13,
 140, 148, 249–50, 318
 art (*ars, arte*), 15, 26, 32–33, 35–50
 (36, three parts of), 52, 70–74, 80,
 87, 93–94, 121, 127, 162, 168–71,
 185, 187, 191–92, 210, 218, 226–
 27, 230, 233, 244, 252, 255, 261,
 264, 277, 281, 300, 307, 310–11,
 315, 318, 326–27, 331–33, 336–42,
 344–45
 artist(s), 5, 12, 19, 28, 32, 35, 47, 56,
 64–68, 83–85, 87, 100–10, 128,
 159–60, 169, 175, 189, 199, 226,
 231–32, 246, 248, 253, 258–59,
 264–67, 277–78, 281, 299–300,
 308, 312–14, 316–19, 321–22,
 325–26, 336–41, 346–47
 Astaire, Fred, 190
audacia, 31, 33–35, 46, 52, 85
 Augustine (St.), 61, 173

 Bach, J.S., 313
 Bandello, 107, 263
 Bandinelli, 108, 196–97, 221, 235,
 276, 285, 296
 Bandini, Domenico, 130
 Baldinucci, Filippo, 78, 124, 300
 Baron, Hans, 53
 Baroque, 43, 336
 Bartoli, Cosimo, 48, 99, 102, 107,
 217, 225, 233–36, 272, 297, 303,
 312
 Bartolommeo, Fra, 16, 298, 344
 Barzizza, Gasparino, 101
 Basil (St.), 259

 Baudelaire, Charles, 56, 158, 310,
 316
 Baviera, 186
 Baxandall, Michael, 316, 325–35,
 340–44, 347
 Beham, Barthel, 183
 Bell, Clive, 9, 305, 316
 Belli, Valerio, 285
 Bellini, Gentile, 144, 285
 Bellini, Giovanni, 46, 134, 179,
 187–89, 285
 Bellori, Giovanni Pietro, 15, 185
 beloved, see love
 Belvedere Torso, 10
 Bembo, Bernardo, 130, 215, 274
 Bembo, Pietro, 12, 107, 144, 155, 167,
 200, 223, 293
 Benedetto da Maiano, 290
 Benivieni, Girolamo, 166, 282
 Berchem, Giachet, 236
 Bernard of Clairvaux (St.), 259
 Berni, Francesco, 68–69, 143, 159
 Bernini, 160
 Bidon, 222, 248
 Billi, Antonio, 295
 Biondo, Michelangelo, 5, 93
 Bissolo, 179
 Blake, William, 324
 Blanc, Charles, 14–15, 310
 Boccaccio, 79, 99, 120, 129, 170, 174,
 239, 242, 293, 330
 Bocchi, Francesco, 273, 300
 bohemian, 312, 316
 Boiardo, Matteo Maria, 156
 Boldu, Giovanni, 285
 Bonasone, Giulio, 190–92, 287
Book of Kells, 313
 Borghese, Scipio, 265
 Borghini, Raffaello, 256, 273
 Borghini, Vincenzo, 274, 281, 296
 Botticelli, 82, 117, 219
 bourgeois, bourgeoisie, 16–17, 52,
 164, 312, 314, 316–17, 346
 Bramante, 99, 285
 Brandolini, Raffaele, 115–16
 Bronzino, 82, 154
 Brunelleschi, 7, 65, 73–74, 84,

- 151, 220, 238–41, 253, 261,
265–66, 279–81, 282–95, 312,
332
- Bruni, Leonardo, 78–81, 90, 99, 123,
127, 129, 131, 136, 158, 268, 275,
282, 284, 295, 327
- Brutus, 133
- buffoons, 47, 64, 77–78, 159, 165,
330–31
- Buggiano, 288, 295
- Bugiardini, Giuliano, 190, 196
- Buonarotti, Michelangelo il
Giovane, 273
- Buonarotti, see also Michelangelo
- Burckhardt, Jacob, 13–14, 16–17, 22,
36, 49, 52–53, 178, 244, 304, 314,
316, 321–22, 326, 331, 343
- Burke, Peter, 326
- burlesque, 154, 156–60
- Caccianemici, Vincenzo, 76
- Callot, Jacques, 236–37, 244
- Calmata, Vincenzo, 203
- calor*, 38
- Calvo, Fabio, 257
- camera, 310
- Camerarius, Joachim, 176
- Campagnola, Giulio, 76
- Campaspe, 41
- Canossa, Count Ludovico da, 45,
47, 57, 92, 175, 222, 253
- Capella, Bianca, 245
- Capella, Martianus, 63
- capriccio*, capriciousness, 21, 26, 28,
118, 133, 141–42, 160, 168, 209,
211, 224, 236–38, 242–44, 247,
252–53, 303, 343
- Caravaggio, 60, 213
- Carracci, 213
Agostino, 197
- Castagno, Andrea, 240, 284
- Castelvetto, Ludovico, 143
- Castiglione, Baldassare, 42, 47, 50–
51, 58, 92, 102–03, 121, 145, 170,
215, 222–23, 234, 257, 303, 330–31
- Cato, 82
- Cavalcante, Guido, 101, 201
- Cavalieri, Tommaso, 211
- Cellini, Benvenuto, 24, 121, 137, 148,
197, 219, 235, 240, 256–57, 265,
273, 277
- Cennini, Cennino, 124, 229
- Cervantes, 139, 188
- chance, 25
- Chardin, 237
- charis*, 31–32, 47, 338
- Charlemagne, 135–36
- chess, 87
- Christ, see God, gods
- Cicero, 19, 40, 51–52, 63–64, 68, 74,
84–85, 91, 95, 100, 104, 108, 112,
122, 168, 212, 280, 332
Brutus, 71, 191
