

**DEFINING ARTISTIC IDENTITY IN THE FLORENTINE RENAISSANCE: VASARI,  
EMBEDDED SELF-PORTRAITS, AND THE PATRON'S ROLE**

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2006

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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Readers of Vasari's *Vite* will be aware of the lively Renaissance tradition of the artist's embedded portrait within commissioned works. We are told of numerous embedded self-portraits, a notion that earlier authors including Alberti, Filippo Villani, and Ghiberti, corroborate. This dissertation argues that the *Vite*, our most extensive source on the subject, set up ideas and expectations that continue to pervade our understanding of their purposes and functions. A primary aim here is to move beyond Vasari's assumptions and examine self-images from the standpoint of their audience rather than their creators. Chapter One examines aspects of our current knowledge concerning Vasari's historical context and his motivations as an artist, courtier, and writer in order to understand how his views informed his interpretation of the genre. Chapter Two examines a manuscript self-portrait by Pietro da Pavia and a sculpted self-portrait of Andrea Orcagna. It investigates issues of artistic identity and authority and how these notions were displayed and commemorated to discern how self-portraits may have served the aims of the commissioner(s). The third and fourth chapters delve into the history of Quattrocento Florentine embedded self-portraits. First with Masaccio's self-portrait in the Brancacci Chapel, and then with self-images of Benozzo Gozzoli, Botticelli, Filippino Lippi and Domenico Ghirlandaio, these chapters examine aspects of the Renaissance culture of art commissioning to establish the patron's role with regard to embedded self-portraiture. Discussion here suggests ways in which a patron might have understood the artist's embedded self-portrait during the early Quattrocento. It further explores the notion that while professional, intellectual, and social-status driven concerns may have dominated the creation of embedded self-images, not all of these were the concerns of the artists. The final chapter investigates transitional images between the embedded and autonomous self-portrait traditions by examining two fictively autonomous self-images – one by Perugino in Perugia's *Collegio del Cambio* and the other by Pintoricchio in Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello. The case-studies presented here illuminate neglected aspects regarding

Renaissance embedded self-images, and cast light on both sides of the transaction between artist and patron that resulted in the inclusion of the artist's embedded self-portrait in narrative paintings.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No project the size and scope of a doctoral dissertation can be accomplished without the generous aid of many individuals and institutions. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support that has made this dissertation possible from the University of Pittsburgh in the forms of a Teaching Fellowship and an Andrew Mellon Pre-Dissertation Fellowship. The latter made a year spent writing and doing research at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz possible, an institution from which I derived enormous scholarly and personal benefits.

Equally important have been encouragement and support I have received from friends, faculty, and members of my family – I trust that these individuals know who they are and know how much I have appreciated them. Two members of my committee deserve special mention here: David G. Wilkins an amazing mentor who has been able to encourage, inspire and jolt when necessary; and Kathleen Christian, who although arriving late on my committee graciously took the time to study my work and made insightful comments that have greatly improved the final product. Ann Sutherland Harris, Dennis Looney and Barbara McCloskey have also provided me with inspiration and encouragement, and have helped to guide the course of this dissertation. My friends and fellow students at the University of Pittsburgh also deserve mention for their consistent willingness to provide helpful commentary on grant applications, seminar projects, and prospectus drafts, and for the general atmosphere of collegial support maintained in our department. Especially helpful were April Eisman, Sheri Lullo, Kathy Johnston-Keane, Cindy Persinger, and Cornelia Piok-Zanon. When I found myself most at sea during the course of my doctoral studies, I discovered from these individuals just how important it is to have friends who both appreciate the pressures of graduate studies and who are willing to help one to forget them. Friends abroad have also been wonderfully supportive, most especially Marianna Cerno, whose aid in translating medieval Latin proved especially helpful. In the same vein but

closer to home, Kathleen Christian and Ann Wilkins also provided aid in translations and deserve my gratitude.

Lastly, while my entire family deserves a resounding thank-you, I wish to mention especially the generosity of my grandmother, Paula L. Thorson. Without her support, both moral and financial, as well as her belief in me, this project might never have been completed.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Italian Renaissance was not the first period in which artists made portraits of influential, famous or otherwise noteworthy individuals, nor was it the first in which artists created images of themselves. According to sound accounts from ancient writers, portraits were used in antiquity for reasons of commemoration, glorification, propaganda and spiritual necessity. Portraits regard us tranquilly from the walls of tombs, stand transfixed in panels and frescoes of all types, present their profiles in medallions and coins, and stare us down from museum plinths. Caius Plinius Secundus (23-79 CE), better known as Pliny the Elder, prematurely mourned the passing of portraiture in his encyclopedic *Natural History*, asserting that “indolence has destroyed the arts, and since our minds cannot be portrayed, our bodily features are also neglected.” In ancestor halls of the past “portraits were the objects displayed to be looked at, not statues by foreign artists, nor bronzes nor marbles.”<sup>1</sup> Pliny praised the historian and prolific ancient writer Marcus Terentius Varro (116 – 27 BCE) for “in former days” having placed in his *Imagines*, a work providing biographies of seven hundred famous Greeks and Romans, a portrait of each. According to Pliny, Varro was to be commended for “not allowing their likenesses to disappear or the lapse of ages to prevail against immortality in men,” and having instead “dispatched [immortality] all over the world, enabling his subjects to be ubiquitous, like the gods.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pliny the Elder, the foremost ancient writer on the arts, also referred to numerous portraits. See Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, ed. E. Sellers, trans. K. Jex-Blake (Chicago: Argonaut, Publishers, 1968). For the quote, see Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV, II. 6: Pliny, *Natural History, with an English Translation by H. Rackham*, Leob Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), vol. 9, p. 265. [...*artes desidia perdidit, et quoniam animorum images non sunt, negleguntur etiam corporum. Aliter apud maiores in atriis haec errant, quae spectarentur; non signa externorum artificum nec aera aut Marmora....*”]

<sup>2</sup> Marcus Varro is estimated to have written some 600 volumes. The lost text in question is his *Hebdomades vel de imaginibus*, a biographical work in 15 books that, supposedly illustrated with as many as 700 portraits, had a wide distribution. Pliny refers to the text in *Natural History*, XXXV, II. 8: Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 267-268. [...*non passus intercideret figures aut vetustatem aevi contra homines valere...quando immortalitatem non solum dedit, verum etiam in omnes terras misit, ut praesentes esse ubique ceu di possent.*]

Pliny, too, wrote of dozens of famous portraits of individuals of high and low social status, and obviously saw nothing amiss juxtaposing a discussion of a portrait of Alexander the Great with one of Lekythion, a “master of gymnastics,” when both images were made by worthy artists.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, from Plutarch we know that ancient artists, too, commemorated their own features. The ancient Greek biographer remarked that the renowned sculptor Phidias had included his self-image in 438 BCE as an Athenian warrior in a scene decorating the shield of a now-lost Athenian cult statue.<sup>4</sup> Nor is it impossible that self-images appeared earlier still.<sup>5</sup>

Portraiture as a genre has received much attention in the last few decades, something to be expected in light of the renewed vigor with which scholars have probed issues of identity. In addition to art historical articles and texts dedicated to the genre, several portraiture exhibitions have highlighted scholarly and popular interest in a subject that is evolving continuously both in how it is understood, and in the physical forms that understanding takes.<sup>6</sup> The concept of identity, along with accompanying implications of self-consciousness or awareness of individuality, has become one of today’s catchwords as more writers investigate how and why early modern identity was formed and displayed, and what those displays were intended to communicate – and to whom.

Many scholars find equally interesting the connection between portraiture and self-portraiture. Yet, whereas a portrait is the product of a negotiation between the sitter – who may or may not have been the commissioner – and the artist, a self-portrait implies a more direct relationship, something which may partially explain its fascination for viewers. With a portrait, it is necessary to consider how the sitter – or the commissioner – wished the sitter to appear or to be displayed. This desire was then affected by the artist’s own perception of the sitter, and by his or her ability to represent what was seen. A self-portrait, on the other hand, presumably

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<sup>3</sup> Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 161. For commentary on Pliny’s sources and the society about which he wrote, see especially Jacob Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society: The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, Odense University Classical Studies, vol. 17 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> The original is lost and is known only from a copy. Plutarch identified Phidias in the face of an Athenian warrior whose features are less idealized than the others in a battle fought between Greeks and the Amazons. See Plutarch, *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, trans. B. Perrin (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1982), p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that self-portraits appear even earlier in the art of Ancient Egypt. See Winfried Barta, *Das Selbstzeugnis eines altägyptischen Künstlers, Stele Louvre C14* (Berlin: B. Hessling, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> A recent example is an international exhibition mounted in London’s National Portrait Gallery (Oct 2005 – January 2006) of self-portraits made by artists from the Renaissance up to the present day.

represents the artist's own conception of his or her appearance, of the "self" and the particular facet(s) of identity that he or she wished to make visible.<sup>7</sup>

Self-portraiture as a genre has begun to take its place on the stage of art historical inquiry. This renewal of interest began at least four decades ago and was reflected by the public opening of the Vasari Corridor of the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence in 1973. After centuries of tantalizing descriptions in old books, scholars and the interested public gained limited access to the famous collection whose core was formed by the Medici collection begun under Cosimo I de' Medici, the first grand duke of Tuscany. Although augmented in the intervening centuries, the collection had nevertheless been inaccessible to all but a few curators and well-placed scholars. Today, the collection continues to grow, owing to the same fascination the genre holds for the viewing public as for the scholarly community – and for artists themselves who continue to explore and evolve the concept. This captivation was demonstrated as recently as 2004-2005 with an exhibition of 20<sup>th</sup>-century self-portraits held in the Uffizi, several which came from the Uffizi's own holdings.<sup>8</sup>

On another level, however, the public's interest in the artists' self-portrait never waned. Artists of many traditions, western and eastern, have created them for centuries, and art historians to seek them out, if at times only in a dilatory fashion. Modern and post-modern viewers appear to be especially interested in the genres of both self-portraiture and embedded self-portraiture, the reasons for which are impossible to examine here. Nevertheless, it is likely that the continued interest that individuals and groups have had in the genre is responsible for the breadth of objects grouped under the term. The nature of the current study makes it advisable to clarify as early as possible what is intended here by the words "portrait" and "self-portrait." Because the genre has been explored almost continually by both visual and verbal artists, what exactly has been meant by this slippery term has differed depending on the application, milieu and date. Consideration of the range of objects that might be called a "portrait" in an exhibition or library catalog offers a salutary lesson. One might find information regarding an image by

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<sup>7</sup> For a brief outline of the history of this term and its usage, see Joanna Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture: the Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Pascal Bonafoux, *Moi! autoritratti del XX secolo. Ideazione e cura della mostra* (Milan: Skira, 2004). First shown in Paris, the exhibition was hosted in the Uffizi from September 17, 2004 to January 9, 2005, and included works owned by numerous museums, including many works from the Uffizi's collection, as well as a number from private collections.

Audrey Flack, whose choice of objects arranged collage style in a still-life format may be said to reveal a glimpse of its creator's identity. Nevertheless, such an image would not have been understood by a 15<sup>th</sup>-century individual as a "portrait." A Cubist portrait by Picasso of David Henry Kahnweiler would doubtless have also puzzled a pre-modern viewer. Similarly, author James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* would likely not have made sense to a Renaissance viewer as a "portrait" either, since he or she would have expected a visual rather than textual description.

At the same time, it is worth considering what was meant by the Renaissance use of the Italian term *ritratto* which, although translated freely as "portrait" in English, no more indicated solely a picture of an individual than does today's varied usage. Instead, the Italian term originally indicated a visual reproduction of any specific item under scrutiny, and could have designated a piazza, a man, or a building, and appears to be better analogous to the English word "portrayal."<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that while the Renaissance understanding of the word suggests the artistic rendering of a specific object, it did not carry a precise sense of an individual's individuality.

My own definition of the word "portrait" for the purposes of this study will by necessity be narrower and more precise than either the Renaissance or modern usage. My use of the term is adapted from one given by Richard Brilliant: a "portrait" is a likeness made by an artist of a living or once living human being that is meant to be recognizably the individual portrayed, resembling to some extent the subject's physical, outward appearance and intending to reveal or display some element(s) of the sitter's character or identity.<sup>10</sup> By extension, a "self-portrait" is a portrait created by the person it portrays. The use of the term "likeness" excludes from the

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the usage of the term "*ritratto*," see Joanna Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 17. Salvatore Battaglia and Giorgio B. Squarotti. *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, Vol. XVI (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2002), p. 984, define a *ritratto* as "Raffigurato, effigiato, rappresentato, per lo più dal vivo, con le tecniche delle arti plastiche o figurative (una figura umana, un paesaggio, un oggetto, ecc.)." [Depicted, portrayed, represented, as if alive for the live, by means of plastic or figurative arts (a human figure, a landscape, an object, etc).]

<sup>10</sup> Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 8, defines a portrait as a work of art intentionally made of a living or once living person by an artist done in a variety of media for an audience. I have substituted the word "likeness" for "image." While I do not disagree with Lorne Campbell's [see Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 1] stance that a likeness is not always sought in portraiture and that not all likenesses are portraits, for the purposes of this study, however, I will consider only those likenesses which were plausibly intended as portraits. A likeness, understood as a depiction that is similar in appearance or character or nature to the thing depicted, better fits the current study's parameters.

discussion figures from several *uomini famosi* series, however much some examples may suggest that they should be understood as representing specific individuals. While some images of famous men were copied from Roman coins or, occasionally, older portraits, more often they were based on fantasy, contemporary notions of physiognomy, and interpretations of textual descriptions rather than any actual model.<sup>11</sup> My definition also excludes the images of workshop *garzoni* whose faces or forms were used as models, but whose figures were not intended to depict the sitter's actual individuality, character or identity.

This study is primarily concerned with embedded self-portraits created by artists of the Italian Renaissance which I propose to study as a discreet genre in its own right, rather than simply a subset of self-portraiture. Admittedly, Renaissance self-portraiture itself has only recently begun to solicit serious study; nevertheless, I seek to demonstrate in the following pages that the distinction between self-portraiture and embedded self-portraiture is an important one. An artist's image, a created likeness of the artist's self, is his or her self-portrait. The artist's self is the primary if not the sole subject of the depiction. An "embedded" self-portrait, however, is but a single element within a larger context, here normally a religious or historical narrative whose primary subject is a portrayed event. The artist's features might be imposed upon a character within the narrative, or he might portray himself as a witness or non-character participant. Recognition of the artist's self-image, while perhaps adding to a viewer's appreciation of the work, is not necessary for his or her understanding of it. I will use the term "embedded" because it is more accurate than "participant portrait," which is also used.<sup>12</sup> The latter designation implies, at least, that such a figure would be taking an active role in a scene. Instead, several images of figures identified as self-portraits cannot be said to participate in the narrative, and instead, occasionally seem removed from the action portrayed either by their placement and/or scale, or by their inattention to the action at hand.

To see embedded self-images as *only* part of the larger phenomenon of self-portraiture is to lose sight of many fascinating issues that enrich our knowledge of Renaissance ideas of personal and familial commemoration, religious experience, communal pride, and the

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding the notion of physiognomy in Renaissance portraits, see Peter Meller, "Physiognomical Theory in Renaissance Heroic Portraits," in *Studies in Western Art: The Renaissance and Mannerism*, ed. Ida E. Rubin, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 53-69.

<sup>12</sup> Katherine T. Brown, *The Painter's Reflection: Self-Portraiture in Renaissance Venice 1458 - 1625* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2000), considers what she terms the "Artist as Participant" in Chapter Two.

complicated, evolving relations between artists and patrons. Such images have been found in numerous frescoes, painted panels, works of sculpture and manuscripts that were created for patrons as commissioned works of art. This simple fact affects their placement and sets their meaning within a larger context; this context requires examination.

At the beginning of the last century, Aby Warburg argued that it was a fact of early Renaissance Florentine patronage that works of art came about from the “mutual understanding between patrons and artists,” and were from “from the outset, the results of a negotiation between client and executant.”<sup>13</sup> Renaissance art today is examined from various angles and uses numerous methodologies borrowed from other disciplines. It is accepted as basic practice that an investigation into the circumstances surrounding a commission – including the social, religious and economic context and biographical/historical details of artist and patron – will allow the scholar to begin to unlock and understand the meaning behind and intended function of those works. Thus far, only those circumstances surrounding the painter have been given much consideration. On the other hand, art historical scholarship is currently reconsidering what Jill Burke described as the old idea of a Renaissance painting’s “meaning” being “implicitly understood to be reconstructable, singular and unified. In other words, only one individual is implied as the audience for the work, and that is the person who paid for it.”<sup>14</sup> In line with other current efforts, my approach to embedded self-portraits seeks to re-situate their study within a larger context that involves the “client” as well as the “executant” in order to examine and discuss another side of the transaction.

At this point, it is useful to consider briefly a few facets of the study of the self-image generally, and with an eye towards the current study. With regard to a painting’s client or patron in which a self-portrait of the artist appears, among aspects that should see further investigation is the group dynamic. Several Quattrocento cycles, including Benozzo Gozzoli’s Chapel of the Magi discussed in Chapter Four, prominently display large groups of individuals who appear, presumably as witnesses, at an event whose subject matter is the ostensible focus of the scene. It is clear that these groupings of figures, although some remain anonymous in spite of scholars’

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<sup>13</sup> Aby Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie," in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance. Texts and Documents*, ed. Aby Warburg and Kurt W. Forster (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institution for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), p. 187.

<sup>14</sup> Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), pp. 7-8.

best efforts, were clearly intended to represent known individuals in meaningful relationships to each other. This is a subject, however, to which this dissertation, dedicated to the embedded self-portrait, cannot do full justice.

Nevertheless, while the present work makes some attempt to situate the embedded self-images discussed within their respective contexts – several of which include other embedded portraits – other studies such as that of Joseph Schmid focus more directly on the group dynamic.<sup>15</sup> Scholars frequently argue various identities for figures in this type of cycle, but often neglect to consider what can be discerned about the physical relationships among figures following the most secure identifications. Studies of Quattrocento portrait galleries embedded within religious scenes have focused primarily on the display of familial, political and social identities represented by groups, and less frequently on how individuals are physically represented with regard to each other.<sup>16</sup> Questions regarding how placement and location of particular figures with regard to each other and the religious subject depicted, and how deportment, dress, and gesture affect the group dynamic and indicate meaningful, recoverable relations between individuals (and how an artist's self-portrait fits into this display) are part of a neglected area in Renaissance art history.

Also worth mention at this juncture is a necessary facet of the creation of the self-portrait whether embedded in another subject or displayed autonomously. A reflective surface is a prerequisite for any artist who wishes to record his or her features in a self-portrait. Although reflections can be gained by other means, we know that mirrors were common to many Quattrocento workshops according to inventories and were considered indispensable by Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>17</sup> While mirrors have been discussed in metaphorical terms as casting reflections of the soul, providing insight into the character, and acting as a symbol of the Virgin's

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<sup>15</sup> Josef Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria: Bürgerliche repraesentation in der Capella Tornabuoni in S. Maria Novella*, ed. Max Seidel, I Mandorli, vol. 2 (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> See Patricia Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), and especially her chapter on portraiture, for an excellent study of the problem of the Quattro- and Cinquecento narrative cycles containing daunting quantities of portraits that decorate several Venetian confraternal spaces.

<sup>17</sup> H. Schwarz, "The Mirror and the Artist and the Mirror of the Devout: Observations on Some Paintings, Drawings and Prints of the Fifteenth Century," In *Studies in the History of Art Dedicated to William E. Suida on His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Paul Underwood (London: Phaidon Press, 1959), pp. 90-105 and p. 194. Regarding Leonardo's commentary on the usage of the mirror – the "master" of painters – see Leonardo da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting. With a Life of Leonardo and an Account of His Works by John William Brown*, trans. John F. Rigaud (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), pp. 259-260.

purity, primarily of concern here are their physical properties.<sup>18</sup> Mirrors are also important in the creation of the particular “look” of many self-images. The physical limitations associated with painting a self-image – the positioning of the body in relation to the reflective surface(s) and to the medium of depiction – generally result in a three-quarter view with both eyes intently focused slightly to one side, a fact that has often aided the identification of self-portraits.

A brief consideration of two aspects of this dissertation’s title elucidates its purpose. Artistic identity is discussed by art historians who investigate how and by what means Renaissance individuals consciously “fashioned” their identities for themselves and for others.<sup>19</sup> This topic became especially popular following Stephen Greenblatt’s now-classic study of the Renaissance self.<sup>20</sup> It is true that the application of the phrase “to fashion” to actions taken by 15<sup>th</sup>-century individuals may be unsuited, since the term is primarily associated with the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, increased attention to and recognition of the fashioned identity as the result of a manipulable and artful process as it pertains to Renaissance individuals – and especially artists and their works – is a hallmark of much current Renaissance scholarship.<sup>22</sup>

It is taken as a given in Renaissance art historical studies that it is important to recognize the active contribution of patrons and the effects such contributions had on commissioned works of art produced by artists. Part of my interest in the subject of identity here, both of the artist and of the patron, is how it was manipulated by both entities for their own use. After a family’s palazzo, the family chapel was probably the public site most clearly affiliated with a familial identity. By the deliberate harnessing of the artist’s identity to a location clearly associated with that of his patron, accomplished by an embedded self-portrait, I believe that Renaissance commissioners could promote specific ideas and values about themselves as patrons of the arts.

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<sup>18</sup> Brown, *The Painter's Reflection*, pp. 50-53.

<sup>19</sup> “To fashion” in this sense is taken to connote “the process of creating a distinct, personal style...,” which in the 16<sup>th</sup> century “designat[ed] the shaping of a given person’s identity, as revealed in his or her personality or mode of behavior.” Joanna Woods-Marsden, “Introduction: Collective Identity/Individual Identity,” in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>21</sup> Woods-Marsden, “Introduction,” p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> For a few recent examples of studies concerned with the subject of how and to what effect a Renaissance individual’s social or professional identity could be molded and deployed, see Francis Ames-Lewis, “Reconstructing Benozzo Gozzoli’s Artistic Identity;” Rona Goffen, “Signatures: Inscribing Identity in Italian Renaissance Art,” *Viator* 32 (2000); Sally McKee, *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Anthony Molho, “Names, Memory, Public Identity, in Late Medieval Florence,” in *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Giovanna Ciapelli and Patricia Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).



An investigation of some contemporary concepts concerning what art was intended to do provides a lens through which one can begin to discern how both some artists and some patrons thought about and deployed artistic identity to the mutual benefit of both parties.

The second aspect of the title I wish to touch upon at this juncture is my deliberate invocation of one of the most recognizable names of Renaissance art history, that of artist and courtier Giorgio Vasari (1511 - 1574). There is good reason for this: discussion of Italian Renaissance self-portraiture within a narrative context immediately raises the issue of evidence. The majority of identified embedded self-portraits now debated in art historical literature originated in the pages of Vasari's famous *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* [hereafter the *Vite*] and, unfortunately, are largely uncorroborated by other sources. Several historians have taken issue with the Renaissance biographer's accuracy including Charles Hope, who argues that a reader was not meant to take completely seriously Vasari's identifications in the first place.<sup>23</sup> Paul Barolsky is the most vocal in his insistence that scholars desist in attempting to "force Vasari into the mold of a 'documentary source.'"<sup>24</sup> Instead, this line of debate argues that Vasari's use of self-portraiture is more rhetorical and poetic than documentary in nature: that, as Peter Burke put it, "Vasari used portraiture as a means of emphasis...as an underscoring of circumstances he wished to stress." While I do not entirely agree with these arguments, one cannot deny that Vasari's accuracy has been rightfully challenged. While many identifications appear valid and are largely accepted, others are hotly contested or have been rejected. For these reasons and others to be discussed, Vasari is often a means to an end as regards most of the self-images examined in the following pages. The exception to this caveat is the first chapter, which is devoted to Vasari and an understanding of how his views – including what those are and their origins – have influenced modern interpretations of the genre of the Italian Renaissance embedded self-portrait.

Although the city of Florence has long benefited from intense scholarly attention, the subject of its artists' embedded self-portraits from any period has seen no consistent study. The present dissertation, due to its nature and scope, examines the subject of Quattrocento embedded

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<sup>23</sup> Charles Hope, "Historical Portraits in the 'Lives' and in the Frescoes of Giorgio Vasari," in *Giorgio Vasari tra decorazione ambientale e storiografia artistica. Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento: Convegno di Studi, Arezzo, 8-10 Ottobre* (Florence: Leo S. Olshki, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> Paul Barolsky, *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. xiv.

self-portraiture by drawing upon a range of published materials. The materials considered here include Renaissance portraiture and self-portraiture, Vasarian scholarship, discussions of numerous specific artists and their supposed self-images, and patronage studies, amongst others. Two fundamental studies that broadly consider Renaissance portraiture include texts by John Pope-Hennessy and Lorne Campbell.<sup>25</sup> Neither author, however, nor most others who treat Renaissance portraits, addresses the *self*-portrait – much less the embedded self-image – as a distinct type, although both scholars use examples of the former genre throughout their texts. Nevertheless, many of their conclusions regarding the uses of portraits by Renaissance patrons find discussion within the present work.<sup>26</sup> Self-portraiture itself as a distinct genre has been studied with greater frequency in the past few decades. Examples from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century created north of the Alps have been considered, especially the work Albrecht Dürer, whose repeated studies of himself done over a period of many years have focused attention on German self-portraits and those of artists made in the Low Countries.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, several studies examining the self-images produced by women artists have produced an increased consciousness of the ways in which early modern female artists negotiated the terms of their professional and personal identities through paintings.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1966).

<sup>26</sup> For further information on Renaissance portraits in general, see also Linda Klinger Aleci, "Images of Identity: Italian Portrait Collection of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *The Image of the Individual. Portraits in the Renaissance*, ed. Nicolas Mann and Luke Syson (London: British Museum, 1998); M. Bizet, "The Reflection of the Other in One's Own Mirror: The Idea of the Portrait in Renaissance *Imatio*," *Romance Notes* 36 (1996); Jodi Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sharon Fermor, "The Portrait in the Renaissance: Renaissance Portraits, European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries," *Art History* 14, no. September (1991); Jack M. Greenstein, "Faces in Time: Temporalities of the Sitter in Renaissance Portraits," in *Symbols of Time in the History of Art*, ed. Christian Heck and Kristen Lippencott (Belgium: Brepols, 2002); Linda S. Klinger, *Paolo Giovio's Portrait Collection* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1995); Flavia Polignano, "Ritratto e biografia: due insieme a confronto, dalla parte dell'iconologia," in *Il Ritratto e la memoria*, ed. Augusto Gentili (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1989); E. H. Ramsden, "*Come, take this lute*," *A Quest for Identities in Italian Portraiture* (Tisbury: Element Books, 1983); Stephen Scher, ed., *The Currency of Fame: Portrait Medals of the Renaissance* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994); L. M. Sleptzoff, *Men or Supermen? The Italian Portrait in the Fifteenth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978); Claudia Cieri Via, "L'immagine del ritratto. Considerazioni sull'origine del genere e sulla sua evoluzione dal Quattrocento al Cinquecento," in *Il Ritratto e la memoria*, ed. Augusto Gentili (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1989); J. Walker, *Portraits 5,000 Years* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1983); Alison Wright, "The Memory of Faces: Representational Choices in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraiture," in *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Giovanna Ciapelli and Patricia Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Georgia S. Wright, "The Reinvention of the Portrait Likeness in the Fourteenth Century," *Gesta*, no. 39 (2000).

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> For examples of texts dealing with women's self-portraits painted during the Renaissance, see Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998); Frances Borzello and Natacha

Several studies concerned specifically with Italian Renaissance self-portraiture have been published over the past few decades.<sup>29</sup> Wolfram Prinz analyzed the Uffizi's collection of self-portraits in an excellent contribution published in 1971.<sup>30</sup> Prinz followed this publication with one of even more pertinence here, writing a lengthy article examining the portrait illustrations published by Vasari in the 1568 version of the *Vite*.<sup>31</sup> More recently, Katherine Brown has tackled the Venetian self-portrait, focusing attention on the self-images created there from the mid-Quattrocento through the first quarter of the Seicento. Nevertheless, Joanna Woods-Marsden's book, *Renaissance Self-Portraits: The Visual Construction of Identity and the Social Status of the Artist*, is to my knowledge the only text to examine broadly the self-portraits made by Italian artists during the Renaissance.<sup>32</sup> Because it is the publication that pertains most directly in several respects to the present work, it is worth examining it in some detail.

Woods-Marsden's subtitle speaks forthrightly of her argument: throughout the book, she examines self-portraits – “visual constructions” – in relation to a social construction, namely, what she terms the prevailing Renaissance ideology concerning the social status of art and artists. She argues that the self-images made by Renaissance artists should be viewed as images that project the social and professional aspirations of their creators, specifically their general and

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Ledwidge, *Women Artists: A Graphic Guide*, Graphic guides (London: Camden Press, 1986); Liana Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon, and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self-Portraits by Women Painters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Martha W. Driver, "Mirrors of a Collective Past: Reconsidering Images of Medieval Women," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997); Liz Rideal and others, *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2002); Lesley Smith, "Scriba, Femina: Medieval Depictions of Women Writing," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane Taylor (London: The British Library, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> For a few examples, see Anton W. Boschloo, "Perceptions of the Status of Painting: the Self-Portrait in the Art of the Italian Renaissance," in *Modeling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance, with a Critical Edition of Petrarch's Letter to Posterity*, ed. Karl Enekel (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998); Marco Collareta, "La fama degli artisti," in *Storia delle arti in Toscana: il Trecento*, ed. Max Seidel, *Storia delle arti in Toscana* (Florence: Edifir-Edizioni Firenze, 2004); Virginia W. Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Philipp Fehl, "Death and the Sculptor's Fame: Artist's Signatures on Renaissance Tombs in Rome," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 59 (1997); L. Freedman, *Titian's Independent Self-Portraits* (Florence: Casa Editrice Leo S. Olschki, 1990); Catherine King, "Italian Self-Portraits and the Rewards of Virtue," in *Autobiographie und Selbst portrait in der Renaissance*, ed. Gunter Schweikhart (Cologne: König, 1998); C. Wolters, "Ein Selbstbildnis des Taddeo di Bartolo," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 7 (1953).

<sup>30</sup> Wolfram Prinz, *Die Sammlung der Selbstbildnisse in der Uffizen* (Berlin: Geschichte der Sammlung, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Wolfram Prinz, "Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 12 (1966).

<sup>32</sup> Professor Woods-Marsden is not, of course, the only scholar to have considered Renaissance self-portraits, although her study remains to date the most extensive. Most other contributions to the subject of the Renaissance self-portrait come in the form of articles. Two worthwhile recent examples not already mentioned are Peter Burke, "The Presentation of Self in the Renaissance Portrait," in *Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication*, ed. Peter Burke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Roy Porter, ed., *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1997).

collective interest in increasing the status of art and artists. She explains on the first page that her primary interest lies with the *autonomous* self-image. This is a necessary stipulation for understanding her approach and conclusions. As far as we know, the first images of Renaissance artists were *not* autonomous portraits but were instead the embedded images artists created of themselves and of their peers within the context of a commissioned painting. Having stated her primary interests, Woods-Marsden nevertheless devotes chapters four, “The Florentine Artist as Witness in Religious Narrative,” and five, “Sculptural Self-Portraits within Frames,” to discussions of embedded self-portraits by Florentine and non-Florentine artists in both painted and sculpted formats. Moreover, by dividing the later chapters into discussions of specific artists, she is able to include considerations of an artist’s embedded self-images in addition to the autonomous ones that emerge in Italy after 1500. Woods-Marsden argues that Renaissance self-portraiture was both a strategy adopted by some to enhance their status and a reflection of that desire. Further, she argues that Renaissance self-images are evidence of an artistic exploration of the artist’s own subjectivity. The argument is well considered and appears to be borne out by the evidence weighed; nevertheless, there is a danger in accepting such a ready conclusion. I think Woods-Marsden’s focus on the autonomous images of the Cinquecento has blurred some of the issues involved. Having formulated her conclusions regarding the autonomous self-images, she contextualizes the embedded ones within the same frame, and considers them principally as precursors of the autonomous images. While she alludes to the possibility of other, perhaps more religiously motivated meanings for some of the earlier self-portraits, this is hastily said and thereafter forgotten, and she looks no further for explanations.<sup>33</sup>

Recognition of the fact that the origin of embedded self-portraiture lies within a narrative context adds new dimensions to the issue. While I think that Woods-Marsden’s statement that the self-portrait was an art form designed specifically for the affirmation of the artist rather than that of his patron is essentially correct, I would argue that it is an oversimplification.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, even taken as a bald fact, it would be worthwhile to consider the genre and its formation from another side: how did patrons view the inclusion of an artist’s face in their commissioned art? What benefit did patrons gain, and what knowledge did he or she bring to the image of the artist in order to understand it? As will be elaborated in Chapter Three, it cannot be

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<sup>33</sup> Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

forgotten that Renaissance patrons – as affirmed even by Vasari’s tales of clever artists who manipulated their less discerning patrons – had the final say in questions of taste, style and subject, whether or not they chose to exercise that option.<sup>35</sup> This being the case, while studies examining the artist’s motivations for including him or herself in a commissioned work – sculpture, painting or manuscript – are certainly of great value, they often tend to neglect the simple but important question of why a patron would have allowed the image to remain there or how it got there in the first place. It is absurd to think that a patron did not notice, for example, a craftsman’s face amongst the witnesses to a miracle that might include the patron, his or her family and their peers. Thus, the question arises again: what did the inclusion mean to the patron and to the commission?

I intend for my dissertation to take issue with this neglected aspect of Woods-Marsden's argument and to address some of the issues that she raises in her introduction as necessary points of further exploration.<sup>36</sup> To begin with, I think it is important to develop the idea that the motivation behind self-portraiture had additional dimensions for both artists and patrons. While I do not dispute Woods-Marsden's basic argument, I think that Renaissance artists creating embedded self-images had more in mind than the visual exploration of their own subject-hood and the goal of increasing their social status. That the earliest images appear in religious narrative imagery is likely significant, as is the fact that they continue to be found there throughout the period.

It is clear that a study of this nature could go in many different directions. The present emphasis will be on the role of the patron as it reflects the interests and understanding of the viewer of an embedded artist’s self-portrait. As already mentioned, the first chapter primarily concerns Giorgio Vasari and aims to introduce the topic of Italian Renaissance embedded self-portraiture by examining him as our principle source of knowledge regarding its existence, scope and function. I argue that Vasari’s text sets up certain ideas and expectations regarding these

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<sup>35</sup> The stories alluded to are those found in the *vite* of Donatello [Giorgio Vasari and Paola Barocchi, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori: nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568: concordanze*, ed. Paola Barocchi and Rosanna Bettarini (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1966-), Testo III, p. 208] and Michelangelo [Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori scritte da Giorgio Vasari pittore arentino con nuove annotazione e commenti di Gaetano Milanesi*, ed. G. Milanesi (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1906), vol. 7, p. 156], both presented as canny young sculptors whose better artistic taste and judgment prevailed over the lesser faculties of their patrons, who failed at first to recognize the perfection of the two masters’ creations. For discussion of the parallel incidents and a possible source, see Mark Zucker, "Vasari and Poggio Bracciolini: Renaissance Tales of Artists and Writers," *Source* 22, no. 2 (2003).

<sup>36</sup> Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, p. 2.

images that continue to permeate our understanding of how they came into being and functioned thereafter. I contend this accounts in part for the artist-driven slant found in recent discussions and interpretations of embedded self-images, which are predicated upon an understanding of Vasari's ideas concerning these images. This chapter examines aspects of our current knowledge concerning Vasari's historical context and his own motivations as an artist, courtier, and writer in order to understand how his views as a painter informed his interpretation of the genre of artists' portraits.

The second chapter examines issues of artistic identity during the late medieval period, examining two examples that set an artist's signature in conjunction with his self-image. The evocation of the artist's presence and authority is considered in the context of the display and commemoration of his identity. My goal is to discern how or in what fashions such evocations may have served the aims of the commissioner(s) and enriched a commission. How might these forms of privileged communication been viewed by the patrons and viewers of major works of art? Why were they allowed, or perhaps even encouraged?

As far as we know, relatively few self-portraits were created in Renaissance monumental paintings, and fewer still survive today. Thus, while those self-portraits that Vasari claims to have found in various examples throughout the Italian peninsula by such august figures as Giotto and his pupils warrant consideration, since they are largely no longer extant, any discussion of them would be short. Other examples gleaned from contemporary reports and modern scholarship are intriguing, but many are impossible to verify. Instead, the discussion will focus on two case studies: Pietro da Pavia's signed self-portrait, included in a late 14<sup>th</sup>-century Italian manuscript, and Andrea Orcagna's sculptural self-portrait and laudatory inscription in Florence's Orsanmichele, as examples that bear sustained investigation.

Chapter Three examines elements of the history of Florentine embedded self-portraits of the Quattrocento using an embedded self-portrait of Masaccio as the basis for discussion. I begin the chapter with a brief investigation regarding textual and visual evidence for embedded self-images. This section stresses that the former is given not only by Vasari, the usual source of identifications, but also depends on evidence provided by Alberti, Ghiberti, Filippo Villani and other early Quattrocento writers. Moreover, earlier authors such as Petrarch attest to the concept of bringing the past into the present and claiming oneself a worthy heir to history's glories. From there, I examine Renaissance artistic status and aspects of the culture of art commissioning

to establish that one may not discuss embedded self-portraiture without first acknowledging the need to explain a patron's implicit permission for embedded portraits of the artist. Masaccio's self-portrait becomes the framework for investigating how contemporary meditational practices and examples fostered by popular sermons might have co-mingled with a patron's desire for self-memorialization – whether motivated by political, personal, familial, or pious rationales. I argue that these factors led to a situation that, aided by new technical advances in painting, made the inclusion of familiar settings and portraits of living individuals acceptable and even desirable in the narrative context. Having examined a patron's presence in his commission, I discuss the artist's self-portrait within this setting, arguing that during the first half of the Quattrocento he is present *because* of the patron's inclusion. I suggest ways in which a patron might have understood an artist's embedded self-portrait during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and end the chapter with a discussion of the situation after Masaccio's early death.

Chapter Four comprises an investigation of embedded self-portraiture in Florence after Masaccio, and is a more traditional discussion of the social and intellectual ideas behind an artist's self-inclusion within a commissioned painting, situating the discourse within the changing status of the pictorial arts and humanists increasingly included them within the liberal instead of mechanical arts. In this section, I examine a few important examples of embedded self-portraiture in order to investigate the way in which the artist presents himself in a painting in relation to his patron and the patron's contemporaries. Within a discussion of later Tuscan artists Benozzo Gozzoli, Sandro Botticelli, Filippino Lippi and Domenico Ghirlandaio, I demonstrate how, increasingly throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, secular concerns – political, familial and professional – seem to dominate the creation of embedded portraiture in general. Not all of these professional, intellectual and social-driven concerns, however, are only those of the artists. Instead, I attempt to demonstrate how a patron might have been served by the artist's image within a commissioned painting.

Chapter Five is the final discussion of the present work. Here I examine what might be termed a pair of transitional images that reflect a turn away from the embedded self-portraits commonly associated with the Quattrocento towards the autonomous type of the succeeding century. Both early 16<sup>th</sup>-century embedded self-portraits, one by Perugino and another by his former assistant Pintoricchio, were painted within a single year of each other, ostensibly as autonomous self-portrait panels within fresco cycles. In this chapter, I discuss these images

within the context of each artist's patrons in an attempt to add to our understanding of how they functioned within their respective geographic, cultural, and historical situations. I will also explore how these images fit into the histories of embedded and autonomous self-images. The manner of Perugino's appearance (amidst famous philosophers and statesmen of Greek and Roman antiquity) or Pintoricchio's portrait (hung within the Virgin's bower at the time of the Annunciation) make it evident, I think, that both images must be placed outside the histories of embedded and autonomous self-images. Instead, I argue that these self-images must be recognized as unique experiments within the practice of self-portraiture dependent on their specific context.