- Cimabue, 78, 101, 124, 201, 234, 247,
294, 330–31
- Ciampi, 267
- Clark, Kenneth (Lord), 306, 308, 311
- class, 7–8, 12, 42, 45, 56, 65–67,
76, 82, 88, 104–05, 137, 147–49,
152–53, 159, 164, 166, 181, 205,
237–44, 267–68, 275–76, 280,
289, 305, 316–17
- cobbler(s), 8, 127, 272
- collectors, collecting, 9, 24, 44, 75,
109, 167, 200, 264–65, 270, 280,
296
- Colosseum, 303
- Colonna, Vittoria, 4, 54, 211, 317
- colore*, 41, 169, 237, 252, 313
- comedy, 17, 61, 159, 243, 247 (see
also burlesque)
- Comanini, Gregorio, 61, 103, 125,
148, 168, 213, 257, 261–62
- compliment, 7, 100, 144, 210, 232–
33, 269, 335
- Condillac, Abbé de, 109–10
- Condivi, Ascanio, 12–13, 99, 129,
169–70, 295, 300
- Correggio, 46, 49, 305
- counterpoint, 228–29, 243, 247
- Counter-Reformation, 60, 62, 198,
208, 313
- Courbet, Gustav, 276
- court, courtier, courtly, 5, 12, 28, 43,

- 47, 52, 58, 88, 100, 184, 237–39,
247–48, 267, 316–17, 334
courtly love, 67, 113, 260, 263, 314
criminal behavior, 277
Crotona, maidens of, 30
cultural memory, 122, 156, 262, 267,
303
Curtius, Ernst, 322–23, 326, 338
Cyclops, 30
- Daedalus, 68, 71, 97, 120, 259, 288–
89
Danae, 182–84, 189, 194
dance, 47, 72, 217–18, 222–23, 225–
26, 244, 248
Daniele da Volterra, 190, 193, 295
Daniello, Bernardino, 103, 130
Dante, Dantesque, 4, 41, 48, 59,
78–83, 90, 99–102, 107, 112–13,
115, 119, 123–31, 133–35, 137, 140,
153–54, 158–59, 168, 170, 174–76,
181, 201, 203, 205, 210, 229, 233–
34, 239, 247, 259, 273–74, 276,
282, 287, 293–96, 298, 314, 328,
333, 340
tomb of, 270–71, 282
Darwin, Charles, 310
Da Udine, Giovanni, 4
Davent, Leon, 195–97
David, Jacques Louis, 247
decadence, 10, 21–22, 36, 305
Decembrio, Angelo, 327–34
Decembrio, Pier Candido, 327
decorum, 12, 16, 49, 54, 60, 140,
146–47, 165, 198–201, 246, 292
Delacroix, 4, 238, 324, 340
Della Robbia, Luca, 117, 279
Desiderio da Settignano, 284
Diderot, Denis, 237, 306, 308
difficultà, 12, 43–45
diligence, 20, 23, 26, 29–30, 33,
38–39, 46–47, 51–52, 79, 104, 125,
170, 198, 208, 222, 228
Diogenes, 71
disegno, 21, 23, 28, 34–35, 41, 48, 60,
85, 127, 169, 200, 202, 221, 237,
253, 276, 289, 313
- divus*, 24, 66, 148, 158, 166, 240, 245
dog, foaming mouth, 25, 37–38, 43
Dolce, 41, 45–47, 75, 80, 94, 96,
113–15, 125, 136, 139–40, 145, 157,
170, 174, 184, 198, 201, 207–08,
257, 274, 319
Domenichi, Lodovico, 331
Domenico da Corella, Fra, 88, 294
Domenico di Michelino, 82, 272
Domenico Veneziano, 284
Donatello, 8, 28, 52, 60, 65, 115,
137, 198, 220, 234, 239, 257, 265,
279–80, 277–78, 285–86, 295,
346
Bronze *David*, 53–54
St. George, 273
burial of, 280
Doni, Anton Francesco, 233, 250
Dossi, Battista and Dosso, 134, 144,
215, 230, 330
drawing(s), 4, 69, 72, 92, 145–47,
265, 269–70
Duccio, 297
Dürer, 165, 167, 195, 197–98, 210,
212, 220, 273, 297, 308, 310, 336,
339–42
Cannon, 55–58
Knight, Death, and the Devil, 55
Portrait of Pirckheimer, 344
Self-Portrait, 176–81, 307, 310–12
- eccentricity, 28, 209, 241
Egyptians, 139, 211
embroidery, 175
Enlightenment, 308
Ennius, 280
Equicola, Mario, 94, 96, 175, 334
Erasmus, 61, 118, 154, 215
Eriphila, 269
Este, 136, 274
Duke Alfonso d', 66–67, 137, 241,
243, 316, 330
Duke Alfonso II d', 236
Baldassare (da Reggio), 329
(Duke) Borso, 64, 211, 225, 240,
245
Leonello, 327–29

- Cardinal Ippolito d', 152
 Isabella d', 149, 187, 216
 etching, 56, 62, 76
 Euclid, 7, 99, 278, 286
 Eugenius IV, 290, 293
 Eupompos of Pamphilos, 72, 89, 96, 124
 facility, 1, 9, 45–46, 48, 117, 250
 Fanti, Sigismondo, 195
 Farnesina, Villa, 24
 Fazio, Bartolommeo, 125, 333
 Fedele, Cassandra, 269
 Federico da Montefeltro, 89–92, 102, 203, 257, 278, 282
 femininity, 40–41, 217
 Ferrara, 88, 134, 166, 168, 230, 233, 327–34 (see also Este)