My goal is not to publish a "definitive" history of Italian Renaissance self-portraiture – Woods-Marsden's text comes closer to this goal than the present work – nor yet that of the embedded self-image. It is impossible to discuss all of the instances of embedded self-portraits created during the Italian Renaissance, which would in any case devolve into an identification game and a recitation of "he said/she said" debates regarding the identities of individualized portrait heads in Renaissance visual narratives. Instead, I am interested in a specific aspect of the subject: what these images meant to their creators and how they functioned for them. Part of this discussion will include who was intended by the designation of "creator." A work's creator is now thought of as the artisan who physically created an object, but during the Renaissance, there was another group who sometimes argued their own "creation" of a work of art, namely the patron. A primary facet of my thesis is the consideration of how this group affected the practice of embedded self-portraiture by allowing its existence within the panels and frescoes they commissioned, and how they might have apprehended the images produced.

Renaissance patronage, religious beliefs and experience, topics which appear to have been mostly overlooked by other examinations of embedded self-portraiture, will inform the succeeding pages. Dale Kent recently sought to "restore the patron's initiative to its proper place in the picture of Quattrocento artistic production" in a book examining the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici.<sup>37</sup> I argue that the same must be done even when considering an artist-oriented genre such as embedded self-portraiture. Whatever an artist's goals or reasons for an embedded self-image, one must ask what reason a *patron* would have had for allowing an artist's self-image to

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<sup>37</sup> Dale Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron's Oeuvre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 5.



be included in a work that was intended to commemorate and glorify the patron – and his or her family and city, and their individual and collective prosperity and piety – rather than the craftsmen who plied the brush or chisel. Moreover, consideration of how these images were then perceived by their viewers, whether their patrons or any other potential audience, is another topic that has been neglected by modern scholars. It seems reasonable to say that artists and patrons would have had differing ways of perceiving images of artists included in commissioned narratives once they were created, an idea I wish to explore in the following chapters. Moreover, it seems to me that this sort of addition would have been possible only if the patron – or perhaps the commission itself – benefited in some way. This concept and its exploration within examples from the late Trecento to early Cinquecento lie at the heart of the discussion that follows.

Before moving on, however, a disclaimer of sorts must be registered. There are, of course, many more instances of supposed self-portraits identified in Italian Renaissance religious narratives than will be discussed herein; the current exercise is not intended to be a catalog of all these occurrences. Following Vasari, many identifications have been proffered in the intervening centuries, often in passing and with little argumentation, in a variety of monographs and articles. Many thus appear somewhat unnecessary or gratuitous. For some time, it has seemed that any peripheral figure looking out from the painted picture at the viewer has been in peril of being “recognized” as a self-portrait. This type of recognition is most likely a response to the observation made long ago that a person drawing him or herself from a mirror’s reflection tends to be characterized by a focused, outward gaze.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, one does best to keep in mind that Leon Batista Alberti recommended the use of just this sort of figure in painted *istoria* to engage and focus the attention of the viewer.<sup>39</sup> The lesson is plain enough considering the large number of figures who act in accordance with this suggestion, gazing out at us intently from a painted narrative: they cannot all be self-images!

The following case-studies are not intended to be platforms for arguing or identifying newly discovered self-images, nor will they become protracted debates concerning attribution or whether or not a supposed self-image indeed represents the artist’s self (as opposed to merely his or her features superimposed upon another in lieu of another model). Neither shall I focus on

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<sup>38</sup> Katherine Brown has noted that many of Vasari’s identifications seem to be based largely on this observation. See Brown, *The Painter’s Reflection*, p. 40 and pp. 117-118, for discussion.

<sup>39</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, ed. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 78. This passage will be examined in more detail in Chapter Three.

some of the more traditional settings for embedded self-portraits such as the iconography of St. Luke drawing the Virgin; instead, I am concerned primarily with narrative painting cycles and their contexts.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the majority of the discussion will be limited to the best known and/or most commonly accepted instances of self-portraiture. As we will see, legitimate problems exist in accepting Vasari's identifications of self-portraits without some form of corroborating evidence. For this reason, I will be taking only the most accepted and arguable identifications for which there exist the richest documentation and interpretations, and those whose historical circumstances are the best understood in order to work from an established foundation.

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<sup>40</sup> For discussion of this specific iconography, see for example Robert Maniura, "The Icon is Dead, Long Live the Icon: The Holy Image in the Renaissance," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Anthony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

## 2.0 SELF-PORTRAITURE IN VASARI'S *VITE*

Both the 1550 and 1568 publications of Vasari's *Vite* continue to solicit inquiry from historians who seek to discern the biographer's literary sources, his motives and aims in writing, and his research methods. The vast majority of quotes and references taken from it are obtained from the second expanded edition published in 1568 rather than its original form of 1550.<sup>1</sup> The first edition was heralded as an important work upon its publication and called a best seller by its author. Nevertheless, it was quickly eclipsed by its successor to the extent that today it is available in few sources.<sup>2</sup> More recently, scholars have investigated the topic of Vasari's authorship of the editions, as well as issues pertaining to his publication of 144 portrait prints of artists used to enhance the 1568 edition.<sup>3</sup> Fruits of these inquiries are our increased recognition

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<sup>1</sup>The Torrentino edition of 1550 is entitled *Le vite de più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*. The second edition's title was changed slightly to name the painters first, presumably to reflect Vasari's primary interest in the art as being the closest in his estimation to pure design, and due to the predominance of its discussion within the text.

<sup>2</sup>Vasari notes in the second edition that copies of the first were no longer available. The principal, scholarly source for the first edition is the one edited by Rosanna Bettarini and Paola Barocchi (Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*). Volumes in this set feature the two editions set on the page allowing for a direct comparison. Exhaustively edited, the volumes include excellent notes and indices. Other editions of the 1550 *Vite* include two paperback versions edited by Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi published by Einaudi editore in 1986 and republished as two volumes in 1991 following the format of the Torrentino press original. Nevertheless, the first edition is more difficult to obtain, and to my knowledge is not found in an English translation in comparison with easily found translations of the second edition in English, French, and German in various abridged and unabridged publications. The edition edited by G. Milanese (Vasari, *Le vite*) remains a classic source for the second edition.

<sup>3</sup>Contributions to and influence upon the *Vite* by Paolo Giovio and Vincenzo Borghini, referred to in correspondence, have been thoroughly examined by Vasarian scholars. Early last century, W. Kallab [see W. Kallab, *Vasaristudien*, ed. J. Von Schlosser (Vienna: Graeser, 1908), pp. 147-148, p. 270, and pp. 447-447] pointed out that other writers had contributed material to various biographies and other parts of the text, while more recently Charles Hope (see Charles Hope, "Can You Trust Vasari?" *New York Review of Books* 42, no. 15 (1995): pp. 10-13) has suggested that the *Vite* were collaborative. Thomas Frangenberg, "Bartoli, Giambullari and the Prefaces to Vasari's *Lives* (1550)," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* LXV (2002), argues that Vasari himself wrote none of the 1550 edition's prefaces and suggests these were instead written by Pier Francesco Giambullari, Carlo Lenzone and Cosimo Bartoli. It appears that Hope will be expanding his arguments soon in publication, although in anticipatory reference to this Paul Barolsky, "What Are We Reading When We Read Vasari?" *Source* XXII, no. 1 (2002): p. 35, has already stated that he does not think that Vasari's reliance on the assistance of his collaborators diminishes his overall auctorial role in the *Vite* and states emphatically his own opinion that the book is still intrinsically and essentially a work by Vasari. Two excellent recent contributions to the discussion of portraits

of both texts as reflections of contemporary topical issues, including those of portraiture, self-portraiture, identity, fame, artistic status and ambition, the Accademia del Disegno, illustrious patrons, and city pride, to name only a few. Nevertheless, Paul Barolsky wrote recently that in spite of centuries of work, our reading of Vasari's texts is yet incomplete and many lines of inquiry remain available to scholars.<sup>4</sup> One issue that has only begun to emerge from a critical reading of the *Lives*, the concern of the present discussion, is a greater recognition of Vasari's subjectivity on the topic of portraiture and his aims regarding his numerous discussions of artists' portraits.

Over twenty years ago, Charles Hope wrote concerning the authenticity of Vasari's choice of prototypes for the portraits with which he illustrated the biographies of the *Vite* that "in reading the *Vite* it is all too easy to forget that [Vasari's] standards, and indeed his purposes, were not necessarily our own."<sup>5</sup> It seems to me that this lesson has yet to be fully learned by authors of current art historical literature on the subject of artists' embedded self-portraits. At the very least, the acceptance of Vasari's ideas of the motivations behind self-portraits may be partially responsible for modern illations on the subject. Even though we are aware, as A. W. Boschloo put it, that Vasari did "more than any other artist to promote the arts and the recognition of the special position of the artist," at times, some of the implications of this acknowledgement seem to be in danger of being forgotten.<sup>6</sup>

Espousal of Vasari's artist-slanted view of self-portraits has dulled the critical edge of those authors who take up the 16<sup>th</sup>-century author's arguments regarding images of artists without giving full consideration to the problem at hand. Given our acknowledgement of Vasari's biases, might not other concurrent, complementary explanations be sought for artists' embedded images? While professional pride and an exploration of subjectivity, to cite Joanna Woods-Marsden's primary arguments, have been convincingly considered to be strong factors in embedded and autonomous self-images, is it not worthwhile to explore other ideas? Moreover, it is inescapable that current artist-slanted considerations of embedded self-portraiture fail to

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and self-portraits within Vasari's texts include works by Joan Stack, "Artists into Heroes: the Commemoration of Artists in the Art of Giorgio Vasari," in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art*, ed. Mary Rogers (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); and Joan Stack, *Artists into Heroes: the Commemoration of Artists in the Art of Giorgio Vasari* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Barolsky, "What Are We Reading," pp. 33-36.

<sup>5</sup> Hope, "Historical Portraits," p. 338.

<sup>6</sup> Boschloo, "Perceptions," p. 68.

consider fully the entire equation of Renaissance commissions that involved more than the artist's desires.

## 2.1 VASARI ON PORTRAITURE

Who does not feel infinite pleasure and contentment, to say nothing of the honor and adornment that they confer, at seeing the images of his ancestors, particularly if they have been famous and illustrious for their part in governing their republics, for noble deeds performed in peace or in war, or for learning or any other notable and distinguished talent?<sup>7</sup>

Vasari's rhetorical query from the second edition's biography of Jacopo, Gentile and Giovanni Bellini gives a concise rationale for a Renaissance individual's desire to create and/or collect portraiture. Portraits afford pleasure to the viewer by commemorating an illustrious ancestor who had enjoyed eminence for his or her deeds. Vasari furnished himself with this pleasure in the *Vita* of Lazzaro Vasari, his imaginative biography of a Quattrocento relative.<sup>8</sup> Vasari remarks:

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<sup>7</sup> Translation from Giorgio Vasari and Gaston C. de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects. Translated by Gaston du C. de Vere with an Introduction and Notes by David Ekserdjian*, Everyman's Library (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1996), vol. I, p. 495. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 439: *E chi non sente infinito piacere e contento, oltre l'orrevolezza et ornamento che fanno, in vedere l'imagini de' suoi maggiori? E massimamente se per i governi delle repubbliche, per opere egregi fatte in guerra et in pace, se per lettere o per altra notabile e segnalata virtù, sono stati chiari et illustri?*

<sup>8</sup> For discussion of the more imaginative elements of Vasari's autobiography and his biography of Lazzaro, see Paul Barolsky, *Giotto's Father and the Family of Vasari's Lives* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), pp. 47-50, and Stack, *Artists into Heroes*, pp. 25-30.

Truly great is the pleasure of those who find one of their ancestors and of their own family to have been distinguished and famous in some profession, whether that of arms, or of letters, or of painting or any other noble calling whatsoever; and those men who find some honorable mention of one of their forefathers in history, if they gain nothing else thereby, have an incitement to virtue and a bridle to restrain them from doing anything unworthy of a family which has produced illustrious and very famous men.<sup>9</sup>

One does not need to restrict these sentiments only to deferential descendents. The same motivation underpinned the creation of *uomini famosi* series in public and private spaces across Italy, helped to foster the painting of numerous “group portraits” in dozens of Quattrocento frescoes of religious subjects, and must have been a factor in the portrait galleries of collectors such as Paolo Giovio and Cosimo I de’ Medici, amongst others. Portraits of famous and illustrious men (and occasionally women) who provided *exempla* of virtue – in whatever worthy field of endeavor – were prized objects that conferred pleasure and honor upon the owner and allowed the owner to bask in reflected glory.

It is recognized that although Vasari’s interest in portraiture required more ink in the second edition, it was expressed – albeit to a lesser extent – in the first.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the dozen or so portraits created before 1500 mentioned in the first edition, and expanded to over fifty in the second, Vasari makes apparent his interest in the images of his fellow artists.<sup>11</sup> This is evident from the last line of the *Proemio delle Vite*, that states that he would continue, “without describing otherwise, however, the forms and features of the craftsmen, judging the time lost to describe with words what one may see in their portraits, mentioned and identified by me wherever they are to be found.”<sup>12</sup> The statement is expanded in the second edition’s

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<sup>9</sup> Translation from Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 419. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 294: *Grande è veramente il piacere di coloro che truovano qualcuno de’ suoi maggiori e della propria famiglia esser stato in una qualche professione, o d’arme o di lettere o di pittura, o qualsivoglia altro nobile esercizio, singolare e famoso. E quegli’ uomini che nell’istorie trovano esser fatta onorata menzione d’alcuno de’ suoi passati, hanno pure, se non altro, uno stimolo alla virtù et un freno che gli ratiene dal non fare cosa indegna di quella famiglia che ha avuto uomini illustri e chiarissimi.*

<sup>10</sup> Although Vasari states his interest in finding portraits of artists in the first edition (see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 32), he says far more on the subject in the second edition. Hope, “Historical Portraits,” p. 326, however, argues that Vasari was not terribly interested in portraiture generally while writing the second part of the 1550 edition. I think it is fairer to say that while Vasari’s interest had not yet become honed by the experience of decorating the interior of the Palazzo Vecchio with all of the portraits it required, his was still more than an idle interest. It would not have been necessary to mention them at all, much less to continue mentioning them throughout the text, had he been truly disinterested in the subject.

<sup>11</sup> Hope, “Historical Portraits,” p. 322.

<sup>12</sup> My translation. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 32: *Senza descrivere però altrimenti le forme e fattezze degli artefici, giudicando tempo perduto il circunscrivere con le parole quello che manifestamente si può vedere*

corresponding section, in which Vasari clearly records his efforts regarding the accumulation and publication of 144 portraits used to illustrate the *Vite*. “And in describing the forms and feature of the craftsmen I will be brief,” we are informed, “seeing that their portraits, which have been put together at great expense by me with no less fatigue and effort than diligence, demonstrate better what type of craftsmen they were in appearance than I can recount. And of any missing a portrait, this is not my fault, but because one was not to be found.”<sup>13</sup>

Almost fifty years ago, Wolfram Prinz provided a thorough study of the prototypes for the woodcut illustrations used in the second edition in his article “Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen.”<sup>14</sup> Surprisingly, however, art historians continue to make assumptions that Prinz’s text, or simply their own attentive reading of the *Vite*, would have put to rest. One mistake that I think is symptomatic of the kind of supposition many writers have inadvertently demonstrated is that Vasari’s project privileged *self*-portraits of artists. This belief is not always clearly stated in print, although when it appears it seems sufficiently assumptive as to indicate a broad level of general acceptance. One example is found in the introduction to an edition of Gaston du C. de Vere’s respected and often quoted English translation of the 1568 publication, which states that when searching for a portrait of the artist with which to illustrate the *Vite*, Vasari ideally sought self-portraits.<sup>15</sup> Francis Ames-Lewis appears to make a similar error when he states that Vasari’s need of models for his printed portraits encouraged him to identify facial types as self-portraits – implying, of course, that Vasari specifically sought them out over other types of images.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, as recently as 2005 a respected scholar stated unequivocally that Vasari used a self-portrait to precede each biography.<sup>17</sup>

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*negli stessi ritratti loro, citati et assegnati da me, dovunque é truovano.* Nevertheless, Hope, “Historical Portraits,” p. 326, argues that Vasari was not greatly interested in recording portraits while writing Part II of the first edition and asserts that Vasari mentioned them only “when they occurred in the course of the narrative, but not in any comprehensive or consistent way.”

<sup>13</sup> My translation. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 32: *E nel descrivere le forme e la fatezze degli artefici sarò breve, perché i ritratti loro, i quali sono da me stati messi insieme con non minore spesa e fatica che diligenza, meglio dimonstreranno quali essi artefici fussero quanto all’effigie, che il raccontarlo non farebbe già mai; e se d’alcuno mancasse il ritratto, ciò non è per colpa mia, ma per non si essere in alcuno luogo trovato.*

<sup>14</sup> Wolfram Prinz and Giorgio Vasari, *Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen: mit einem kritischen Verzeichnis der 144 Vitenbildnisse in der zweiten Ausgabe der Lebensbeschreibungen von 1568*, vol. 12 (Florence: L’Impronta, 1966). I will, however, be using statistics gathered from my own investigations of the *Vite* unless otherwise noted.

<sup>15</sup> Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. xx.

<sup>16</sup> Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 212.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris, *Seventeenth-Century Art and Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005), p. 341.

Evidence present in the *Vite* does not bear out the assumption that Vasari preferred self-portraits. Nowhere in his writings does Vasari mention a preference for them. In fact, as already quoted, he said he took the portraits “from wherever they were to be found.” Added to this, Charles Hope noted rightly that in many cases Vasari took care to state the source of the artists’ portraits discussed within the text.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the wide range of those sources and the implications of their variety have been overlooked. A close look at the *Vite* reveals that Vasari’s purported sources are sufficiently diverse so as to indicate that Vasari himself saw variety as an important factor. By providing verifiable “documentation” of the various sources from which he culled images of artists, Vasari is able to make the entire exercise more credible. Vasari’s earnest search for portraits is implied in a passage of the *Ragionamenti* in which he explains the iconography of the *Sala di Lorenzo* to his young prince. While discussing some of the individuals of which he had found no portraits, Vasari tells Francesco that “I painted them in such a way that if some day I should chance to find them, I could very quickly change the faces to resemble them.”<sup>19</sup> Vasari’s emphasis on the veracity of the portraits he illustrated, painted and discussed most likely reflects new “scientific” concerns for verisimilitude evidenced in the attitudes of contemporaries such as fellow portrait-hunter Paolo Giovio, who likewise aimed at credibility.<sup>20</sup> The images existed, we are informed, and a reader might then recognize for him or herself an artist’s image in a fresco or panel following Vasari’s helpful identifications.

A few moments spent considering statistical data drawn from the *Vite* can prove illuminating. Although 159 biographies of named individuals were published in the second edition, fifteen are published without a portrait of the primary artist listed as the subject of the *vita*.<sup>21</sup> In these cases, an empty, presumably waiting frame was published, perhaps intended to signal that an authentic image was still being sought at the time of publication – and lending

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<sup>18</sup> Hope, "Historical Portraits," p. 336.

<sup>19</sup> J. L. Draper and Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari's Decoration in the Palazzo Vecchio: the Ragionamenti Translated with Introduction and Notes* (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973), p. 237.

<sup>20</sup> For discussion, see Stack, *Artists into Heroes*, p. 176. As Stack observed, Paolo Giovio invited anyone who wanted to verify the portraits to “go to see them for himself.” The source of Stack’s quote is Paolo Giovio, *Epistularum, pars prior volume one of the Pauli Iovii opera series*, ed. Giuseppe Guido Ferrero, vol. 1 (Rome: Società Storica Comense and Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato), p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Of these empty frames, eight are identified with their intended occupant, while seven appear without any identification. Stack, *Artists into Heroes*, p. 204, noted that only the eight identified frames were also included in the Giunti publication of 1586 of the *Ritratti de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architetti contenuti nelle vite di M. Giorgio Vasari Pittore & Architetto Aretino*, which published the portraits without text.



greater authenticity to those images that *were* included.<sup>22</sup> Because Vasari states he will discuss portraits of artists wherever they were to be found, there was no need to restrict himself to discussing only the images he chose for illustration and he reaped greater profit in leaving the impression that artists had always been so honored and esteemed in their own cities and beyond.

Vasari reports that several images of artists came from their own frescoes, and thus may be presumed to be self-images, or were copied from autonomous self-portraits. I estimate that fifty of the 126 images of artists mentioned within the second edition are self-images, while forty-five are portraits made by others. Although some of these images were used to illustrate their biographies, whether noted as such or not, numerous others were mentioned primarily to make the reader aware of their existence.<sup>23</sup> Vasari tells us that self-portraits of Andrea del Castagno and Jacopo da Palma, for example, could be found in their own works.<sup>24</sup> Some artists' images, however, were made by others who wished to commemorate them, such as Giovanni Pisano, who supposedly sculpted an image of his father, Nicola Pisano, not long after he heard of the latter's death.<sup>25</sup> Other images came from the artist's tomb, such as the portraits of brothers Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo and of Andrea Mantegna.<sup>26</sup> Portraits of other artists were supposedly taken by those who worked with them – for example, Vasari reports that portraits of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-189, reaches a similar conclusion. It seems quite likely that in doing so, Vasari was influenced by Vincenzo Borghini, who told the artist he would prefer to see Vasari leave some of his frames empty in hopes that reliable portraits might be later found to put inside the frames. See Borghini's letter to Vasari of August 14, 1564, published in Giorgio Vasari, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, ed. Karl Frey (Munich: Georg Müller Verlag, 1923 and 1930), vol. II, p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> Occasionally Vasari will refer to the specific portrait illustration used within the course of the artist's biography. In the majority of occasions, however, while he might mention an artist's image, one only infers that this is the image used to precede the *Vita*. One such allusion to an illustration is made in the *Vita* of Vittore Carpaccio. Vasari remarks that he begins the group life with a discussion of Vittore because he is the only one of the group of whom he has a portrait. See Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 617. Vasari gives the impression that he simply wants to make sure images of the artists were known in the cases for which he reports multiple portraits. For example, he mentions three self-images of Giotto, two of Taddeo Gaddi, three of Sodoma, three of Andrea del Sarto, and three portraits of Donatello and four of Michelangelo taken by others.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Testo III, p. 360, gives the location of Andrea del Castagno's self-portrait as a tondo the artist painted "before" (i.e. to the left of) a cycle of the Life of Mary in Sant'Egidio; see below for discussion. Jacopo Palma is said to have painted an autonomous self-portrait: "*Ma senza dubbio, comeché molto siano e molto stimate tutto l'opere di costui, quella di tutte l'altre è migliore e certo stupendissima dove ritrasse, guardandosi in una sfera, se stesso di naturale con alcune pelli di camello intorno e certi ciuffi di capegli, tanto vivamente che non si può immaginare....*" Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 551. Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 946: "But without doubt, although the works of this master were many, and all much esteemed, that one is better than all the others and truly extraordinary in which he made his own portrait from life by looking at himself in a mirror, with some camel-skins about him, and certain tufts of hair, and all so life-like that nothing better could be imagined."

<sup>25</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> Vasari (Ibid., Testo III, p. 506) locates the sculpted portraits of the Pollaiuolo brothers in S. Piero in Vincola in Rome, the church where they were buried. Similarly, Vasari (Ibid., p. 555) mentions Mantegna's bronze portrait at the site of the artist's burial, along with his epitaph.

Davide Ghirlandaio, Alesso Baldovinetti and Bastiano da San Gimignano – described as the brother, master and assistant of Domenico Ghirlandaio – were embedded in a scene in Ghirlandaio’s Tornabuoni Chapel in S. Maria Novella in Florence.<sup>27</sup> Pupils were said to have made an image of Daniele da Volterra, for example, while friends possessed a portrait of Properzia de’ Rossi.<sup>28</sup> Vasari likewise highlighted Correggio’s supposedly retiring nature and lack of self-regard to explain why no one, neither a friend nor the artist himself, had made an image of Correggio, and why Vasari was unable to illustrate his account of the artist’s sad life.<sup>29</sup>

These examples serve to illustrate the point mentioned earlier: Vasari did not privilege self-portraits but instead insisted that images of famous artists abounded in many locations and in multiple circumstances, even if many scholars today doubt the veracity of such assertions. Whether culled from panels and drawings held in private hands or, more frequently, found literally rubbing shoulders with the most famous men of their times in numerous church frescoes, the image attest to the general high regard in which artists were held, an impression it would seem clear that Vasari wished to give. I think it is quite possible that Vasari himself would have been nonplussed at the notion that he held self-images in any special regard.

A brief examination of the portrait images used in the *Vite* helps to clarify some of the ways in which Vasari understood and used portraits of artists. It further serves to remind the reader that one must view Vasari’s concept of the genre and its presentation within his text as a construction manipulated to serve a thesis concerning the innate worthiness of the visual arts and their practitioners. In the following paragraphs, I am interested in the visual impact of the portrait prints on the presentation of the second edition. Their affect on the 16<sup>th</sup>-century reader is, of course, impossible to know precisely. Nevertheless, they had to have been viewed as extraordinary in presentation and concept. By using the portrait images of artists instead of, for instance, the presumably more readily-available engraved prints of their most famous works, the *Vite* made a statement that could not help but have a lasting affect on the readers’ measure of

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., Testo III, pp. 484-485. As will be discussed later, scholars have doubted some of Vasari’s identification: for example, instead of Alesso Baldovinetti and Bastiano da San Gimignano, Jean K. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio: Artist and Artisan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 90, identifies Tommaso and Benedetto Ghirlandaio. See Chapter Four for further discussion.

<sup>28</sup> Concerning Vasari’s portrait of Properzia, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 403. Vasari concludes Danielle’s biography stating that while some ungracious pupils had created a portrait of their master in gesso, they had refused to honor their promise to give it or a copy to Vasari, resulting in Vasari’s creation of an inferior likeness of the sculptor from memory. See Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo V, p. 550.

<sup>29</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 54. See also Barolsky, *Giotto's Father*, pp. 69-70, for a discussion of the artist’s “rather sad story,” as given by Vasari.

artists as individuals of merit who had enhanced their own reputations in service to their patrons and cities.<sup>30</sup>

The images of the artists set within their decorative and differentiated frames would have served a practical aspect, too, acting as guides to the text, providing an innate rhythm and allowing the reader to see easily where one life began and another ended. The images further would have had their own logic within the text as foci for the reader's imagination while reading the accounts of the lives of those portrayed. Personal traits of character and appearance, described by Vasari in many instances, could be discerned in the artists' faces and dress to the extent that tempts one to think that ideas of physiognomic and sartorial decorum would have been a factor in Vasari's choice of the images used to illustrate the *Vite*, especially in those cases where he was less certain of having a "true" portrait. Patricia Rubin observed that some artists' biographies in the second edition became "suitable vehicles for important topics."<sup>31</sup> Likewise, it would seem possible that their images were chosen and manipulated so as to present the traits Vasari's rendition of the artist had displayed.<sup>32</sup>

One example of the manipulation of character and portrait is found notably in the image of Andrea dal Castagno of Mugello (before 1419 – 1457), the painter vilified falsely in Vasari's account for the murder of his friend and partner, Domenico Veneziano.<sup>33</sup> Vasari reports the legend, using the biographies of the pair as a moralizing tale warning against the vice of envy, which causes men to commit the most atrocious acts. Vasari heaps scorn on the blameless Andrea, who is demonized in the opening paragraphs and whose sin is revisited throughout the

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<sup>30</sup> Incidentally, the 1912 reprint of Gaston du C. de Vere's English translation, published by Philip Lee Warner, was illustrated in this manner.

<sup>31</sup> Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 227. The author noted that Mantegna's *Vita* became a convenient location for Vasari to discuss education and antiquity, while a discussion of history painting found its way into the biographies of Bellini and Pintoricchio, and Medici patronage and architecture found space in the biography of Michelozzo.

<sup>32</sup> Hope, "Historical Portraits," pp. 334-335, implies a similar argument, asserting that Vasari selected "suitable" figures from frescoes and altarpieces "without seeking for any kind of comparative evidence for his proposed identifications." While I think this criticism to be somewhat overstated, it does seem clear that Vasari had ideas about how an artist should choose to portray himself.

<sup>33</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 350-363, portrait illustrated at p. 350. The legend of Andrea's murder of Domenico had already found its way into the account of Antonio Billi [see Carl Frey, *Il libro di Antonio Billi* (Berlin: 1892), p. 22] and in the Anonymous Magliabechiano [see Annamaria Ficarra, *L'Anonimo Magliabechiano* (Naples: Fiorentino Editore, 1968), p. 106], although in actuality, Domenico outlived Andrea by four years and was buried in San Pier Gattolini on May 15, 1461. Nevertheless, although both earlier sources reported the story, Vasari must be credited with the interpretation and discussion of Andrea's supposed character. See also Barolsky, *Giotto's Father*, pp. 53-54, who discusses the pair and compares Vasari's account of the artists to the biblical story of Cain's murder of Abel.

account in descriptions of the painter's temper and rancor towards his fellow artists, though its depths were well hidden beneath his talents. It is worth quoting in full the account leading up to the description and origins of the portrait image Vasari uses to illustrate the biography:

Meanwhile Andrea had painted in oil on his wall [of the Chapel of S. Maria Nuova] the Death of Our Lady, in which, both by reason of his rivalry with Domenico and in order to make himself known as for the able master that he truly was, he wrought in foreshortening, with incredible diligence, a bier containing the dead Virgin, which appears to be three *braccia* in length, although it is not more than one and a half. Round her are the Apostles, wrought in such a manner, that, although there is seen in their faces their joy at seeing their Madonna borne to Heaven by Jesus Christ, there is also seen in them their bitter sorrow at being left on earth without her. Among the Apostles are some angels holding burning lights, with beautiful expressions on their faces, and so well executed that it is seen that he was as well able to manage oil-colors as his rival Domenico. In these pictures Andrea made portraits from life of Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi, Puccio Pucci, and Falgavaccio, who brought about the liberation of Cosimo de' Medici, together with Federigo Malevolti, who held the keys of the Alberghetto. In like manner he portrayed Messer Bernardo di Domenico della Volta, Director of that hospital, who is kneeling and appears to be alive; and in a medallion at the beginning of the work he painted himself with the face of Judas Iscariot, whom he resembled both in appearance and in deed.<sup>34</sup>

The 15<sup>th</sup>-century decoration of S. Maria Nuova and its church of Sant'Egidio is sadly impossible to reconstruct. The Florentine hospital's church was later enlarged, resulting in the destruction of one of the most important Quattrocento cycles.<sup>35</sup> Vasari reports that the portrait image published in the *Vite* was derived from a frescoed *tondo* or medallion that preceded (*nel*

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<sup>34</sup> Translation from Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 452. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 360: *Intanto aveva Andrea nella sua facciata fatta a olio la morte di Nostra Donna, nella quale, per la detta concorrenza di Domenico e per essere tenuto quello che egli era veramente, si vede fatto con incredibile diligenza in iscorto un cataletto dentrovi la Vergine morta, il quale, ancora che non sia più che un braccio e mezzo di lunghezza, para tre. Intorno le sono gl'Apostoli fatti in una maniera che, se bene si conosce ne' visi loro l'allegrezza di veder esser portata la loro Madonna in cielo da Gesù Cristo, vi si conosce ancora l'amaritudine del rimanere in terra senz'essa. Tra essi apostoli sono alcuni angeli che tengono lumi accesi, con bell'aria di teste e sì ben condotti, che si conosce che egli così bene seppe maneggiare i colori a olio, come Domenico suo concorrente. Ritrasse Andrea in queste pitture, di naturale, Messer Rinaldo degli'Albizi, Puccio Pucci, il Falgavaccio che fu cagione della liberazione di Cosimo de' Medici, insieme con Federigo Malevolti, che teneva le chiavi dell'Alberghetto; parimente vi ritrasse Messer Bernardo di Domenico della Volta, spedalingo di quel luogo, inginocchiato, che par vivo; et in un tondo nel principio dell'opere se stesso, con viso di Giuda Scario, come egl'era nella presenza e ne' fatti.*

<sup>35</sup> The cycle of the Life of the Virgin was painted between 1439 and 1461 by Domenico Veneziano, Piero della Francesca, Andrea del Castagno and Alesso Baldovinetti. It was destroyed in the course of the church's amplification by a design of Bernardo Buontalenti at the order of Francesco I de' Medici at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For discussion of the hospital's church, see Walter Paatz and Elisabeth Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz, ein kunstgeschichtliches Handbuch*, 6 vols., Frankfurter Wissenschaftliche Beiträge (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann), vol. 4, pp. 1-64.

*principio dell'opere*) a scene of the *Assumption of the Virgin*. Judging from Vasari's description, Andrea's narrative scene deviated somewhat from tradition: the artist used oils and painted the Virgin's empty bier in perspective so as to make it appear longer than it was. As tradition dictated, the bier is surrounded by the marveling Apostles who behold the Virgin being borne into heaven by Christ. Vasari further described it as including some portraits of Quattrocento notables, who were likely cast as observers rather than rendered in the countenances of the Apostles.<sup>36</sup> Without debating whether the face in the medallion was truly a portrait or, perhaps more likely, an evangelist or other figure, Vasari's characterization of the face is worth considering: it was like that of Judas Iscariot (*con viso di Giuda Scariotto*). He does not say that Andrea portrayed himself *as* Judas – which would have been odd in this narrative – but that the face he took as the artist's was physiognomically similar to that of the betrayer of Christ.<sup>37</sup> It appears that Vasari would have us think that it was at least partially from this interpretation that he deduced that it represented a self-image of the artist, who, he asserts, had likewise betrayed a dear friend.

The inference conflicts with the only other description of the artist's physical appearance given in Vasari's text. In the section that introduces Domenico Veneziano to the account, Andrea is described as being “no less crafty in dissimulation than he was excellent in painting, being cheerful of countenance at his pleasure, ready of speech, fiery in spirit, and as resolute in every bodily action as he was in mind....”<sup>38</sup> By Vasari's account of things, Andrea was a consummate actor who would not have given himself away as Domenico's murderer by either his demeanor or appearance if not for his own death-bed confession. This is, however, at odds with the writer's ‘recognition’ of the Quattrocento painter by virtue of his

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<sup>36</sup> One might interpret the figure identified as Messer Bernardo di Domenico della Volta as a donor, since he is described as kneeling in a pose traditionally associated with the act. Since Vasari says that the others were depicted “in a like manner” or “similarly” (*parimenti*), it would seem unlikely that the contemporary portraits were painted as holy figures.

<sup>37</sup> Vasari was aware of a precedent of artists creating their features in those of another, and claimed to have found portraits of the artist Dello as Ham in Paolo Uccello's *The Drunkenness of Noah* from Santa Maria Novella's Chostro Verde (see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 41) and Giorgione in a *David and Goliath* (see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 43). He also mentions a few portraits done of famous contemporaries in a similar manner by Raphael in the *School of Athens* (see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, pp. 166-167). By equivocating – that is, by not asserting that Andrea portrayed himself as Judas – Vasari seems to cast doubt on the identification he puts forth of both artist and religious figure.

<sup>38</sup> Translation from Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 450. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 375: *E perché era Andrea non meno sagace simulatore che egregio pittore, allegro quando voleva nel volto, della lingua spedito e d'animo fiero et in ogni azione del corpo, così come era della mente.....*

physiognomic resemblance to the biblical traitor who was traditionally portrayed as dark-visaged, saturnine, and brutish.<sup>39</sup>

Andrea's image, as much as the text of his biography, had its own tale to tell and moral to propagate. While reading the individual *vite*, the reader had available a portrait whose physical appearance was in keeping with the character and biography of the artist that Vasari described. Without being able to compare the figure with its source, only speculation is possible regarding its relationship to the original image. Nevertheless, it is possible that images like that of Andrea were manipulated to support Vasari's characterization. Any reader of the *Vite* will be predisposed, I think, to see in Andrea's image a malevolent cast of features. Nevertheless, the results from an informal poll I conducted suggest that the text may well have biased readers of the *Vite* with regard to how they read this image. Asked to characterize the image, most amongst those who consented to answer my questions described the figure as "intelligent-looking" and by no means shared the reaction of one viewer, well-informed by the *Vite*, who recoiled from the image.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, I think it quite likely that the image was manipulated – or perhaps even chosen – for its potentially villainous nature or appearance. A comparison of the image with other portraits used in the *Vite* reveals that while the image is rendered darker than some by means of the many lines engraved down the cheeks, suggesting hollowness, the eyes figure most into the reading of an infamous character. While they are identical in position and in direction of glance as, say, that of the illustration of the Cinquecento painter Andrea del Sarto, Andrea del Castagno's eyes are rendered much darker, smaller and deeper set, with the brows set low over them.<sup>41</sup> These characteristics tend to give the figure a generally more mysterious aspect, which the tousled hair and furtive over the shoulder position of the head help complete. Again, while the original is unknown, I would not put it beyond possibility that the image was 'enhanced' to create the effect Vasari desired.

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<sup>39</sup> Giotto provided one of the most famous renditions of Judas in the Arena Chapel, in which the small eyes and heavy features are juxtaposed against Christ's refined face. Andrea himself painted a saturnine, almost devilish Judas in the *Last Supper* he painted for Sant' Apollonia's refectory.

<sup>40</sup> My sampling was small and involved only twenty individuals. I asked ten acquaintances who claimed no prior knowledge of the image, and ten who had read Vasari's account, to imagine what sort of personality the figure might have had given the image. Answers given by those with no prior knowledge ranged from "intelligent" to "nice-looking," but no one without prior knowledge of Vasari's account reacted negatively to the image. The opposite was true of those with previous knowledge: all of these individuals characterized the image with variations of "dark," "brooding," or "mean-looking."

<sup>41</sup> For illustration, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 340.

If my hypothesis is correct, Andrea's would probably not be the only image manipulated to fit Vasari's description of character or historical circumstance in some way. In any event, it is difficult to determine how closely Vasari's portraits correspond to their models – much less to those whom they presumably portray – given the several occasions that betray his willingness to modify his sources. As Sharon Gregory pointed out in a study that examined the ways in which the portraits reflect the biographical text, Vasari often used elements of clothing and other visual clues to reflect the described personalities and character traits of those depicted in the woodcut series.<sup>42</sup> For example, profile portraits of some artists seem to reflect their historical importance or an interest in classical antiquity. The luxurious garments that Michelangelo sports in his portrait (he is shown wearing fur and brocade in a three-quarter profile view that conceals his broken nose) helps to characterize the artist as an important man of high social status. Raphael's jaunty cap and discreet lace collar identify him as a man of refined tastes and social grace.<sup>43</sup> The figure Vasari identified as Masaccio's self-portrait from the *Tribute Money* in the Brancacci Chapel is divested of his "biblical" robes, and re-attired in a voluminous mantle in keeping with the painter's heroic status within the *Vite*.<sup>44</sup> Gregory compares the cap worn by Leonardo in Vasari's print with that worn by Aristotle in Renaissance images, and suggests it was meant to reflect the scientific and philosophical interests that Vasari attributes to the Renaissance artist and experimenter.<sup>45</sup> Joan Stack noted that the image of the sculptress Properzia de' Rossi resembles, in its grave modesty, contemporary literary descriptions of sculpture personified.<sup>46</sup> It does not seem to be beyond the realm of possibility that notions of status and physiognomic propriety led to recast facial features as well as to redressed figures.

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<sup>42</sup> Sharon Gregory, "Vasari, Prints and Printmaking" (Ph.D. dissertation, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1998), pp. 107-115. Gregory is not, of course, the first to explore these issues. In addition to Prinz, "Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen," see also Wolfram Prinz, "La seconda edizione del Vasari e la comparsa di 'vite' artistiche con ritratti," *Il Vasari* 21 (1963); Licia Ragghianti Collobi, *Il Libro de' disegni del Vasari*, 2 vols. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> For illustration, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 154.

<sup>44</sup> Although I do not discuss the figure that Vasari presents as Masaccio's self-portrait in the discussion of the artist in Chapter Three, it is clear that Vasari has re-dressed his source image, specifically the apostle furthest to the right in the famous narrative in Florence's Carmelite church. For illustration of the figure Vasari identifies as Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel, see Paul Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino: A Complete Catalogue* (London: Phaidon, 1993), Pl. 272, p. 326. See Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 121, for the modification of this detail into Masaccio's "portrait."

<sup>45</sup> For illustration, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Stack, *Artists into Heroes*, p. 197. For illustration, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 398.

## 2.2 VASARI IN CONTEXT

Vasari does not go into much specific detail about what he thought motivated an artist to make an image of himself or someone else, though he provides enough to allow us to make some inferences. The *Vite* themselves as a collection of biographies were first and foremost commemorative in function. The reason Vasari gives in the *Proemio* of the second edition as one of his own grounds for writing – to protect worthy artists against a “second death and maintain them as long as possible in the collective memory” – might be taken as Vasari’s primary goal of the genre.<sup>47</sup> The reader is left with the general idea that artists gained lasting recognition and fame as much through their portraits and self-portraits as through the signatures that Vasari occasionally notes in the course of the *Vite*. The fact that pupils and others – friends, relatives or other professionals – created portraits of an artist was an attestation of his or her merit and a mark of homage – and even more so when others desired such portraits.<sup>48</sup> Vasari’s stance appears to be that just as an artist may be considered worthy for his friendship with the powerful men of his city, a situation described often throughout the *Vite*, so too was an artist worthy *of* having – and shown worthy *in* having – his features commemorated by others. Vasari may have wished to suggest that the same pleasure and contentment a family member might feel at seeing the images of his notable and illustrious ancestors could also be felt by an artist seeing his famous predecessors. So, too, might a similar pleasure have been felt by an art connoisseur who viewed a portrait of a famous artist whose works he or she may have possessed. By presenting the artists as dutiful citizens whose works glorified and enhanced their cities, Vasari puts them on a par with the illustrious and notable figures of whom a Renaissance patron would naturally desire a portrait.

Another motivation given by Vasari, cited specifically for a signature though perhaps transferable to embedded self-images, may be gleaned from the first edition’s treatment of the prominent signature that appears on the sash pulled tight over the Virgin’s torso in

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<sup>47</sup> My translation. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo I, p. 10: “...seconda morte e mantenergli più lungamente che sia possibile nelle memorie de’ vivi...”

<sup>48</sup> There are few “hers” mentioned in the *Vite* generally, though Vasari does illustrate Madonna Properzia de’ Rossi’s biography and reports that her portrait was obtained from some painters who were very much her friends. [...*il suo ritratto si è avuto da alcuni pittori che furono suoi amicissimi*]. He does not identify portraits of the other three contemporary female artists – Sister Plautilla, Madonna Lucrezia and Sofonisba Anguissola, the last now the best known for her several self-images – discussed in the sculptress’ biography.



Michelangelo's Vatican *Pietà* [MICHEL.ANGELVS BVONAROTVS FLORENTINVS FACIEBAT].<sup>49</sup> Michelangelo's conspicuously-placed example numbers amongst the best-known of Renaissance signatures, in part thanks to Vasari's commentary. While Vasari modified his comments on it in the second edition, in the first he spoke of it as a result of Michelangelo's pride in his creation.<sup>50</sup> Vasari concludes his remarks on the work by saying that the artist had put so much love and effort into the sculpture that it was to become the only one he ever signed, commemorating an effort that had given him much pleasure and satisfaction.

However, since Vasari's project is intrinsically commemorative in nature, it cannot be a surprise that after interpreting portraiture and signatures as solely commemoratively-driven – evidence of love and pride on the artist's part and, perhaps by extension, signs of esteem on the patron's – he looks no further. Nevertheless, numerous studies have helped to advance our understanding of how Vasari's historical circumstances within the sixteenth-century Florentine court of Cosimo I de' Medici helped form many of the writer's ideas regarding portraiture and shaped his usage of the genre throughout the latter half of his career. A lengthy discussion here is unnecessary; rather, one need only recall what Vasari had at stake in his commitment to portraiture within the *Vite* and his own career. Portraiture, already an interest of Vasari's in the first edition of the *Vite*, came with the territory that was soon mapped out for Vasari upon his wooing and acceptance of the job to remodel the Palazzo Vecchio in 1554.

Renovations of the old communal palace began in 1540, and upon its completion in 1565, the converted palazzo reflected the new government of Cosimo I de' Medici: the exterior was left comfortably familiar while the interior displayed the magnificence of its new resident.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This signature almost undoubtedly betrays Michelangelo's awareness of commentary on the use of the term "*faciebat*" ("has been at work on") rather than "*fecit*," ("completed") found in signatures left by ancient artists. It is likely that he was familiar with Pliny's explanatory discussion of the implications of the signatures from the preface to his *Natural History*. See Pliny, *Natural History*, pp. 17-19, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>50</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo VI, pp. 16-17: *...lasciò il suo nome scritto a traverse una cintola che il petto della Nostra Donna soccigne, come di cosa nella quale e sodisfatto e compiacito s'era per sé medesimo....*" As Goffen, "Signatures," pp. 322-323, pointed out, Vasari deletes the line regarding the sculptor's satisfaction with his work from the second edition's account of the artist's life, arguing that it may have been considered an unflattering allusion to excessive pride. Instead, Vasari paraphrases the story from an anonymous letter written a month after the sculptor's death, which states that the young sculptor added his signature to the piece in the dead of night after overhearing a false attribution.

<sup>51</sup> For discussion of the Palazzo Vecchio and its numerous renovations, see for example Ugo Muccini, *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Palazzo Vecchio of Florence* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997); Ugo Muccini and Raffaello Bencini, *The Apartments of the Priori in Palazzo Vecchio* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1992); Ugo Muccini and Alessandro Cecchi, *Palazzo Vecchio* (Boston: Sandak, 1992); Nicolai Rubinstein, *The Palazzo Vecchio, 1298-1532*:

Vasari joined the project already in progress, and was soon at its head, appointed court architect in charge of the remodeling and decoration in 1555 upon the death of Battista del Tasso. The program that he and his team of artists painted, allegorical on the upper floor and historical – and specifically Medicean – on the lower one, drew upon the talents of Cosimo Bartoli, Giovanni Battista Adriani and Vincenzo Borghini who, in conjunction with Vasari and Cosimo I de' Medici, devised the decorations.<sup>52</sup> Ignoring Cosimo's actual descent and tracing a direct line back between him and Cosimo 'il Vecchio,' these paintings portrayed scenes from Florentine history cast in a decidedly Medicean light. In order to make these images believable and to glorify Cosimo I with the "truth" of his illustrious clan's contributions to the history and fame of the city, they required dozens of portraits of contemporary figures.

For Vasari, as he explained the origins of these portraits and the meaning of the complex program in the *Ragionamenti*, it was important that he had reasonable proof of a portrait's existence. Why that portrait existed was of secondary concern. The reasoning behind the phenomenon of portraiture was a given in his mind and he had no need to examine the issue further. As Hope pointed out, the fact that many of the portraits he needed probably no longer existed, assuming they ever had, would not have been a sufficient excuse to present to his noble patron. Instead, Vasari takes care, at the very least, to select contemporary paintings that clearly contain portraits, albeit unidentified, in order to find appropriate heads for the various scenes he had designed.<sup>53</sup> Vasari goes too far, however, when he reported in the *Ragionamenti* that thanks to the good fortune enjoyed by Duke Cosimo, not only were the images of early Medici family members and their peers (and artists!) *not* impossible to find and obtain, but that they had been in fact easy to come by.<sup>54</sup>

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*Government, Architecture, and Imagery in the Civic Palace of the Florentine Republic*, Oxford-Warburg studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Draper and Vasari, *The Ragionamenti*, pp. 37-56, discuss Vasari's various advisors and sources for the decoration of the palace.

<sup>53</sup> Hope, "Historical Portraits," pp. 337-338.

<sup>54</sup> Draper and Vasari, *The Ragionamenti*, p. 204.

## 2.3 BEYOND VASARI

It is not necessary to argue against the reasons Vasari provided as motivations for an artist to place a signature upon, and less frequently portraits or his self-portrait within, a work of art. An artist himself, Vasari would have known that fame and society's admiration were seductive inducements for the majority of his peers, past and present, to put false modesty aside and sign their works. The numerous examples and the various means by which artists included their signatures provide convincing proof that self-commemoration was a goal. In the addition of their identities to their works in ways subtle or exceedingly clever, bold or visible only to the discerning or well-placed eye, an artist could give his or her name, and thus identity a longer life.

Nevertheless, Vasari revealed himself as a consummate propagandist in his service to the Medici, Italian Renaissance artists and not lastly, to himself and his own ambitions. Vasari's own extraordinary work ethic, his drive to gain status and recognition, and his thirst for respectability through his professional and apparently irreproachable moral behavior are some of the artist's most recognized qualities. It is little wonder that throughout the *Vite* the artists who best exhibit these same qualities fare better than those who fell from grace through bad work habits, immorality or inability to work within the system. Scholars have demonstrated how Vasari's ideas and prejudices alike found voice in the *Vite*; the case is no different here.

Moreover, Vasari's own high level of assurance in the second edition tends to inspire confidence in the reader regarding his authority and the correctness of his judgments. By 1568, Vasari was both an experienced historian and, to use Patricia Rubin's phrase "*the* experienced art historian" in Italy.<sup>55</sup> In Vasari's own words, the second edition was written, "...having had the space to understand many things better and to see many other things again."<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, he told the reader in the preface to Part II that he could have, had he had wanted to, given "details of [the artists'] numbers and names and places of birth and describe in what city or exact spot their pictures of sculptures might be found..." by use of a "simple table" (*semplice tavola*)

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<sup>55</sup> Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, p. 197. As Rubin notes, Vasari offered increasing definitive opinions in his assessments of controversial incidents and works and wrote, for example, at the end of one such episode involving the commission for the choir of San Lorenzo that "although I might well have kept silent on these matters, I have not wanted to do so because to proceed as I have done seems to me the duty of a faithful and true writer." See p. 196, for this translation and its source in the *Vita* of Pontormo: Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo V, p. 331.

<sup>56</sup> See Vasari's prefatory letter to the artists, Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 175: *avendo avuto spazio poi d'intendere molte cose meglio e rivederne molte altre.*" Translation from Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, p. 199.

and “without intervening with any judgment of my own.” This was, however, undesirable, for “...those historians who are generally agreed to have produced the soundest work have not been satisfied just to narrate the events simply...[and] have not simply given a dry, factual account of what happened....”<sup>57</sup> He then elaborated, telling us that he had

...striven not only to say what these craftsmen have done, but also, in treating of them, to distinguish better from good, and the best from the better and to note with no small diligence the methods, the feelings, the manners, the characteristics and the fantasies of the painters and sculptors; seeking with the greatest diligence in my power to make known, to those who do not know this for themselves, the causes and origins of the various manners and of that amelioration and that deterioration of the arts which have come to pass at diverse times and through diverse persons....<sup>58</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century value of “objectivity” was never an issue for Vasari, as he makes plain. For Vasari, there was little point to a biography that did not offer an expert’s eye and judgment “to those who did not know” such things for themselves. As we have seen, he had definite reasons for presenting the portraiture of artists in the light in which they shine throughout the *Vite*. With the *Vite*, Vasari sought to elevate his profession and he succeeded, for as Stack put it, “public perception of artists changed after Vasari. The general character of the profession was no longer determined solely by the way its individual practitioners were viewed within society.... Not all artists were given heroic status [to the extent of Michelangelo and Raphael] but the profession as a whole became heroic.”<sup>59</sup>

A sense of history pervades Vasari’s notion of artistic progress: “good” art had been dead for centuries following the fall of the ancients and was only gradually restored thanks to the dedicated efforts of Italy’s best craftsmen. Vasari’s concept of progress is historically based, and

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<sup>57</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 3: *...ritrovare il numero et i nomi e le patrie loro, et insegnare in che città et in che luogo appunto di esse si trovassino all presente le loro pitture o sculture o fabbriche...Ma vedendo che gli scrittori delle istorie, quegli che per comune consenso hanno nome di avere scritto con miglior giudizio, non solo non si sono contentati di narrare semplicemente i casi seguenti, ma con ogni diligenze e con maggior curiosità che hanno potuto...non per narrare asciuttamente i occorsi....* Translation from Philip Sohm, "Ordering History with Style: Giorgio Vasari on the Art of History," in *Antiquity and its Interpreters*, ed. Alina Payne, Ann Kuttner, and Rebekah Smick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 44.

<sup>58</sup> Translation from Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 246. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 4: *...e mi sono ingegnato non solo di dire quel che hanno fatto, ma di scegliere ancora discorrendo il meglio dal buono e l’ottimo dal migliore, e notare un poco diligentemente i modi, le arie, le maniere, i tratti e le fantasie de’ pittori e degli scultori; investigando, quanto più diligentemente ho saputo, di far conoscere a quegli che questo per se stessi non sanno fare, le cause e le radici delle maniere e del miglioramento e peggioramento delle arti accaduto in diversi tempi e in diverse persone.*

<sup>59</sup> Stack, *Artists into Heroes*, p. 9.

while molding his readers' concepts, he had also to work within them.<sup>60</sup> Vasari made the *Vite* acceptable and, as one historian put it, "comfortable" for his readers, most of whom would already have had some idea about the place of the arts in the workings of their own lives and cities.<sup>61</sup>

Vasari was writing of events and artists whose lives and circumstances were known primarily from oral tradition and precious few written accounts, especially in accounts of Duecento artisans from Part I. It is inevitable that some anachronisms would have been part of the biographies, even in those instances when he was not deliberately molding the past, for example, to reflect the historic generosity and artistic discernment of his Medici patrons.<sup>62</sup> Vasari was, of course, fully aware that the past was different from the present and demonstrates this awareness in a thousand small details. His prince Francesco of the *Ragionamenti* comments in admiring tones how "anyone who has read Villani, Guicciardini, and the other ancient and modern historians who deal with the affairs of our city realizes that you are informed of every detail and that you worked just as hard in reading the writers and in conceiving the inventions as you did in painting this hall," speaking of the *Sala Grande* as the pair walked through the newly decorated Palazzo Vecchio.<sup>63</sup> Part I of the *Vite* is peppered with descriptions of the "old fashions" of Duecento masters and compares the perfection of Vasari's day with the "gothic" – i.e. barbarian – art of the distant past. In service to his Medici patrons, old paintings became valuable historical documents. In a passage in the *Vita* of Buffalmacco, for example, Vasari wrote of borrowing details of armor from the painter's Quattrocento frescoes for painting historical scenes in the Palazzo Vecchio.<sup>64</sup>

Yet while Vasari acknowledges the usefulness of earlier paintings as historical records, of things done "in the ancient fashion, and other similar things of that age..." he does not make any visible effort to distinguish between the wants and needs of 14<sup>th</sup>-century patrons and 16<sup>th</sup>-century

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<sup>60</sup> Vasari did not, of course, produce this kind of art theory unaided. For further discussion, see for example Ernst Gombrich, "The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress and its Consequences," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966).

<sup>61</sup> David Cast, "Reading Vasari Again: History, Philosophy," *Word and Image* 9, no. 1 (1993): p. 34.

<sup>62</sup> See Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, pp. 201-204, for a discussion of how the Medici became instrumental factors in the perfection of the arts through the Quattro- and Cinquecento in Vasari's account. Also see Ernst Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), for a classic study on the subject of early Medici patronage.

<sup>63</sup> Draper and Vasari, *The Ragionamenti*, p. 47 and p. 396.

<sup>64</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 173.

ones.<sup>65</sup> The term “anachronistic” is not too strong to describe the idea that the exact same motivations and circumstances that governed artistic patronage in a mid-Cinquecento court would have held sway over a 13<sup>th</sup>-century Guelf/Ghibelline-conflicted commune trying to withstand nearly constant warfare with all-comers (and starting several of its own). Although Cosimo I de’ Medici sought to highlight links to his illustrious ancestors and an idealized past in the frescoes painted in his short-lived residence of the Palazzo Vecchio, it cannot be denied that 16<sup>th</sup>-century Medici-ruled Florence was a different world, religiously, politically and artistically, from that of the Medici-ruled Florence over which the family had held sway a hundred years earlier.

Although it is not necessary to argue against Vasari’s reasonings because of the inevitability of historical biases and anachronisms in his work, it is surely necessary to look beyond and to add to them. As David Cast put it, “We are not engaged now with the values Vasari espoused. Yet we can urge upon them a different form of attention, seeing them as testaments to the particular historical and artistic situation Vasari lived in and from which he was able to do all his work.”<sup>66</sup> Vasari’s *Vite* are replete with the author’s moral, historical and aesthetic values and judgments. They portray artists whose images, histories and personalities were subtly – and at times unsubtly – recast to suit the exercise of 16<sup>th</sup>-century writing, in which a biography was intended to present a model of behavior as well as the facts. For this reason, while the following chapters in the present study engage Vasari’s identifications, they will seek other explanations and explore other facets of Renaissance experience.

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<sup>65</sup> Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 154. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 173: ...*all’antica et altre somiglianti cose di quell’età*....

<sup>66</sup> Cast, "Reading Vasari Again," p. 30.

### 3.0 SELF-PORTRAITURE IN THE TRECENTO

Giorgio Vasari, writing the *Vite* during the second and third quarters of the Cinquecento, fills Book I with thirty-three major artists of the Due- and Trecento, predominantly from Tuscany. He allots chapters to twenty-three painters, one architect, three sculptor/architects, and three of those rare individuals who not only painted and sculpted, but also designed buildings.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five of the thirty artists are illustrated at the beginning of their biographies with an engraved portrait. Five others – Pietro Cavallini, Barna da Siena, Duccio, Giovanni dal Ponte and interestingly, Taddeo di Bartolo – had only empty frames to commence their biographies, perhaps signaling Vasari's continued search for their portraits.<sup>2</sup>

Within the text of Book I, Vasari mentions twenty-six portraits of the various artists discussed, though his descriptions do not always correlate with the published portrait. For example, Vasari considers three embedded self-portraits supposedly painted by Giotto and two portraits of the master by pupil Taddeo Gaddi in the *Vite*, but he mentions no portrait – not even a source for the published engraving for five other artists whose lives he illustrates.<sup>3</sup> The portraits that Vasari *does* discuss in this section come in two formats – embedded self-portraits being the majority, with embedded portraits of artists by a friend or pupil a close second.<sup>4</sup> Only

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-eight biographies in the first edition were increased to thirty-three in the second. The distinction of being called a painter, sculptor and architect was rare by Vasari's estimation. In the 1550 edition he gives it only to Michelangelo, while in the in the 1568 edition he increased the number of bestowals of the three-part status to five artists throughout the three sections, and only one each in Books II and III. The three from Book I are Margaritone, a fellow Aretine, and more predictably, Giotto and Andrea Orcagna, both Florentines. From Book II, Andrea del Verrocchio is listed as a painter, sculptor and architect, and in Book III, Michelangelo is described as the same.

<sup>2</sup> Although he does not illustrate Taddeo's *vita*, Vasari reports that Taddeo painted himself and the Warden of Works in Pisa's Duomo. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 310. Later scholars have questioned the attribution to Taddeo, and the artist's early career is murky enough to cast doubt both on it, and of course, any self-portrait. For discussion, see Gail Solberg, *Taddeo di Bartolo: His Life and Work* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1991), pp. 37-38.

<sup>3</sup> These five for whom no portraits are mentioned – though their biographies are illustrated – are Agostino da Siena, Stefano Sanese, Giotto, Lippo and Lorenzo Monaco.

<sup>4</sup> In later sections, portraits are described as autonomous self-portraits and portraits, in addition to the embedded portraits and self-portraits formats more common to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vasari discusses thirteen embedded self-portraits and nine embedded portraits more or less without ambiguity. Two discussions of portraits and one of a

one example could be interpreted as in any way autonomous: Lorenzo di Bicci's portrait in a medallion with an inscription painted by his son Neri in the Lenzi chapel of Ognissanti.

Any of Vasari's discussions of the image of the artist – embedded or autonomous, portrait or self-portrait during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries – is complicated by the fact that many of his identifications are highly suspect while others are simply erroneous. Barna da Siena did not exist, so Vasari's inability to discover a portrait does not surprise, and perhaps testifies to the writer's credibility, or might, had the chapter not existed in the first place. On the other hand, the knowledgeable reader encounters a problem with the identification of a portrait of Cimabue and a self-portrait supposedly of Simone Martini in Santa Maria Novella's chapter-house. Vasari reports at the end of Cimabue's *vita* that Simone, seen in profile, ingeniously made his own image with the aid of two mirrors. Nevertheless, such details lose their ability to impress once the reader knows that the fresco was painted by Andrea da Firenze instead of Simone. Moreover, Vasari's identification of other figures, such as Count Guido Novello in the figure of an armor-clad soldier between the two artists, might be seen as tarnished by association. Beyond these problems, several examples of embedded portraits that Vasari reports simply no longer exist, making their analysis difficult at best.

The previous chapter addressed Vasari's particular relationship with the images of the artists he portrays in text and engraving. The reasons behind his discovery and use of these images cannot be forgotten when considering his discussion of them, especially in light of the time gap between their creation and Vasari's lifetime. Vasari vested interest in finding artists' images, his uncanny ability to find so many of them, and modern concerns over their authenticity have helped lead to the type of questions asked by many scholars in recent years that were summed up in the title of Charles Hope's 1995 essay, "Can You Trust Vasari?"<sup>5</sup> Given the critical role of Vasari and the *Vite* in the discipline of Renaissance art history and the fact that in

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self-portrait are mentioned in passing, without sufficient information to be able to discern whether they were embedded or autonomous images, though one always suspects the former during the centuries in question.

<sup>5</sup> Hope, "Can You Trust Vasari?" A few other relatively recent discussions of Vasari's accuracy and interests include Barolsky, *Giotto's Father*; Paul Barolsky, *Why Mona Lisa Smiles and Other Tales by Vasari* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); Paul Barolsky, "Vasari and the Historical Imagination," *Word and Image*, no. 15 (1999); Lorenzo Bartoli, "Rewriting History: Vasari's Life of Lorenzo Ghiberti," *Word and Image* 13, no. July-September (1997); Elizabeth Pilliod, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Non-Representation: Vasari and His Competitors," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Joshua Jacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Louis A. Waldman, "Fact, Fiction, Hearsay: Notes on Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo," *Art Bulletin* 82 (2000).



many cases he has been proven correct, I would amend this question to “*how much* can you trust Vasari?” The answer, of course, is only so far as you can verify him.

I have begun this chapter with a short discussion of Vasari’s identifications of pre-Renaissance artist-portraits with a few principle reasons in mind. Vasari remains an excellent source of knowledge regarding general Italian artistic production and phenomena most especially from the Quattro- and Cinquecento. Identification problems and vested interests aside, it is difficult to think that Vasari would have introduced and spent so much time and ink on the subject of the artist-portrait, especially those made in the Duecento, did he and his contemporaries not have reasons to believe they existed. Therefore, whatever one’s well-founded skepticism of a particular identification, it is possible to say with some certainty that embedded artist-portraits were created and that Vasari best serves modern scholars as a source of information leading to their further investigation and discussion. He cannot, however, be taken on faith.

Further, Vasari himself points to one of the other critical ways in which artists made reference to themselves within their works, especially during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Vasari’s pride in his profession and desire to see its – and by extension his own – elevation within the social hierarchy made references to signatures, and especially those laudatory inscriptions by and about artists, a desirable inclusion within the *Vite*. These were more than simply sources of knowledge whereby he could identify works; it is clear that he perceived them as signs of the artist’s importance to his commissioner and society. Acknowledgement of Vasari’s particular viewpoint serves as a reminder to seek other explanations even of phenomena as seemingly cut and dried as self-portraiture.

Vasari’s interests and identifications of artists from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries are often a good place to start, if not to linger. I will use Vasari – his identifications and his ideas – as a starting point throughout these chapters for another type of discussion of these evocations of the artist. Various formats allowed artists to make themselves known during these centuries. Embedded self-portraits existed, but signatures and inscriptions were far more common in Italy before 1500.

### 3.1 THE ARTIST/SCRIBE AND THE MEDIEVAL BOOK

Medieval art is in two senses an art of the book. Its subject matter, in a great range of techniques, is founded on sacred texts that shaped religious life. The spiritual content of these writings entered into the allusive expressiveness of the work of art. In the second place, the sacred manuscript, with its paramount importance in cult and religious thought, became an object and field of art in itself, with qualities of its own and the source of an acknowledged merit for the one who commissioned or transcribed or decorated the written text. In no other epoch has the book been for generations, even for centuries, as it was throughout the Middle Ages, a prime field of invention of styles of art and the expression of individual sensibility and perceptions.<sup>6</sup>

Meyer Schapiro's summation of the book's intellectual, religious and cultural importance to medieval society serves as a pithy introduction to the subject at hand. Despite my intention to use Vasari as a means of launching the various discussions of this paper, this goal is largely impossible in the case of medieval manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Schapiro's magisterial affirmation of the medium's importance to medieval thought allows us a different point of entry, and one that alludes to the subject of the present discussion. It is the implications of Schapiro's assertion regarding the manuscript as a source of merit recognized by others and the traces those persons might have left on a manuscript in order to aid and focus this sense of worth that I wish to explore.

In some respects, an investigation of scribe's evocation in medieval colophons – signatures or short texts regarding either the text and/or the scribe, and self-images – would appear to be a far more straightforward proposition than that of an embedded self-portrait in a narrative context, the subject of a later discussion within this chapter.<sup>8</sup> This is largely due to the

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<sup>6</sup> Meyer Schapiro, "Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text," in *Words, Script, and Pictures: Semiotics of Visual Language* (New York: George Braziller, 1996), p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Vasari devotes a biography in Book III to Giulio Clovio (1498 - 1578), a manuscript artist whom he praises as the Michelangelo of small painting. In his typical fashion, Vasari uses the chapter to discuss other artists of the same media. See Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, p. 564. Nevertheless, Giulio is too late for the previous discussion, and Vasari does not give a great deal of information on earlier manuscript painters.

<sup>8</sup> It must be acknowledged that my definition of the term 'colophon' is expanded beyond that used by other writers on the subject. According to D. Muzerelle, *Vocabulaire codicologique. Répertoire méthodique des termes français relatifs aux manuscrits (Rubricae I)* (Paris: CEMI, 1985), p. 136, a *colophon* is a "final formula in which the scribe mentions the place or the date of the copy, either one or both." He defines a *souscription* as a "formula in which the scribe indicated his name." More recently, E. A. Overgaaauw, "Where are the Colophons? On the Frequency of Datings in Late-Medieval Manuscripts," in *Sources for the History of Medieval Books and Libraries*, ed. Rita Schlusemann, Jos. M. Hermans, and Margriet Hoogvliet (Egbert Forsten Groningen, 1999), p. 82, n. 81, defined a

format their makers used for such evocations, which tend to suggest very different meanings from the embedded formats used in later narratives.

Instead of appearing within a fully narrative frame, the evocation of a scribe/illuminator seems at first glance to be far easier for the modern viewer to identify.<sup>9</sup> Instead of being set within the illustrated narrative events of a manuscript, the colophon often appears at the beginning or end of the text or is in some way appended and set apart. In some pictorial colophons – sometimes in the form of small inscribed self-images of the scribe or author – the figures often appear far less (or perhaps far *more*) self-conscious of their professional stature: medieval scribes usually portrayed themselves writing or drawing in small images found in page margins. This is in direct contrast to the painters of panels and frescoes of the Renaissance, who will not openly declare themselves professional practitioners of their arts until well into the 16<sup>th</sup> century and are thus often difficult to identify with much certainty. Other ‘non-professional’ examples of medieval pictorial colophons include those occasions when the presence of a contemporary individual in his or her placement, dress, and deportment clearly indicates a break from the other figures portrayed; such figures are interpreted as self-images.<sup>10</sup> For example, as Lesley Smith has demonstrated, even female authors – to say nothing of female scribes/illuminators – were rarely if ever portrayed in the act of writing, but are nevertheless identified in several well known instances.<sup>11</sup>

The majority of written and pictorial colophons are considered evocations of a scribe’s or copyist’s voice or presence.<sup>12</sup> When not providing information solely about the text itself, these

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colophon so to combine Muzerelle’s sense of the colophon and *souscription*. Because the image of the scribe in the medieval text is often accompanied by some means of identification – generally the name of the individual and his or her link to the text – for the sake of convenience I am going to include within my use of the term colophon images of the scribe or author when they are the same individual. It should be recognized, however, that a scribe and author were most often *not* the same individual in a period in which literacy, though important, was linked (as it is today) to power: a medieval person in a powerful position was often content to have someone nearby to read and write for him or her.

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, these must be differentiated from the author portrait. These often appear in medieval texts, and both author portraits and scribal (self-)portraits share much in common.

<sup>10</sup> Some self-portraits of female scribes have been interpreted thusly, although as Smith, "Scriba, Femina," p. 21, pointed out, few images of a woman writing (as opposed to reading or being figured with books, both common enough) occur during the Medieval period, though some self-portraits were created.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Portraits of a few female authors – who, like their male counterparts would have dictated their texts rather than performing the menial task of writing – are figured in their volumes. An example is Bridget of Sweden (see Smith, "Scriba, Femina," p. 27, for the following illustrations: New York, Pierpont Morgan, MS. 498, fol. 8r and Stockholm, Ericsson Castle, MS. *Liber celestis*, fol. 85v.).

<sup>12</sup> David M. Robb, *The Art of the Illuminated Manuscript* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1973), p. 19, asserts that although some colophons refer to a third party, the majority refer to the scribe or copyist of a text.

passages represent a personality apart from the text's author whose words or image placed in the margin provide a counterpoint to and are distinguishable from the copied text.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes stating a work's purpose or asserting the creation of a true copy, scriptural medieval colophons also might reveal the personal thoughts or remarks of their creators. Hundreds of these messages survive, ranging from pious sentiments enjoining the reader's acknowledgement of a worthy effort, to the more profane if equally heartfelt expressions of gratitude for a labor brought to completion.<sup>14</sup> Less frequently, an identified self-portrait of a scribe or author can be found at the commencement of a book accompanied by an inscription that removes any lingering doubt as to whom the image is supposed to represent.

In other respects, the situation is not so easy to address. No systematic investigation exists that catalogs colophons, scriptural or pictorial, in any particular manuscript category or tradition, for example. It would be a daunting task given the number of existing books produced by the various countries commonly listed under the heading "medieval Europe." Just how many colophons were originally produced – much less how many still survive – is unknown. This fundamental gap in our knowledge makes any discussion of the spread and/or influence of this phenomenon impossible, although it appears to have been an activity common to all western European manuscript traditions. Although dozens of examples are known, it is difficult to isolate Italian ones, since the study of Italian Gothic and Renaissance manuscript lags behind that of Northern Europe. Nonetheless, a few Italian examples are known. For the sake of succinctness, only one will be emphasized in the following discussion.

Equally problematic, however, is the modern basis for identifying pictorial colophons as self-portraits in the first place. It is for this reason that it is useful to address the "evocation" of the artist instead of only his "self-portrait." While one finds many definitions of the word "portrait," a mimetic aspect is generally presumed in early modern art; there is broad agreement that medieval and Renaissance portraits were intended to represent an individual's physical likeness. Beyond any problem of mimesis in the normally much-simplified renderings of

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<sup>13</sup> Typical pieces of information referring to the text include its date and/or place of publication, or alternatively only the name of the copyist.

<sup>14</sup> One medieval scribe left the reader with, "Now I've written the whole thing: for Christ's sake give me a drink," while another enjoined, "Let the reader's voice honor the writer's pen." See Overgaauw, "Where are the Colophons?" p. 81. Nevertheless, as Overgaauw notes, although many of these injunctions are known, the majority of medieval manuscripts carry no colophons at all. Instead, he points out that the medieval colophon was exceptional, although there never appears to have been a rule forbidding their use.

manuscript portraits, however, there is the more difficult question of whether or not we can assume that an unidentified image of a craftsman at work was truly intended to represent the scribe or illuminator's "self," or was meant to illustrate the particular, mechanical act of the artisan in a more general way.<sup>15</sup>

The issue of authorship is another source of confusion with regard to the medieval text and any pictorial evocation of a scribe found therein, which must be differentiated from the tradition of the author portrait. A scribe and an illuminator of a manuscript were not generally one and the same person, and especially after the 13<sup>th</sup> century both classes of manuscript workers are found adding their colophons to manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> One also finds during this period an influx of secular illuminators producing manuscripts, something which likely affected the frequency and types of colophons made. Equally problematic is the fact that although literacy was an important aspect of upper class medieval life, to "write" a book was not necessarily to pen it oneself, but rather to dictate it to a scribe. Thus, a scribe, illuminator and author were typically at least three individuals: the medieval writer generally gave notes to or dictated a text to a scribe who did the actual copying, while an illuminator was commissioned to paint the illustrations. Christine de Pisan, for example, oversaw the writing and illustration of her books and employed a female illustrator, some of whose illustrations show – confusing the issue further – Christine in the act of writing.<sup>17</sup> Thus, author portraits like those of Christine must be viewed as visual metaphors of

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<sup>15</sup> Many examples in both the manuscript and sculptural traditions figure medieval artisans at work without any known deliberate intention to represent a specific artist. For example, although it is possible that the Benedictine monk who is shown painting a small devotional statue of the Virgin and Child in the *Lambeth Apocalypse*, an English manuscript from the third quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century [Lambeth Palace Library, London: Ms. 209, f. 2v] may be someone's self-portrait, it is unidentified. For illustration, see Andrew Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, ed. Joan Evans and Christopher Brooke, Library of Medieval Civilization (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), p. 47, fig. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Robb, *The Art of the Illuminated Manuscript*, p. 19, notes that prior to this period the colophon had always referred to the scribe, but that the situation had changed by the middle of the century. Also complicating the issue, Robb observes that some manuscripts copied earlier examples so faithfully that a colophon of the original scribe was copied by a later one into the later manuscript.

<sup>17</sup> The literature on Christine de Pisan and her works is vast. For an example of recent criticism, see Patrizia Caraffi, *Christine de Pisan: una città per sé* (Rome: Carocci, 2003). Several manuscripts which include images of Christine are cited in Smith, "Scriba, Femina." Another example of a female author who used an illustrator to create her portrait was Herrad, a German nun who wrote an enormous illustrated encyclopedia called the *Hortus Deliciarum* or *Garden of Delights* between 1160 and 1170. Although the original manuscript was destroyed in 1870, it exists today after a copy made c. 1840-70 now in the Bibliotheque Nationale. Interestingly, Herrad not only had herself portrayed as prioress, but also had depicted what might be called a "class picture" with the names of all the nuns present at that time in a volume that was used within the convent where it was created as a teaching tool for novices. See Rosalie B. Green and Herrad of Hohenbourg, *Hortus deliciarum / Herrad of Hohenbourg*, Studies of the Warburg Institute, v. 36 (London: Warburg Institute, 1979).

the authorial process rather than as documents of its actual occurrence. Moreover, by definition, although an author-portrait may be present, such details made by another are no more “self-portraits” than is a portrait bust of Michelangelo sculpted by Daniele da Volterra.

Creating a new list of manuscript self-images is not my goal. Instead, my interests in pictorial colophons are linked to the fascinating issue of why a medieval scribe might or might not have included his colophon or other self-image and the implications of this act for the manuscript and its intended reader(s).<sup>18</sup> This is especially intriguing because the copying and illumination of manuscripts, though work of critical importance to medieval society, were still jobs best left to others if possible. Preliminary data on the occurrences of colophons, both written and pictorial, suggest that these factors had a great deal of influence over their creation.

Worth investigating is a self-portrait of Fra Pietro da Pavia, who commemorated his involvement in the creation of an important and lavishly illustrated copy of Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* with the inscription “*Frater Petrus de Pavia me fecit, 1389*” in the illuminated letter “M” initiating Book XXXV.<sup>19</sup> Pietro decorated the Ambrosiana Pliny, which had been copied by Armano (also called Armannus) de Alemannia, in the Augustinian monastery of S. Pietro in Ciel d’Oro, Pavia’s most important medieval scriptorium.<sup>20</sup> His patron was Pasquino Capelli (d. 1398), an important chancellor to Giangaleazzo Visconti, duke of Milan (d. 1402).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> On this subject, see Albert Derolez, “Pourquoi les copistes signaient-ils leurs manuscrits?” in *Scribi e colofoni: le sottoscrizioni di copisti dalle origini all’avvento della stampa. Atti del seminario di Erice X Colloquio del Comité international de paléographie latine (23-287 ottobre 1993)*. ed. Emma Condello and Giuseppe De Gregorio (Spoleto: 1995), pp. 37-56; and Bénédictins du Bouveret, *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au XVIe siècle 1-6*, 6 vols. (Fribourg: Spicilegii Friburgensis Subsidia, 1965-1982).

<sup>19</sup> Milan, Ambrosiana, Ms. E. 24 inf., folio 332. Pliny, *Natural History*. For illustrations and brief discussions, see Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, fig. 30, and Jonathan Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 30. For a more in-depth consideration of the manuscript and its importance, see Lilian Armstrong, “The Illustration of Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis* in Venetian Manuscripts and Early Printed Books,” in *Manuscripts in the Fifty Years After the Invention of Printing: Some Papers Read at a Colloquium at the Warburg Institute on 12-13 March 1982*, ed. J. B. Trapp (London: The Warburg Institute, The University of London, 1983); Lilian Armstrong, “The Illustration of Pliny’s *Historia Naturalis*: Manuscripts before 1430,” *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983); Marco Rossi, “Pietro da Pavia e il Plinio dell’Ambrosiana: miniatura tardogotica e cultura scientifica del mondo classico,” in *Rivista Storia della Miniatura. Atti del IV Congresso di Storia della Miniatura “Il codice miniato laico: rapporto tra testo e immagine.”* ed. Melania Ceccanti (Florence: Centro di, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> While there is no direct documentation that puts Pietro at this church, he is dressed as an Augustinian, and the church of S. Pietro was known to have been occupied by the order beginning in 1327. See Crisanto Zuradelli, *La basilica di S. Pietro in Cielo d’Oro ed i suoi ricordi storici* (Pavia: Fratelli Fusi, 1884).

<sup>21</sup> While called “Capelli” in all of the art historical literature, he is also known as Pasquino de’ Cappelli in some historical texts. See D. M. Bueno de Mesquita, “Cappelli, Pasquino de’,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Alberto Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1975), vol. 18, pp. 727-730, for the most complete account of his life. Armano de Alemannia (also called Armandus) recorded his involvement in several manuscripts

While Pietro's image is small, its placement in the illuminated letter initiating the book about ancient art immediately renders it noteworthy to the viewer. A similar letter commences each book, several including human figures or landscapes while others display only beautiful pattern designs. Pietro's self-identified self-image is the sole portrait the volume contains, however, and a short discussion of the self-image within its context of the Visconti court and its important commissioner sheds light on the issue of how an illuminator's face might come to be included in a collected manuscript.