 Ferruci, Andrea de, 291
 Ficino, Marsilio, 99, 155, 178, 216, 291
 fiction, 6, 79, 116, 123, 230, 244, 260, 323
 Filarete, 188, 198
 finish, 35, 45, 48, 55, 106, 114, 117
 Florence, Florentine, 11, 36, 48, 51–54, 59, 63, 65, 75–82, 85–86, 88, 92, 113, 115, 127, 129, 131, 144, 154, 158–59, 164, 168, 193, 197, 205, 208, 212, 235, 237–49, 252–53, 258, 267–73, 274–76, 279–85, 298, 315, 343, 346
 Bargello, 124
 Campanile, 97
Chain Map, 220
 Duomo, 82, 241, 256, 270–72, 288, 289–91, 294
 Or San Michele, 88, 117
 Palazzo Medici, 246, 295
 Palazzo Valori, 99–100
 Floris, Frans, 190
 Fontainebleau, 197
 Fornari, Simone, 138, 144–45, 167, 287, Appendix
 Foucault, Michel, 341
 Francesco da Milano, 224, 233–34, 248, 274
 Francisco de Hollanda, 72, 112, 137, 190, 232
 Francis (St.), 81, 123, 129
 Franco, Battista, 161
 Franco, Matteo, 317
 Freud, Sigmund, 96, 158, 308–09, 324, 346
 Friedlaender, Walter, 51, 335
furia, furioso, furor, 25, 29, 45, 52, 79, 97, 104, 106, 113, 116–19, 127–29, 132, 138, 141–43, 147, 153–55, 161, 163–65, 169, 176, 181–83, 185, 187, 208, 217, 224–25, 234, 244, 295, 311, 339 (see also 217)
 Gaddi, 285–86
 Gaffurio, Franchino, 227
 Galen, 72, 95
 Galilei, Galileo, 1, 21, 108, 154, 158, 262, 300
 Galileo, Vincenzo, 154, 223
 Garimberto, 313–14
 Gardano, Antonio, 232, 236
 Garimberto, G., 205
 Garzoni, Tomaso, 137, 203, 274
Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 14, 304, 306–11, 316
 Geertz, Clifford, 177
 gems, 11, 97, 108, 167, 328
 genius, 3–4, 13, 15, 26, 40, 77, 106, 177, 230, 235, 246, 270, 301, 303, Appendix *passim*
 genre, 60
 gentleman, gentlemen, 28, 64, 66, 92, 161, 175, 181, 197, 220, 222–23, 241, 252, 271, 312, 324
 geometer, geometry, 73–74, 89, 91, 98, 108, 125, 169, 218, 283, 286
Gewalt, 177–78, 341–42
 Ghiberti, Lorenzo, 67, 75, 85, 280, 282
 Ghirlandaio, 45
 Ghisi, Giorgio, 191, 201
 Giambologna, 60
 Gian Cristoforo Romano, 47
 Gianotti, Donato, 82, 251, 344
 gifts, 265

- Giorgione, 27, 116–17, 209, 219, 303
 Giotto, 28–29, 60, 64, 77–78, 87–88,
 97, 101, 107, 116, 124, 126, 128,
 134, 140, 201, 220, 229, 238, 240–
 43, 247, 250, 256, 267–68, 274,
 278, 285–86, 291, 94, 315, 318,
 328, 330–31
 memorial to, 274, 290, 292
 Giovanni da Prato, 7, 128, 288
 Giovanni da Udine, 4, 256
 Giovio, Paolo, 7, 34, 62, 118–19, 128,
 168, 208, 217, 234, 258, 267, 278,
 287
 Giraldi, Giambattista Cinthio,
 105–06, 158, 204
 Giulio Romano, 220
 Glarean, Heinrich, 229–31
 God, god(s), 3, 7, 13–14, 20–21, 32,
 36–37, 61, 84, 90–91, 96, 101–02,
 109–10, 112, 122, 128, 133, 147–49,
 166, 169, 176–82, 184, 186, 193,
 200, 226, 232, 265, 267, 270, 288,
 306–07, 311–13, 323, 334, 342,
 345
alter deus, 178, 325
 Goethe, 318, 323
 Goldthwaite, Richard, 270
 Gombrich, E.H., 51, 256, 310
 Gonella, 8, 330
 Gonzaga, 298
 Giovan Francesco, 73–74
 Julia, 141
 Goya, 133
 Gozzoli, Benozzo, 125–26
 Graces, Three, 218–19, 306
grazia, 4–6, 27, 31–34, 40–45, 47–51,
 79, 145, 165, 170, 185, 229, 251,
 289, 313, 337–38
 Greco, El, 192, 313
 Gregory the Great, 259, 310
 grotesque, 21, 121, 132, 153, 156,
 159–63, 168, 243, 247, 252, 262–
 63, 265
 Gruyer, 311–12
 Guariento, 267
 Guarino of Verona, 261–62, 327–28,
 328–29
 Guazzo, Stefano, 103–04, 125, 261–
 62
 Guglielmo Ebreo, 218, 229
 hair, 42, 45, 131, 162, 175, 189
 Halley, Edmund, 314
 Hankins, James, 346
 harpy, 154, 158
 Hartt, Frederick, 53, 346
 Held, Julius, 4, 269–70
 Hercules, 70, 98, 156
historia, see *istoria*
 Homer, 111–13, 115, 119, 124, 127,
 133, 152, 161, 204, 228, 236, 238,
 273, 327–28, 334
 Horace, 46, 103–04, 111, 120–21, 123,
 125, 151, 155, 199, 328
 humanism, humanists, 17, 33, 52,
 63–64, 67, 75, 77, 81, 84, 87, 89,
 99–100, 108, 120, 123, 158, 169,
 184, 226, 231, 247–48, 255–56,
 260–61, 264, 271, 288–93, 299,
 317, 326–39, 343, 347
 Hungary, 239–40, 252
 Impressionism, 118
 individual, individuality, 8, 20, 36,
 50–54, 61, 148, 164, 167, 178, 221,
 244, 262, 317, 321–25, 337, 339,
 343
 industry, 27, 33, 40, 273, 288
ingegno, *ingenium*, 5–11, 19–20, 26,
 30–32, 35, 39, 48, 52, 54, 63, 67,
 73–75, 77, 79–80, 86–87, 121, 125,
 129, 152, 159, 184, 188–89, 204,
 210, 231, 236, 238–40, 246, 258,
 260–61, 264–65, 268–70, 273, 275,
 279, 287–89, 295, 316, Appendix
passim
 inimitability, 12–13, 15, 32, 47, 140,
 169, 299–300
 inscriptions, 125–26, 148, 191–94,
 196, 288–91, 293–98, 344
inventio, inventions, 31, 34–35, 39, 60,
 71, 111, 117, 120, 123–25, 155, 168,
 177, 210
 Iphigenia, 30–31

- istoria*, 31–32, 34, 57, 94, 117, 119, 124, 135, 163, 193, 236, 243, 247, 260, 297
- Jacopino del Conte, 189–91, 287
- Jacopo de' Barbari, 66, 84, 93
- Jardine, Lisa, 270
- Jerome (St.), 61
- John XXIII, Anti-Pope, 275
- Josquin des Prez, 229–31, 234–35, 248, 303
- judgment, 75, 109–10, 166–67, 198–99, 202, 208–09, 212–13, 226, 230, 236, 241, 250, 261
- Julius III (Pope), 5
- Kandinsky, 168, 212
- Kant, 227, 311
- Kantorowicz, Ernst, 323, 325–26
- Kemp, Martin, 325–26, 336, 338–41, 343
- Koerner, Joseph Leo, 177–78, 326, 341–43
- Kristeller, Paul, 338
- Kubrick, Stanley, 162
- Lago, Giovanni del, 231
- Lancilotti, Francesco, 92
- Landi, Ottavio, 233
- Landi, Ortensio, 10–11, 110, 138–39, 142, 154, 166, 204–05
- Landino, Cristophoro, Ch. 1 *passim*, 76, 82, 88, 91, 113, 119–20, 127, 130–31, 155, 221, 270–71, 275–76, 279–80, 282, 288, 293–95, 333
- Landino, Francesco Cieco, 221, 279
- landscape, 57, 89, 114, 116–17, 126, 133, 156, 161, 220, 229, 257
- Landucci, Luca, 284, 291
- Laocoön, 10
- lasciviousness, 96, 138, 223
- Latin, 51, 73, 78–79, 81, 83–84, 105–06, 125, 130, 170, 172, 190, 206, 328, 331, 344
- Laurana, Luciano, 91
- learning, learnedness, 8, 29–31, 33–34, 48, 51, 59, 64–65, 67, 77, 81–82, 85–88, 91, 94, 96–99, 100, 105, 110, 116, 123, 125, 132, 145, 183, 203, 205, 237–38, 251, 255, 278, 281, 289, 297, 325, 329, 333, 337, 343 (see also humanism, liberal arts)
- Lenzoni, Carlo, 48–49, 107, 201
- Leonardo da Vinci, 4, 11, 16, 27–28, 33–34, 40, 42, 44, 56, 64, 66, 76, 82, 85–86, 88, 90, 98, 107, 115, 125–26, 131, 134, 137, 156–57, 162–64, 169, 181, 184, 189, 209, 217, 219–20, 257, 259, 265, 278, 284, 287, 303, 307, 321–22, 343
- Deluge* drawings, 265
- Last Supper*, 107, 256, 273, 344
- Mona Lisa*, 133, 161–62, 164, 312, 321
- Leoni, Leone, 190, 277
- liberal artist, arts, 21, 29, 33, 41, 51, Ch. 2 *passim*, 113, 115, 119, 123, 151, 167, 217, 221–22, 227–29, 232, 242–43, 249–50, 252, 262, 277, 281, 286, 289, 291, 316–17, 325, 340, 347
- license, licentiousness, 26, 53, 140–41, 144, 158, 169, 173, 176, 198–99, 205–09, 212–13, 223, 235, 237, 243, 277 (see also *capriccio*, rulelessness)
- Lippi, Fra Filippo, 137, 274, 277, 290–91, 293
- Lippi, Filippino, 290
- Locke, John, 109
- Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo, 7, 96, 176, 278
- Longinus, 322
- love, lover, beloved, 67, 86, 125, 128, 139, 148, 153–55, 158–66, 168–69, 173–76, 189, 194, 217, 230, 233, 259–60, 262–63, 312–13, 319 (see also women)
- Lucian, 37, 70, 215
- Luther, Lutheranism, 9, 61, 128, 147, 157, 165, 313
- lute, lyre, 4, 27, 69, 216
- Lysippus, 35

- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 103
 Macrobius, 70, 112, 322
 madrigals, 236
 Magliabechiano, Anonimo, 7
 magnet, 111, 116
magnifico, magnificence, 10–11, 149,
 153, 242, 317
 Manet, Eduoard, 317
 Manetti, Antonio, 141, 239–40, 279,
 282, 285–89, 292, 295,
 Manetti, Giannozzo, 113, 130, 286–
 87