According to Lilian Armstrong, north Italian medieval scribes in the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries developed their own cycle of illustrations for the decoration of Pliny's text which involved using historiated initials at the beginning of each of its thirty-seven books. Rather than any attempt at a scientific classification, Armstrong asserts that the images were chosen "merely [to] indicate to the reader something about the events of the book to follow," with images inspired by the text.<sup>22</sup> In this light, it is not surprising that images regarding the arts are generally found in the historiated initials of Book XXXV and were also used in the initials of the last five books describing ancient art. It is interesting to note that while the earliest known medieval example of an illustrated copy of Pliny, a Bolognese manuscript dating to 1300, also illustrates Book XXXV, it does so in a different manner than Fra Pietro's, and instead features an abstracted design in brilliant gold, red and blue. The illuminator's self-portrait is part of a group of images from the Ambrosiana text that show activities associated with the subjects discussed as opposed to images of plants or animals.<sup>23</sup> Described as numbering amongst the most powerful compositions in the manuscript, these details are probably Pietro's innovations instead of elements that he copied from an earlier model.<sup>24</sup>

One might deem Pietro's self-portrait and Armanno's several signed manuscripts the exceptions that prove the rule. They certainly seem to defy the conclusions drawn by A. E. Overgaauw, who argued on the basis of a sampling of twenty-one thousand manuscripts held in

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for Pasquino Capelli. For a short discussion of these texts, which were subsequently illustrated by Pietro da Pavia, see Élisabeth Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza, ducs de Milan au XVe siècle, Supplément avec 175 planches publié sous les auspices de la Société Internationale de Bibliophilie* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1969), pp. 17-18. Rossi, "Pietro da Pavia e il Plinio," p. 231, maintains that Armanno copied six signed manuscripts for the Visconti's secretary, amongst which numbers the Ambrosiana Pliny.

<sup>22</sup> Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Biblioteca Real de el Escorial, Ms. R.I.5. See *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," pp. 26-27, and Rossi, "Pietro da Pavia e il Plinio," p. 232.

public libraries and archives in Germany that scribes of the later Middle Ages “hardly ever wrote their names in the manuscripts they wrote for the use of others...”<sup>25</sup> One observes that Pietro not only inscribes his name on the left curving staff of the letter “M,” but he figures himself at work sitting on a scriptoria bench before a desk upon which already sits a cut and bound volume with two pages visible. The text is already in place, in keeping with medieval book production practice, and the legible script suggests that we are looking at the volume in which Pietro himself appears, for it is a copy of Pliny’s *Natural History* that Pietro decorates. Pietro, soberly garbed as an Augustinian hermit and cleanly tonsured, paints a large letter “P” on the facing recto page. He appears both framed by the letter and yet in an ambiguous space: the curving outside staves of the “M” appear beside him, but he sets himself in front of the letter’s center staff. The tiny background space is entirely filled with a floral motif finely painted in rich colors.

A few tantalizing facts are known about the Ambrosiana Pliny and its commissioner. Prior to the spectacular reversal of fortune leading to his imprisonment and death in prison (or possible execution) for treason in 1398, Pasquino Capelli was one of the most powerful officials in Giangaleazzo Visconti’s court in Pavia where he was known as the man to whom ambassadors presented themselves and foreign chancellors appealed for favor.<sup>26</sup> Although apparently not in a position of great security, Capelli nevertheless enjoyed considerable power during his time in office.<sup>27</sup> Pasquino had been instrumental in the actions leading up to Giangaleazzo’s confirmation by the Milanese Great Council of Nine Hundred that legitimized his solitary rule of the city following his seizure of power from his uncle Bernabò Visconti in 1385.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Overgaaauw, "Where are the Colophons?" p. 88. Of the books sampled, however, only four percent (sixteen manuscripts) were categorized as “Classical Latin literature.” See p. 85. Overgaaauw argues that manuscripts made in-house for monastic use were more likely to include scribal colophons or other indications of the circumstances surrounding a book’s creation than those commissioned by the laity.

<sup>26</sup> The first date that securely places Pasquino in the Visconti court is 1373, when he is listed as a chancellor. E. R. Chamberlin, *The Court of Virtue: Giangaleazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1965), p. 85 and p. 185, discusses some of the speculation and intrigue surrounding Capelli’s betrayal and condemnation, undisclosed mode of execution and posthumous pardon. For a brief but illuminating biography discussing Capelli’s importance within the Visconti court prior to his disgrace, see Bueno de Mesquita, "Cappelli, Pasquino de'," pp. 727-728.

<sup>27</sup> Ronald G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads: the Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983), pp. 161-162, discusses Pasquino’s fortunes at the Visconti court, and states that Capelli’s position was always perilous. Citing Coluccio’s numerous unanswered letters to Pasquino, Witt argues that even before the war between Florence and Milan, the chancellor was “terrified of being suspected of treasonous activities.”

<sup>28</sup> Chamberlin, *The Court of Virtue*, p. 79.



Pasquino has been called the most remarkable personality in the Milanese chancellery of his day: a “lover of studies, writer of some elegance and an ardent supporter of early Lombardian humanism in rapport with the spirit of the time and particularly with Coluccio Salutati.”<sup>29</sup> Recognized as an early Milanese humanist, the chancellor is also known to history as a passionate bibliophile who actively sought to enlarge his impressive book collection throughout his career. He was known to have taken advantage of various diplomatic missions to Paris to acquire books for himself and others.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, when an inventory of Giangaleazzo’s library was completed in 1426, of the 988 items listed, the book collections of Pasquino Capelli and Francesco I da Carrara were two of the best and largest.<sup>31</sup>

The Ambrosiana Pliny has proven to be a rich source of information for scholars interested in the relationship between Northern Italian and French illumination during the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries; examples of the latter would have entered Lombardy following Blanche of Savoy’s marriage to Galeazzo II in 1350.<sup>32</sup> Armstrong describes Pasquino’s copy of the *Natural History* “as an appealing pastiche” created at the behest of a patron with “a taste for manuscripts of classical texts, and an appreciative eye for the new naturalism of Lombard

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<sup>29</sup> Antonio Viscardi and Maurizio Vitale, "La cultura milanese nel secolo XIV," in *Storia di Milano*, ed. Giovanni Galbiati and Paolo Mezzanotte (Milan: Fondazione Treccani degli Alfieri per la storia di Milano, 1955), p. 592: “*Il Cappelli fu personalità rilevante nella cancelleria Milanese: amante degli studi, scrittore di qualche eleganze e ardente propugnatore del primo umanesimo in Lombardia, in rapporto con gli spiriti doti del tempo, e particolarmente, con Coluccio Salutati...*”

<sup>30</sup> Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 29. Also, J. B. Trapp, "Illumination and Illustration of the Letters of Petrarch," in *Studies of Petrarch and His Influence*, ed. J. B. Trapp (London: The Pindar Press, 2003), p. 260, notes that Pasquino had been sent by his friend Coluccio Salutati in 1392 on a successful search for a manuscript of Cicero's *Ad familiares*.

<sup>31</sup> Kay Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron: a Prayer Book Illuminated by Pietro da Pavia," *Apollo* 137, no. 372 (1993): p. 91. Francesco ‘il Vecchio’ da Carrara possessed a collection containing thirty-three books previously owned by Petrarch that were later part of the Visconti library. See Élisabeth Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza, ducs de Milan au XVe siècle* (Paris: Service des Publications du C.N.R.S., 1955), p. 45. Not all of Pasquino Capelli’s collection immediately entered the Visconti library, however, since the Ambrosiana Pliny was not listed in the 1426 inventory ordered by Filippo Maria Visconti in 1425. Its subsequently-added Viscontean emblems and coats of arms indicate its later presence there. Florence Moly, "Pietro da Pavia," in *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori Italiani, secoli IX-XVI*, ed. Milvia Bollati and Miklós Boskovits (Milan: Edizioni Sylvestre Bonnard, 2004), speculates that only the best of Pasquino’s collection was taken for the Visconti library, implying that his collection was even greater than can be currently estimated. Two more inventories were completed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century after that of 1426: a second in 1459 and a third between 1490 and 1497. See G. D’Adda, *Indagini storiche, artistiche e bibliografiche sulla Libreria Visconteo-Sforzesca del Castello di Pavia* (Milan: Libreria Editrice Gaetano Brigola, 1875), p. LIV.

<sup>32</sup> Edith W. Kirsch, *Five Illuminated Manuscripts of Giangaleazzo Visconti* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p. 8, estimates that a group of forty-two French manuscripts entered the Visconti collection between 1350 and 1387, the year of Blanche’s death.

illuminations.”<sup>33</sup> Nor was the Ambrosiana Pliny the only text to reflect Pasquino’s classical interests: Armannus da Alemannia and Pietro da Pavia also made copies of Petrus de Abano’s *Commentaries in Problemata Aristotelis* and Petrarch’s *Res memorandae*, both of which found their way into the Visconti collection following Capelli’s disgrace.<sup>34</sup>

The extent to which Pasquino Capelli might have figured in the manuscripts he commissioned from the Augustinian scriptorium at S. Pietro in Ciel d’Oro or bought while on diplomatic missions to Paris is difficult to ascertain. Following their confiscation, all of the volumes known or thought to have been in his collection were emblazoned with the Visconti arms, and several books had their previous owner’s emblems scraped away.<sup>35</sup> Armanno’s signatures, however, recorded six times in manuscripts made for the Visconti chancellor, were allowed to remain.<sup>36</sup>

Within its context, Pietro’s self-inclusion within the Ambrosiana Pliny would seem to make a good deal of sense, and is, in fact, the sole self-portrait or other self-reference the illuminator makes in any of the known books he decorated, whether for Pasquino or for other patrons. It figures in what seems to be an eminently sensible location, initiating Book xxxv of one of the most important classical sources for Renaissance scholars and modern art historians alike of knowledge regarding ancient artists and famous works of ancient Greek and Roman art. Pietro’s illuminations served as a model for other copies of Pliny created subsequently, in which a figure of an artist at work was often used to commence “On painting.”<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, Pietro’s own model for the image is unknown. If Armstrong is correct in her belief that Pietro’s model

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<sup>33</sup> Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Latin 6541 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Latin 6069. See Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron," p. 90. The former was listed as item 179 in the 1426 inventory. See D'Adda, *Indagini storiche*, p. 18. It figures Capelli’s emblems and coat of arms extensively throughout the text, but also bears the addition of the Visconti arms painted on the flyleaf facing the first folio. Regarding the second, also copied by Armanno de Alemannia, see Liana Castelfranchi Vegas, "Il percorso della miniatura lombarda nell'ultimo quarto del Trecento," in *La pittura in lombardia. Il Trecento* (Milan: Electa Lombardia, 1993), p. 314. The most complete listing of the books Pietro da Pavia created – all of which are secular and most created for Pasquino – can be found in Moly, "Pietro da Pavia," pp. 865-866.

<sup>35</sup> Pellegrin, *Supplément*, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> One example can be found in Ms. Lat. 6830 H, f. 131, which is signed “Armanus scripsit mandato d. Pasquini” at the bottom of the page. See *Ibid.*, p. 14 and Pl. 67. Also, see Élisabeth Pellegrin, *Manuscrits de Pétrarque dans les bibliothèques de France* (Padua: 1966), pp. 59-60, regarding Armanno’s involvement in Pasquino’s aforementioned copy of Petrarch’s *Epistolae familiares*.

<sup>37</sup> For commentary on Pietro’s influence on later Lombard illuminators, see for example Rossi, "Pietro da Pavia e il Plinio," p. 236. During the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, it seems that the trend turned away from illustrated copies of Latin texts. See E. P. Goldschmidt, *The Printed Book in the Renaissance* (Cambridge:

was incomplete and that Pietro himself was responsible for several innovations, including the image in question, then one might wonder what circumstances led to the particular choice of motif and Pietro's own self-inclusion. This is especially true as later examples of the text's illustrations, said to have been modeled after Pietro's version, do not generally figure an artist at work in the same way, much less a self-portrait.<sup>38</sup>

One can presume that Pietro turned to some other model for this and other images of artisans and laborers at work rather than creating the images from his own imagination, given the importance of the text. Very likely, other manuscripts that Pietro had access to – especially in light of the famous Visconti library housed in the palazzo at Pavia, founded by Galeazzo II (d. 1378) – would have featured an image of a scribe or painter at work in addition to other manuscript portraits, whether of the volume's author or its possessor(s).<sup>39</sup> While discussions such as those by Virginia Egbert and Jonathan Alexander, due to the nature of their theses, tend to give the impression that such images were common, colophons in general were relatively rare, and thus a false picture may ensue regarding the frequency with which these images occurred.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, such images are found in a sufficient number of manuscripts to presuppose that Pietro would have seen something similar, if not necessarily in great quantity.<sup>41</sup> A brief examination of a few relevant images reveals that Pietro may have had some choice in what model to employ with regard to the typical ways in which medieval scribes, painters and illuminators revealed themselves, or a member of their profession, at work.<sup>42</sup>

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Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 36, and Lilian Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters and Classical Imagery: The Master of the Putti and His Venetian Workshop* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1981), p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 27.

<sup>39</sup> Regarding the Visconti library and patronage, see Chamberlin, *The Court of Virtue*; Kirsch, *Five Illuminated Manuscripts of Giangaleazzo Visconti*; Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza*; Pellegrin, *Supplément*; Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron."

<sup>40</sup> For illustrations of manuscripts that feature illuminators at work, see Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, pls. I, II, V, VI, IX, XI, and XXX, and fig. 5. For illustrations and a good discussion of similar images, see also Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, chapter 1 and Martindale, *The Rise of the Artist*. Although one occasionally finds an historian making a comment to the effect that the medieval colophon was fairly common, the identified *pictorial* colophon seems to have been less so. While several manuscript self-portraits are illustrated in the cited references, it should be recognized that with only a few exceptions, discussion of the same images are published in the majority of texts that deal with this subject, giving the reader the impression that more were created than could likely be demonstrated with purely statistical evidence.

<sup>41</sup> For this view, see Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> I would draw this distinction following Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, Appendix, pp. 89-94, who lists twenty-four instances of the medieval artisan at work involving the brush or pen in a medieval manuscript, only five of which she regards as self-portraits.

Two basic modes of representation were used by medieval book decorators for their self-portraits. Either we find illuminators and scribes, identified or not, who feature themselves with their tools, or we find them figured without any implements, but identified by inscription as a book's scribe/copyist, illuminator or painter. In general, the former seems to be a more specific commentary on the scribe or illuminator's relationship with the physical text read by the reader – the image is of the craftsman at work, *doing* work, and thus, perhaps, we are to appreciate the fruits of his finished labor. If this interpretation is valid, this type of self-image would parallel many existing colophons that enjoin the reader's attention to the worthiness of the work, and recommend the scribe's soul to God. The second type of portrait draws more attention to the individual personality of the artist and the goal of spiritual salvation or patronal recognition, although the artist is generally identified within his or her professional capacity.

Pictorial colophons of the first type fall generally into two styles. One features the diminutive self-portrait of the illuminator in the act of painting a portion of one of the illuminations featured on the page in which he appears. This compositionally dynamic style was used by several illuminators throughout the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in northern Europe. For example, the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Premonstratensian canon Frater Rufilus of Weissenau places his self-portrait in the open space framed by a large and fantastically conceived letter "R" at the beginning of the *Passion of St. Martin*.<sup>43</sup> He appears with many of the tools of his profession surrounding him – inkhorn, mahl stick and brush in hand, his mixed colors in four pots sitting on the table behind him while before him rests a knife and bowl for grinding colors. His horizontally held pen set against the letter's tail serves as an underline for his self-identification "FR RUFILUS." Like Pietro, Rufilus also appears dressed as a tonsured monk, although he is less formal in his appearance; for one thing, his work has hiked his robes up around his shins.

In a similar vein, an anonymous painter and his assistant occupy the spaces created by a letter "N" in the Dover Bible, probably made in Canterbury also during the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup> The illuminator, whose face is seen in profile, sets his pen against the bar of the letter while casually propping up a foot on a decorative flourish. His assistant, crowded by a desk and

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<sup>43</sup> Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, Cod. 172, folio 244. Legendary. See Erardo Aeschlimann, *Dictionnaire des miniaturistes du moyen âge et de la Renaissance dans les différentes contrées de l'Europe avec CXXXII planches dont VI en couleurs* (Milan: Ulrico Hoepli, Editeur, 1940), p. 164; Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, pp. 16-18, fig. 25; Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, p. 32, pl. 33.

decorative flourishes, grinds colors above. Egbert notes that neither of these images appears to be related to the text.<sup>45</sup>

A second style featuring the scribe or illuminator with his tools might be described as the desk self-image, and appears largely based on the tradition of the author portrait, which in turn follows the style of the standard Evangelist portrait seen for centuries in numerous illuminated manuscripts. In this style, a scribe features himself at a writing desk with an open manuscript beside or before him; Pietro da Pavia's self-portrait falls into this mode and seems to have deemed appropriate by many monk-scribes. One such self-portrait was made by Hugo, a late 11<sup>th</sup>-century Norman monk likely from Jumièges who created a well-known colophon portrait at the end of a manuscript of Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*.<sup>46</sup> Hugo also shows himself with implements; he dips a pen in an inkwell with one hand and holds a knife with the other while seated at a lectern set in the arch made underneath an angled stairwell. Hugo will not be the last to style himself a "pictor" and "illuminator," perhaps in order to emphasize how two activities often carried out by different individuals had instead been done by his hand alone.

A similar if livelier and more engaging image was made by a 12<sup>th</sup>-century layman named Hildebertus who rather inexplicably features himself and his assistant Everwinus on a page of an Augustine *Civitas Dei*.<sup>47</sup> A narrative is created by the scribe whose open book displays his exasperation with the current drama: (in translation) "damn you, wretched mouse exasperating me so often!" we may read as we see the scribe with sponge raised to throw at the large rat that has knocked a chicken to the floor and seems ready to make off with the rest of the pair's lunch. Although tonsured, Hildebertus – who may have taken lay orders – is quite fashionably dressed with a cloak pinned by a brooch at his left shoulder to a tunic with an embroidered collar and sleeve bands. He sits at a cushioned bench with a writing table supported by a rampant lion beside him, upon which are already set up ink wells and pens. Everwinus, dressed in a short

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<sup>44</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Ms. 4, folio 241v. Dover Bible. For illustration, see Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 18, fig. 26.

<sup>45</sup> Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Bodley 717, folio 287v, Jerome on Isaiah. For illustration, see Aeschlimann, *Dictionnaire des miniaturistes du moyen âge et de la Renaissance dans les différentes contrées de l'Europe avec CXXXII planches dont VI en couleurs*, p. 100, and Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 10, fig. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Prague, Metropolitan Library, A. XXI/I, folio 153v. Augustine, *Civitas Dei*. For illustration and discussion, see both Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, p. 30, pl. V, and Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 15, fig. 19. The pair as well as the copyist-monk "R" are also featured on the dedication page of a Sacramentary of St. Gregory the Great dated 1136. Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, A. 144, fol. 34.

tunic, sits on a low stool below his master, practicing his flourishes on a board resting on his lap and ignoring the drama behind him.

One fascinating example of this type has been discovered to have *not* been a self-portrait, and presents itself as something of a corrective, demonstrating that a scribe might occasionally have been considered important or illustrious enough to have been portrayed by another. An inscription running around a full-page illustration of the monk Eadwine calls him “the prince of scribes” and is found in a mid-twelfth-century Psalter from Canterbury.<sup>48</sup> It is the type of image that, for its size – covering an entire page in a large manuscript – could easily be assumed to be a particularly grandiose self-portrait, being similar in format – if not in its dimensions – to many such images. The stylized portrait of a seated monk hunched somewhat uncomfortably over his open, blank, and already stitched manuscript appears with pen and knife in hand. The equally stylized towers and façade of Christ Church are shown above the Gothic trefoil arch used to frame his figure and separate him from the rest of the page. Eadwine is presented in three-quarter profile at an ornate, architecturally-themed bench certainly suited to a scribe-prince. No longer thought to be a self-portrait, however, it is more likely that the image commemorates a famous scribe of the past.<sup>49</sup> With the ease of hind-sight, this is perhaps more comprehensible than a full-page self-glorification made by the monk-scribe himself.

As was mentioned, an inscription was often used instead when a creator of a medieval book did not use the tools of the trade to identify him or herself. Many of these images appear on dedication pages and/or in a supplicant’s pose, and in a sense might seem more in keeping with the idea of the medieval monk’s colophon as a means of entreating a higher power for salvation. For example, the layman Engilbertus describes himself as a “pictor et scriptor” by an inscription written on his chest as he lies prone in a prayerful attitude, his body providing the tail

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<sup>48</sup> Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1, fol. 283v. Psalter. “SCRIPTOR (?) SCRIPTORVM PRINCEPS EGO NEC OBITURA DEINCEPS LAVS MEANEI FAMA QVIS SIM MEA LITTERA CIA MA (?) LITTER TE TUA SRIPTVRA QVEM SIGNAT PICTA FIGURA.” “PREDICA J(G)? EADWINVM FAMA PER SECVLA VIUVM . ING(C?) ENIUM CVIVS LIBRI DECUS IND I CAT HVIVS QVEM TIBI SEQUE DATUM MVNVS DEUS ACIPE GRATVM.” See Christopher De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (London: Phaidon Press, 2001), p. 75. [The Scribe: I am the prince of scribes and neither my praise nor my fame shall die; shout out, oh my letter, who I am! The Letter: By its fame, your script proclaims you, Eadwine, whom the painted figure represents, alive through the ages, whose genius the beauty of this book demonstrates. Receive, O God, the book and its donor as an acceptable gift!]

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

of a “Q” containing an image of the risen Christ in a manuscript held in Trier.<sup>50</sup> Another similar well-known example includes a self-portrait of the famous 13<sup>th</sup>-century English illuminator and chronicler Matthew Paris (d. 1257) from St. Albans, who identifies his kneeling figure featured below a framed image of the Virgin and Child in the third volume of his Chronicle in what Jonathan Alexander views as a self-conscious reference to earlier similar images of kneeling monk-scribes.<sup>51</sup> Far *less* supplicating is a self-portrait that miniaturist Alan Strayler added to a volume dated c. 1380. Strayler’s inscription notes his hard work in painting the book as well as his donation of money still owed him for colors. Appearing in a framed illumination with one hand piously covering his heart while indicating his own elegant Gothic script with the other, Alan would appear to portray himself as one of the book’s donors instead of merely its humble illuminator or scribe.<sup>52</sup>

Another source of inspiration both in general for the self-portraits of the scribe featured at a desk – and specifically for Pietro’s self-portrait – is not a self-image at all. Instead, it would seem impossible *not* to regard images of the Evangelists at work transcribing the gospels, especially St. Luke – who is depicted in the act of painting the Virgin and Child already in the second half of the Trecento – as a source of both style and conceptual inspiration for many pictorial colophons.<sup>53</sup> Images of the Evangelists that decorated books of the Gospels acted as a guarantee of authenticity from the second century onward. In fact, one of the oldest traditional figurations pictures the saint in the act of writing with his Evangelical symbol or some other holy figure dictating the words of the text, denoting the biblical book’s divine authorship. In these

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<sup>50</sup> Trier. Stadtbibliothek, Cod. 261/1140 2°, folio 153v. Homiliary, c. 1160-1170. See Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 16, fig. 21.

<sup>51</sup> London, British Library, Royal 14 C. VII, folio 6. Chronicle. For illustration, see *Ibid.*, p. 25, fig. 36.

<sup>52</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Nero D. VII, folio 108. St. Albans’ Benefactors’ Book. See Aeschlimann, *Dictionnaire des miniaturistes du moyen âge et de la Renaissance dans les différentes contrées de l’Europe avec CXXXII planches dont VI en couleurs*, p. 176, and for illustration and brief discussion, see Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work*, p. 31, fig. 48.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, “Scriba, Femina,” p. 24, noted that male scribes and illuminators had access to this clear source, unlike female practitioners, who are rarely if ever found in the act of writing. One of the best known female scribes is Guta, who described herself as a sinner who had both written and painted a *Homiliary* now in Frankfurt [Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Ms. Barth. 42, folio 11v]. While she names herself in her professional capacity, she shows herself holding the organic flourish that makes up the interior of the letter “D” in which she appears dressed as a cloistered female. None of the normal tools of her profession are shown – contrary to the normal male pictorial colophon – although she does hold up her right hand prominently in front of her body. This could, however, be a gesture of entreaty or perhaps blessing, and may not have been, as it appears, a display of the hand with which she wrote. For an illustration, see Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, p. 20, fig. 29. Egbert, *The Mediaeval Artist at Work*, pp. 72-73, pl. XXVI, describes an image of St. Luke from the *Gospel Book of John of Troppau*, dated 1368

images, the actual nuts and bolts of medieval manuscript production – a lengthy and multi-stepped process requiring many people with various skills – are only symbolically represented in order to highlight the concept of God’s voice coming forth from his mortal instrument’s pen so that such texts were, in fact, divinely authorized. Author portraits appear to borrow their iconography from this model.<sup>54</sup>

Discerning which if any of the images or image types discussed above Pietro might have studied is impossible, but it seems likely that any self-portrait model he saw would have fallen into one of those basic styles. Like other clerical illuminators who showed themselves at writing desks, Pietro figures himself dressed as a monk of his order at work drawing a letter upon the page, and is prominently self-identified.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, it seems probable that any illuminator who put his self-image in a commissioned manuscript for a patron as sophisticated, powerful and book-knowledgeable as Pasquino Capelli, would have done so with Pasquino’s knowledge and approval. While Albert Derolez argues that Italian illuminators added colophons as a means of advertising their services, he makes this argument concerning secular painters.<sup>56</sup> Presumably, advertising would not have been an issue for the Augustinian Pietro da Pavia, whose relationship with his bibliophilic patron may have begun as much as a decade earlier in 1374 with an illustrated Boccaccio.<sup>57</sup> It is worth noting in any case that whether or not one accepts the Vatican manuscript as coming from Pietro’s scriptorium, in the same year that Pietro signed and

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[Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Ms. 1182, fol. 91 vo.], as the earliest known representation in western art of St. Luke as a painter.

<sup>54</sup> For a brief discussion of Evangelists’ portraits, see Smith, "Scriba, Femina," p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> Pietro’s image appears to be all but unique in one particular and easily overlooked aspect: it is the earliest dated example I have been able to uncover of an illuminator/scribe’s self-portrait that features the seated individual at a lectern in pure profile rather than full face or in three-quarter profile. This detail in itself is not important, save that the primary images of the type in profile are those of the Evangelists. Based on this observation, it would appear that Pietro’s model was possibly inspired by something outside the manuscript tradition with which he presumably would have been most familiar. Contemporary portraits of donors, for example, were normally presented in profile, and it has been argued that the profile depiction was more in keeping with an attitude of piety and humility. This attitude of humility appears to follow the models presented in many sepulchral monuments, whose kneeling profile figures have been interpreted as pleading for admittance into heaven. For discussion, see Ingo Herklotz, *'Sepulcro' e 'monumenta' del Medioevo. Studi sull'arte sepolcrale in Italia* (Rome: Rari Nantes, 1985), pp. 191-193.

<sup>56</sup> Derolez, "Pourquoi les copistes signaient-ils leurs manuscrits?" pp. 48-50, n. 46. This conclusion is disputed by Overgaauw, "Where are the Colophons?" p. 88. Derolez’ argument that scribes or illuminators would add colophons to books they wished to mark as special due to personal or to historical circumstances makes more sense than the one he makes regarding promotional activities.

<sup>57</sup> *De Montibus, silvis, fontibus, lacubus, fluminibus* [Vatican, Reg. Lat. 1477]. This text, although not indubitably assigned to Pietro, bear Pasquino’s arms. Pellegrin, *Supplément*, p. 18, notes that the style appears to be that of Pietro.



dated the Ambrosiana Pliny, his work is recognized in a text of Petrarch's *Liber rerum memorandarum* also illustrated for Pasquino and containing no self-references.<sup>58</sup>

Aside from a supposed awareness of the tradition of the pictorial colophon, one source of inspiration for Pietro's self-portrait would appear to come from an increased interest in the arts in Italian literature, and by extension, the creators of those works of art. While the pictorial colophon may have been more common north of the Alps (or at least more studied by modern scholars with more examples known), it is rarer that we know the names of individual craftsmen outside their own remarks and even less common that we know anything of their other works or circumstances. In Italy, the situation may have been different, or at least there must have been some reason why Dante – who is known to have written of famous personages in his *Divine Comedy* – used the manuscript miniaturist Oderisi da Gubbio as a symbol of pride punished in purgatory in Canto IX. The same often-quoted passage that notes the transfer of fame from Cimabue to Giotto has a parallel: the contemporary renown of the illuminator Franco da Bologna had once been Oderisi's.<sup>59</sup> Benvenuto da Imola's commentary on the text written during the 1370s spoke dismissively of a 1333 author's expression of surprise that Dante would give honor and fame to “rude mechanicals” (*bassae artis*). The later author noted that “the appetite for glory is found indifferently among all so that even small craftsmen have been eager to acquire it.” To cap his argument, Benvenuto draws upon history: “So we see that painters attach their names to works, as Valerius points out in his *De pictore nobili*.”<sup>60</sup> While the late 14<sup>th</sup>-century author did

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<sup>58</sup> Paris, BN, Ms. Lat. 6069T. See *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> At the beginning of the famous passage [see Dante, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Volume 2: Purgatorio*, ed. Robert Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 176-177], the Poet records his address to Oderisi's shade: “‘Oh,’ I said to him, ‘are you not Oderisi, the honor of Gubbio and the honor of the art which in Paris they call “alluminare,”?’ ‘Brother,’ he replied, ‘the pages worked by Franco of Bologna shine more brightly. It is his now, all the honor, and mine in part.’” [See *Purgatorio*, XI. 79-84: Dante, *Il Purgatorio di Dante. Nuovi appunti per la lettera*, ed. Maria d'Aramengo (Turin: Riccadonna Editori, 2004), pp. 178-179: ‘O’ *dissi lui, ‘non sei tu Oderisi, l’onore d’Agobbio, e l’onore di quell’arte che ‘alluminare’ è chiamata in Parisi?’ ‘Frate’, diss’egli, ‘più ridon le carte che penelleggia Franco Bolognese: l’onore è tutto or suo, e miol in parte.’*] The miniaturist is also mentioned by Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 105, who quotes Dante's verse and mirrors it in his brief discussion of Oderisi and Franco da Bologna. Vasari counts Oderisi a good friend of Giotto, and reports that the illuminator had been summoned by Pope Benedict IX to decorate several books for the papal library that were in Vasari's day in a ruinous state. Vasari goes on to say that Franco had worked more-or-less contemporaneously with Oderisi, also for Pope Benedict IX, and that he had drawings by the artist in his collection. D'Aramengo (see Dante, *Il Purgatorio di Dante. Nuovi appunti per la lettera*, n. 79-80 and n. 83) comments that Oderisi, although from Gubbio, was of the Bolognese school and that several miniatures are attributed to him. Of Franco, he reports that he knew nothing.

<sup>60</sup> Benvenuto da Imola, *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherii Comoediam* (Florence: 1887), iii, p. 310. Citation and translation from John Larner, *Culture and Society in Italy 1290 - 1420* (London: B. T. Bartsford, 1971), pp. 271-272. [...*cum potuisset dignius facere mentionem de viris excellentissimis qui pulcra et nobilia opera fecerunt avidissimi gloriae?... sicut videmus quod pictores apponunt nomina operibus, sicut scribit Valerius de pictore nobili*]

not assure the reader that artists both generally and specifically were themselves worthy of discussion and praise, we do find an acknowledgement that it was natural for artists to seek fame and to claim it with their signatures. The existence of the passage indicates a commissioner's recognition and acceptance of the justice of an artist's goal of glory.<sup>61</sup>

Regarding how Pasquino and other readers of the handsomely decorated book might have viewed Pietro's tiny but lush signed self-portrait, there was likely a pre-existing way of viewing artists' signatures of the type Pietro presents. An educated man, Pasquino would have been familiar with historical and contemporary discussions of mankind's hunger for fame and recognition, and on the opposite side of the coin, the need for a semblance, at least, of humility. One instance expounding both concepts that Pasquino and Pietro could not help but have known comes from the very volume that Pasquino commissioned and Pietro illuminated. Pliny prefaced his *Natural History* with a disclaimer of its incompleteness, commenting that his was a provisional signature after the practice of artists who signed their work "*me faciebat*" ("was working on for a long time") rather than "*me fecit*" ("completed"). Pliny recorded that he knew of no more than three ancient artists who had inscribed their works as actually "*fecit*," but claimed that they normally used a signature form that indicated that the work was still somehow in progress and might be returned to and improved.<sup>62</sup> As noted in the previous chapter,

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<sup>61</sup> Nor is it unique. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350-1450*, ed. T. S. R. Boase and J. B. Trapp, Oxford-Warburg Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 68, notes that Coluccio Salutati's correction of a passage in friend Filippo Villani's *De origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus* (1381-1382) changed the author's sense of Giotto as a man prudent of his reputation rather than anxious for monetary gain to one who was a prudent man anxious for fame rather than gain. This automatic correction of Villani's shaky Latin would seem to indicate that the idea that artists were eager for fame was a commonplace generality.

<sup>62</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. I, pp. 17-19. The passage more or less in its entirety is worth quoting: "...I should like to be accepted on the lines of those founders of painting and sculpture who, as you will find in these volumes, used to inscribe their finished works, even the masterpieces which we can never be tired of admiring, with a provisional title such as *Worked on by Apelles* or *Polyclitus*, as though art was always in process and not completed, so that when faced by the vagaries of criticism the artist might have left him a line of retreat to indulgence, by implying that he intended, if not interrupted, to correct any defect noted. Hence it is exceedingly modest of them to have inscribed all their works in a manner suggesting that they were their latest, and as though they had been snatched away from each of them by fate. Not more than three, I fancy, are recorded as having an inscription denoting completion – *Made by so-and-so* (these I will bring in at their proper places); this made the artist appear to have assumed a supreme confidence in his art, and consequently all these works were very unpopular." [...*ex illis nos velim intellegi pingendi fingendique conditoribus quos in libellis his invenies absoluta opera, et illa quoque quae mirando non satiamur, pendenti titulo inscripsisse, ut Apelles faciebat aut Polyclitus, tanquam inchoate semper arte et imperfecta, ut contra iudiciorum varietates superesset artifice regressus ad veniam, velut emendaturo quicquid desideraretur si non esset interceptus, quare plenum verecundiae illud est quod omnia opera tamquam novissima inscribere et tamquam singulis fato adempti, tria non amplius, ut opinor, absoluta traduntur inscripta;*

Michelangelo's signature on the Vatican *Pietà* took this form. In the volume that Pietro illuminated, however, the book tells us that it (or at least self-image) was "made" or "finished" by Pietro – "*Frater Petrus de Papia me fecit.*"

One must surmise, however, from the number of existing scribal self-portraits and colophons that it was not considered inappropriate for illuminators and scribes, whether monastic or lay, to commemorate their involvement. We will likely never know enough about Pietro's motivations to regard him as fame-hungry or its opposite; nevertheless, the model was present for his patron, and might have been appreciated. At the very least, it must be presumed that both patron and illuminator were aware of Pliny's discussion of the matter. It is tempting to speculate that the use of "fecit" here subtly implied for the discerning patron the heights to which the artist – and thus, perhaps, the astuteness of Pasquino's patronage – had increased since Pliny's day.<sup>63</sup> While it is true that many of Pietro's peers signed their works "fecit," these occasions did not occur in the context of a classical discussion of the term's signification.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps the implication is that artists of Capelli's time, and above all the one he had chosen to illuminate several of his manuscripts, were worthy of being able to claim their works completed.

Another influence on Trecento culture and the arts, and a factor that cannot be taken lightly since it probably conditioned the way in which the image was perceived, is that of Petrarch. The writings of the poet and humanist were themselves likely an indirect source of inspiration for the image's presence in the Ambrosiana Pliny. Although Petrarch's influence probably did not enter through any particular image of the poet or even necessarily through his comments on specific works of arts, these episodes are worthy of the studies made of them.<sup>65</sup>

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Ille fecit (*quae suis locis reddam*); quo apparuit summam artis securitatem auctori placuisse, et ob id magna invidia fuere omnia ea.]

<sup>63</sup> In early humanist literature, for example, it was common that contemporaries were ostensibly to be preferred to their ancient counterparts. For discussion, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, p. 72.

<sup>64</sup> For discussion of Trecento signatures, which were commonly inscribed with "fecit," see Monica Vannucci, "La firma dell'artista del Medioevo: testimonianze significative nei monumenti religiosi toscani del secoli XI - XIII," *Bollettino storico pisano* 56 (1987). It is possible that Pietro's use of "fecit" had more to do with the style of late Trecento signatures than with any personal claim to perfection on the part of the monk-scribe, but the context within Pliny's text renders the situation ambiguous.

<sup>65</sup> Petrarch's most famous commentaries on the pictorial arts are his praise of a portrait Simone Martini made of Laura which the poet claimed to have always carried with him. It seems likely that Petrarch and Simone met in Avignon. See Sonnets LXXVII and LXXVIII, Francesco Petrarca, *Sonnets and Songs, Translated by Anna Maria Armi, Introduction by Theodor E. Mommsen* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1946), p. 131. Petrarch is also known for his praise of an image of St. Ambrose in the Milanese church of Sant' Ambrogio near his lodgings there. To this image, he gives the formulaic praise that it only lacks breath and a voice in order to be alive. Another of Petrarch's discussions on the arts includes his self-congratulatory commentary concerning his possession of a painting of the

Scholars have recently explored relations between Petrarch's texts and pictorial imagery; his *Triumphs*, especially, would become a source of inspiration and textual reference for painters of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, for the most part, the phrases he used to discuss and praise works of art fell well within what Michael Baxandall described as "a narrow range of commonplaces."<sup>67</sup> Petrarch's importance to humanist art criticism comes from his "re-establishment" of a "characteristic sort of generalized reference" to painting and sculpture.<sup>68</sup> Or, as John Richards put it, "[Petrarch's] observations on art were sporadic and usually marginal, but they are crucially important for the understanding of the development of a critical vocabulary for art, and for revealing the way in which an appreciation of the visual arts began to be absorbed into the concerns of literary humanism."<sup>69</sup> The longest discussion of art from a Trecento humanist, *De remediis utriusque fortunae* was written between 1354 and 1366 as a dialogue between *Gaudium* and *Ratio*; the text makes it clear where Petrarch's appreciation of the arts falls in the greater scheme of things. The arts, like one's health, a good game of chess or one's friends, were to be enjoyed in proper moderation.

Undoubtedly, these texts and the concepts they contain would have been known by both illuminator and commissioner given the fact that humanism in Milan and its territories first emerged during Giangaleazzo's reign. Courts and courtly activities generally took their cue from

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Virgin by Giotto that, while not understood by the ignorant, stunned masters of art. For a few examples of useful references regarding Petrarch's influences on the arts, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, pp. 51-65; Andrea Bolland, "Art and humanism in early Renaissance Padua: Cennini, Vergerio and Petrarch on imitation," *Renaissance Quarterly* XLIX, no. 3 (1996); Prince d'Essling and E. Muentz, *Pétrarque: ses études d'art, son influence sur les artistes, ses portraits et ceux de Laure, l'illustration de ses écrits* (Paris: Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1902), Chapter One; Barbara Dodge, "Petrarch and the Arts," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1988); Nicolas Mann, "Petrarch and Portraits," in *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance*, ed. Luke Syson and Nicolas Mann (London: British Museum Press, 1998); Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," *Art Bulletin* 34 (1952); J. B. Trapp, "The Iconography of Petrarch in the Age of Humanism," in *Studies of Petrarch and His Influence*, ed. J. B. Trapp (London: The Pindar Press, 2003); Trapp, "Illumination and Illustration of the Letters of Petrarch." Moreover, Petrarch's contemporary portraits in some of his volumes – for example, the illuminated letter "U" found in a copy of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* written and decorated in Florence c. 1383 [Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS. Ital. 1, ff. 3r] – bear a resemblance to the way in which Pietro portrayed himself. That is, both men are viewed in illuminated letters figured in profile and seated at a writing desk, pen poised over the open volume. Both are following an older tradition. For illustration, see Trapp, "The Iconography of Petrarch in the Age of Humanism," p. 87, figure 28.