maniera, Mannerism, 8–9, 21, 28,
 36, 43, 51–52, 60, 121, 159, 162,
 209–10, 237, 303, 342
 Mantegna, Andrea, 8, 66, 88, 117,
 134, 244, 256, 275, 296, 298, 303
 Mantua, 88
 Manutius the Younger, Aldus, 104–
 05
 Marcantonio, see Raimondi
 Marcolini, 233–34
 Marie Antoinette, 67
 Marone (Maro), Andrea, 234
 Marsuppini, Carlo, 275, 284, 288
 Martelli, Niccolò, 148–49
 Marx, Karl, 267, 316
 Masaccio, 137, 220, 256, 284–85, 295
 Masolino, 284
 Master HFE, 62
 Master IHF, 183, 194
 Master LD (Lèon Davent), 195–97
 Maximilian, Emperor, 55
 McKlue, Marshall, 332
 mechanical arts, 65, 70, 74, 85, 89,
 92, 95, 97, 228, 317, 325, 328, 347
 (see also stonemasons)
 Medici, Alessandro (Duke), 247
 Catherine de', 96, 246
 Cosimo de' (Pater Patriae), 28,
 53–54, 66, 78, 99, 138, 208,
 240, 242, 247, 271, 279–80,
 282–83, 290, 317
 Cosimo de' (Duke), 22, 36, 48, 52,
 54, 109, 144, 160, 211, 222, 225,
 235, 237, 240–42, 247, 266–68,
 273, 287, 292
 Francesco de' (Duke), 76, 245,
 266, 292
 Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, 141
 Giovanni di Bicci, 292
 Giovanni de' (Leo X), 62, 115,
 197, 245
 Giuliano de' (Duke of Nemours),
 222, 247
 Giulio de' (Clement VII), 62, 144,
 197, 331
 Lorenzo de' (Il magnifico), 29,
 55, 81, 88–89, 91, 100, 112,
 117, 131, 135, 144–45, 154–56,
 161, 216–17, 245, 256, 259–60,
 262–63, 269, 274, 276, 282,
 290, 292, 301, 317
 Lorenzo de' (Duke of Urbino),
 103, 132, 247
 Piero de', 82, 280
 Medici garden, 29
 Medici political agendas, 82, 130,
 244–47, 265, 268, 273–76, 282,
 290–92, 295, 316
 melancholy, 95, 153, 176, 195, 198,
 224–25
 Menighella, 237
 merchant, mercantile, 67, 76, 80, 97,
 203, 239, 241, 267–68, 271, 282,
 284, 316 (see also bourgeois)
 Michelangelo
 Arca di San Domenico, 252
 Bacchus, 159, 170, 237
 Battle of Cascina, 11, 256
 Brutus, 247, 253
 David, 53–55, 146, 237, 249
 Death, in his stairwell, 166
 Doni Madonna, 42
 drawings, 54, 132–33, 157, 162–63,
 208, 249–50, 253, 292
 Old Faun, 55, 156, 301
 Last Judgment, 6, 61, 129, 142, 145–
 46, 152, 193, 198, 207–08, 233,
 241, 249, 273
 Leda, 67, 165, 194, 241
 Moses, 4, 273, 276, 308–09
 New Sacristy (Medici Chapel),
 131–33, 160–61, 165, 194, 235,

- 237, 247–49, 263, 274, 276,
300
- Pietà* of, 1500 4, 164, 193, 249,
258, 298
- Pietà*, Florentine Duomo, 276
- San Lorenzo, 160, 292
- St. Peter's, 191
- Sistine Ceiling, 4, 13–14, 60, 67,
82, 107, 133–34, 158, 169, 184,
186, 202, 222, 237, 244, 249,
252, 312
- Slaves*, 99, 266
- Sleeping Cupid*, 8, 319
- teste divine*, 76, 162–65, 248, 265
- Tomb of Julius II*, 6, 99, 133, 191,
194, 249, 272
- Venus*, 194
- avarice of, 147
- inimitability, 12, 169, 299–300
on Palazzo Medici, 246
- poetry of, 153, 170, 233, 343 (see
also Dante, Petrarch)
- popularity of, 83
- portraits of, 189–97, 247, 276, 285,
299
- rulelessness of, 52, 170, 208 (see
also license, rulelessness)
- self-image, 10, 54, 149, 153, 155,
160, 163, 170, 195–96, 242,
262–63
- solitariness of, 12, 211
- tomb of, 291–92
- Michelet, Jules, 13–14, 17, 176, 180,
307, 310–11, 321–22, 343, 346
- Milan, 11, 85, 89, 219, 261, 327–28,
340
- mimesis (imitation), 7, 21, 31, 43, 52,
60, 68, 73, 85, 120, 133, 157, 184,
227, 260, 262, 264, 322
- miracle, *mirabile*, 21, 25, 37, 43, 54,
58, 60, 118, 130, 147, 151, 266,
279, 300, 315, 317
- modernity, moderns, 9, 16–17, 51,
55–57, 91, 117, 133, 135, 137, 140,
151, 156, 163, 166, 168, 173, 185,
213, 223, 236, 238, 251, 258, 263,
269, 303–05, 314, 318, 322, 324
- Molinet, Jean, 230
- monster(s), 14, 132, 135, 140, 153–54,
156, 158, 161–62, 168, 208, 233,
235, 262, 321 (see also grotesque)
- Montaigne, 51, 56–57, 142–43,
262–63
- Montefalco, 126
- morality, moral sciences, 26, 29,
43, 51, 64, 173 (see also virtue,
decorum)
- Morelli, Giovanni, 315, 345
- Morone, 221
- multiples, 11, 16, 204, 248 (see also
print culture, portrait medals)
- Muse(s), 89–90, 112, 118–20, 155,
160, 164, 182–83, 185, 188
- music, musicians, 1, 43, 47, 69–70,
73–75, 77, 80, 98, 102, 105, 138,
168, 212, Ch. 5 *passim*, 284, 291,
303, 331
- Narcissus, 180, 259
- nature, 9, 17, 21, 30, 33, 38–40,
42, 45, 47, 50, 55–57, 67, 69, 71,
118, 121, 123, 129, 132–33, 149,
154, 157, 159–64, 168, 170, 174,
178, 187, 189, 191–92, 210, 212,
220, 226–27, 229–30, 233, 242,
251, 259, 265, 309, 311, 317, 323,
328–29, 334, 336, 341–42
- Nazis, 335, 346
- Nero, 22
- Newton, Isaac, 314
- Niccoli, Niccolò, 81, 127, 268, 280–
81
- Nicholas V, Pope, 281, 293
- Nikophanes, 23
- nobilis*, nobility, ennobled, 19, 23, 29,
66, 73, 76, 85, 87, 95, 117, 153,
160, 174, 190–92, 211, 234, 273,
280, 284, 307 (see also class)
- Nogarola, Isotta, 269
- non-finito*, 51, 266, 323–24
- nudity, 305–09, 311–12, 314, 317–18
- Ockeghem, Jean, 228, 230, 232,
234–35

- Oderisi, Omberto, 101, 247
 orator(s), rhetoricians, 19, 26, 31,
 38–40, 51–52, 71–74, 88, 95, 107,
 110–112, 122, 191, 200, 261, 280,
 331
 Orlando, 141, 156, 173, 312
 Orpheus, 117, 127, 216–17, 225
 Or San Michele, 88
- Pacioli, Luca, 61, 89, 98
 Paganini, 50
 pageantry, 244–47, 252, 265, 268,
 316
 Palestrina, 221
 Palma Giovane, 179, 221
 Palmieri, 63
 Pamphilos, see Eupompos
 Panofsky, Erwin, 17–18, 49, 51, 55,
 68, 84, 97, 124, 176, 180, 198,
 306, 311, 317, 326, 330, 335–38,
 342–44, 347
 Parrhasios, 34
 Parler, Peter, 220
 Parmigianino, 76, 108, 181–82, 186,
 277, 343
 Parnassus, 62 (see also Raphael)
 pastoral, 10–11, 67, 156, 159, 175,
 188, 208, 220, 230 (see also
 landscape)
 Pater, Walter, 164, 312, 321
 patron(s), 5, 8–12, 19, 24, 27, 29, 41,
 55–57, 66–67, 73, 76–77, 88–89,
 99, 102, 105, 144, 156, 174–75, 179,
 240, 246–48, 251, 255, 265, 268,
 276–77, 280, 296, 327
pazzia or madness, 29, 42, 138–39,
 141, 143, 153–55, 158, 165–66, 176,
 183, 195, 208, 295, 318 (see also
furia)
 peasant(s), common people, 6, 130–
 31, 133, 149, 153, 166, 177, 202–03,
 216, 226, 237–38, 240, 243, 250,
 305, 310, 331, 342 (see also class)
 Pecci, Francesco, 273
 Pegasus, 62
 Pellegrini, Camillo, 150–51
 Pericles, 69, 71
 Perino del Vaga, 256
 permanence, 16
 Persco, Antonio, 163
 perspective, 74, 98, 150–51, 240, 261,
 283, 298
 Perugino, 90, 184, 241, 269, 298
 Peruzzi, Baldassare, 256
 Peruzzi, Ridolfo, 283
 Pesellino, 294
 Peter Pan, 43
 Petrarch, Petrarchism, 41, 54, 64,
 67, 75, 79, 84, 90, 99, 112–13, 120,
 125–31, 135, 137, 143, 155–56, 158,
 161–63, 168, 173–74, 176, 181, 184,
 188, 201, 217, 229, 243–45, 255,
 259, 262, 278, 293, 312–14, 333
 Pheidias, 28, 33, 35, 69–70, 122, 124,
 273, 278, 297
 Philip of Macedon, 69
 photography, 310
 Picasso, Pablo, 301, 318
 Piccolomini, Aeneas Sylvius (Pius
 II), 216, 240, 245, 283, 318
 Pico della Mirandola, 4, 36, 287
 Piero della Francesco, 89, 98, 244
 Piero di Cosimo, 28, 251, 284, 286
 Pigna, Giambattista, 114, 138–39,
 150, 153, 317
 Pino, Paolo, 5, 92–93, 99, 111, 117–
 18, 200
 Pisano, Giovanni, 296–97
 Pisano, Nicola, 297
 Pisanello, 125–26, 285
 Plato, Platonism, Neo-Platonism,
 53–54, 58, 60–61, 68–69, 79, 95,
 100, 115–17, 119–20, 122, 128, 135,
 139, 143, 155, 158, 163, 176, 223,
 225, 227, 244, 269, 271, 289, 313,
 324, 326, 336, 340–42
 pleasure, 96, 111, 116, 119, 125, 158,
 168, 199, 201, 210, 224–26, 251,
 305, 329
 Pliny, 7, Ch. 1 *passim*, 72–73, 89, 92,
 95, 155, 259–61, 298, 331, 333, 338
 Plutarch, pseudo-Plutarch, 52,
 69–70, 121, 216, 222
 poet, poets, poetry, 1, 3, 5, 15–16,

- 19, 59, 67–70, 79–82, 89, 92,
94–95, 97–98, 100, 106–08, Ch.