<sup>66</sup> For example, see Jens T. Wollesen, "'Ut poesis pictura?' Problems of Images and Texts in the Early Trecento," in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci, University of Toronto Italian Studies 4 (Toronto: Doverhouse Editions, 1990).

<sup>67</sup> Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, p. 32.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>69</sup> John Richards, "Petrarch, Francesco," in *Grove Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (2000), p. 559.

the reigning figures, and significantly, Milanese humanism was especially associated with the court chancery at Pavia at the end of the Trecento/early Quattrocento.<sup>70</sup> Thus, that Giangaleazzo would be immortalized within Paolo Giovio's homage to the Lombardian family, *Vite duodecim Vicecomitum Mediolani Principum* (later, *Le vite dei dodici Visconti, prencipi di Milano*) (1549), with the author's customary superlatives for the ruler's scholarly zeal almost two centuries after the fact can likely be taken as an indication of the general tenor of a court that recognized – or wished to be seen as recognizing – the importance of intellectual pursuits.<sup>71</sup> There was, of course, no more famous a scholar in living memory than Petrarch for Trecento humanists. Directly linked with two Visconti courts, Petrarch's influence within the humanist circles frequented by Pasquino is well known and has seen much study.<sup>72</sup> In fact, although the Visconti may have been in part responsible for the emergence of humanism in Milan and its early thematic interests, Albert Rabil, Jr. regards the works of Petrarch and Florentine humanism as its cultural foundation.<sup>73</sup>

Further, almost undoubtedly Pasquino knew of the famous fresco cycle of the *Virorum Illustrium* based on Petrarch's text and dedicated to Francesco da Carrara in the Paduan palace of the Trecento ruler.<sup>74</sup> Today the original cycle painted probably between c. 1367 and 1379 in the

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<sup>70</sup> Albert Rabil, "Humanism in Milan," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy. Volume 1: Humanism in Italy*, ed. Albert Rabil (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 236.

<sup>71</sup> Paolo Giovio wrote about both the Visconti and Sforza. Although scholarship has shown that the duke was not the dedicated bibliophile the 1426 inventory would indicate at first glance, it nevertheless appears that Giovio's praise was somewhat warranted, and that the duke was uncommonly interested in learning and reading – or preferred to be known thusly – if not in commissioning the type of lavishly illuminated manuscript that so enraptured his chancellor. Giangaleazzo's confiscation of Francesco da Carrara's collection of manuscripts owned by Petrarch was possibly motivated by more than a conqueror/collector's avarice. It appears that Giangaleazzo was himself interested in the creations of the poet who had spent eight years (1353-1361) in Milan during his youth and whom the duke had probably met on the occasion of his wedding in 1360.

<sup>72</sup> Petrarch resided in Milan for eight years, accepting the hospitality of the Visconti. Although Florentine friends wrote chidingly to him for accepting hospitality from such a notoriously anti-Republican source, Petrarch, according to Albert Rabil, "Petrarch, Cicero, and Classical Pagan Tradition," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy. Volume 1: Humanism in Italy*, ed. Albert Rabil (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 80-81, generally leaned politically to those who assured his freedom to study. Regarding Petrarch's influence, Rabil, "Humanism in Milan," p. 237, comments that one of his Milanese disciples, Giovanni Mazini, was entrusted with the education of Pasquino's son.

<sup>73</sup> Rabil, "Humanism in Milan," p. 236.

<sup>74</sup> Petrarch dedicated the text in a final preface to the Paduan ruler. For discussion regarding the relationship between the two men, see Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," Also see A. Limentani, "L'Amicizia fra il Petrarca e i principi di Carrara," *Padova. Rassagna mensile del comune di Padova* X (1937) and A. Zardo, *Il Petrarca e i Carraresi* (Milan: 1887). The dedication to Francesco came some time after German king (later emperor) Charles IV requested the same honor in 1354. Petrarch's elegant, cutting reply was collected in his *Familiars*, XIX, 3 (See Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters. Rerum*

room named for the cycle - the *Sala Virorum Illustrium* (known today as the *Sala dei Giganti*) – is all but gone, but it is known that one of the earliest images of Petrarch was painted there.<sup>75</sup> Theodor Mommsen dates Petrarch's portrait in the *Sala*, painted after the original cycle's completion, to a point after Petrarch's death but before Francesco's imprisonment by Giangaleazzo in 1388. Although the Trecento image was repainted during both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was noted during the 1928 restoration of the hall to have been the only remaining original work within the hall.<sup>76</sup> Although extensively retouched, the portrayal more-or-less follows the typical format of the author portrait, and portrays Petrarch in a roughly similar fashion to Pietro's concurrent image.<sup>77</sup> Both men are portrayed at writing desks, although interestingly, instead of showing Petrarch at work writing, the Paduan image figures Petrarch looking up from the act of reading or study. Three fingers of one hand lift and mark the page while the other hand indicates a passage on the facing page. The direction of his gaze is difficult to discern; he may be looking out the window to the distant mountain landscape beyond, to the lectern to his left with its open books, or to his own internal thoughts. It could be said that both portrayals are in roughly typical forms, but are rendered extraordinary by their placements in a ruler's palazzo and an important humanist's manuscript. This cycle was known outside of Padua after 1370.<sup>78</sup>

As the site of the Visconti court, the city of Pavia enjoyed a great deal of ducal and noble patronage which included notable examples at the Certosa da Pavia and Pietro's own church of S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro. The city certainly could have supported more than one scriptorium, as it was also the location of the *Studium* or University of Pavia re-founded in 1361 by Galeazzo II

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*familiarium libri XVII-XXIV*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 77-82, especially p. 81.

<sup>75</sup> The dating of the cycle is based on Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," p. 98-99. The hall in Francesco's palace contained paintings based on Petrarch's text, *De viris illustribus*, a collection of biographies celebrating twenty-four ancient Roman generals and statesmen, to which was added twelve others by the painter Lombardo della Seta after Petrarch's death. Its artists have been considered to be various painters including Altichiero of Verona (d. 1385) and Ottaviano Prandino of Brescia, or alternatively Guariento and Jacapo Avanzo of Padua. For discussion, see Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," pp. 101-102. The participation of Altichiero and Jacapo Avanzi is supported by Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 620.

<sup>76</sup> Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," p. 102.

<sup>77</sup> For illustration, see *Ibid.*: p. 103, fig. 103,

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98, discusses evidence of the cycle's fame outside of Padua, citing discussion of the Sala by Piero Buonisegni (*Historia Fiorentina*, Florence, 1580, p. 548) which mentions the inclusion of a portrait of Florentine mercenary, Manno Donati, who died and had been buried – and then commemorated – in Padua.

until 1396 when most of its activities were moved to Pistoia.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately, relatively little is known about the scriptorium in which Pietro labored.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, we know that Petrarch had associated himself with the church to which it was attached, having stated in his will that if he died in Pavia, he wished to be buried in S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.<sup>81</sup>

I would like to end this part of the discussion where it began: with Meyer Schapiro's quote. If we can regard the medieval book in general, and this finely illustrated copy of Pliny's *Natural History* in particular, as a "source of an acknowledged merit for the one who commissioned or transcribed or decorated the written text," then clearly Fra Pietro's self-portrait gives us a sure indication of one personality to which one must assign that merit. The Capelli arms throughout the text, since removed, would have of course indicated another, more visible destination for acknowledgement.

In sum, it appears that a confluence of factors best accounts for Pietro da Pavia's self-portrait within the Ambrosiana Pliny. The Italian illuminator's historical situation was ripe for the visual confirmation of Petrarchan-stimulated notions of fame and individualism. Although we do not have evidence that Italian illuminators included themselves as often as did their counterparts across the Alps, it is difficult to ascertain whether this is actually the case, or is instead evidence only of a lack of study. Nevertheless, one of the few known Trecento Italian manuscript self-portraits can be confirmed as the commission of the most important patron of manuscripts of the humanist Milanese court that had long felt the influence of Petrarch on its humanist studies. While no more direct a link can be traced, it would seem that more than simple coincidence lead to Pietro's self-portrait. Instead, it seems more probable that a patron of Pasquino's sophistication, and one with his knowledge of French and Italian manuscript traditions, suggested the inclusion himself. Even were this not the case, he was undoubtedly

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<sup>79</sup> Giangaleazzo, though often associated with scholarly pursuits, was erratic in his patronage of Pavia's university, which he closed before transferring its functions to Piacenza in 1398. His support for the University of Pavia is nonetheless commemorated in his tomb sculpted by Gian Cristoforo Romano, 1493-1497, in the Certosa of Pavia. One relief panel is inaccurately inscribed, "He builds the schools of the Liberal Arts of Pavia." See Evelyn Welch, *Art and Authority in Renaissance Milan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 28.

<sup>80</sup> While details concerning the scriptorium are sadly lacking, it is known that Pietro's Order, the Augustinian brothers of S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, were latecomers to the church complex. See Zuradelli, *La basilica di S. Pietro in Cielo d'Oro*, pp. 157-174, for the early history of the church. For the statement regarding the church's importance to the Visconti family and court and its justification, see Zuradelli, *La basilica di S. Pietro in Cielo d'Oro*, esp. pp. 172-174.

<sup>81</sup> Kirsch, *Five Illuminated Manuscripts*, p. 75, n. 19.

aware of a tradition of such self-inclusions of illuminators and scribes, and must have seen Pietro's inclusion in this specific text and location as appropriate and fitting.

Another possible explanation for the inclusion from Pasquino's point of view might have been an opinion of himself as a connoisseur and expert patron of manuscripts. As was mentioned, the Ambrosiana Pliny was not the first time Pietro had illuminated a manuscript for Capelli: in fact, it is likely that Capelli commissioned four manuscripts from Pietro before his death in 1398, contributing to a large personal library.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, we know that one of Giangaleazzo Visconti's rare manuscript commissions was that of an elaborately decorated prayerbook containing prayers attributed to saints Ambrose and Augustine illuminated by Fra Pietro.<sup>83</sup> It is possible that the Pietro's reputation in late Trecento Pavia won him the Visconti commission.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, it would seem dubious that Pasquino, whose aid and expertise had been requested by foreign chancellors such as Coluccio Salutati and from whom other Visconti family members has requested aid in procuring manuscripts, was *not* consulted in the matter of the best choice of local manuscript illuminators.<sup>85</sup> Although Giangaleazzo's prayerbook was likely made after the completion of the Ambrosiana Pliny, nevertheless it seems reasonable that Pasquino would have seen himself as a manuscript collector and patron in the classic sense. While it may be stretching matters to say that Capelli perceived himself as a patron in the sense Pliny exemplified in his *Natural History*, the model was before him, and it is not out of the question that he encouraged Pietro's self-portrait in self-conscious emulation of magnanimous patrons of the ancient past.

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<sup>82</sup> Manuscripts Pietro illuminated for Pasquino are thought to be a copy of *De Montibus, silvis, fontibus, lacubus, fluminibus* by Bocaccio [Bocaccio, Vaticano, Reg. lat. 1477]; Pliny's *Natural History* under discussion dated 1389, Petrarch's *Liber rerum memorandarum / Res memorandae* [Paris, BN, Ms. Lat. 6069T], and a copy of Pietro d'Abano's *Commentarius in Problemata Aristotelis* [Paris, BN, Ms. Lat. 6541], completed sometime before 1398.

<sup>83</sup> For discussion of Giangaleazzo's manuscript commissions, see Kirsch, *Five Illuminated Manuscripts*; Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza*. For specific commentary on the Prayerbook of Giangaleazzo, see Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron." Its commission by Giangaleazzo is secure, and the manuscript was probably made between 1389 and 1395; see Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron," pp. 92-93.

<sup>84</sup> Admittedly, another connection between the court and the scriptorium exists in that Pietro's monastery neighbored the Castello and had provided confessors for the Visconti. See Sutton, "Giangaleazzo Visconti as Patron," p. 93.

<sup>85</sup> In 1368, Giangaleazzo's mother, Blanche of Savoy, requested Pasquino's aid in the acquisition of a book to give to Isabella di Valois as a gift. Capelli was again in Paris in 1383 for his patron in connection with the marriage of Valentina Visconti to Louis d'Orléans, and at the time acquired at least two books and possibly a third for his library. See Armstrong, "The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*," p. 29. Moreover, J. B. Trapp,



### 3.2 THE ARTIST IN A TRECENTO NARRATIVE

This last section is concerned with the purposes behind and reception of a self-portrait created by Andrea di Cione, commonly known as Andrea Orcagna, in the greatest sculptural commission of mid-Trecento Florence. As with the previous section, the choice to concentrate on Orcagna was both difficult and easy to make; easy in that after consideration the self-image itself appears to make a certain amount of sense in its context as will be discussed below, and difficult in that there are other images from which to choose. Many figures proposed as self-images in later scholarship were never mentioned in Vasari's *Vite*. While this is no great obstacle in itself, many of these identifications, though appealing, are not convincing. Giovanni Pisano, for example, might be portrayed in a kneeling 'Atlas'-type figure found represented between two of the Evangelists at the base of the pulpit created for Pisa's Duomo.<sup>86</sup> Taddeo di Bartolo has been identified in the figure of St. Thaddeus in the Assumption altarpiece he painted for the Pieve of Montepulciano.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, Andrea's identification remains the most securely documented and is supported by the visual evidence.

Andrea's self-portrayal appears in a large, sculpted marble panel of the *Assumption of the Virgin* belonging to the prestigious tabernacle created to house a miracle-performing image of the *Virgin and Child* in Florence's Orsanmichele; it is inscribed and dated 1359.<sup>88</sup> It is easy to believe the figure identified as Andrea Orcagna in the sculpted panel, part of the grandiose, multi-leveled, free-standing, canopied tabernacle created to house a particularly venerated image, is a faithful record of the artist's features. Vasari's identification of the artist in both editions of

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"Illumination," p. 260, notes that Pasquino had been sent by his friend Coluccio Salutati in 1392 on a successful search for a manuscript of Cicero's *Ad familiares*.

<sup>86</sup> H. von Einem, *Das Stützengeschoss der Pisaner Domkazel. Gedanken zum Alterswerk des Giovanni Pisano* (Cologne: Opladen, 1962), pp. 37-44, also cited in Collareta, "La fama degli artisti," p. 79 and p. 82.

<sup>87</sup> Wolters, "Ein Selbstbildnis des Taddeo di Bartolo," first described St. Thaddeus as a self-portrait of Taddeo, a figure found in the 1401 altarpiece painted for a member of the Aragazzi family. It was recently accepted by Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, pp. 43-48.

<sup>88</sup> For discussion of the history of this image and the tabernacle, see Brendan Cassidy, "Orcagna's Tabernacle in Florence: Design and Function," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 55 (1992); Brendan Cassidy, "The Assumption of the Virgin on the Tabernacle of Orsanmichele," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988); Nancy R. Fabbri and Nina Rutenburg, "The Tabernacle of Orsanmichele in Context," *Art Bulletin* 58, no. 3 (1981); Gert Kreytenberg and David Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle in Orsanmichele, Florence* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994); Diane F. Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze/Orsanmichele Florence* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore SpA, 1996). For large-format illustrations of the front and back, see Diane F. Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze/Orsanmichele Florence. Atlante/Atlas* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore SpA, 1996), p. 355, fig. 609 and p. 435, fig. 798.

the *Vite* as the last figure to the right in the carved relief is supported – or perhaps inspired – by earlier accounts that also name the figure as a self-portrait, including Lorenzo Ghiberti's *I Commentarii*, and both the *Anonimo Magliabechiano* and *Libro di Antonio Billi*.<sup>89</sup>

The appearance of this man wearing contemporary headgear is easily discernable as somehow set apart and removed from the adjacent figures. He appears noticeably larger in size, especially given the crowding of the other figures in the scene. In the space that Andrea's image occupies, two other figures could easily have been represented, going by relative scale. Moreover, he occupies a slightly differentiated space, indicated by his size and the amount of empty space that surrounds him. Like the Apostles and other witnesses, he adds his own personal reaction to the scene. Andrea's appropriately sober countenance is combined with his hand placed on the shoulder of the apostle in front of him as if in consolation, who for his own part turns away from the Virgin's bier as if overcome by his grief. These factors in combination with the lack of any false pride evident in the inscription which names the creator of one of the century's most important and expensive Florentine sculptural monuments as a painter, lends credence to the idea that Orcagna portrayed himself in his work.

According to Rona Goffen, "A signature is the...manifestation of the writer's presence; and inscribing the name, one attests to responsibility for the object on which it is written." Goffen argued that a signature might also be taken as a declaration of authenticity, and that a self-portrait might function as a signature.<sup>90</sup> Andrea's name and professional position is prominently displayed on the prestigious works of art near his self-portrait in such a way as

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<sup>89</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, pp. 223-224. Vasari's initial comments [*Nella quale opera, dietro all Madonna, fece di mez[z]o rilievo una morte di Nostra Donna e l'assunzion sua, et appresso alla fine della storia, a man sinistra, ritrasse sé, il quale è uno che ha il viso tondo e piatto col cappuccio avvolto alla testa....*] are slightly revised in 1568: "*In uno de' quali Apostoli ritrasse di marmo se stesso vecchio come'era, con la barba rasa, col capuccio avvolto al capo e col viso piatto e tondo....*" Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 186: "In one of these Apostles he portrayed himself in marble, old, as he was, with the beard shaven, with the cap wound round the head, and with the face flat and round...." For Ghiberti's comment – seemingly impressed by its cost – on Orcagna's self-portrait, see Lorenzo Bartoli, *Lorenzo Ghiberti, I commentarii (c. 1447)* [Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, II, I, 333] (Florence: Guinti, 1998), p. 87: [*"Fu l'Orcagna nobilissimo maestro, perito singularissimamente nell'uno genere e nell'altro. Fece il tabernacolo di marmo d'Orto San Michelle, è cosa eccellentissima e singulare cosa, fatto con gradissima diligentia...Evi scarpellato di sua mano la sua propria effigie, maraviglosamente fatta, fu di prezzo di 86 migliaia di fi."*] For pre-Vasari sources of this identification, see also Fabio Benedettucci, *Il Libro di Antonio Billi* (Rome: De Rubéis Editore, 1991), p. 71, and Ficarra, *L'Anonimo Magliabechiano*, p. 65. Vasari identifies the figure only as a man in a *cappuccio* in the 1550 edition, while in the 1568 edition he not only names Andrea, but also misidentifies him as one of the apostles. For illustration, see Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze. Atlante*, p. 439, fig. 801.

<sup>90</sup> Goffen, "Signatures," p. 303, and Claude Gandelman, "The Semiotics of Signatures in Painting: a Piercian Analysis," *American Journal of Semiotics* 3, no. 3 (1985): p. 76.

might also draw attention to his patrons, the *Compagnia dei Laudesi della Madonna di Orsanmichele*: “Andrea Cionis, Florentine painter, *archimagister* of this Oratory was responsible for [this] 1359.”<sup>91</sup> It could be argued that this signature falls within the general formats of the period: it indicates the name of the artist and his province of origin, and is of normal length.<sup>92</sup> This specific signature, however, inscribing Orcagna’s name, position and the date of completion, has been considered to have been more in keeping with those by artists of the tabernacle’s medieval Roman prototypes than with those who made contemporary Florentine monuments and did not usually sign their works.<sup>93</sup> We will leave aside the fact that the work was not solely Andrea’s – its scope and Andrea’s tremendous output attests to an organized workshop – in order to concentrate on the signature within the context of the work itself and within that of the society that witnessed its creation and experienced its use.

Acknowledging that signatures are generally thought to be manifestations of the artist’s presence and claims of the work’s authenticity, and that self-portraits, in turn, have been interpreted in the same way, we have, then, a curious situation. What is the significance of the artist’s presence made manifest twice in the same work? Orcagna’s inscription positioned beneath the relief that contains his self-portrait at first appears to be a source of information regarding the artist and commission, but on further consideration exhibits some ambiguity.<sup>94</sup> The reader knows the name of the artist, what area produced him, and an associated date. Unlike many signatures of the period including that of the previous discussion, we are not told that Andrea made the item in question, but are instead given his official professional position at the

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<sup>91</sup> “ANDREAS CIONIS PICTOR FLORENTIN[US] ORATORII ARCHIMAGISTER EXTITIT HUI[US] MCCCLIX” The last part of the phrase – “EXTITIT” – is difficult to translate, and could alternatively mean “stands for” or “exists.” Roughly contemporary documents pertaining to the Duomo use the word to mean “stood for” as to “stand for a debt.” See for example folio 2 verso of Book II 1 72 of the archive of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, a document dated December 20, 1471. For the confraternity, also recorded as the *Compagnia della Nostra Donna Sancta Maria e del Beato Messer Santo Michele in Orto*, see Giuseppe Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi quartieri*, 10 vols. (Florence: Viviani, 1754-1762), vol. I, 7 (1754). The organization was founded in 1291 to adore and care for the original image of the Madonna located on a pilaster of the structure begun in 1284, as well as another image of the Archangel Michael. Chronicler Giovanni Villani recorded the miracles performed by the image the year after the *compagnia*’s foundation.

<sup>92</sup> For a brief discussion of some types of signatures associated with 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-century Italian monuments, see Vannucci, “La firma dell’artista.” Regarding Andrea’s signature specifically, the example from the Orsanmichele is one of three known examples associated with Andrea’s works, although the other two works come from altarpiece commissions. Andrea signed the Annunciation altarpiece created for S. Remigio, Florence in 1346 and the Strozzi Altarpiece in 1357.

<sup>93</sup> Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, p. 85.

time in question.<sup>95</sup> If anything, his name seems to act as a guarantee that the artist, as the person in charge or the “*archimagister*” (likely the Latin word for the Italian “*capomaestro*”) oversaw the work – as, in fact, signatures were intended to do.<sup>96</sup> Andrea’s inscription, moreover, is lofty in tone, an injunction that appears cleverly praise-seeking. Vasari was the earliest writer to note that by calling himself a painter in conjunction with the proclamation of his title of “*archimagister*” of the oratory, Andrea appeared to be claiming for himself – or had it claimed for him – a universal role in the arts: a painter who could also create such a stupendous sculptural work.<sup>97</sup> I think it is also reasonable to surmise that in praising the artist, the patrons – in this case a *compagnia* – may also be claiming a right to a viewer’s praise for their religious devotion to glorifying God and the Virgin, as would be evident by their commissioning of so worthy an artist.

However, were lasting fame and recognition the primary goal of the signature inscription or self-portrait, only the signature would be necessary to accomplish the artist’s objective.<sup>98</sup> In semiotic terms, one might be able to interpret Orcagna’s inscription as a whole as an *index*, and his self-portrait as a *symbol*.<sup>99</sup> Unlike an embedded self-portrait, whose ability to provoke recognition is tied intrinsically to the viewer’s knowledge of the work and its subject and cannot be separated from it, an inscription may carry meaning outside and, in a sense, apart from the

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<sup>94</sup> This is not, of course, the case with all 14<sup>th</sup>-century signatures. Some were quite complicated, taking the form of verse, while others were simply long and involved, naming artists and patrons, and giving some of the commission’s circumstances.

<sup>95</sup> Although clearly involved with the tabernacle’s execution from the start, he is not mentioned in the surviving documents prior to 1355. See Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, p. 80. Also, while Orcagna names himself “*archimagister*” in the Tabernacle’s inscription, surviving documents regarding payments to Orcagna from the Oratory consistently call him “*capomaestro*” after the first instance of payment. See Diane F Zervas, *Orsanmichele: Documents 1336-1452* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore SpA, 1996), p. 40, p. 41, p. 44, p. 45, and p. 51. Although I have encountered no other Medieval or Renaissance individual called an “*archimagister*,” the title of “*protomagister*” was sometimes associated with master sculptor/architects working on large, prestigious projects. Examples of artists given this title include the 13<sup>th</sup>-century master Nicolaus, the “*protomagister*” of the Campanile of Trani Cathedral. See Clara Gelao, “Nicolaus (Nicola),” in *Grove Art Online* (January 20, 2006). Sante Lombardo was also so-named during his tenure as the *protomagister* at the Scuola Grande di S Rocco between 1524 and 1527. See Sarah McHam, “Sante Lombardo,” *Grove Art Online* (January 20, 2006).

<sup>96</sup> Signatures have been discussed as guarantees of the involvement of the artist so-named, and thus as assurances of quality. For a discussion of the functions of signatures, see for example Louisa C. Matthew, “The Painter’s Presence: Signatures in Venetian Renaissance Pictures,” *Art Bulletin* 80, no. 4 (1998).

<sup>97</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 222.

<sup>98</sup> Although an embedded self-portrait might ensure recognition during an artist’s lifetime, in a period as posterity-conscious as the Renaissance, it would seem more likely that a more persistent recognition would have been more important.

<sup>99</sup> Charles S. Pierce, “Logic as Semiotic,” in *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology*, ed. Robert Innis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 9.

work it references. A signature-inscription found *upon* a work of art immediately sets up associations between the work and the authorship of the person named. An inscription quoted in a book, however, gives the reader a very different type of knowledge: it informs the reader that *something*, presumably of a worthy nature, was created by a specific individual. Vasari quoted inscriptions throughout the *Vite* for such a purpose, citing them as proof of the artist's fame and regard within society since he was unable to demonstrate merit with illustrations of paintings or sculptures.<sup>100</sup> While an embedded self-portrait might (or might not) itself be sufficiently individualized that it causes the viewer to recognize it *as* a portrait even if one does not know the artist's identity, that artist – without his signature – is still more likely to remain anonymous. Taken from its context – a detail published without identification for example – the embedded self-portrait loses all of its original meanings. Thus, if the signature can carry the signification of identification and authorship, providing the viewer an understanding of the artist's relation to the work as a whole, then what other meaning was an embedded self-portrait meant to carry?

Nevertheless, it is unlikely that all of a work's viewers would have had the ability to read a signature inscription. It can be assumed that Andrea's signature inscription and self-portrait were both intended to have been fairly visible, given the unique layout of its physical context of Florence's Orsanmichele, sited between Florence's religious and political epicenters – the Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio. The arcade nearest the tabernacle was one of the first to be filled in with tracery paneling during a building campaign of 1366/67, but Orsanmichele had been an architecturally open loggia when Andrea was given and completed the commission.<sup>101</sup> Both the marble relief on the back of the tabernacle to which Andrea added his self-portrait and

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<sup>100</sup> Vasari quotes several inscriptions and also composed epigrams in the form of inscriptions on several occasions. For example, Orcagna's signature-inscriptions are quoted twice in Testo II, p. 222 and p. 224. Furthermore, the 1550 edition of Orcagna's *vita* concluded with an epigraph [*HIC IACET ANDAEAS QUO NON PRAESTANTIOR ALTER AERE FUIT. PATRIAE MAXIMA FAMA SUAE*] that is not found in the second edition. See *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>101</sup> On April 27, 1357, the captains of Orsanmichele petitioned the Signoria to move the grain market activities away from the structure, citing as a reason the near completion of the Virgin's tabernacle and oratory. For a transcription of document *PR*, 44, fol. 117r-v, see Zervas, *Orsanmichele: Documents*, p. 48. This removal did not actually take place until 1367. The closing in of the formerly open loggia during the same general period as the tabernacle's construction seems to have been part of a project to emphasize the ecclesiastical functions of the structure that began as early as the late 1350s. Each of the ten tracery infills cost around 490 florins to construct, making them an expensive venture that each took between three and four years to complete. These were made from a design by Simone di Francesco Talenti, the son of the cathedral's capomaestro. See Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, p. 131. One cannot think, however, that Orcagna himself was aware of the decision to obscure the back of the tabernacle where his magnificent relief now languishes, especially as he began its construction some five years prior to the petition. Although occasionally the door cut into the wall during the 18<sup>th</sup> century is opened for the sale of

the inscription featured at the base of the Virgin's bier would have been equally visible to the passers-by on one of the city's major arteries.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, taking into account Trecento literacy rates, the inscription might not have received much notice on its own. Therefore, one might regard an embedded self-portrait as another way of invoking the artist should the signature have failed to do so by its either incomprehensibility or invisibility. After all, in order to discuss embedded self-portraiture as a phenomenon in the first place, we must accept them as having been recognized – and intended to be recognized – as such. Moreover, many Renaissance individuals had long memories regarding a work's creator, whether a piece was associated with a signature or not, as Vasari's numerous correct attributions attest. Andrea's signature combined with his embedded self-image, however, still warrants further consideration.

The Tabernacle of Orsanmichele was constructed at a particularly active point as regards sculptural commissions. The Trecento was a period in which patronage was shifting to embrace the enrichment of existing cathedrals and the many new mendicant churches that had been built during the previous century. Private patronage grew rapidly in this period as prosperous families negotiated with the strengthening orders to install tombs in new places of worship and as confraternities commissioned art for altars constructed in response to new mendicant-driven devotional and meditational practices. With the active participation of these emerging classes of patrons came changes in the production and imagery of artistic commissions.<sup>103</sup> The present structure of Orsanmichele had been begun in 1336, paid for by indirect taxes under the supervision of the silk guild.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, although Orsanmichele's tabernacle was ostensibly commissioned by a lay confraternity rather than the *Arte della Seta* or an overtly municipal body, the *Compagnia dei Laudesi* had lost a great deal of its fiscal autonomy by the middle of the Trecento.<sup>105</sup> The resulting situation in which the *compagnia's* top officers were in

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concert tickets, and thus giving the viewer a glimpse of the relief, most viewers who wish to see it are now forced to resort to illustrations.

<sup>102</sup> Orcagna had persuaded some of Florence's best sculptors to work with him on the construction of the tabernacle; while Andrea conceived the tabernacle's design, its numerous reliefs were executed by several hands. Nevertheless, Kreytenberg and Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle*, p. 54, asserts that Orcagna himself contributed only the *Annunciation and Death of the Virgin* and the *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*, the program's most significant sculptures.

<sup>103</sup> Francis Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving, 1250-1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 1-16, provides a useful general analysis of the civic context of early 14<sup>th</sup>-century sculpture.

<sup>104</sup> Fabbri and Rutenburg, "The Tabernacle," p. 388.

<sup>105</sup> See especially Matteo Villani's account in Giovanni Villani, Matteo Villani, and Filippo Villani, *Croniche di Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo Villani secondo le migliori stampe e corredate di note filologiche e storiche*, vol. 1 (Trieste: Lloyd Austriaco, 1854). Kreytenberg and Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle*, pp. 30-31, describes a situation in which the Florentine government intervened in the activities of the extremely wealthy *compagnia* and took charge of

effect municipal appointees occurred only a few years before Andrea's charge began, and put the commissioning of the tabernacle at an interesting cross-road between confraternal and civic patronage. In this light, the new tabernacle can be read as even more of a communal commission than had been previously assumed, especially considering its extremely public, highly-trafficked location within a structure under guild and civic regulation.

It is interesting, then, to consider the placement of Andrea Orcagna's self-portrait and signature. The view of the miracle-performing image that is housed by the tabernacle located in the southeast corner of the busy open loggia was restricted. Spectators of ceremonial events in conjunction with the tabernacle's painting approached it from Orsanmichele's interior – from the north.<sup>106</sup> Thus, presumably, the majority of the ceremonial events surrounding the miraculous image's veneration and propitiation occurred outside the immediate context of Andrea's self-image where he was not visible. Instead, it appears that the *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*, the program's culminating image which was framed by a wide arch facing Via de' Calzaiuoli, was conceived to be a part of the public sphere of daily life. The pilgrim arriving from the north would have first seen the thaumaturgic image of the *Madonna and Child* (were its protective curtain drawn aside, that is). The more casual visitor passing by on the street would have had a different view that served as a daily reminder of the promise of salvation and its source.

Andrea's relief of the *Death and Assumption of the Virgin* shows the two sequential scenes in a vertical format: in the lower half, the viewer notes the Virgin's bier surrounded by mourning apostles, angels and other onlookers crowded two and three deep. Christ, flanked by candle-bearing angels, stands in the center holding a swaddled infant representing Mary's soul, as described in the traditional Byzantine *Koimesis*. Nevertheless, some other features have been added, such as the crowd of lay-onlookers, and some, such as the palm mentioned in the *Golden*

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the expenditure of its funds, perhaps following fiscal abuse on the part of its officials. In 1348, the city's Priori decreed that the brotherhood had to sell its real estate to the city, and in 1349 that the confraternity's *capitani* would no longer be nominated by members, but would be chosen from between two candidates selected from each of the city's quarters. The *capitani* were thus municipal officers and the *compagnia* was no longer a private entity.

<sup>106</sup> For discussion of the financial inquiry and the results for the *compagnia*, see Fabbri and Rutenburg, "The Tabernacle," p. 390. Also, see Kreytenberg and Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle*, pp. 30-31. The miraculous painting was normally protected by a curtain that was lifted during ceremonial occasions, while the shrine's interior was accessible only to the members of the *laudi*, singers who performed during ceremonies, and pious individuals with prior permission. While Fabbri and Rutenburg, "The Tabernacle," p. 391, interpreted the tabernacle as a small "church" with accompanying importance given an interior, however little used, Kreytenberg and Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle*, p. 37, disputes the term, and argues that the structure was not intended to be entered except by performers or officials who would have been invisible from the outside. He asserts instead that it was used exclusively as a shrine for the miraculous image it held and framed.

*Legend*, have been left out.<sup>107</sup> The upper register, divided from the lower by a stone ledge, provides a contrast. Instead of portraying a crowd pressed close to the picture plane, the *Assumption* is sparsely populated; figures present are shown well divided and larger in form against the brightly polychromatic inlaid stone. The Virgin appears in a large mandorla that is supported and flanked by angels. Wholly contained within the sacred space, the Virgin gestures passively toward St. Thomas the Apostle who kneels below in the mortal realm, signified by the trees to the right. The girdle, humanity's comforting proof of the Virgin's Assumption, is not present, although the angle of the heads and trajectory of St. Thomas' gaze indicates that the girdle was a removable piece that has been lost.<sup>108</sup>

Orsanmichele's splendidly decorated tabernacle has been thoroughly researched, a fact that aids the current consideration of Andrea Orcagna's presence in so hallowed a location, although no one has sought to apply these interpretations *to* that presence and its explanation in the past. Years of corrections and reconsiderations ensued subsequent to Millard Meiss' famous summation of Orcagna's tabernacle as a throwback to the decorative styles of the previous century and a return to imagery promoting the power and authority of the Church following the mid 14<sup>th</sup>-century devastation of the bubonic plague.<sup>109</sup> Scholars have since interpreted the tabernacle and its sculpted panels depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin somewhat differently. Brendan Cassidy pointed out in 1988 that the iconography of the Assumption was rarely depicted in Trecento Florence; the more common terminating scene of a Marian cycle was the coronation of the Virgin or the related imagery of Christ and the Virgin in glory.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps the Assumption's presence in the Orsanmichele can be understood within the context of some of the worst years of the plague. Additionally, there was a precedent for the iconography in works by artists who influenced Andrea, in addition to songs of the *laudesi*, some of which featured St.

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<sup>107</sup> While Jacopo's text is known to have provided iconographic details for many medieval and early Italian paintings – and would seem to have influenced Orcagna's rendering of the subject – the palm mentioned three times in the description of the events surrounding the Virgin's assumption is left out of Orcagna's scene. For the text of the *Golden Legend*, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, ed. Frederick S. Ellis (Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892).

<sup>108</sup> Kreytenberg and Finn, *Orcagna's Tabernacle*, p. 165, suggest that the Virgin's *cintola* might have been supplied in bronze.

<sup>109</sup> Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 27-38.

<sup>110</sup> Cassidy, "The Assumption of the Virgin," p. 175 and n. 176, notes that other surviving examples are more often to be found in graduals or missals associated with readings for the Feast of the Assumption.



Thomas the Apostle.<sup>111</sup> Another key aspect to interpreting the tabernacle is the visible emphasis on human emotion apparent throughout the many relief panels.

Several details in the scenes of the Marian cycle convey the sympathy of the holy actors for each other, and the sculptors' attempt to understand and demonstrate these tender emotions to the viewers.<sup>112</sup> Fabbri and Rutenburg have rightly discussed the "...great emphasis on human interaction and contact which sometimes seems more intense than in the earlier Trecento..." to be found in the tabernacle's cycle.<sup>113</sup> In the small relief of the *Birth of the Virgin* from the north socle, for example, St. Anne not only points to her newly-born daughter, currently being swaddled by the midwife, but props herself up on one elbow in order to incline her body downward so as to be able to reach down and caress the infant's cheek.<sup>114</sup> In the *Nativity*, Orcagna's Virgin sits by her sleeping son in the customary depiction. Her love of her son is given visual emphasis in the tender way she seems to regard him while reaching over to pull the cover more closely around him, lest he become cold.<sup>115</sup> The old King in the *Adoration of the Magi* not only kneels humbly to kiss the infant Christ Child's foot which he cups in one hand, but is touched in return. The Virgin carefully supports her son with a hand at his waist and another at his back as the infant leans down, hand stretched out to the forehead of the old man.<sup>116</sup>

Not unexpectedly, the emotional emphasis discernable in other aspects of the program is carried to greater heights in the *Death of the Virgin*. The penultimate scene in the program, it was also the most visible one at the time of the tabernacle's creation. Here we find eloquent

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<sup>111</sup> Fabbri and Rutenburg, "The Tabernacle," p. 400.

<sup>112</sup> For discussion, see Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 394. The article rebuts Millard Meiss' famous insistence that the tabernacle represented a throwback to Duecento styles. Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena*, p. 27, argued that the flattened space and the spiritually charged and distant figures emphasized the power and authority of the church.

<sup>114</sup> For illustration, see Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze. Atlante*, p. 372, fig. 645. The scene shows an affinity to the same episode depicted earlier by Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, and Pietro Lorenzetti, in the depiction of a domestic space and the placement of many of the actors on the near-side of the bed. These other scenes do not, however, include the very human – to say nothing of motherly – gesture on the part of St. Anne, who in other depictions had been shown merely watching or washing her hands. Instead, the focus on mother and daughter is heightened by the tightness of the scene, the diagonal created by St. Anne's body and arm, and the gesture of the maidservant to the left who looks to her companion while indicating the action. Comparable scenes by other painters include Giotto's depiction of the same subject in the Arena Chapel (1303-1306), Taddeo's work in S. Croce's Baroncelli Chapel (Florence, c. 1333-1334), and Pietro Lorenzetti's panel (1335-1342) from an altarpiece commissioned by the Opera del Duomo for the Cathedral of Siena today in the Museo del Duomo.

<sup>115</sup> For illustration, see Ibid., p. 380, fig. 677. Giotto's depiction in the Arena Chapel puts a similar touch of humanity in the scene, portraying the Virgin in the act of accepting the swaddled body of her son from the midwife. Nevertheless, Orcagna's scene emphasizing the human aspects of a mother seeking to protect her young son from the cold seems to invoke a deeper sense of a mother's care.

<sup>116</sup> For illustration, see Ibid., p. 381, fig. 678.

expressions of grief on the faces of the Apostles and witnesses gathered around the Virgin's mortal remains. Every head is bowed and many grasp or raise their hands in prayerful gestures. Two figures turn away, seemingly overcome by the strength of their sorrow, including the one that Andrea appears to comfort.

Of course, the portrayal of humanizing emotion within art depicting events of Christian history was not new in the late medieval period, and naturally was not original to Andrea Orcagna. Giotto and his followers have long been considered to be earlier proponents of many aspects of the style that Andrea inherited, which put into a more human context those stories dealing with religious salvation and its means through betrayal, pain and death. Many figures in the work of Giotto – take those of the Arena Chapel for example – demonstrate not only the emotions of grief and anger, but also more positive sentiments – the love between husband and wife, parent and child, and Christ's love of humanity – that Andrea also takes care to depict in his work. Therefore, in a sense, the manner in which Orcagna portrays himself, consoling a man overcome with grief, can be interpreted as simply part of that interest in the depiction of human interaction.

Because we believe it is the artist who performs this kind of action, a deeper significance is likely inherent in the figure's performance within the highly public context of the scene. Moreover, it is worthwhile to consider just whom it is that Andrea consoles. Diane Zervas has suggested that this figure's distinctive pilgrim's hat identifies him as St. James the Great, a choice that can only be seen as significant.<sup>117</sup> The apostle was both the spiritual protector of the pilgrims who visited Orsanmichele in vast numbers and the supposed author of the *Protoevangelium*, an important source of the Virgin's early life. Moreover, St. James was known during the medieval period for a vision of the Virgin in which he was commanded to build a shrine in her honor – a command fulfilled by the famous pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela in Spain where his relics were taken after his martyrdom in 44 CE. His interaction with Andrea is deliberate and is likely intended to underscore the fact that both James and Andrea had been charged with the task of building a shrine to the Virgin's honor.<sup>118</sup>

The manner in which Orcagna portrays himself within the context of the *Death of the Virgin*, which along with the tabernacle as a whole seems to emphasize the humanity of the

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<sup>117</sup> Zervas, ed., *Orsanmichele a Firenze*, p. 115.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

actors, may reflect the importance and popularity of the practices of mendicant orders during the Due- and Trecento for late medieval society. Franciscan and Dominican preachers had large followings over which they had a great deal of influence. From their early period onward, many mendicant meditational tracts and sermons written by popular theologians and preachers were pervasive throughout Italy. Significantly, many sermons emphasized the critical role played by the worshipper's well-developed pictorially-aided imagination.<sup>119</sup>

Probably the best-known example to art historians is the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, written in the vernacular most likely by the Franciscan preacher Giovanni de Caulibus de Sancto Gemeniano (also known as Giovanni da Calabria) in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, it was traditionally attributed to St. Bonaventure as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A popular illustrated meditational handbook, it contained several homilies on Franciscan virtues and exhortations to meditate on the events described. Widely diffused, it was copied into many European languages with several different versions; today over 200 copies still exist.<sup>121</sup>

According to their author, the *Meditations* were created as a simple sermon for the laity intended to lead its audience to Christ.<sup>122</sup> It does so in a manner that is inherently experiential, and appeals to the senses as a means of reaching the emotional, imaginative and physical participation the preacher incites the reader to experience through his or her own meditations. It is not a sufficient exercise of piety merely to witness mentally the divine in the course of one's meditations; instead, direct participation is called for in order to learn what was necessary for salvation. In the section concerning a meditation on the Nativity, after a description of the departure of adoring angels, the *Meditations'* author directs comments to the reader and gives instructions:

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<sup>119</sup> Popular only weakly describes the situation: according to eye-witness testimonies, crowds gathering to hear mendicant preachers such as Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444) could number between 20,000 and 50,000 people. For discussion, see Santa Casciani, "Sacred Oratory and Audience: Preaching in Medieval Italy," in *Word, Image, Number: Communication in the Middle Ages*, ed. John J. Contreni and Santa Casciani (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002), p. 252.

<sup>120</sup> Lina Bolzoni, *The Web of Images: Vernacular Preaching from its Origins to St. Bernardino da Siena*, trans. Carole Preston and Lisa Chien (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 157 and n. 121. For an English translation, commentary and illustrations, see Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: an Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, Paris, *Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Ital. 115*, ed. Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, trans. Isa Ragusa (Princeton: 1961).

<sup>121</sup> Regarding the text's medieval and Renaissance diffusion, see *Ibid.*, p. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>122</sup> See Daniel Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: the Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), chapter 4: "The Franciscan 'Sermo Humilis,' pp. 134-171,

You too, who lingered so long, kneel and adore your Lord God, and then His mother, and reverently greet the saintly old Joseph. Kiss the beautiful little feet of the infant Jesus who lies in the manger and beg His mother to offer to let you hold Him a while. Pick Him up and hold Him in your arms. Gaze on His face with devotion and reverently kiss Him and delight in Him. You may freely do this, because He came to sinners to deliver them, and for their salvation humbly conversed with them and even left Himself at food for them. His benignity will patiently let Himself be touched by you as you wish and will not attribute it to presumption but to great love. But always do these things with veneration and fear, for He is the Saint of saints. Then return Him to the mother and watch her attentively as she cares for Him assiduously and wisely, nursing Him and rendering Him all services, and remain to help her if you can. Rejoice in these events and think of them continually; familiarize yourself as much as you can with the Lady and the boy Jesus.<sup>123</sup>

Moreover, active participation in salvation history had the potential to endow blessings upon the person meditating. The devout worshipper, contemplating the meeting of the infants Jesus and John the Baptist, who joined in and greeted the infants respectfully might receive the Baptist's blessing.<sup>124</sup> The virtuous individual, using his or her own powers to comfort the Virgin following Christ's crucifixion, may likewise receive the Virgin's benediction.<sup>125</sup>

Nor, as Lesnick notes, is this participation taking place in an abstracted place or time.<sup>126</sup> The Nativity took place in not only the distant far-flung past, but also today. Speaking specifically of the Annunciation and Nativity, the author's words ring out with an almost martial enthusiasm:

Today [the day of the Annunciation] is the festivity of God the Father, who wedded human nature to His Son who is today united to it inseparably.... Today is the festivity of the Holy Spirit to whom is ascribed this marvelous and unique deed of the Incarnation, and who today begins to manifest unexampled benignity toward the human race.... Today is even more the festivity of human nature, for its salvation and redemption have begun.... Today He has become one of us, our brother, and has begun to go on pilgrimage with us.... Today the living bread that animates the world has begun to be baked in the oven of the virginal womb....

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for a discussion of the text, its probable author, and its influence. Also, see Bolzoni, *The Web of Images*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>123</sup> Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditations*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>124</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 64.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Today is the beginning and the foundation of all festivities and the inception of all our welfare.<sup>127</sup>

The type of highly visual exercise encouraged in the quoted passage is restricted neither to Franciscan meditations nor to the early Trecento period. David Lesnick called a reading of the *Meditations* the closest we can come to retrieving Franciscan sermons preached to the laity in Trecento Florence.<sup>128</sup> Trecento Dominican sermons, more entrenched in the Scholastic tradition and more often directed to a somewhat higher social strata than their Franciscan counterparts, also painted mental images for listeners.<sup>129</sup> Popular medieval preachers of the mendicant orders commonly used *exempla* or stock narrative stories, both sacred and profane, to illustrate and lend authority to their sermons. *Exempla* undoubtedly enlivened these discourses and created mental images in the minds of listeners who drew upon daily experiences in order to comprehend the points being made.

Thus, Renaissance individuals were accustomed to listening to creative and often bombastic sermons that drew on the ordinary person's daily experience. They were urged by preachers and meditation tracts to interact mentally with the divine, and were encouraged to visualize themselves as if they were actually present at sacred events.<sup>130</sup> The fact that many copies of the *Meditations* were illustrated is itself telling. Not only did the descriptive phrases and exhortations to imagine a scene help the reader see it recreated in his or her mind's eye, but the dozens of images these illustrated manuals contained gave the story an immediate visual punch.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Pseudo-Bonaventura, pp. 20-21.

<sup>128</sup> Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, p. 143, points out that Franciscans' sermons were less likely to be transcribed than those given by their Dominican counterparts, who generally preached to a more sophisticated audience.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142, discusses briefly the social classes appealed to by Dominican and Franciscan preachers.

<sup>130</sup> That painting could serve as an inspiration to meditation is also supported by the presence of the famous frescoes by Fra Angelico and his helpers in the Dominican monastery cells of San Marco of the *Crucifixion* and other events of Christian history, in which St. Dominic is often prominently displayed, presumably as a stand-in for the meditating monk.

<sup>131</sup> Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditations*, p. xxiii, n. 5, provides a list of the twenty known illustrated copies of the *Meditations* primarily from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries written in Italian, English, French and Latin. Although no figure in the illustrations of Ms. Ital. 15 can be identified as a witness, the many events figured in conjunction with the text make it clear that the reader is to regard him or herself as an eye-witness to the scenes, which have been helpfully depicted. Although the illustrations in this copy stop in the middle of the Christ's public life, there were sufficient spaces left in the text to provide every narrative with an illustration, and many episodes were to receive an illustration for each moment of the action. One hundred ninety-three illustrations were included in the Ms. Ital. 15 copy.

With these ideas in mind, we can interpret Andrea's presence with a new appreciation for the dual qualities discernable in his presence within, and curious removal from, the scene. While these ideas will be elaborated in the succeeding chapter, at present the introduction to the *Meditations* serves to introduce another means of interpreting Andrea's apparent participation and may provide clues regarding its meaning for the contemporary viewer. Moreover, it bears mentioning that Andrea's image is not an example of the period's more common portrait style – the donor portrait. In fact, in almost every particular it is the direct contrast to this image-type.

Beginning in the Duecento, though more common to the Tre- and Quattrocento, donor portraits gave commissioners of sacred art a way of having the self displayed with a holy figure using a mode of presentation that separated, metaphorically speaking, the sacred and profane worlds.<sup>132</sup> Such portraits during the late medieval period often displayed a patron in profile view in contrast to the frontal presentation of the object of adoration, and until the second quarter of the Quattrocento, they were also marked by disparity in scale of the figures portrayed.<sup>133</sup> Meyer Shapiro commented on the general use of the frontal vs. profile presentation modes as a means of “distinguishing a past symbolic event and a present symbolized one, the first a unique historic action and the second a recurrent liturgical performance.”<sup>134</sup> The viewer is not allowed to apprehend Andrea as a donor; that is, as a figure intended to be recognized as intrinsically differentiated from the divine although presented in perpetual adoration of it. Such figures, usually representing the person(s) who commissioned a work, carry other layers of meaning; the mode of presentation is often interpreted as a sign of blessings either desired or received, a desire for commemoration, and a reflection of the hope for salvation. In addition, one must also recognize Andrea's insistence upon his act of participation within a symbolic sacred narrative as it took place.

Part of the complexity of interpreting Andrea's self-portrait is the fact that it does not appear to belong to the other primary genre of portraiture known during the period. The present discussion is not able to address many intriguing issues that follow from a recognition of

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<sup>132</sup> A general discussion of Renaissance donor portraits can be found in Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, Chapter Six.

<sup>133</sup> Simone Martini's painting of *St. Louis of Toulouse* (c. 1317) presents such a case. Masaccio's *Trinity* of 1425 is possibly the earliest image of the donor in correct scale to most of the other participants within a scene. For a theoretical discussion regarding hierarchical scale in pictures, see Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Arts: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs (1969)," in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), pp. 23-27.

Andrea's embedded self-portrait portrait as a different type of statement than that of the more common format. A full understanding of how Andrea viewed his inclusion within the commissioned work and what this meant to either his professional status or religious devotions, much less its full implications for the *compagnia* that commissioned it or the ordinary citizen who viewed it is impossible. Instead, I hope here to tease out a single possible meaning regarding what I believe is Andrea's performance within the *Death of the Virgin* for the panel's viewers.

Cennini's *Il libro dell'arte* (c.1390), a medieval handbook for painters written in the Paduan court of Francesco Novella da Carrara, is pertinent to my reading of Orcagna's performative role for his text's articulation of novel ideas concerning the nature and purpose of artists. Cennini tells us that the creation of art called "for imagination and skill of hand, in order to discover things not seen, hiding themselves under the shadow of natural objects, and to fix them with the hand, presenting to plain sight what does not actually exist."<sup>135</sup> In the same chapter, he goes on to tell the artist-reader that as a painter he is "given freedom to compose a figure...as he pleases, according to his imagination."<sup>136</sup>

This second quote reflects the acknowledged role played by the imagination – specifically of the artist's as a factor in the creation of works of art, sacred or otherwise – in the presentation to the viewer of distant events, while the previous one might indicate their proper reception by the viewer. The performative role of Andrea's self-portrait, at once a participating character and yet demonstrably not quite a part of the scene, might have called forth for the viewer the ideal of his or her own spiritual participation with a visual model. The example provided by the active role taken by the single non-Biblical individual present in the scene, here reasonably assumed to represent the artist himself, encouraged the devout individual to perform a similar role in his or her own contemplations of the divine, as promoted not only in the meditations discussed briefly above, but by the more everyday popular sermons addressed to the common man.

Finally, it is interesting within the context of Trecento art and the renewed recognition of art as a subject of serious discourse to consider that the role I am claiming for the figure

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<sup>134</sup> Schapiro, "Words and Pictures," p. 76.

<sup>135</sup> Cennino Cennini, *The Craftman's Handbook: The Italian "Il libro dell' arte,"* ed. Daniel V. Thompson (New York: Dover, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

representing Andrea is one that could have been played by anyone or no one in particular. In fact, some might argue in light of no specific identification having been left by the artist that the figure in fact does *not* represent anyone in particular and further that an identification is not important to the overall meaning conveyed by the scene. On the other hand, in our acceptance of Andrea's presence we have yet more confirmation of the slowly changing attitudes prevalent during late Middle Ages and early Renaissance about those who created its art. Andrea's depiction of himself indicates an important instance of an artist claiming fame for his efforts and, it would seem, of the patrons' acknowledgement of the validity of the claim.

It remains a given that fame and social status are of paramount importance for the correct interpretation of an artist's visible presence, both pictorial and verbal, within works of art. Nevertheless, I hope the arguments presented in this chapter provide a basis for additional readings of the self-portraits of Pietro da Pavia and Andrea Orcagna and for the recovery of layers of meaning. While the artists no doubt had personal motivations for their inclusions, the same can be argued for their patrons – whether an individual or confraternal entity – who would have had another rationale for allowing the portrayal to take place, and a different understanding of what it signified. A fuller understanding of the rise of the reputation of the arts and of artists can emerge only upon further contextualizing this apparent elevation within the equation of artist(s) and patron(s) and the creation of medieval works of art.



## 4.0 MASACCIO AND THE QUATTROCENTO FLORENTINE PRACTICE OF EMBEDDED SELF-PORTRAITS

Although several of the identifications of embedded portraits that Vasari offers in the *Lives* have been called into doubt, few would argue that Italian Renaissance artists did not occasionally place their patrons, and even themselves as well as their peers and assistants, in narrative paintings. What has taken scholars longer to recognize is the necessity of discussing these images as something more than simply the precursors to the autonomous self-image.<sup>1</sup> Regarding the practice, however, we are not solely dependent upon Vasari for the idea that some artists displayed their own images as part of groups – generally witnesses – in religious works of art. Admittedly, the problem is complicated by the lack of self-identification of either artists or other embedded portraits, unlike the manuscript self-portraits discussed in the previous chapter. We have, however, several period sources that can be examined for clues regarding the practice's presence within the Renaissance context. This chapter considers the historical situation surrounding an early Quattrocento embedded self-portrait of Masaccio.

### 4.1 EVIDENCE PRIOR TO VASARI

Renaissance art fulfilled a variety of purposes beyond the personal, eschatological and instructional concerns of its patrons and viewers. It brought glory and fame to the patron and to the city that fostered such sound judges of artistic skill. Like their famous ancient predecessors, Quattrocento writers were proud of their celebrated artists, and counted them among a city's

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<sup>1</sup> To my knowledge, this recognition is infrequent and is not seen, for example, in Joanna Woods-Marsden's monograph on Renaissance self-portraiture. Instead, see Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria*, p. 115.

claims to magnificence.<sup>2</sup> Taking their cue from the antique practice of lauding a city's artistic talents, some 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century writers began to concern themselves with the lives and personalities of artists. By including accounts of artists in their discussions of more illustrious citizens, writers such as Filippo Villani, author of *Vite d'uomini illustri Fiorentini* (c. 1382-1396), made it clear that artists, too, could bring distinction and merit to their cities as well as to themselves.<sup>3</sup>

In *De pictura* (c. 1435) and its Italian translation, *Della pittura* (c. 1436), Leon Battista Alberti discusses the contemporary practice of including portraits in *istorie* or history paintings. When taken together, four references from the text amply reflect the early Renaissance praxis. One of the clearest instructions regarding the use of embedded portraiture within narratives is given in Book III:

Where the face of some well known and worthy man is put in the *istoria* – even though there are other figures of a much more perfect art and more pleasing than this one – that well known face will draw to itself first of all the eyes of the one who looks at the *istoria*. So great is the force of anything drawn from nature.<sup>4</sup>

This quote encapsulates a key benefit gained from the placement of well-known, contemporary figures into a narrative. Even superior skills of mimesis cannot compete with the known and recognizable face for attracting the attention of the viewer.

Other phrases give additional support to the supposition that embedding portraits within narratives was a known, and at least for Alberti, desirable inclusion. In the opening lines of Book Two of the Italian treatise, Alberti explains the importance of painting, telling us that

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Ugolino Verino wrote in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century of Florence's superiority to ancient Greece, and compared favorably his city's artists to the ancients. According to Verino, Verrocchio "is hardly inferior to Phidias..." and "Apelles should not be offended by being put on par with Sandro [Botticelli], whose name the whole world knows." See Ugolino Verino, *De pictoribus et sculptoribus Florentinis qui priscis Graecis aequiperari possunt*, in *Poeti latini del Quattrocento*, ed. Francesco Arnaldi, Lucia Rosa, and Liliana Sabia (Milan: Ricciardi, 1964), pp. 872-874; translation source: Stefano U. Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, eds., *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History, and Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 207-212.

<sup>3</sup> Villani, Giovanni, Matteo Villani, and Filippo Villani, *Croniche*, p. 450, include Giotto amongst the "illustrious Florentines" under discussion.

<sup>4</sup> The sentiment is first expressed in the Latin version. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture: The Latin texts of De pictura and De statua*, ed. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), pp. 98-101: "We can see how desirable this is in painting when the figure of some well-known person is present in a '*historia*,' for although others executed with greater skill may be conspicuous in the picture, the face that is known draws the eyes of all spectators, so great is the power and attraction of something taken from Nature..." [*Quae res in picturis quam sit optanda videmus, nam in historia si adsit facies cogniti alicuius hominis, tametsi aliae nonnullae praestantioris artificii emineant, cognitus tamen vultus omnium spectantium oculos ad se rapit, tantam in se, quod sit a natura sumptum, et gratiam et vim habet*].

“Painting contains a divine force which not only makes absent men present, as friendship is said to do, but moreover makes the dead seem almost alive...” The same paragraph tells us also that “the face of a man who is already dead certainly lives a long life through painting.”<sup>5</sup> It is unlikely that Alberti is referring to dead saints or other religious figures not normally considered portraits. Instead, given the statement’s context, it seems credible that the absent or dead men would be known, recognizable individuals; the example presented directly following the quote is of one of Alexander’s captains who trembled at the sight of a portrait of his recently deceased leader – thus recognizing a contemporary.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, while autonomous portraiture existed during the 1430s, it was still primarily a royal or noble activity of the court until later in the century, when it became more widespread amongst the bourgeois class. If Alberti is indeed speaking of known, deceased individuals whose recorded features caused them to live on, given the state of portraiture at the time it would seem likely that they were not featured in autonomous portraits. The presumed alternative is their inclusion as participants, embedded portraits or witnesses within other subjects.<sup>7</sup>

The second quote to consider concerns the importance of including a figure that can somehow make contact with the viewer of a work of art, and is also found in Book II:

In an *istoria* I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there, or beckons with his hand to see, or menaces with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near; or shows some danger or marvelous thing there; or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 63: “*Tiene in sé la pittura forza divina non solo quanto si dice dell’amicitia, quale fa li huomini assenti essere presenti ma più i morti dopo molti secoli essere quasi vivi...*” and “*Et cosi certo il viso di chi già sia morto, per la pittura vivie lunga vita...*” See Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Pittura*, ed. Luigi Malle (Florence: G. S. Sansoni Editore, 1950), p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: “*Dice Plutarco, Cassandro, uno de chapitani di Alessandrio, perché vide la immagine d’Alessandrio re tremor con tutto il corpo.*”

<sup>7</sup> It is useful at this point to clarify what is intended by “witness” and “participant.” A participant in a narrative might be an historic or invented character within the narrative, or alternatively, a portrait of a contemporary individual whose features are superimposed on another character, or who is placed within the scene in the act of participating within it according to the narrative’s plot. A witness is an individual, portrait or otherwise, who is not part of the image’s plot but who is placed within the scene as a figure peripheral to the action, who does not actively participate, but instead watches (or ignores) the action, and in a sense, takes the place of the actual viewer of the image.

<sup>8</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 78. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, p. 94: “*Et piacemi sia nella storia chi admonisca et insegni ad noi quello che ivi si facci: o chiami con la mano a vedere o, con viso cruccioso e con li occhi turbati, minacci che nuino verso loro vada; o dimostri qualche pericolo o cosa ivi meravigliosa e te invite ad piagnere con loro insime o a ridere.*”

This quote does not mention portraiture specifically, but makes it clear that art should engage the viewer and be able to draw the spectator into the action – requiring what John Shearman has called an “engaged spectator” of art.<sup>9</sup> In fact, several of the figures commonly identified as embedded self-portraits stand out in some fashion; positioned to one side of the action and, often, looking out of the picture frame to make eye contact with the viewer, they also sometimes gesture to the scene or even to themselves.

The third quote more specifically addresses the practice of including a contemporary, recognizable individual in a picture about something else entirely, and appears at the very end of the text. Alberti was likely influenced by a desire to tap into a growing cult of fame that centered on images of famous men – *uomini famosi* cycles and collections of ancient coins being notable examples of the growing trend. He says at the conclusion of his treatise, “I have had these things to say of painting. If they are useful and helpful to painters, I ask only that as a reward for my pains they paint my face in their *istoria* in such a way that it seems pleasant and I may be seen a student of the art.”<sup>10</sup> Like the famous ancient and medieval men who were portrayed in cycles of *uomini famosi* to praise their virtue and to display them as examples for modern viewers, Alberti suggests his own demonstrable virtue is worthy of visual commemoration. Although proving the inclusion of Alberti’s portrait following his injunction to painters is problematic – presumably *not* because he was unhelpful – the entreaty nevertheless indicates that such a

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<sup>9</sup> For discussion, see John Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), Chapter 1: “A More Engaged Spectator.”

<sup>10</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 98. Alberti, *Della Pittura*, p. 144: “Ebbi da dire queste cose della pittura quali, se sono commode et utili a pictori, solo questo domando in premio delle mie fatiche, che nelle sue istorie dipingano il viso mio ad ciò dimostrino sé essere grati et me essere stato studioso dell’arte.” Proposed instances of Alberti’s 15<sup>th</sup>-century portrait occur in a medal by Matteo de’ Pasti, a self-portrait plaque in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., four possible embedded portraits and a drawing. One embedded portrait has been recognized in the Brancacci Chapel’s *The Chairing of St. Peter* (See Luciano Berti, *Masaccio* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1964 and 1967); Luciano Berti, *Masaccio* (Florence: Cantini Editore, 1988), p. 57, p. 179, and p. 184), while another may have been included in a cycle by Francesco del Cossa for Ferrara’s Palazzo Schifanoia (see J. H. Whitfield, “Portraits of Alberti: a Not Inconsiderable Harvest,” *Apollo* 138, July (1993): p. 28). A third has been suggested in a painting by Paolo Uccello (see Francis Ames-Lewis, “A Portrait of Leon Battista Alberti by Uccello?” *The Burlington Magazine* CXVI, February (1974)) and a fourth in a portion of the frescoes painted for the Gonzaga family by Andrea Mantegna in the *Camera Picta* of the Ducal Palace. See Whitfield, “Portraits of Alberti: a Not Inconsiderable Harvest,” p. 28, for commentary and illustration. Another possibility, dubbed a “shabby drawing,” (Ibid., p. 27) might be an anonymous piece held in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, Fondo Vittorio Emanuele, MS 738. John Spencer (see Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 136) asserts that the phrasing of Alberti’s quote suggests that the author expected his portrait to appear in the near future, and indicates the possibility that unrecognized portraits of Alberti exist, or once existed. Regarding Alberti’s desire to be remembered in portraiture, see Robert Tavernor, “La Ritrattistica e l’interesse dell’Alberti per il futuro,” in *Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Joseph Rykwert and Anne Engel (Milan: Olivetti/Electa, 1994).

practice of portraying contemporary figures within narratives was, at least, a known commodity, and may have been seen as a just reward for a worthy effort, an idea to which we will return in a later section of this chapter.<sup>11</sup>

If Alberti speaks in terms both abstract and concrete concerning the practice of embedded self-portraiture, and perhaps gives a greater sense of its underpinnings, other Renaissance writers have been more straightforward, giving simple identifications. Filippo Villani, son and nephew of two famous Florentine chroniclers of the same name, mentioned Giotto's self-portrait made with the aid of mirrors as well as a portrait of Dante in a fresco in the Palazzo del Podestà.<sup>12</sup> Lorenzo Ghiberti (d. 1455), the author in his later years of a short, unfinished 15<sup>th</sup>-century treatise known as *I commentarii*, reported Trecento embedded self-portraits of Taddeo Gaddi and Andrea Orcagna.<sup>13</sup> Of Ghiberti's own well-known self-portraits, one on each of the two sets of bronze doors created for the Florentine baptistery (completed respectively in 1424 and 1452), he is unexpectedly silent. Orcagna's self-portrait, as we have already seen, was also reported by Antonio Billi.<sup>14</sup>

## 4.2 SELF-PORTRAITURE: A PATRON'S CONCERN

No textual evidence for the practice of embedded portraiture addresses the issue of why an artist's self-portrait might have been included in a commissioned work from the perspective of either artist or patron. Renaissance patrons themselves revealed nothing regarding how a viewer might have understood an artist's self-inclusion. From authors we primarily obtain verification

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<sup>11</sup> Luciano Berti (see n. 10, this chapter), by arguing that Alberti's portrait by Masaccio can be found in the Brancacci chapel, argues that Alberti's portrayal occurs *before* he wrote *On Painting*. See also Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 336.

<sup>12</sup> Filippo Villani, *Le vite d'uomini illustri Fiorentini*, ed. Giammaria Mazzuchelli (Florence: Sansone Coen Tipografo-Editore, 1847), p. 47. "Dipinse eziandio a publico spettacolo nella città sua, con aiuto di specchi, sè medesimo, e il contemporaneo suo Dante Alighieri poeta nella cappella del palagio del potestà nel muro."

<sup>13</sup> For the reference to portraits of contemporaries and the self-portrait of Taddeo, see Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I commentari*, ed. Ottavio Morisani (Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1947), p. 35. ["*In essa è tratto del naturale Giotto e Dante e 'l maestro che la dipinse, cioè Taddeo.*"] For the self-portrait of Orcagna, see Ghiberti, *I commentari*, p. 36: "*Evvi scarpellato di sua mano la sua propria effigie maravigliosamente fatta...*" *The Commentaries* existed in manuscript form, and were obviously known to Vasari, who makes reference to both of these self-portraits in addition to many others.

<sup>14</sup> Benedettucci, *Il libro di Antonio Billi*, p. 71.

of the practice's existence, and the occasional, all-too-brief notice concerning specific self-images. These discussions do not – with the exception of Alberti's allusion to a portrait included as a reward for his efforts and Vasari's later emphasis on artistic fame and professional pride – give us much information regarding the circumstances and beliefs that led to the practice, or about its larger context and theories concerning underlying meaning. Each pursuing personal interests, Renaissance authors were not concerned with explaining for future generations what must have been a well-known and understood practice, and perhaps did not conceive of the knowledge ever being lost. It must be assumed, however, that no matter how famous or respected an artist might have been, or however amicable his relations with his patron(s), an artist would not have had the authority to include his own image within his patron's commission unless the self-image was, for whatever reason, considered an acceptable and appropriate inclusion.<sup>15</sup>

Renaissance artist-patron relationships and their ancient models have an obvious bearing on the present discussion. Many allusions are made in Renaissance art treatises to famous ancient artists and their privileged relations with powerful contemporaries. Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* served as the primary classical text for Renaissance patrons desirous of an ancient model for their patronage. This text extolled the example of a discerning, understanding patron who recognized and appreciated the genius found in a particularly worthy artist. The Greek painter Apelles supposedly had a personal relationship with Alexander the Great who, Pliny reports, visited the artist's studio often after having forbidden anyone else to paint his portrait. If during a visit the conqueror spoke too long or on matters in which he was uninformed, "Apelles would pleasantly advise him to be silent, hinting that the assistants who ground the colors were laughing at him; such power did his personality give over a king habitually so passionate."<sup>16</sup> Other artists had privileged places within Renaissance courts, and

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<sup>15</sup> The topic of artistic/patron relations and possible friendships between artists and patrons has seen recent study. See S. D. Bolton, *Friendship in the Renaissance: An Examination of Theoretical Writings on Friendship by 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century Italian Authors*, vol. M. Phil. Diss. (London: University of London, 1990); Burke, *Changing Patrons*; Martin Gosman, Alasdair MacDonald, and Arjo Vanderjagt, "Princely Culture: Friendship or Patronage?" in *Princes and Princely Culture 1450 - 1650*, ed. Martin Gosman (Leiden: Brill, 2003); R. Hyatte, *The Art of Friendship: The Idealisation of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Guy Fitch Lytle, "Friendship and Patronage in Renaissance Europe," in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 125: "...sed in officina imperita multa disserenti silentium comiter suadebat rideri eum dicens a pueris qui colores tererent. Tantum erat auctoritati iuris in regem alioqui iracundum." *NH*, Book 35, 86. Pliny makes Alexander's regard for Apelles equally apparent in the

knew great fame and wealth, although many of the most significant examples occur later in the century, after the first well-known embedded self-portraits had occurred.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, there is some evidence that some important Quattrocento patrons numbered artists within their circle of dear friends. The story of Cosimo de' Medici as the indulgent patron of the rascally painter Fra Filippo Lippi is well-known.<sup>18</sup> Cosimo was also celebrated by Vespasiano da Bisticci as being a "great friend" to Donatello, to whom he gave a salary and fine clothes – and according to Vasari, was well-enough thought of by Cosimo's heirs to be buried in San Lorenzo near Medici family tombs.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps knowledge of that relationship and a desire to emulate it inspired the friendship of Piero del Pugliese and Filippino Lippi, to be discussed later. Cordial relations between the two men apparently went beyond the normal patron/patron association, as is indicated by the existence of a double-portrait celebrating the pair's friendship to which poems were written.

In this light, one might consider the parallel between Renaissance practitioners of visual and verbal arts, and between painters and poets. Numerous contemporary writers on Renaissance painting made statements similar to Vasari's summation of the art as "nothing other than mute poetry"<sup>20</sup> (*non è altro che una poesia mutola*), while others such as Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci would affirm painting's superiority to poetry.<sup>21</sup> This was, of course, a comparison motivated by the commonplace classical phrase memorialized by Horace: "ut

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subsequent passage, in which the king gives the painter one of his own concubines after perceiving that the painter had fallen in love with her while creating her nude portrait.

<sup>17</sup> Some well-investigated relationships between artists and Renaissance courts include relationships such as those between Pisanello with the courts of Mantua, Ferrara, Pavia, Milan and Naples. For a recent discussion of Pisanello's court career(s), see Luke Syson and Dillion Gordon, *Pisanello: Painter to the Renaissance Court* (London: National Gallery, 2001). Andrea Mantegna's connection to the Gonzaga family and court at Mantua and Donatello's relationship with the Medici are others that could be justified under this heading. Artist-court relationship is a topic that will be revisited at a later point within the chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 331-332, relates how Cosimo il Vecchio, exasperated by his painter, locked him in a room in order to keep him at his labors only to have Filippo escape. The writer notes that subsequently Cosimo sought to restrain the painter by kindness rather than force.

<sup>19</sup> Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Le Vite* is quoted in Burke, *Changing Patrons*, pp. 94-95 and n. 44, p. 240. See Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 222, regarding Donatello's burial in the Medici-patronized church.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase comes from a letter dated May 1, 1539, written by Vasari to Bronzino and Niccolò Tribolo. A transcription of the entire letter can be found in Catherine M. Soussloff, "Lives of Poets and Painters in the Renaissance," *Word and Image* 6, no. 2 (1990): p. 171. The portion containing the cited phrase is found on pp. 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> Alberti spends the first quarter of Book II of *On Painting* discussing the merits of the art of painting, and notes that all other artisans – beginning with architects – derive their arts from it. See Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 64. Leonardo's stance on the superiority of painting over poetry, music and sculpture is expounded in the notes for his unfinished late 15<sup>th</sup>-century *Paragone* or *Treatise on Painting*. See Martin Kemp and M. Walker, *Leonardo on Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

*pictura poesis*” (as with a painting, so with a poem).<sup>22</sup> It would appear that the Renaissance acknowledged a comparison between the two groups’ practitioners, as well. Renaissance biographies of artists, a genre which began in the latter half of the Quattrocento, were clearly modeled after those of ancient and Renaissance poets.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, some Cinquecento artists like Michelangelo, whose poetry is well known to modern scholars, would pen verses. The poetry of his younger contemporary, Bronzino, who rejoined the Accademia Fiorentina in May of 1566 upon the acceptance of a required poem (the means by which ejected members could regain admittance), was better known in the past than today.<sup>24</sup> Nor can it be denied that beginning with Petrarch’s famous dedication to Simone Martine’s lost portrait of Laura, Renaissance poets found both subjects and inspiration in Renaissance painting.

I have drawn this comparison in order to make a point regarding the parallel functions between some members of the two groups. Beyond the hotly contested *paragone* between painters and sculptors, practitioners of the visual and poetic arts followed the ancient model of the artist or poet as custodian of the noble or royal patron’s projected image, whether it was in print or on panel.<sup>25</sup> A court poet controlled the rhetoric of praise or blame directed toward a patron, and thus facilitated that patron’s immortality as either a lauded figure or one who was defamed. Many artists sought noble standing, and in the pursuit of titles often attached themselves to a court.<sup>26</sup> In this vein, they too would have negotiated with the patron and court poets the images to be projected to foreign powers, to one’s own people or city, or to the microcosm of the court itself. This was undoubtedly a source of intellectual and social power for some artists that only increased throughout the latter part of the Renaissance.

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<sup>22</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 361: Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*, ed. David Ferry. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), pp. 176-177.

<sup>23</sup> For discussion of this phenomenon, see Soussloff, "Lives of Poets and Painters in the Renaissance."

<sup>24</sup> For discussion of Bronzino’s poetry, see Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially p. 9. As she notes on p. 10, few today remember Bronzino’s more than 300 poems, although Vasari records the artist’s reputation for writing witty *capitoli*, a type of satirical composition done in *terza rima*. See Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, pp. 604-605.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander the Great was famous, according to Pliny, *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 125, for issuing an edit allowing only Apelles to paint his portraits, thus controlling the quantity and presumably the quality of the royal image that would have been circulated amongst the territories of the conqueror’s vast kingdom. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Pliny’s comment did not escape the notice of Medieval and Renaissance Italian scholars.

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the Renaissance artist at court, see for example Martin Warnke, *Artisti di corte. Preistoria dell’artista moderno*, trans. Renato Pedio (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1991) and Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, pp. 62-66. Some notable 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>-century examples include Giotto, Cennino Cennini, Pisanello, Filarete, Andrea Mantegna and Leonardo da Vinci.



Nevertheless, despite the lofty positions of a few, during the greater part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the general social status of most Italian artists was still that of a tradesman, many steps below the noble class.<sup>27</sup> In spite of a few particularly famous ancient artists and their illustrious patrons, the general attitude of ancient Greece and Rome towards artists as a body – inherited by the Renaissance – regarded them as craftsmen.<sup>28</sup> While a painter might be counted a friend of the person for whom he created a work of art, he undoubtedly accepted many commissions from patrons for whom he was simply a skilled artisan commissioned to produce a work of religious devotion. Even repeated commissions cannot be assumed to stem from a personal relationship. Moreover, friendship was often a formalized affair during the Renaissance. While a formal relationship of patron/friend and client/friend might have included privileges of compositional judgment, there is still no obvious explanation for the presence of an artist's self-portrait in a piece created for and belonging to another.

Furthermore, artists were engaged in a trade often bound by contracts, several of which survive that name the persons involved and the format of the work to be created, and generally

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<sup>27</sup> Although it is largely accepted, as Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 412-413, concluded, that “the movement of Florentine artists in the marketplace was not largely restricted by social status” and that they were “less confined by ... traditional barriers,” mercantile freedom cannot be equated with social status. For discussion of the social status of artists during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see for example H. W. Janson, “The Birth of 'Artistic License': The Dissatisfied Patron in the Early Renaissance,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Guy F. Lytle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Patricia Rubin, “Commission and Design in Central Italian Altarpieces c. 1450-1500,” in *Italian Altarpieces, 1250-1550: Function and Design*, ed. Eve Borsook and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> For example, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century CE Greek essayist Lucian of Samosata (see Lucian, *Lucian Volume II With an English Translation by A. M. Harmon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp. 213-233) asked: “What it shall profit you to become a sculptor ... you will be nothing but a laborer, toiling with your body and putting in it your entire hope of a livelihood, personally inconspicuous, getting meager and illiberal returns, humble-witted, an insignificant figure in public, neither sought by your friends nor feared by your enemies nor envied by your fellow-citizens – nothing but a laborer, one of the swarming rabble, ever cringing to the man above you and courting the man who can use his tongue, leading a hare's life, and counting as a godsend to anyone stronger. Even if you should become a Phidias or a Polyclitus and should create many marvelous works, everyone would praise your craftsmanship, to be sure, but none of those who saw you, if he were sensible, would pray to be like you; for no matter what you might be, you would be considered a mechanic, a man who has naught by his hands, a man who lives by his hands.” Lucian was a popular ancient author during the Renaissance beginning in the late Trecento/early Quattrocento, as is indicated by the fact that *The Dream* was translated into Latin in 1434 by Lapo da Castiglionchio, who dedicated it to Pope Eugenius IV. See David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1998), Chapter 1 (Lucian and the Quattrocento): pp. 1-41, especially p. 43 and p. 13.

Furthermore, in spite of the fame of ancient sculptors, Plutarch (*Pericles* 2.1: see Plutarch and Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch's Cimon and Pericles with the Funeral Oration of Pericles Newly Translated, with Introduction and Notes* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), p. 104) asserts that “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 of Pisa or the Hera at Argos, longs to be Phidias or Polyclitus....”

include information regarding an artist's compensation and the work's date of delivery.<sup>29</sup> While Vasari supplies us with ample anecdotal evidence relating the importance, ingenuity and inventiveness of artists in the *Vite*, it is necessary at some point to investigate which party was responsible for the content of a work of art. This is no easy task, as contractual evidence presents a complex picture that must be readdressed periodically throughout the present work due to rapidly changing circumstances through the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Artistic status, levels of displayed subjectivity and artistic privilege are in a state of flux for artists throughout the period, necessitating a re-examination at various points.