3 and 4 *passim*, 215–18, 220,
228–30, 234, 237, 244, 251–53,
259, 261–64, 269, 279, 289, 294,
303, 314, 317, 319, 322, 327–29,
331
- Polignotus, 85
- Poliziano, Angelo, 153, 217, 291
- Pollaiuolo, 98, 284
- Polykleitos, 33, 35, 69–70, 328
- Pontormo, 160, 194, 251, 343
- popularity, vulgarity, 69, 82, 84, 112,
139, 167, 202–10, 243, 250–51,
278, 295, 305
- Porcacci, 152, 206
- Pordenone, 9
- Porter, Cole, 139
- portraits, portraiture, 22–23, 28, 33,
60, 90, 102–03, 116, 141, 161–64,
177–81, 189–98, 220, 247, Ch. 6
passim, 317, 329
medals, 11, 117, 190, 247, 272, 285,
299
- Poussin, Nicholas, 237
- Praxitiles, 37, 39–40, 70, 85, 301
- pregnancy, procreation, 79, 106, 118,
160, 164–65, 169, 186–89
- price, 6–7, 22–24, 65, 70, 125, 166
- Primaticcio, 197
- primitive men or times, 38, 96, 347
- printing, print culture, 8, 11, 52, 64,
86, 109, 140–41, 154, 203–05,
209, 221, 231, 248, 253, 287, 298,
314
- printmaking, prints, 75, 102, 108,
110, 116, 146, 162, 169, 190–97,
200–201, 210, 212, 221, 226, 246,
251, 256, 258, 264–65, 287, 296,
303, 337
Sacrifice of Isaac, engraving, 239
- Proteus, 103, 259
- Protogenes, 19–20, 23, 25, 28, 30, 37,
41, 43, 47, 57, 104, 134
- Pulci, Luigi, 135–36, 154, 220, 277,
313
- Pygmalion, 110, 247
- Pyrgoteles, 328
- Pythagoras, 212, 223, 227, 232–33,
278
- Quintilian, 26–27, 38–40, 44, 48–49,
71–72, 110, 140, 184, 227, 261,
331–35, 338, 345 (see also orators)
- Rabelais, 158
- Raimondi, Marcantonio, 5–6, 158,
168, 182–83, 186, 195, 199, 215
- Raphael, 1, 14–15, 28, 35, 40–42,
46–48, 50, 61, 64, 66, 82, 85, 88,
92, 94, 102, 107, 115, 131, 134, 136,
146, 149, 163–64, 185, 193, 195,
198–99, 201, 203, 209, 211, 237,
249, 251, 256–57, 275, 287, 303,
305–07, 310, 324
Danaë, 182–89, 194
Entombment, 94
Galatea, 185, 311–12
Loggia, *Isaac and Rebecca*, 185
Lucretia, 185, 265
Sibyls, Sta. Maria della Pace, 185
Stanza d'Eliodoro, 182, 184
Stanza della Segnatura, 98, 115
Parnassus, 117, 122, 215–16, 220,
227
School of Athens, 98, 192
Fornarina, 164
St. Peter's, 182
tomb, 256, 275
Three Graces, 306
Transfiguration, 256
portraits of, 195, 287
- Rembrandt, 185
- Renaissance, 3–6, 9, 14–18, 49–53,
67–68, 84, 103, 120, 131, 168, 212,
223, 255, 260, 262, 264, 268–70,
274–75, 303–05, 308–09, 311–19,
Appendix *passim*
- Reni, Guido, 300
- republic, republicanism, 36, 52–54,
78, 81, 169, 208, 239, 267, 270,
275, 293, 314, 334, 346
- reputation, 3, 6–7, 16–17, 19, 27, 84,
133, 137, 151–52, 176, 203, 210,

- 233, 245, 248–49, 255, 258, 265,
272, 281–82, 286, 289, 293, 296,
273, 298, 314–15, 317–19, 322, 347
(inter alia)
- Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 13, 94
- Riccio, 199
- Riccio, Luigi del, 231–32
- Ringhieri, Innocentio, 96, 132,
159–60, 246
- Rossellino, Antonio, 284
- Rosso, 165, 219
- Rousseau, J.J., 65
- Rovere della, Julius II (Pope), 24,
133–34, 241, 243
Sixtus IV, 98
- Rucellai, Giovanni, 239, 282–84
- rulelessness, 26, 28, 42, 55–56, 132–
33, 137, 166, 170, 208, 237–38,
241, 243, 247, 262, 295 (see also
capriccio)
- rules, regularity, 26, 31, 38, 44, 48–
49, 52, 71, 77, 93, 110, 121, 123,
150–52, 184, 189, 202, 205, 207,
210, 213, 223, 228, 232–33, 251–
52, 262, 294, 323, 331, 339, 342
(see also liberal arts)
- Ruscelli, Girolamo, 137–38, 140–41,
152, 154, 164
- Ruskin, John, 77, 118
- Ryle, Gilbert, 177
- Sachetti, Francesco, 78, 169, 240,
242
- Sack of Rome, 62, 209
- Salutati, Coluccio, 75, 268
- Salviati, Francesco, 192, 220, 287
- Sangallo, Francesco, Giuliano,
Giamberti, 285–86
- Sannazaro, Jacopo, 117, 208
- Sansovino, Jacopo, 249, 273
- Sansovino, Francesco, 7, 142, 149,
247, 249, 256, 258, 272–73,
303
- Santi, Giovanni, 89–90, 102, 121,
203, 257
- Savonarola, Michele, 64, 74, 203,
225
- Savonarola, Girolamo, 61, 101–02,
128, 158, 166, 174, 217, 253, 272,
282
- Scacchi, Marco, 232
- Scala, Bartolomeo, 271, 287
- Schongauer, Martin, 162
- scientia*, science, 21, 33, 79, 85–86,
90, 112, 132–33, 158, 166, 170,
184, 218, 244, 260, 291, 297, 301,
308–10, 339
- Scipio Africanus, 70, 90, 280
- sculpture, sculptors, 19, 23, 25, 38,
70, 75, 83, 98, 103, 109–10, 114,
121, 137, 149, 169, 185, 229, 235,
239, 242, 261, 279, 296–97, 317,
328
- sdrucchioli*, 159, 169, 208
- Sebastiano del Piombo, 134, 153,
193, 219
- Seilanion, 29, 155