The degree to which existing contracts suggest that artists were allowed to use their own judgment has been a subject of much investigation over the past decade. The traditional view of better-educated patrons dictating the terms of erudite commissions to passively receptive artists who viewed the contract as a set of instructions has been rightly challenged.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the more circumspect argument that patrons primarily concerned themselves with the "big picture" of subject matter while artists were more likely to be given a free hand with details of composition and figure placement has also undergone revision.<sup>31</sup> As Michelle O'Malley has recently argued, a systematic review of contracts suggests that art purchasers might involve themselves with decisions regarding layout, placement of figures, color and dress, and that artists might suggest subsidiary iconography, or even occasionally an appropriate main figure for a

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<sup>29</sup> The mechanics of the relationship that resulted in a Renaissance work of art has seen a great deal of investigation over the past few years. One of the more detailed is a study by Michelle O'Malley, *The Business of Art: Contracts and Payment Documents for Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Italian Altarpieces and Frescoes* (London: University of London, Ph.D., 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Although Martin Kemp, "From 'Memisis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts," *Viator* 8 (1977): p. 358, wrote that "there clearly was a strong feeling among Renaissance patrons that subject matter and meaning were too important to be left to the painter or sculptor," this viewpoint has been challenged. See especially Charles Hope, "Artists, Patrons, and Advisors in the Italian Renaissance," in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy F. Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), and Creighton Gilbert, "What Did the Renaissance Patron Buy?" *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998), both of whom have argued that painters often carried out the research on commissioned subjects themselves for patrons who, far from dictating elements of subject matter, were primarily interested only in the delivery of a visually appealing work. Lorenzo Ghiberti asserted in *I commentari*, p. 45, that he had been allowed to proceed as he wished in creating the Doors of Paradise "in that way which I believed would be most perfect, embellished and rich." (*in quell modo ch'io credessi tornasse più perfettamente e più ornate e più ricca.*)

<sup>31</sup> For an example of the former argument, see Rubin, "Commission and Design," p. 206, who contends that the recognition of a painter's ability to ornament must be differentiated from the task of finding subjects, which she says was, in the third quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a skill associated with literary knowledge coming largely from gentlemen and scholars. For the revision of this type of argument, see Michelle O'Malley, "Subject Matters: Contracts, Designs and the Exchange of Ideas between Painters and Clients in Renaissance Italy," in *Artistic Exchange and Cultural Translation in the Italian Renaissance City*, ed. Stephen Campbell and Stephen Milner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

composition.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, many Renaissance patrons appeared to have considered themselves connoisseurs, and took an active – even contentious – interest in the quality of works produced by the hands of particular, chosen artists.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, there is sufficient evidence regarding client- and agent-driven changes made to preparatory drawings and even suggestions of ultimately rejected works to indicate that the final judgment of a work, as might be expected in a mercantile society, was not that of the artist/creator alone.<sup>34</sup> Instead, increasingly throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, unsatisfied patrons had recourse to *stima* in which disputes between artists and patrons over an unsatisfactory commission could be resolved by a body of qualified professionals who would evaluate a work of art considering its materials, labor and aesthetic worth.<sup>35</sup> As early as the mid-Trecento, guild statutes of the Florentine *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* allowed this type of mediation not only for active disputes, but also for fixing fair prices.<sup>36</sup> While these kinds of evaluations have been said to be about artists' relationships with each other, they are typical of a mercantile society in which each party seeks fair representation.<sup>37</sup> The right of judgment was given to an experienced body of mediators – generally artists – but it seems evident that in such situations today's judge could easily become tomorrow's newly commissioned artist, and it behooved such a body to consider

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<sup>32</sup> O'Malley, "Subject Matters," p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Anabel Thomas, *The Painter's Practice in Renaissance Tuscany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 256.

<sup>34</sup> Many contracts appear to have given an agent a say in what a commissioned painting included, whether the right was exercised or not. Many of these gave final judgment to an agent whose approval also had to be gained before changes to a preparatory drawing were permissible. For discussion regarding the use of agents in procuring and valuing of paintings, see *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97 and pp. 185-196.

The rejection of Renaissance works of art is not a topic that has seen much specific study. It is, however, something that was known to have occurred in specific instances, and is something I think probably happened more often than current scholarship has explored. One well-known instance is referred to by Fra Filippo Lippi in a letter that mentions the rejected work in preface to a plea for food supplies from Piero di Cosimo de' Medici. See Giovanni Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti*, vol. I (Florence: Giuseppe Molini, 1839), vol. I, p. 141.

<sup>35</sup> A *stima*, as discussed in Deborah Krohn, "Taking Stock: Evaluation of Works of Art in Renaissance Florence," in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th - 17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell'Arte in Italia, secc. XV-XVII*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2003), p. 203, was an evaluation of a finished art work made by an artist's peers, and were common by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as a means of setting the cost for a work of art. See Deborah Krohn's chapter for a discussion of *stima* made during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries that examines anecdotes provided by Vasari in his biographies of Donatello, Nanni di Banco, Guillaume de Marcillat and Giovan Francesco Rustici, and well as an instance from Vasari's own experience mediating in a dispute between Aristotile and Perino del Vaga. It also seems to have been a common enough practice to decide upon an artist by means of a competition. As Krohn (p. 210, n. 211), points out, probably the first to come to mind include the famous competition for the relief panels of the Florentine Baptistery's bronze doors in which Lorenzo Ghiberti carried the prize to beat out Filippo Brunelleschi, and for the fruitless competitions of designing the Duomo's façade held in 1476 and again in 1490-91.

<sup>36</sup> Krohn, "Taking Stock," p. 204.

fairly the needs of all parties of a dispute.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, records show that some unsatisfactory works were not paid for by their commissioners and the commissions given to another artist, or that modifications might be required according to a contract.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, in some cases an increased number of figures in a painting meant an increased cost for the patron; thus, it would seem that if a patron had been disinclined to allow the self-portrait of an artist, it would not have been left in place.<sup>40</sup>

The importance placed on artistic commissions within Renaissance society must also be taken into account when considering the place of embedded portraiture in works of this period. Chapels appear to have been the most common site of Quattrocento embedded portraiture and self-portraiture rather than the domestic or private sphere.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, these chapels, primarily situated in the great Florentine churches belonging to the mendicant orders, were prestigious and difficult to obtain for any but the most affluent and influential families of the neighborhoods in which the churches were located. Once gained, they became important loci of historic family and/or corporate identity, passing through the hands of generations of individuals sharing a common heritage. Although a primary concern was the security of burial in consecrated ground, church chapels soon provided other benefits.<sup>42</sup> The rights to chapels often remained within the families and confraternities that paid for and maintained them, unless circumstances intervened to prevent it. These sites served to honor the holy individuals or sacred events to which an altar

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 202, primarily views these challenges in light of artists' professional relationships with each other.

<sup>38</sup> This type of consideration appears to be what Vasari had in mind when in his *vita* of Aristotile he admonished Perino del Vaga, the artist chosen by a delegate of Cardinal Farnese to judge a scene painted by Aristotile in the Cancelleria, against "giving a wrong and unjust estimate" (*guidicando male e non dirittamente*) against a fellow artist and in favor of a patron. In doing so, according to Vasari, the artist's misjudgment did not harm the one he unfairly judged so much as art and excellence itself. See Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. VI, pp. 447-449. The translated line can be found at Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. II, p. 440. Also see James Clifton, "Vasari on Competition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. Spring (1996), who analyzes the themes of competition and envy found in several passages in the *Vite*.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, *The Painter's Practice*, p. 256.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>41</sup> It should be admitted that we have fewer surviving painting cycles from domestic and other secular contexts. It is possible that more evidence from other spheres would shift this situation, but at present, we have far more knowledge of existing and described embedded portraits in religious contexts. See Chapter Five for a discussion of our present knowledge regarding the place of Renaissance portraits in the domestic and public contexts.

<sup>42</sup> Beginning in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the privilege of burial within the church, previously granted only to the clergy, was extended to the laity. Mendicant orders took full advantage of the right, confirmed by several papal Bulls, to offer burial, and thus created for themselves a constant source of funding from the costs of the right of burial on consecrated ground and from the assurance of prayers for the souls of the dead. See Ena Giurescu, *Trecento Family Chapels in Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce: Architecture, Patronage, and Competition* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1997), pp. 1-3, for a brief discussion of the religious and social context of Trecento lay burials in Florentine churches.

was dedicated, but also provided the patron(s) a presence – and mode of presentation – within the community. Family and corporate identity was promoted through prominently displayed arms at chapel entrances, as well as banners and other standards, sometimes in impressive quantities, displaying family insignia.<sup>43</sup>

A great deal of money could be spent in the creation and maintenance of a church chapel; once rights were granted to a chapel and prayers secured, the chapel itself had to be appropriately outfitted.<sup>44</sup> Costly materials such as marble and other colored stones might be used to create an altar and a floor-tomb slab, expensive metal candlesticks and candelabra had to be procured, one or more precious marble tombs might be placed within such a site, and a wrought-iron gate usually surrounded the entirety.<sup>45</sup> The altarpiece might, in fact, be one of the lesser expenses (though the frescoes cost less); nonetheless, it carried with it a great deal of visual authority regarding the presentation of the individual, family or group represented by the space.

Several Quattrocento Florentine fresco cycles contained portraits of contemporaries, but the vast majority of these portrayals are thought to represent members of the commissioning family, their friends and important peers. Considering the importance of these spaces to the individuals who maintained them, an account must be given to explain an artist's presence among the other individuals portrayed that considers what the inclusion meant for the viewing community. In a mercantile society where one might surmise that the client often, if not always, had the last word, how and why does the embedded self-image of the artist come into being? To address these issues, it is necessary to examine the circumstances surrounding some of the more secure instances of embedded self-portrayal created during the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 154, and especially p. 225. Giurescu cites the Peruzzi chapel, which during the 15<sup>th</sup> century included a total of 18 standards and 24 *targhe* and shields, all displaying arms.

<sup>44</sup> To take one example, 200 florins paid on February 15, 1335, to the Dominicans of Santa Maria Novella secured a family chapel dedicated to St. Gregory for Piero, Alessandro and Tommaso Bardi. Church documents confirm the family's continued rights to burial in the space, but forbade in this instance the erection of a raised funerary monument. The document [Archivio di Stato Firenze, Mss. 812, fol. 40. "Registro e descrizione di tutte le cappelle e sepolture della chiesa e convento di Santa Maria Novella di Firenze."] is cited in Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the types and number of liturgical objects used in Florentine lay chapels, see Ibid., pp. 212-226. As Giurescu points out, chapels often contained a variety of items that might include wooden crosses, holy water fountains, banners decorated with family arms and other public and private insignia, frescoed walls, stained glass decorations, choir stalls or benches, altar cloths, and even life-sized wax figures of saints amongst other assorted religious paraphernalia.

### 4.3 MASACCIO AND THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

Any discussion of embedded self-portraits – or indeed any image of an artist – said to be found in Italian Renaissance art will usually eventually circle back to Giorgio Vasari. The 1550 edition's discussion of artist's self-portraits, including embedded and autonomous portraits and those made by the artist's own self or a portrayal made by another, was amplified eighteen years later to 158 illustrations of artists, more than ninety-five of which are discussed in the text.<sup>46</sup> Of these, only about half are self-portraits according to Vasari.<sup>47</sup> Vasari tells us that a self-image was created by one of the most important of early Quattrocento artists, Tommaso di ser Giovanni di Monte Cassai, called Masaccio.<sup>48</sup>

According to Vasari, Masaccio and Masolino da Panicale (misidentified by Vasari as the younger artist's teacher) were commissioned by Antonio Brancacci, a member of a prestigious Florentine family, to decorate the family chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine in conjunction with other works for the church.<sup>49</sup> The exact date of the commission is not known, although it is commonly dated between 1424 and 1428, the year that Masaccio is believed to have died in Rome. Felice Brancacci most likely commissioned the chapel's decorations, but instead of choosing his own patron saint, his cycle is dedicated to the life of St. Peter.<sup>50</sup> According to Vasari, Masaccio painted his own face "so well that it appears absolutely alive" with the aid of a mirror in the figure of the last apostle (presumably St. Thomas, Masaccio's name-saint) in one of

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<sup>46</sup> Statistics drawn from the 1568 edition of Vasari's *Lives*, unless otherwise noted, are my own, as are any mistakes or miscalculations. According to Hope, "Historical Portraits," pp. 322-323, Parts I and II of the 1550 edition included discussions of about eighty-two Tuscan portraits.

<sup>47</sup> Vasari gives some information concerning the disposition/location of the artists' image he publishes in fifty cases, and not at all on forty-five occasions. Part III especially lacks discussions of these images, despite (or perhaps because) of the author's proximity to his subjects, and of the seventy-six *vite* of named artists in the section, only eight *vite* lack published portraits.

<sup>48</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 130. Vasari reports Masaccio's self-portrait in both editions.

<sup>49</sup> Although Vasari makes the claim for a master-pupil relationship, and found support in the literature up until the 1930s, Luciano Berti appears to have laid the question definitively to rest in 1961 following the recovery of the San Giovanale altarpiece, arguing persuasively that the styles of the two artists c. 1422-1423 were conceptually very different: see Luciano Berti, "Masaccio 1422," *Commentari* 12 (1961), and Berti, *Masaccio*. See Perri Lee Roberts, *Masolino da Panicale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 53-84, for further discussion of the pair's relationship. See Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 443-447, for discussion of Masaccio's other works within the Carmelite church.

<sup>50</sup> Felice di Michele Brancacci had inherited rights to the chapel in 1394 upon the death of his father. While there is no proof that Felice actually commissioned the cycle and other possibilities have been raised, Keith Christiansen, "Some Observations on the Brancacci Chapel Frescoes after their Cleaning," *The Burlington Magazine* 133, no. 1054 (1991): p. 7, argues that it stands to reason that, as the chapel's patron, he would have been responsible for overseeing any work carried out there.

the chapel's most famous scenes, the *Tribute Money*.<sup>51</sup> Current scholarship, however, rejects Vasari's identification in favor of one made in 1929 by Mario Salmi, who locates Masaccio's self-portrait instead in one of the figures closest to St. Peter, part of the group to the right of the saint in the scene below of the *Chairing of St. Peter*.<sup>52</sup> Likely due in part to the figure's adherence to Alberti's famous instructions – looking out, and originally, at least, touching St. Peter – and its often-noted quality of self-awareness, the identification has been accepted by art historians with no real challenge.<sup>53</sup>

The proposed self-portrait of Masaccio has been followed by many art historians since its identification; the figure is acknowledged as such in monographs and articles on the artist, and discussions of it claim space in the majority of texts written on the subject of Renaissance self-portraiture.<sup>54</sup> In addition to general acceptance, I contend that there are other reasons beyond those argued by Salmi to recognize the image as Masaccio's self-portrait. Of the scenes painted by Masaccio, *the Raising* and *the Chairing* are clearly the ones that contain the most portraits of contemporary Florentines, a model that Filippino Lippi followed when he contributed the center portion's figures to *the Raising* later in the same century.<sup>55</sup> As such, I think it would be the scene most likely to contain the artist's self-image. Moreover, as Salmi pointed out, the figure appears to share a characteristic common of most self-portraits, embedded or autonomous: a particularly

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<sup>51</sup> Vasari use of the phrase, “*tanto bene ch'è par vivo vivo*,” is a formulaic phrase of praise repeated and paraphrased often throughout the *Vite*. For this instance, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 130. For illustration, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 118, fig. 181, and for a detail, p. 326, Pl. 272.

<sup>52</sup> M. Salmi, “L'autoritratto di Masaccio nella Capella Brancacci,” *Rivista Storica Camelitana* 1, no. 1 (1929): pp. 99-100, argues against Vasari's identification based on the age of the artist at his death, as well as the information the biographer gives regarding how the self-image would have been created. Salmi contends that the profile image of the apostle in question could not have been made with the single mirror Vasari mentions, and alternatively suggests the individual closest to St. Peter as appropriate in age, descriptions of the artist, original gesture, and three-quarter profile view. For illustration, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 139, Pl. 196 and p. 143, Pl. 100 for a detail.

<sup>53</sup> That Masaccio's self-portrait originally reached out and touched St. Peter was discovered during the chapel's most recent cleaning, begun in 1984 and completed for the June 1990 re-opening. According to Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 336, the cleaning revealed that the gesture had been cancelled out by Filippino. Regarding Vasari's identification of Masaccio in the *Tribute Money*, Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 327 and p. 337, baldly states that Vasari was incorrect, and regards Salmi's to be the most convincing of the many possible identities discussed for the various portraits contained within the chapel's frescoes.

<sup>54</sup> It is not, however, treated in one of the most extensive books written on the subject of embedded self-portraiture by Professor Joanna Woods-Marsden.

<sup>55</sup> For discussion of Filippino's contribution to *The Raising of Theophilus' Son and the Chairing of St. Peter*, see for example Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 333-334. A more recent discourse concerning Filippino's work in the Brancacci Chapel can be found in Patrizia Zambrano and Jonathan Nelson, *Filippino Lippi* (Milan: Electa Editore, 2004), pp. 181-223, illustrated on pp. 124-125.

intense glance like the one produced by an artist using a mirror to paint his own image.<sup>56</sup> That Filippino Lippi also added his portrait on the opposing wall would also seem to me in itself to support the idea that it is a self-image.<sup>57</sup> I think that we can regard Filippino's self-portrait as a response to the image of the famous early Quattrocento master, the study of whose work was a standard part of many later artists' education.<sup>58</sup> Although Vasari provides the names of ten artists prior to Masaccio who supposedly created embedded self-portraits, Masaccio's recently-identified image in *The Chairing* is widely accepted as one of the earliest self-representations of an Italian artist.<sup>59</sup> With so few known self-images preceding it – and fewer still extant – this image and its presentation, both within the scene of the miracle portrayed and the cycle of the saint's life as a whole, bears further investigation.

Art historical treatment of Masaccio's self-portrait tends to focus on the artist as a young, well-connected innovator who was part of the charged atmosphere of a dynamic city that contained the likes of Brunelleschi, Donatello and Lorenzo Ghiberti.<sup>60</sup> Most explanations that address Masaccio's self-image argue that the artist wanted to celebrate himself and his friends, and that Masaccio proved his ability to secure good likenesses with his self-portrait. As is the case for other embedded self-images, it has been suggested that it represented a figural signature, a concept discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>61</sup> These arguments, while providing a valid lens through which to examine the famous self-image, falter in two instances: first, they neglect to consider a patron's regard for its presence. Additionally, how would a viewer in the Brancacci chapel have understood the portraits of his Florentine contemporaries, much less the artist himself?

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<sup>56</sup> Salmi, "L'autoritratto di Masaccio," p. 102.

<sup>57</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 561, identifies Filippino's self-portrait in the figure that can be found to the extreme edge of the scene of the *Dispute with Simon Magus*, which Vasari uses as a model for the engraving preceding the artist's life. This identification has not been disputed, although see below for discussion involving the misattribution of this scene and self-portrait to Masaccio.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Testo III, p. 132.

<sup>59</sup> In Part I of the *Lives*, Vasari reports embedded self-portraits by Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Andrea Orcagna, Agnolo Gaddi, Barna da Siena, Antonio Viniziano, Buonamico Buffalmano, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini and Ghardino Starnina. It must be recognized that the number of pre-Masaccio embedded self-images that can be both seen and discussed are much fewer than those that will come after him.

<sup>60</sup> Incidentally, these would be some of the artists that Leon Battista Alberti mentions in the preface of *Della pittura* a few years later.

<sup>61</sup> Studies of semiotics and art history generally regard the embedded self-portrait in this light. See Gandelman, "The Semiotics of Signatures."



Masaccio, though an up-and-coming artist in the 1420s with a *bottega* shared with his brother Giovanni di Ser Giovanni (*lo Scheggia*), was still young, and was less well known at that point than the older, more established Masolino.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the first quarter of the Quattrocento was the better part of a century away from the period that would commonly refer to one artist – Michelangelo – as “il divino” and honor him with numerous portraits.<sup>63</sup> Masaccio’s well-documented talents aside, no compelling evidence exists of a reputation that would motivate a patron to accord Masaccio with the privilege of his self-documentation. Some further explanation of why and how self-portraiture might have worked to the Brancacci interests is required.

#### 4.4 MASACCIO’S LOST SAGRA AND THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

Before addressing the notion of a Brancacci-driven purpose for Masaccio’s self-portrait in the scene with St. Peter, it is helpful first to see the self-portrait within Masaccio’s body of work in the Carmelite church. By briefly considering the artist’s activities at the Carmine, we may better explore how the Brancacci *and* Masaccio might have viewed an artist’s self-portrait in its context. These commissions have been exhaustively treated in art historical literature, and thus it is necessary only to give some of the bare facts.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> In 1424, the earliest date for the chapel’s initial commission, Masaccio would have been a member of Florence’s *Arte di Medici e Speciali* for two years, and documented as a working artist for at most six. During the next few years, he would see many commissions, but there is no evidence that he was the most popular or highest-paid artist in Florence at the time. Instead, extant documents paint a picture of a typical small workshop that existed, as most did, mostly upon credit. See Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 25-35, regarding the known documentation of Masaccio’s life. Regarding Masolino’s status in Quattrocento Florence, see Roberts, *Masolino da Panicale*.

<sup>63</sup> Although various artists were occasionally termed “divine” in earlier periods, Michelangelo Buonarroti was one of the earliest artists to be called “divine” more-or-less routinely and further, according to both Vasari, numerous portraits were created to commemorate the artist’s famous, battered appearance. For discussion of the phenomenon of the “divine” Renaissance artist, see Patricia A. Emison, *Creating the "Divine" Artist from Dante to Michelangelo*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions. Medieval and Early Modern Peoples, vol. 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), especially chapter three.

<sup>64</sup> For bibliography regarding Masaccio’s work within the Carmelite church, see for example Berti, *Masaccio*; Ornella Casazza, *Masaccio and the Brancacci Chapel* (Florence: Scala, 1990); Bruce Cole, *Masaccio and the Art of the Early Florentine Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Creighton Gilbert, “The Drawings Now Associated with Masaccio’s Sagra,” *Storia d’arte* 3 (1969); Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 100-179, pp. 313-349, and pp. 443-448; Salmi, “L’autoritratto di Masaccio.”

As was common amongst Quattrocento artists, Masaccio's career during the 1420s was not fixed in Florence, but instead ranged about Tuscany and Lazio, with commissions in Valdarno, Pisa and several other cities in which he temporarily resided. Masaccio's first dealings with the Florentine Carmelite church may have occurred with the painting of a figure of St. Paul (destroyed) mentioned not only by Vasari, but also by other early writers, including Albertini and the Anonimo Billi.<sup>65</sup> Although exactly when and where Masaccio's St. Paul appeared is difficult to determine, it is reasonable to surmise that it was painted as a preliminary demonstration of Masaccio's abilities as Vasari claims. Regarding the Brancacci Chapel, Masolino is generally recognized as the first of the pair commissioned to paint there probably in 1424, but he was soon joined by the younger painter, Masaccio, late in 1424 or possibly early in 1425.<sup>66</sup> Joannides believes it was likely in between the first and second/final campaigns, however, that a now-lost, but highly influential and important painting was created: the *Consecration (la Sagra) of the Carmelite Church*.<sup>67</sup> The most complete description of the destroyed painting is Vasari's from the second edition of the *Vite*. Following the 1550 edition's dilatory mention of two embedded portraits of Brunelleschi and Donatello and an offhand comment that alludes to some of their friends (*altri suoi amici domestici*), Vasari veritably falls over himself to correct the slight 18 years later:

It came to pass...that the said church of the Carmine was consecrated; and Masaccio, in memory of this, painted the consecration just as it took place, with terraverde and in chiaroscuro, over the door that leads into the convent, within the cloister. And he portrayed therein an infinite number of citizens in mantles and hoods, who are following the procession, among whom he painted Filippo di Ser Brunellesco in wooden shoes, Donatello, Masolino da Panicale, who had been his master, Antonio Brancacci, who caused him to paint the chapel, Niccolo da Uzzano, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, and Bartolommeo Valori, who are all also portrayed by the hand of the same man in the house of Simon Corsi, a gentleman of Florence. He also painted there Lorenzo Ridolfi, who was at that time the ambassador of the Florentine Republic in Venice; and not only did he portray there the aforesaid gentlemen from the life, but also the door of the convent and

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<sup>65</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 129, states that Masaccio "portrayed from life" Bartolo di Angiolino Angiolini in the head of a figure of St. Paul situated near the bellropes in the Brancacci Chapel. For discussion of this painting, see its catalog entry in Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 447. Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 446, identifies Bartolo as an important advocate in the establishment of the Florentine *Catasto* in the early 1420s.

<sup>66</sup> Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443. A first and second period of painting would have resulted in a break in the work during 1425, a year when Florence, under threat from Milan, was not commissioning many of its artists, who were instead traveling outside of the city in search of work.

the porter with the keys in his hand. This work, truly, shows great perfection, for Masaccio was so successful in placing these people, five or six to a file, on the level of that piazza, and in making them diminish to the eye with proportion and judgment, that is indeed a marvel, and above all because we can recognize there the wisdom that he showed in making those men, as if they were alive, not all of one size, but with a certain discretion which distinguishes those who are short and stout from those who are tall and slender; while they are all standing with their feet firmly on one level, and so well foreshortened along the files that they would not be otherwise in nature.<sup>68</sup>

From this richly informative description, we learn that numerous named individuals were in attendance.<sup>69</sup> We have already seen that Vasari had a professional interest in finding portraits of illustrious Florentines for other Medicean projects; nevertheless, it seems to me that the historic importance of the event and the social prominence of the named individuals suggest that he was likely working from oral accounts. One striking element of the description in relation to Masaccio's extant works is the assertion of the portrayal of recognizable individuals. This is scarcely the first time in the *Vite* that Vasari identifies historically-known individuals in works by Renaissance artists. In this case, Vasari's assertion, if not all of the identifications, is rendered circumstantially credible. The consecration was the sort of highly visible religious and civic celebration that prominent citizens like those that Vasari mentioned often attended. Moreover, extant visual evidence from the late Trecento onward often includes depictions of the painter's contemporaries as ostensibly recognizable bystander figures in religious narratives, or

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<sup>68</sup> For Vasari's comment made in 1550, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 129-130. Note: translations of the 1568 text are quoted from Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives* unless otherwise noted. (*Accade ... che é fu consagrada la detta chiesa del Carmine; e Masaccio in memoria di ciò, di terra verde dipinse, di chiaro e scuro, sopra la porta che va in convento, dentro nel chiostro, tutta la sagra come ella fu. E vi ritrasse infinito numero di cittadini in mantello et in cappuccio, che vanno dietro a la processione; fra i quali fece Filippo di Ser Brunellescho in zoccoli, Donatello, Masolino da Panicale, stato suo maestro, Antonio Brancacci, che gli fece far la capella, Niccolò da Uzzano, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, Bartolomeo Valori, i quali sono anco, di mano del medesimo, in casa di Simon Corsi gentiluomo fiorentino. Ritrassevi similmente Lorenzo Ridolfi, che in que' tempi era ambasciadore per la Repubblica fiorentina a Vinezia. E non solo vi retrasse i gentiluomini sopra detti di naturale, ma anco la porta del convento et il portinaio con le chiavi in mano. Questa opera veramente ha in sé molta perfezzione, avendo Masaccio saputo mettere tanto bene in sul piano di quella piazza a cinque e sei per fila, l'ordinanza di quelle genti, che vanno diminuendo con proporzione e giudizio secondo la veduta dell'occhio che è proprio una meraviglia; e massimamente ch'e'vi si conosce, come se fussero vivi, la discrezione che egli ebbe in far quegl'uomini non tutti d'una misera, ma con una certa osservanza che distingue quelli che sono piccoli e grossi dai grandi e sottili, e tutti posano i piedi in sur un piano, scortando in fila tanto bene che non fanno altrimenti i naturali.*)

<sup>69</sup> The importance of the Carmelite church's consecration would have guaranteed the presence of many high-ranking clergymen and powerful secular Florentines. For a discussion of other individuals presumably in attendance not named by Vasari or other writers mentioning the event, see Megan Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi: The Carmelite Painter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 49.

even superimposed upon the scene's main figures.<sup>70</sup> Although the *Sagra* no longer exists, and it can only be imagined through the drawings believed to copy portions of it and paintings presumably influenced by it, there exists sufficient evidence of portraiture in the Brancacci Chapel alone to support Vasari's claim that there were several recognizable figures within the *Sagra*.<sup>71</sup> We shall now examine the chapel.

#### 4.5 PICTORIAL SPECIFICITY IN THE BRANCACCI CHAPEL

Informed Quattrocento visitors to the Brancacci Chapel were undoubtedly struck by the fact that he or she had entered a very different space from anything known before it. Scholars frequently describe the space as possessing remarkably strong qualities of illusionism and naturalism, the same qualities normally associated with Giotto and his followers. Like them, Masaccio and Masolino painted populated scenes that set sacred events in a recognizable environment that evoked the Tuscan countryside and cityscape. A greater consistency in the use of one-point perspective allowed Masaccio to adjust the scale of that environment to situate the human actors credibly in their settings. The simplicity and grandeur of the figures, some of which convey an even greater intensity of emotion than many 14<sup>th</sup>-century cycles, have been especially admired by the many scholars have written about the chapel.<sup>72</sup>

Further, several historians have noted the remarkable number of portrait heads that populate the scenes, although none are proposed for the main figures. No one, for example,

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<sup>70</sup> For some examples, see Eckart Marchand, "The Representation of Citizens in Religious Fresco Cycles in Tuscany," in *With and Without the Medici: Studies in Tuscan Art and Patronage 1434-1530*, ed. Eckart Marchand and Alison Wright (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Peter Meller, "La capella Brancacci, problemi ritrattistici e iconografici," *Acropoli* I: 186-227, IV: 273-312 (1960-1961); D. Norman, "Those Who Pay, Those Who Pray and Those Who Paint: Two Funerary Chapels," in *Siena, Florence and Padua: Art, Society and Religion 1280-1400*, ed. D. Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Margaret Plant, "Portraits and Politics in Late Trecento Padua: Altichiero's Frescoes in the S. Felice Church, S. Antonio," *Art Bulletin* 63 (1981).

<sup>71</sup> Eight extant sheets of drawings are believed to record the *Sagra* partially, while a ninth is disputed. For discussion of both the drawings and of three paintings believed to have been inspired by the work, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 443-446.

<sup>72</sup> In addition to cited studies, see Umberto Baldini and Ornella Casazza, *La Cappella Brancacci* (Milan: Electa and Olivetti, 1990); Mario Carniani, "La Cappella Brancacci a Santa Maria del Carmine," in *Cappelle del Rinascimento a Firenze*, ed. Mario Carniani and Antonio Paolucci (Florence: Editore Becocci, 1998); Ornella Casazza, "La Cappella Brancacci dalle origini a oggi," in *La Cappella Brancacci* (Milan: Olivetti and Electa, 1990); Andrew Ladis, "Salvation and Vision in the Brancacci Chapel," in *Studies in Italian Art* (London: Pindar Press, 2001).

suggests that the head of Christ in the *Tribute Money* – taken to be the smoother, placid work of Masolino – is a portrait; nor is it thought that St. Peter's more rugged visage, surely painted by Masaccio, was meant to represent anyone else.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand, several of Masaccio's scenes, in addition to the ones added later by Filippino, are fleshed out – literally – by extraneous individuals.<sup>74</sup> These individuals act as witnesses to the miracles and many react with well-studied naturalism. Some watch avidly the concurrent miracles taking place with incredulous or adoring gazes, while others miss the spectacles entirely, too immersed in their daily lives to perceive the significance of the religious portents surrounding them.

While this is not the first time that Italian Renaissance artists included portraits of recognizable contemporaries as witnesses to sacred events, we find that more than the human portrayals are particularized. The setting for St. Peter's life does not portray a known landscape per se, but its architecture seems to reflect Albertian ideas. Moreover, the courtyard setting seems to reflect concurrent and subsequent modes of architecture found in Tuscany. Of the portions of the Brancacci Chapel by Masaccio, the long scene on the lower left wall containing the frescoes of the *Raising of the Son of Theophilus* and the *Chairing of St. Peter* has attracted the most attention for its portraiture. While a center section is actually Filippino's work, several faces nearby painted by Masaccio have been identified as portraits in the extensive literature about the chapel with various amounts of success. One dubious example sees Giangaleazzo Visconti and Coluccio Salutati in the figure of Theophilus and the figure immediately to his right.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, while these and other identities are disputed, that many of the figures are portraits has never been in doubt.

It is necessary at this juncture to consider this portraiture activity situated in the familiarized landscape visible in the Brancacci chapel – and also presumably present in the commemoration of the Carmelite church's consecration – and its function for the historical viewer. I contend that the presence of the artist's self-image in this and other Quattrocento narrative settings is contingent upon or related to the presence of contemporaries as recognizable

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<sup>73</sup> It is not unheard of, however, for a portrait or self-portrait to be identified in the figure of a saint or other holy figure. Two of the better-known suggestions for this have already seen reference here. It is believed that Taddeo di Bartolo included his self-portrait in the figure of St. Thaddeus from the *Assumption* altarpiece painted for the Pieve of Montepulciano. See the discussion in Chapter Two.

<sup>74</sup> Regarding Filippino Lippi's part in the Brancacci Chapel frescoes, see the next chapter for discussion.

<sup>75</sup> Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 335, sensibly counters identifications proposed by Meller, "La capella Brancacci, problemi ritrattistici e iconografici," p. 200.

witnesses, and would scarcely have occurred without them. By first investigating the reasons behind the presence of the other portraits, I believe we are in a better place to unpack the functions of the artist's self-portrait. The explanation proffered here for the Brancacci Chapel's numerous portraits is borrowed from Megan Holmes' study of 1999, *Fra Filippo Lippi: the Carmelite Painter*.<sup>76</sup> Discussing the *Sagra*, Holmes convincingly situated the use of portraiture in the lost work within the needs of the Carmelite Order and the Order's lay patrons. After a brief explanation of Holmes' reasoning, I will argue for its extension to the Brancacci Chapel.

The *Sagra* commemorated the consecration of the Florentine Carmelite church and convent that occurred on April 19, 1422. It was an event that Masaccio possibly witnessed since he was already in Florence, although the fresco was probably not painted until 1424.<sup>77</sup> The occasion was one of several important ecclesiastical consecrations occurring in Florence during the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Carmelite ceremony took the form of a set liturgy observed over an eight-day period including processions inside and outside the church. Some events required the participation of the public while others were performed only by Carmelite friars. By being scheduled to coincide with Florentine public festivities, several Carmelite rituals were deliberately interwoven with civic ceremonies; there would have been many possible choices of events to immortalize in painting.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the pictorial commemoration of the Carmelite consecration would have been no easy task to complete, requiring the choice of a single episode to fit the intended location within the Carmelite cloister that would signify for the entire protracted event. Although the painting is lost, some pictorial and textual evidence gives a sense of its appearance. According to Vasari's lengthy description, Masaccio's *Sagra* represented a procession involving the lay public in the piazza outside the church. It is widely accepted that eight sheets of drawings dating from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to the late 16<sup>th</sup> centuries also give a partial visual record of the destroyed painting.<sup>79</sup> Holmes

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<sup>76</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, pp. 42-57, especially pp. 42-49.

<sup>77</sup> Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 443, places Masaccio in Florence in 1422 at the time of the ceremony, but argues on the basis of the sophistication of the extant drawings done after the fresco that the *Sagra* was possibly done somewhat later, perhaps between the middle and lower levels of the Brancacci Chapel in early 1427.

<sup>78</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, pp. 48-49, discusses the concurrent launching of the first of the Florentine light galleys, part of the merchant fleet that was intended to allow Florence to compete for Mediterranean trade.

<sup>79</sup> For discussion of the drawings associated with the *Sagra* that are believed to record portions of it, see Gilbert, "The Drawings," and Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, pp. 443-444. The figures recorded in the sheets appear to follow Vasari's description, and display rows of men facing the same general direction as if all viewing the same event. Furthermore, the rows are viewed in perspective as Vasari reports, and the figures wear various styles of contemporary clothing and assorted headwear. Gilbert, however, argues against the association of the sheets with

argues that in representing the scene as a well-attended public procession, the painting's subject was as much the civic pageantry that surrounded the consecration as the event itself, and was marked by the differentiation of the mass of people into easily comprehensible groups – religious dignitaries, convent friars, patrons and city officials.<sup>80</sup> This was undoubtedly accomplished to some extent by conventions governing dress, an idea borne out by Vasari's mention of many citizens in "mantles and hoods," as well as by the 16<sup>th</sup>-century drawings that exhibit differentiated costumes.<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, Masaccio likely availed himself of another means by which to articulate the varied nature of the participating crowd, one that, Holmes argues, would have prompted a viewer to attend closely to each of the figures in procession. Just as Masaccio integrated portraits of individuals, identified or not, among generic types in the Brancacci Chapel frescoes, so he likely did in the *Sagra*. Thus, according to Holmes,

The viewers of the [*Sagra*] could have pieced together a composite meaning by attending to the features of each of the participants represented, recognizing familiar faces, and understanding the importance of the consecration of the church through the homage paid to the Carmelites by the pointed presence of specific Florentine citizens.<sup>82</sup>

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the *Sagra*, and instead argues they are preparatory studies made in the Ghirlandaio workshop for the Sassetti chapel. I agree with Joannides who counters Gilbert's arguments. Pertinent arguments include the fact that the sheets are not copied from paintings, but are anthology sheets of simple outlines arranged in groups suggesting that the source was a pattern-book, and that figures in Sassetti chapel do not wear the turbans featured in the drawings, which are instead used to suggest exotic elements in other Ghirlandaio works. Moreover, Gilbert assumes that Ghirlandaio's compositional studies – as opposed to completed frescoes – would have possessed sufficient authority to have been copied for a century after his death. It is also widely believed that Bicci di Lorenzo's fresco of the *Consecration of Sant'Egidio* (c. 1430-1440) reflects to some degree Masaccio's painting, although the painting which probably best provides a general idea of the *Sagra* is Cosimo Rosselli's fresco of the *Miracle of the Holy Blood* of 1486 painted for Sant'Ambrogio. The latter shows a processional scene with the presentation of the Holy Blood in the painting's center. A large crowd stretches back on the left side into depth, and is balanced by a smaller group on the right. Smaller groups of kneeling figures on the church's podium and piazza are shown in complex poses. Although no detail in this painting corresponds directly with any of the drawings, the emphasis on the crowd's situation in space, the depth of the piazza and the variety of the figures would appear to concur with Vasari's description.

<sup>80</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 44.

<sup>81</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 129, describes citizens portrayed "in mantello e in cappuccio." Both Gilbert, "The Drawings," p. 267, p. 269, and p. 271, and Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 443, pl. 455, and p. 444, pl. 456 and 457, illustrates the same three drawings: they may be consulted for reproductions of (1) the drawing by an anonymous late 16<sup>th</sup>-century artist held by the Folkestone Museum and Art Gallery (Kent County Council), (2) the Uffizi drawing (Gabinetto dei Disegni, 76F) attributed to Andrea Boscoli after Masaccio and dated to the 1580s, and (3) the famous drawing by Michelangelo after the *Sagra* held by the Albertina in Vienna (SR 150) and usually dated to c. 1490.

<sup>82</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 47.