- Seneca, 70–71, 95
- Serafino Aquilano, 149, 191, 203,
210, 215, 221–22, 231, 251, 274
- Sforza, Isabella, 176, 260, 311
- Shakespeare, William, 319
Hamlet, 173, 204
Love's Labor's Lost, 278
Twelfth Night, 217
- Shelley, Mary, 110
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 127
- Shepherd, E.H., 313
- signatures, 149, 242, 248, 297–98
- Signorelli, 127
- Simonides, 121–22, 125
- simplicity, 23, 29, 36, 55, 67, 210,
238, 280
- Socrates, 68
- Soderini, Piero, 55
- Spano, Pippo, 239–40
- Spartaro, Giovanni, 223, 228, 231
- Speroni, Sperone, 84, 207
- sprezzatura*, 42–51, 55, 57–58, 145
- Squarcialupi, 221, 284, 291
- Statius, 112
- Stern, Daniel, 306–07
- stonemasons, 103
- Strascino, 111, 143

- Strozzi, Palla, 282–83
 Strozzi, Tito Vespasiano, 150, 329
 study, 29–30, 33, 38, 40–42, 44, 47–
 48, 50, 70, 74, 118, 184, 223, 275,
 278, 303, 332, 339 (see diligence)
 stylelessness, 263, 310
 sublime, 231, 334, 338
 Summers, David, 326, 337–38, 342
 surrealism, 308
 Symonds, John Addington, 14, 18,
 304
 syphilis, 111
- Taccone, Baldassare, 189
 Tacitus, 36, 179
 Taegio, Bartolomeo, 10
 talent, 20, 30, 33, 38–40, 50, 71, 77,
 87, 115, 117, 222, 227–29, 231–32,
 236, 250, 280, 296, 303, 324, 332,
 336, 339, 345 (see also *ingenium*)
 Tarocchi, 98
 Tarsie, Giovanni Maria, 250, 289,
 299
 Tasso, Torquato, 109, 138, 150, 173,
 185, 202, 210, 212
 taste, 9–11, 198–99, 205, 236–38,
 281, 309–10
 Tempesta, Antonio, 175
terribilità, 34–35, 41, 43–47, 54, 144,
 153, 162–64, 165, 169, 241, 251,
 307, 325–26, 338
 Theophrastus, 19
 Three Musketeers, 43
 Tiepolo, Giambattista, 224
 Timanthes, 31
 Tinctoris, 217, 227–28
 Tintoretto, 313
 Titian, 1, 46, 66, 94, 106, 134, 136,
 144–47, 149, 152, 162–63, 168,
 174, 185, 192, 198–01, 219–20,
 231–32, 270, 285, 299, 307–10,
 319
Death of St. Peter Martyr, 257
Sacred and Profane Love, 306
Venus of Urbino, 305–06, 311
 tomb of, 276
 Titus, 22
- Tolomei, Claudio, 62, 117–18, 193,
 205, 287
 Tolstoy, Leo, 9, 305, 316
 Trent, Council of, 95, 198, 209, 260
 Turks, 165
 Twain, Mark, 305, 319
 Tyard, Pontus de, 224–25, 227
- Uccello, 285–87
uomini illustri or famosi, 59, Ch. 6
passim, 316
urbanità, 48–49, 55
 Urbino, 89–92, 102
 Uzzano, Niccolò, 283
 Valgulio, Carlo, 216
- Valla, Lorenzo, 83, 91, 95
 Valori, Niccolò, 291–92
 Valvassori, Clemente, 150
 Van Dyck, 162
 Vannini, Ottavio, 301
 Varchi, Benedetto, 94, 205, 246, 256,
 292
 Vasari, Giorgio, 4, 12, 18, 21, 28, 82,
 87–88, 123, 128–29, 139, 141, 144,
 155, 160, 192, 198–200, 211, 213,
 222, 229–31, 234–35, 237, 244,
 246, 269, 275–76, 281, 285–87,
 291, 294–95, 298, 309, 313–14,
 319 (inter alia)
 “dell’unga un leone”, 23
 vases, Aretine, 87
 Vedder, Elihu, 303
 Vellutello, Alessandro, 201
 Venice, 148, 232–34, 258, 267, 272,
 298
 Vergerius, P.P., 98
 vernacular, 52, 79, 121, 130, 148,
 150, 167–68, 170, 201–05, 209,
 212, 250, 278, 293, 303, 317, 319,
 333–34
 Veronese, 9, 183
 Verrocchio, 54
 Vespasiano da Bisticci, 279–81
 Vico, Enea, 11
 Villani, Filippo, 77–78, 91, 124, 129,
 279, 330–31

- Virgil, 20, 85, 91, 105, 108, 112, 115, 121, 127, 150, 161, 168, 201, 205, 207, 212, 216, 228, 250, 260, 322, 327–28
- v(V)irtue(s), *virtù*, 8, 26–27, 29–30, 42, 53, 70, 77, 91, 97, 99, 147, 154, 186–87, 200, 215, 218, 255, 271, 277–78, 288, 300
- virtuoso, 221, 248–50
- vis*, 39–40, 94, 184, 269, 331, 341 (see also *Gewalt*)
- Visscher, Cornelius, 186
- Vitruvius, 20, 31, 72–73, 89, 98, 121, 132, 151, 321, 332
- Vittoria, Alessandro, 148
- Vittorini da Feltre, 74
- Warburg, Aby, 17, 45
- Webster, Daniel, 177
- Whistler, 168, 212, 236
- Willart, Adrian, 233
- Winckelmann, J.J., 20, 65, 67, 185
- Wittkower, Rudolf, 15, 323–26, 338, 340
- women, 5, 16, 30, 51, 54, 75, 114, 118, 143, 156–65, 169–70, 175–76, 181–89, 223, 230, 233, 235, 262, 269, 277, 305–07, 312–13, 319, 329 (see also love)
- Wren, Christopher, 289
- writers, writing, 19, 28, 31, 48–49, 74, 80, 83–86, 100–08, 121, 126–27, 135, 138–43, 147–48, 152, 213, 229, 250–51, 260–61, 264, 281, 309, 328–29 (see also humanists)
- Xenophon, 70
- Zanetti, Antonio Maria, 76
- Zarlino, Gioseffo, 216–17, 223, 233
- Zeuxis, 7, 30, 32, 121, 133–34, 164–65, 265, 331
- Zuccaro, Federico, 60, 276, 285, 299
- Zuccaro, Taddeo, 192, 299