Further, the *Sagra*, created during the period in which a commemorative annual feast still celebrated the consecration, was part of a formalized memorializing of the event – transforming the picturing of an historical event into a collective memory. At the same time, Holmes suggests that the *Sagra*, with its recognizable individuals, transformed the nature of commemoration from the depiction of a generalized "religious time" to a particularized "historical time."<sup>83</sup>

The Brancacci chapel, the site of Masaccio's self-portrait, could have functioned similarly, featuring its numerous Quattrocento individuals portrayed as witnesses to the life of – and miracles performed by – St. Peter. The Brancacci Chapel frescoes are the most extensive Petrine cycle produced during a century in which Papal authority was being sorely tested.<sup>84</sup> The Carmelites were traditionally strong supporters of the Papacy, as was presumably Felice Brancacci. Furthermore, it has been convincingly argued that the dedication to St. Peter was politically and theologically advantageous for both the Carmelite Order and Felice, who – commissioner or not – as the individual with rights to the chapel surely must have played a role in Masaccio's program.<sup>85</sup> Several members of the Carmelite order are present at the *Chairing of St. Peter*, thus attesting to both the Order's antiquity and the divine favor whose receipt could be inferred in their privilege of witnessing such an important event.<sup>86</sup> In view of contemporary debates over the Order's origins, the chapel's cycle with its many prominently and specifically portrayed Carmelites offered proof that the Order had been founded in biblical times.<sup>87</sup> Florentine citizens and Carmelites who witness these events in a Tuscan courtyard amidst Tuscan landscapes particularize the event. The events of St. Peter's life no longer occur in a

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p. 50.

<sup>84</sup> Christiansen, "Some Observations," pp. 8-9.

<sup>85</sup> Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 318. Furthermore, it seems likely that the *Sagra's* commissioner was also a lay patron. The likely candidates, though this is an issue still debated, are Felice Brancacci and Tommaso Soderini as the two most important lay patrons of the church involved in the city's civic life. The Carmelite account books give no information regarding any payment for the *Sagra*, and thus Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 49, argues against an ecclesiast patron. Furthermore, Holmes argues that both men would have been in attendance of the festivities along with such other notables as Palla Strozzi and Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, mentioned by Vasari (see quote above, this chapter).

<sup>86</sup> The historicity of the Carmelites was contended during the Middle Ages and Renaissance by many who argued its insistence on its foundation by Elijah improbable. See Andrew Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity: Mendicants and their Pasts in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

<sup>87</sup> For discussion of the order's origins and how Florentine members sought to present themselves, see Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, pp. 51-57. Keith Christiansen, "New Light on the Early Work of Filippo Lippi," *Apollo* 172, no. 285 (1985): p. 342, noted that taken together, Masaccio's *Sagra*, the Brancacci Chapel frescoes, and a slightly later painting by Fra Filippo Lippi showing the conferral of the Carmelite rule in Palestine, display three successive phases in the history of the Order from its conception concurrent with the primal origins of the Church, its formal organization in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and its contemporary foundation in Florence.



foreign, likely never-seen landscape of the Near East, witnessed by ancients in foreign or imagined Biblical costumes. Instead, the witnesses and their surroundings are, even for descendents of the chapel's commissioner, comfortably familiar and recall everyday venues. Once again, an abstract concept of "religious time" as all-time and no-time has been transformed in the Petrine cycle into the "historical" and specific in such a way as to keep the central Carmelite events topical and perpetually relevant for viewers.

Holmes argues that with the creation of Masaccio's *Sagra*, a new type of painting was born of the collaboration between the Florentine Carmelite Order, their lay patrons and Masaccio; all benefited from the venture.<sup>88</sup> The Florentine Carmelites wrote themselves into the history of their city and their Order at a crucial point when the Carmelite Order was itself seeking to become better established in the West.<sup>89</sup> By making a conspicuous public demonstration of their piety, lay patrons sought the protection of the Virgin of Mount Carmel and the Carmelite saints for themselves and for their families. In the Brancacci Chapel, the patrons, the Carmelites and prominent Florentine citizens displayed their piety and support of the papacy by a work whose subject was its glorification, and by having themselves represented as witnesses to critical episodes in Church history. Holmes argues convincingly that Masaccio's literal painting style was developed in service to his patrons' representational needs as pertained to the *Sagra*, while his mastery at capturing portrait likenesses brought it specificity of time, place and participation.<sup>90</sup> This would appear to be a principle equally at work in the scene of the *Raising*.

It seems reasonable that this new mode of pictorial representation of particular, identifiable Florentine citizens in a recognizably Tuscan landscape reflects the strong contemporary and historical interest in the presentation (and preservation) of the city and its citizenry in written documents. Florence has been recognized as a city whose republican status amid the precarious political climates of the late medieval and early Renaissance periods helped to make the detailed recording of financial, communal and familial life unusually prevalent

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<sup>88</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 50.

<sup>89</sup> Although they insisted their foundation by Elijah, the Carmelites were late-comers to Europe and arrived only in 1281. For discussion of the development of the Carmelite historical narrative that would introduce them both to the people and to new friars entering the Order, see Jotischky, *The Carmelites and Antiquity*, pp. 106-150. Also see Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, pp. 54-57, especially p. 55, and Anthony Molho, "The Brancacci Chapel: Studies in its Iconography and History," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977): pp. 67-69.

<sup>90</sup> Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 50.

amongst even its ordinary citizens. Chronicle writing had been known in the area since the end of the Roman period, but Eric Cochrane argues that a 14<sup>th</sup>-century increase in the genre seems to have reflected “the peculiar social and political conditions” of Due- and Trecento Florence, and was likely stimulated at least in part by the particularly Florentine custom of the *ricordanza*.<sup>91</sup> History writing itself became especially noticeable in Quattrocento Florence, flowing from the pens of Leonardo Bruni, Matteo Palmieri, Giannozzo Manetti and many others.<sup>92</sup> The Carmelites and patrons of the Brancacci Chapel, in having the events of St. Peter’s life depicted with Masaccio’s resolute grounding in contemporary life, might have been seeking a pictorial demonstration related to the popular contemporary practice of history writing rather than to other coeval depictions of miraculous events and sacred narratives.

#### **4.5.1 Renaissance Notions of Sight, Memory and Imagination in Religious Themes**

While the foregoing account gives a reasonable explanation regarding why a patron and church officials might have been interested in having their portraits included in the Carmelite frescoes, it neglects certain issues already raised. Holmes’ argument, part of her investigation of the influences and circumstances of Filippo Lippi’s early Carmelite works, cannot be faulted for not addressing Masaccio’s self-portrait, the embedded portraits of the artist in general, or why artists were allowed – or maybe even sometimes encouraged – to include their own images. She also does not seek to explain from a viewer’s standpoint the presence of the artist, nor why other fresco cycles from later in the century also include embedded portraits. Thus, the questions remain: why the burst of self-imaging activity during the Quattrocento and how was the phenomenon perceived by those who witnessed it?

Current explanations contribute to our understanding of the phenomenon, but fail to develop as complete a picture as possible, knowing what we do now of Renaissance culture and history. The status of artists, as already discussed, was undoubtedly beginning its ascent due to the well-publicized “genius” of a few individuals. Nevertheless, frequently-discussed concepts such as literary and civic humanism and how they might pertain to artists have been shown to

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<sup>91</sup> Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 10, states that “at least one [*ricordanza*] was kept by every even modest family in the city.”

<sup>92</sup> For a useful, general discussion of early Florentine historiography and historians, see *Ibid.*, pp. 3-33.

have *not* permeated social strata to a sufficient extent to explain the self-imaging activity believed to have occurred during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.<sup>93</sup> Nor do they provide a sufficiently wide lens through which viewers may have comprehended the practice. Moreover, if embedded self-portraits were an attempt at raising artists' social status, we have no direct evidence that the strategy worked. If this is the case, why continue the practice?

Instead, as Holmes explains, other social forces must be explored to see how they impacted the creation of both embedded self-portraits *and* embedded portraits of a patron and his or her contemporaries. Studies of embedded self-portraits often consider only the self-image or the self-image within the context of the artist's desires for self-memorizing, neglecting to investigate a context that included the patron and often the patron's family and/or friends, as already mentioned, in a familiarized setting. Moreover, it is necessary to reexamine the presence of self-portraits within these displays using a broader approach. My approach to these images will take into account current theories of artistic status and subjectivity, but will also be informed by a study of more general contemporary religious thought and practice in conjunction with concurrent civic and political action.

During the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century our understanding of the phenomenon under discussion – the artist's self-portrait within the larger context of a painting that included other portrayals of living individuals – can be aided by an investigation into Renaissance conceptions of what religious art was for and what artists, by creating works of religious devotion, did. In the first part of this section, I want to expand on the discussion of the previous chapter and examine

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<sup>93</sup> As James Duke (James Duke, "Humanism." *Grove Art Online* (accessed February 15, 2006).) put it, "Intimacy between [humanist] writers and artists is indicated by artistic renderings of humanist texts and programs. Close investigation, however, reveals that allegations of direct dependence or collaboration are often hard to prove." Some artists may have been influenced by humanist circles whether as friends of humanists or having collaborated on artistic programs devised by them. Nevertheless, such contacts rarely seem to have inspired self-portraits. Moreover, humanist influences cannot be traced in all of the cases of embedded self-portraiture, some of which occurred before its advent, including many examples from manuscripts. The literature on the subject of Italian Renaissance art and its links to humanist culture generally, however, is vast and growing. A few interesting examples include Bolland, "Art and Humanism in Early Renaissance Padua: Cennini, Vergerio and Petrarch on Imitation;" Mina Gregori and Cinisello Balsamo, eds., *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece/Cultural Olympiad* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004); Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The Mastery of Nature: Aspects of Art, Science, and Humanism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Rabil, "Humanism in Milan;" Ingrid Rowland, "Render Unto Caesar the Things Which Are Caesar's: Humanism and the Arts in the Patronage of Agostino Chigi," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39 (1986); Jörg H. Schepers, "Benozzo Gozzoli umanista?" in *Benozzo Gozzoli e l'architettura* (Florence: Università degli Studi di Firenze, 2002); Trapp, "The Iconography of Petrarch in the Age of Humanism;" Cesare Vasoli, "La committenza politica alle origini dell'umanismo," in *Patronage and Public in the Trecento: Proceedings of the St. Lambrecht Symposium, Abtei St. Lambrecht (Styria), 16 - 19 July, 1984*, ed. Vincent Moleta (Florence: Olschki, 1986).

contemporary religious culture for its impact on public thinking and what seems to be its reflection in painting. This section begins by seeking to contextualize general contemporaneous religious thought and practice within a patron's frame of reference regarding sacred images. How might the types of enormously popular public sermons known to have been well-attended events during the period have affected how images were created and perceived? These events of popular devotion and the role of mendicant preachers may have played an important role in forming some of a patron's reasons for his or her own inclusion within a painting, and could pertain to the artist's visible role in this setting.

According to one type of rhetoric about them, religious painting was above all didactic in nature. Gregory the Great (c. 545 - 604) wrote of the role of religious painting: it was meant "to instruct the minds of the ignorant," and was present in churches "for the edification of the unlearned... For what the written book conveys to those who read it, that also painting conveys to the uninstructed folk who contemplate it."<sup>94</sup> This statement is further reflected in the *Catholicon*, a 13<sup>th</sup>-century text written by the Dominican Giovanni da Genova (also known as Johannes Balbus who died c. 1298), that was still a standard text in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which asserted that it was the special province of religious images to instruct the simple, to preserve the memory of the acts of the saints for daily remembrance, and to excite feelings of devotion.<sup>95</sup> Thus, religious art possessed particular functions, but what appears to be a straightforward prescription in fact requires further attention. Art – here the depiction of holy figures and sacred events in pictorial form – and memory, appear to have been closely associated for Medieval and Renaissance worshippers; one provided for the other. Moreover, memory and imagination were constructed in visual terms.

Sight, for thinkers from the Ancient to Renaissance periods, was conceived as intrinsically linked to the imagination and to the process of memory. Aristotle informed the

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<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art from Plato to Winckelmann* (New York: New York University Press, 1985), p. 64, from *Epistola ad Serenum* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae* II, p. 195), after Tatarkiewicz, *History*, II, p. 105, no. 26a.

<sup>95</sup> Properly titled *Summa grammaticalis quae vocatur Catholicon*, this is the author's best-known work. Numerous manuscript copies exist, and it was printed several times after the invention of the press (including Gutenberg's printing of it in Mainz in 1460), attesting to its continued popularity. These facts notwithstanding, the text is today difficult to obtain. See Aristide Marigo, *I codici manoscritti delle "Derivationes" di Ugucione Pisano: saggio d'inventario bibliografico con appendice sui codici del "Catholicon" di Giovanni da Genova* (Rome: Tiberino, 1936). For general information about the text, see Victor O'Daniel, "John of Genoa," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia (Online)* (Accessed February 26, 2006).

ancient world that the “soul never thinks without a mental picture.”<sup>96</sup> Cicero later asserted that “the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflection can be most easily retained if they are also conveyed to our minds by the meditation of the eyes.”<sup>97</sup> Liz James, in an article devoted to the concepts of images, memory, and the imagination in the Byzantine context, noted regarding medieval philosophy that the concept of vision possessed a decidedly tactile nature.<sup>98</sup> James observes that John of Damascus (c. 675 - c. 749) spoke of embracing and kissing icons with the eye in order to keep the object in one’s memory. She summarizes, “since memory was visual, mementoes needed to be visual. Otherwise...there was nothing to remember with.”<sup>99</sup> To Christian philosophers as well as their classical antecedents, sight was the most important human sense: “we sanctify the noblest of the senses which is sight.”<sup>100</sup> Moreover, “often what the mind has not grasped while listening to speech, sight seizes without risk of error, [and] has interpreted more clearly.”<sup>101</sup> The “imagination” in this context is based almost wholly upon experience; in the case of imagining the divine, visual experience is only possible after having seen “the original” in pictorial form.

Medieval meditations, already discussed in Chapter Two, emphasized the necessity of the worshipper’s detailed, mental visualization of the holy, something that was no doubt aided by painting. Nor was the importance of such visualizations a new concept. A mid-6<sup>th</sup>-century Syriac text indicates the concern of a devotee on the point of conversion confronted with the problem of sight and representation. “How can I worship Him [Christ], when He is not visible and I do not know Him?” a female would-be convert asked, implying her inability to visualize –

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<sup>96</sup> See Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 1966 and 1992), p. 47, for the quote, and Aristotle, *Aristotle's On the Soul (De Anima)*, trans. W. S. Hett (Grinnel, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1957), 432a, p. 455, for the philosopher’s commentary regarding the need for mental images in order for sentience.

<sup>97</sup> Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), vol. II, lxxxvi, pp. 351-354. Another primary Latin text on the art of memory is the *Ad Herennium* (c. 86-82 BCE) by an unknown author, although it was attributed to Cicero – and knew great prestige because of this – during the Middle Ages. For discussion, see Yates, *The Art of Memory*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>98</sup> Liz James, “Art and Lies: Text, Image and Imagination in the Medieval World,” in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium. Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. Anthony Eastmond and Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 65.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

and thus properly understand or worship – that which she had not seen.<sup>102</sup> From its early period onward, Franciscan preaching, wide-spread and popular throughout Italy during the late medieval and Renaissance periods for its appeal to the common person, emphasized the critical role played by the worshipper's well-developed pictorially-aided imagination.

Oral sermons given by Observant preachers such as the enormously popular Franciscan friar Bernardino da Siena (1380-1440) and the Dominican Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419) appealed to their listeners by using highly visual imagery that enjoined the listeners' imagination and spiritual participation.<sup>103</sup> One sermon given by Bernardino imagined the suffering of the holy actors upon hearing of Jesus' arrest and demanded a sympathetic response from the audience:

It may be imagined that at least John went to Bethany to the house of Mary Magdalene and of Martha, where his mother the Virgin Mary was staying, to announce to them, weeping continually, that Jesus had been taken. Upon hearing this dreadful news, they too wept and were full of tribulation. *Reflect upon and contemplate, devoted soul, the pain they must have suffered.*<sup>104</sup> [My emphasis]

The individual's pious feelings are triggered by the sympathetic picture painted by the words: the holy characters react humanly to the tragic news and the listener is encouraged to imagine the scene based on his or her own experience. The importance of these oral sermons cannot be overemphasized: throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, Italian city-states competed strongly with one another to procure famous preachers, most especially for the annual series of Lenten sermons.<sup>105</sup> Both of these famous, influential preachers made use of analogies and *exempla* to illustrate a sermon's moral content that inspired and required the imagination. Modeled after Christ's parables, sermon texts deliberately drew from ordinary daily experience in

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<sup>101</sup> Nikephoros, *Refutatio et Eversio*, fol. 273v., quoted in Paul J. Alexander, *The Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople: Ecclesiastical Policy and Image Worship in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 211 and n. 213. See also James, "Art and Lies," p. 65, n. 29.

<sup>102</sup> *The Syriac Chronicle known as that of Zachariah of Mitylene*, trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks (London: 1899), p. 320, and James, "Art and Lies," p. 59 and n. 52.

<sup>103</sup> For a discussion of the lives, sermons, and influences of the two preachers, see Nirit Debby, *Renaissance Florence in the Rhetoric of Two Popular Preachers: Giovanni Dominici (1356-1419) and Bernardino da Siena (1380-1444)* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2001). For a discussion of Bernardino specifically, see Casciani, "Sacred Oratory and Audience."

<sup>104</sup> Quotation and translation from Bolzoni, *The Web of Images*, p. 155.

<sup>105</sup> Peter F. Howard, *Beyond the Written Word: Preaching and Theology in the Florence of Archbishop Antoninus, 1427-1459*, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 28 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1995), pp. 87-88. Various letters and other communications contained within the Florentine archives give details concerning the methods of period preachers, and suggest how powerful a preacher and his words were over the lives of his listeners.

order to keep the faithful committed to their devotions and to bind the activities of daily life to religious piety.

One example is a sermon Dominici based on the concept of God as a merchant. Drawing on a typical daily experience – participation in the marketplace – Dominici placed his listeners in the role of astute clients who would recognize the worth of the object symbolizing eternal life.<sup>106</sup> Bernardino also made use of images and concepts drawn from everyday experience, and sometimes prefaced them with the phrase “take this image” (*piglia questa figura*). Preaching against the evils of sin to a Florentine audience in 1424, the Franciscan explained the nature of sin to his listeners by making reference to several of the senses; first sight, then smell and lastly taste. Sin was ugly, often rotten, and it stank.<sup>107</sup>

It is also significant that preachers such as Bernardino not only mentioned contemporary paintings in a general way, but they even reproached painters based on a stated concern that some paintings may have been transmitting erroneous information to the faithful. While paintings of holy events were clearly meant to inspire the imagination and devotion of viewers, they might do damage to the impressionable. In one sermon regarding the birth of Christ, Bernardino remarks upon the “silly artists” who made so many doctrinal mistakes in their paintings, depicting Joseph as a melancholy old man “when he was quite the opposite, joyful in heart, mind and expression,” or painting the Virgin giving birth as if she suffered. “All errors!” we are told, as the preacher attempts to correct what might have been viewed as a hindrance to meditation.<sup>108</sup> By commenting on contemporary images, he both called the story to mind and then corrected the mental image for his listeners.

During the first half of the Quattrocento, Florentine archbishop St. Antoninus (1389-1459), a Dominican friar and former prior of San Marco, would borrow from Thomas Aquinas’ more erudite, polished sermons.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, many of Antoninus’ sermon texts also took into account the more popular style of preaching. One of Antoninus’ *exempla*, borrowed from a discussion of Aquinas on the reasons why man profits from remembering well, explains that “it is necessary to invent similitudes and images because simple and spiritual intentions slip easily from the soul unless they are linked to corporeal similitudes.” Memory devices within sermons

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<sup>106</sup> Debby, *Two Popular Preachers*, p. 44.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>108</sup> Bolzoni, *The Web of Image*, p. 167.

<sup>109</sup> For a detailed discussion of the archbishop’s sermons, see Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*.

and *exempla* are important, “because what is strongly impressed on the soul slips less easily away from it.” Frequent meditation on what one wanted to remember was also critical.<sup>110</sup>

The “images” used in sermons are different from those in paintings and sculptures. Nevertheless, speaking of works of religious art, Antoninus reminds us that

Images, like crucifixes, are adored not in and for themselves, but because they move the worshipper beyond the representation to the object of worship, the Creator himself and especially the Son (who is most easily represented) and the saints, who are honored as participants in the goodness of God as a result of grace or glory and as intercessors for us.<sup>111</sup>

With regard to sacred images, it is worth remembering a different type of object prevalent in Florentine society. Ex-votos, known in Renaissance Florence as *boti*, were objects of popular devotion that maintained a persistent presence from the medieval to early modern periods and blended the sacred and profane worlds. Ex-votos or votives were objects created following a promise made to an interceding holy figure, most often the Virgin, to show gratitude for divine intervention in the face of danger, and to demonstrate to others that prayers were answered.<sup>112</sup> Such objects, along with relics and other images, enhanced a church’s reputation as a holy place, and numerous official inventories listed the number and quality of these items.<sup>113</sup> Votives were the proof or authentication of the power of a holy image or relic, and their number increased the devotion of the visitor.<sup>114</sup> Placed in close physical relation to the holy figure, they were plentiful enough to create the phrase “*i boti d’Orsanmichele*” to indicate an incalculable quantity, and

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<sup>110</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 166. For St. Thomas Aquinas’ *exempla*, see *Summa*, IV, II, II, coll. 36e-37c; cf. Thomas Aquinas’, ST, 2a 2ae, q. 48.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>112</sup> For a general discussion of *ex-voto* images, see P. Clemente, *Storia dell’arte italiana. Parte 3: Forme e modelli.*, ed. Giulio Bollati and Paolo Fossati, XII vols., vol. IV (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), especially pp. 278-279. For their 17<sup>th</sup>-century history, see Julius von Schlosser, *Tote Blicke: Geschichte der Porträtbildneri in Wachs. Ein Versuch*, ed. T. Medicus (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1993), pp. 54-68. Guido Mazzoni, *I boti della SS. Annunziata in Firenze: curiosità storica* (Florence: LeMonnier, 1923), and Warburg, “The Art of Portraiture,” discuss the Florentine *boti* of Santissima Annunziata. The latter is especially useful, publishing several contemporary instances of letters, contracts and other documents that mention wax votives. More recent discussions of Renaissance ex-votos are Hugo van der Velden, “Medici Votive Images and the Scope and Limits of Likeness,” in *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance*, ed. Nicolas Mann and Luke Syson (London: British Museum Press, 1998), and Wright, “The Memory of Faces,” especially pp. 102-103 and n. 146. See Fabio Bisogni, “Ex Voto e la scultura in cera nel tardo medioevo,” in *Visions of Holiness: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Andrew Ladis and Shelley E. Zuraw (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2001), especially for the history of wax ex-votos.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Trexler, “Ritual Behavior in Renaissance Florence: the Setting,” in *Church and Community, 1200 - 1600: Studies in the History of Florence and New Spain*, *Storia e Letteratura, raccolta di studi e testi* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1987), p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.



would become equally numerous in Florence's Servite Church of SS. Annunziata until sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the thousands of objects, supposedly presenting a danger to churchgoers, were largely removed and destroyed.<sup>115</sup>

Ex-votives came in many different forms, including small narrative panels, metal and wooden objects in the form of afflicted body parts, and fully-dressed life-size wax portrait statues, all placed within the orbit of miracle-working images throughout the city.<sup>116</sup> Vasari tells us of Andrea Verrocchio's particular contribution in the creation of life-size wax votive portrait statues made with interior wooden frames.<sup>117</sup> Although relatively few votives of any type survive – and certainly none of the wax figures do – we know that ex-votos of all types were positioned around the art works to which were attributed divine favor. The closer to the holy figure the better, these wax votive statues figured as substitutes in perpetual prayer for the human beings they replaced.<sup>118</sup> It is not a big leap visually or conceptually to go from the integration of physical objects in the orbit of a miracle-working painting to the incorporation of portrayed figures *within* a painting of a miracle or other sacred event.<sup>119</sup> Just as the ex-votos surrounding an altar offered witnesses in perpetual prayer to a sacred presence, so, too, might have the portrayals of Florentine citizens included within painted miracles. A quote from the chronicle of Benedetto Dei, a friend of Luigi Pulci, attests to the great popularity of the wax ex-voto when he

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<sup>115</sup> Mazzoni, *I boti della SS. Annunziata*, p. 18. The *boti* of Orsanmichele were presumably placed in relation to the miracle-performing image of the Madonna that resided in the tabernacle sculpted by Andrea Orcagna's workshop, and discussed in the previous chapter. Regarding the situation of SS. Annunziata during the early Cinquecento, Francesco Albertini reports that many "...gold and silver statues with votive offerings and wax statues – all made by excellent artists..." graced the Servite church. [Francesco Albertini, *Memoriale di molte statue et picture sono nella inclyta città di Fiorentina per mano di scultori et pictori eccellenti moderni et antique* (Florence: Tubini, 1510) – cited in Baldassarri and Saiber, eds., *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, p. 219].

<sup>116</sup> Full-sized wax statues were also made of holy figures themselves. John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 90, cites such a statue of St. Peter Martyr, polychromed and clothed in a white surplice, black cloak and silk crown, displayed in the chapel of the company dedicated to the saint in Santa Maria Novella. Carried in processions that took place both in the parish and within the church, the statue remained in the chapel when not pressed into other service. Perhaps one of the more famous examples of an ex-voto wax portrait is that of Lorenzo de' Medici, who had two created, one showing a wound in his neck, following his narrow escape from assassination during the Pazzi Conspiracy. For discussion, see Velden, "Medici Votive Images."

<sup>117</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 544.

<sup>118</sup> According to Trexler, "Ritual Behavior," p. 20, citing a letter written to a Gonzaga of 1502, printed in Aby Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig: 1932), vol. I, p. 349, these statues themselves were joked about in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century as being "adored" as if they were themselves cult objects.

<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, if this is the case, the orderly presentation of figures around a holy figure found depicted in paintings do not mimic the *disorder* noted by contemporary chroniclers who described the copiousness of such objects in proximity to actual altars. Considering the Italian Renaissance emphasis placed on beauty and order, however, and the notion of selecting the most beautiful elements for a painting, this is not surprising.

praised Florence saying, “There will not be found, nor can there be found, masters of wax images the equal of these who are today in the city of Florence; and the Annunziata says so to the world.”<sup>120</sup>

Many Quattrocento narrative paintings – not merely those of the Brancacci chapel – sought to situate the sacred events of the past, both “real” and wholly imagined, in recognizable time and space. Familiar landscapes complete with contemporary personages “moved” the worshipper, as Bishop Antoninus put it, spiritually and physically to an easily imagined sacred time and place – just as might have been visualized by the placement of ex-votives at an altar.<sup>121</sup> Masaccio’s pioneering use of linear perspective may possibly have had an impact here, as well. The depiction of a miracle whose correctly-proportioned participants are set realistically in a scientifically organized and logical system of perspective might have made this later mental visualization easier to accomplish.

Somewhat ironically, Masaccio’s “naturalism” within the Brancacci chapel might be seen as the “means by which the artist can bring the viewer into an immediate relationship with the supernatural or the sacred.”<sup>122</sup> It appears possible that embedded portraits, while undoubtedly providing testimony of an individual’s appearance and a pious example for his or her descendents, fulfilled more purposes, and were more than self- or familial-glorification, instruction or memorializing.<sup>123</sup> Instead, an observer of religious painting – Felice Brancacci, his associates and descendents perhaps – when meditating the holy events such as those described in the *Meditations*, could mentally recreate and then move through a realistic world peopled by familiar figures. Such strongly illusionistic and particularized painting could serve as a basis for devout meditations in addition to perpetuating political and familial memory; its memory in the mind’s eye providing a clear rendition of the miracle and allowing the worshipper to place him or herself among the other, more familiar people already present.

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<sup>120</sup> Giovanni Pagnini, *Della decima e di varie altre gravezze imposte dal Comune di Firenze: della moneta e della mercatura de' Fiorentini fino al secolo XVI*, 4 vols. (Lisbon: 1765-1766), vol. II, p. 276.

<sup>121</sup> Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 85.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Barolsky, "Naturalism and the Visionary Art of the Early Renaissance," in *Franciscanism, the Papacy, and Art in the Age of Giotto*, ed. Andrew Ladis (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 317, said this in the context of Giotto’s pioneering, deliberately inconsistent naturalism.

<sup>123</sup> For a discussion of embedded portraits within the context of history-conscious 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence, see Patricia Rubin, "Domenico Ghirlandaio and the Meaning of History in Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *Domenico Ghirlandaio 1449-1494*, ed. Wolfram Prinz and Martin Seidel, *Atti del Convegno Internazionale*, Florence, 1994 (Florence: 1996).

#### 4.5.2 Masaccio's Embedded Self-Portrait

What of the role of the artist? As patrons wished increasingly to create a memory of themselves in a sacred setting for spiritual, familial and memorializing purposes, the presence of the artist is still not self-explanatory. I suggest that the burst of embedded self-imaging activity found within Quattrocento narrative fresco cycles is intrinsically linked to the increased number of embedded *portraits* found in those self-same cycles. Furthermore, the artist's self-portrait in this setting might have been considered desirable by some patrons in part because of what artists and their art did in the minds of Renaissance viewers. Renaissance sources suggest that artists with their paintings created illusions, which in deceiving the eye of the viewer, represented the truth. Furthermore, this truth was itself a perfected reality that was better and truer than the truth, better than the ordinary reality of the everyday.

Although Galen, admittedly better known for his medical rather than artistic philosophy, tentatively labeled painting and sculpture liberal arts in his *Protrepticus*, written during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, more generally the ancient world classified them as mechanical ones.<sup>124</sup> That painting was established as a mechanical art is likely indicated by the increasingly emphatic arguments made by several Italian artists throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries that it should be seen otherwise. As already discussed, artists beginning with Cennini – doubtless also thinking of an elevation in their own status – emphasized the imaginative and intellectual faculties necessary for the creation of good art, and compared the creation of paintings to the endeavors of poets.<sup>125</sup> The painter's judgment and *fantasia* would slowly but surely see ever-greater positive commentary in treatises on the arts by artists and architects, and their supporters.

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<sup>124</sup> W. Tatarkiewicz, "Classification of Arts in Antiquity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 2 (1963): pp. 233-234. Galen's hesitation over where to place painting and sculpture is clear in his cautious phrase, "if one wishes, one may consider them as liberal arts." See *Ibid.*, p. 234, for the citation and brief discussion.

<sup>125</sup> Cennini, *The Craftman's Handbook*, p. 2, states that just as the poet is "free to compose and bind together, or not, as he pleases, according to his inclination..." so, too, is the painter, as noted in the previous chapter, "given freedom to compose a figure...according to his imagination." Only a few lines later in the chapter, Cennino cites the intellect of the painter as a factor in choice of professions, and later councils young painters to order their lives just as if they "were studying theology, or philosophy, or other theories..." Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson, Introduction and Notes by Martin Kemp (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 63, asserted that the art of painting was "worthy of free minds and noble intellects," and that he "always regarded it as a mark of an excellent and superior mind in any person whom [he] saw take great delight in painting." Further, he (p. 88) would have a painter become learned in all the liberal arts.

This idea can be discerned in discussions by painters on the subject of nature, which although must be closely observed and was every artist's ultimate master, had also to be improved upon. Leonardo da Vinci tells us "that painting is the most commendable which has the greatest conformity to what is meant to be imitated."<sup>126</sup> The best imitation of nature was for Leonardo and many other Renaissance painters the pinnacle of painting.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that simply the close observation and subsequent imitation of nature for its own sake is not what Leonardo intended. Instead, "a painter ought to study universal Nature..., making use of the most excellent parts that compose the species of every object before him."<sup>128</sup> Leonardo's remark echoes that of Alberti, who some years before had remarked on Pliny's commentary in the practice of the ancient Greek painter Zeuxis. Rather than study a single exquisite form in nature, the ancient artist had made it his practice to study many, and then to cull the most beautiful features from each figure, for as Alberti put it, beauty was "not to be discovered even in Nature in one body alone..."<sup>129</sup> An artist relied upon his or her judgment to discern which natural forms were the most beautiful, and upon his skill for the best means to surpass and perfect nature in a painting.

One contemporary phrase that praised of paintings likened them to mute poems, perfect but for lack of speech. Linked to this was the frequently expressed idea that beautifully painted figures lacked only breath in order to be truly alive. Writers on the arts sought to describe and praise the qualities of beauty and naturalism they saw in painted works, and the last phrase especially seems to have been applied almost as a matter of course to any well-executed figure to which they wanted to draw special attention.<sup>130</sup> These phrases are encountered with sufficient frequency to make one question the sincerity of the writer, especially in light of some of the paintings to which such comments are directed. Nevertheless, it is clear that the particular

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<sup>126</sup> Leonardo da Vinci, *A Treatise on Painting*, p. 260.

<sup>127</sup> Leonardo makes several remarks regarding a painter's just reliance on the observation of nature in order to paint well, which are perhaps best summed up in his remark, "Whoever flatters himself that he can retain in his memory all the effects of Nature, is deceived, for our memory is not so capacious: therefore consult Nature for everything." (See *Ibid.*)

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>129</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 91. Also, see Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 109.

<sup>130</sup> The next chapter will discuss the circumstances for an intriguing double portrait containing Filippino Lippi's self-portrait about which two contemporary poems were composed that contain these sentiments. Examples of painted figures that lacked only breath, according to their Renaissance panegyrist, begin relatively early in accounts of the arts. Filippo Villani (*Croniche* [see Baldassarri and Saiber, eds., *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, p. 187] reports that Giotto praised figures by his son-in-law Stefano as lacking "only the power to breathe."

rhetoric of praise that was applied to exemplary works of Renaissance art centered on a notion of mimetic perfection that surpassed the original model due to the particular gifts of the artist. What beautifully painted figures lacked – breath, life, and a voice – were things that only God could give them.

Nevertheless, mimetic perfection was perceived to be attainable by the best artists – and in fact had been, at least to an extent, achieved according to some writers. In his *vita* of Leonardo, Vasari borrows from the famous story recounted by Pliny of a painting so realistic that it fooled both nature and man – and not simply a man, but a painter who is undoubtedly supposed to know better. This is, of course, the famous fable recounting Zeuxis’s failure to recognize the true nature (that is, the falsity) of the trompe l’oeil painted curtain of his rival, Parrhasios, after having himself already tricked birds into thinking his own painted grapes were real. The story that Vasari related – or most likely created – echoed the creation of the curtain and its effect on Zeuxis: Leonardo painted a shield with a head of Medusa that was so convincing that upon seeing it, his father was deeply startled.<sup>131</sup> Another example celebrated in verse is a lost portrait of Piero Pugliese painted by Filippino Lippi during the second half of the Quattrocento. According to its panegyrist Ugolino Verino, Filippino’s painted likeness of Piero surpassed Nature and forced it to yield to human artifice.<sup>132</sup>

Alberti, as has been already noted, spoke of the “divine force” that painting contained, which had the power not only to make the absent present, but also to make “the dead seem almost alive....”<sup>133</sup> An acknowledgement of the text’s hyperbolic nature does not completely detract

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<sup>131</sup> Another occasion of convincing animals of a painting’s realism occurs in the example Pliny gives of a painting of a horse by Apelles: “A horse also exists, or did exist, painted for a competition, in which [Apelles] appealed from the judgment of men to that of dumb beasts. When he saw that his rivals were likely to be placed above him through intrigue, he caused some horses to be brought in and showed them each picture in turn; they neighed only at the horse of Apelles, and this was invariably the case ever afterwards, so that the test was applied purposely to afford a display of his skill.” (*est et equus eius sive fuit pictus in certamine, quo iudicium ad mutas quadrupes provocavit ab hominibus. Namque ambitu praevalere aemulos sentiens singulorum picturas inductis equis ostendit, Apellis tantum equo adhinnivere, idque et postea semper evenit, ut experimentum artist illud ostenaretur.*) NH, Book 35, 95. Quotation and translations from Pliny, *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 131. For Vasari’s application of the story to the *vita* of Leonardo, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, pp. 21-22.

<sup>132</sup> The Latin poem, *Laus eiusdem pictoris*, was published in H. ed. Brockhaus, “Lob der Florentiner Kunstwelt: Gedicht des Ugolino Verini,” in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Kunsthistorischen Institut von Florenz* (Leipzig: A. G. Liebeskind, 1897), p. iv: *Siquis picta Petri Puliensis viderit ora / Hic Petrus est! et non dicet imago Petri est! / Artifici cessit natura! ut verior ars sit! / Spirantem superat picta tabella virum.* Burke, *Changing Patrons*, p. 89 and pp. 222-223, has recently published a translation: “Anyone who has seen the painted Pietro del Pugliese claims / Here is Piero! and he would not say it was an image of Piero! / Nature has yielded to artifice! as the art is truer! / The painted panel surpasses the breathing man.”

<sup>133</sup> Alberti, *Della Pittura*, p. 76.

from the gravity of its claims. Clerics including Gregory the Great are well known for excusing religious painting as necessary teaching tools for the illiterate, while later authorities such as St. Antoninus assured us that while holy objects were not adored themselves, they were venerated because of their ability to “move the worshipper beyond the representation to the object of worship.”<sup>134</sup> As creators of religious images, painters were some of the primary actors who helped to keep figures of holy significance constantly in front of the worshipper, contributing, as Alberti put it, “to the piety which binds us to the gods, and [fills] our minds with sound religious beliefs.”<sup>135</sup> While arguably not so different from the assertion that a beautifully painted figure lacked only breath in order to be truly alive, nevertheless, Alberti’s statement claims for painting a role almost tantamount to that of Jesus raising Lazarus – making the dead seem, at least, to live again.

During the Renaissance, artists brought religious stories to life for their viewers in a very real sense with a seemingly semi-divine power. I think that some artists began to include their self-images – and perhaps were even asked by their patrons on occasions to do so – in order to act as witnesses to the “truth” of that which they had created. By including themselves and patrons in religious works, artists affirmed their patrons’ piety while simultaneously confirming the “truth” of their patrons’ presence within their own fictive eyewitness account. Just as Zeuxis unwittingly demonstrated the perfection of his rival’s illusion when, fooled by Parrhasios’ painting, he attempted to pull away the concealing curtain, so too could Renaissance painters – more consciously – demonstrate the fictive “truth” of their own illusions with their self-portraits.

Before continuing to artists who followed Masaccio, it is necessary to address more directly Masaccio’s presentation of himself and perhaps his friends in the Brancacci chapel. Previously the discussion has generalized the conditions which might have led to his self-inclusion, and although it is clear that a self-portrait would not have been included outside the behest of the artist’s patron, it does not follow that an artist’s reasons and intentions for his inclusion would be exactly the same as his patron. Masaccio’s possible purposes for and ideas about his self-portrait must now be addressed.

Although first written in Latin six years or so after Masaccio’s death in Rome (c. 1428), Alberti’s justification, quoted above, of his own future inclusion in another’s work of art is worth

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<sup>134</sup> Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*, p. 85.

<sup>135</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 60.

revisiting: “I have had these things to say of painting. If they are useful and helpful to painters, I ask only that as a reward for my pains they paint my face in their *istoria* in such a way that it seems pleasant and I may be seen a student of the art.”<sup>136</sup> This is, as far as I know, the only Quattrocento statement that directly addresses a reason for the practice. Alberti gives us both a justification for and outcome of his recognizable image in a work of art: it is his just reward for being useful to painters, and will allow the viewer to know him as not only a student of art, but also a worthy contributor to its continued improvement. Although no clear evidence links Alberti’s statement with any similar desire on the part of Masaccio, it is clear that the pair knew each other beyond mere reputation. Nonetheless, since the practice of embedded self-portraiture was not new, the later reasoning might have provided some of Masaccio’s motive as well. Later “students” of art would see his, Masaccio’s self-image, and know him also for a true and helpful practitioner of the art of painting. Indeed, artists throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century acknowledged a debt to the Masaccio’s groundbreaking work in the Carmelite church. Given the evidence of Trecento displays of artistic presence, if this reading has validity, then perhaps Masaccio’s self-portrait can perhaps be read as his own claim regarding those artists, including himself, who would be seen as useful to future painters and who should be known as students of art.<sup>137</sup>

Regarding other explanations, one can of course only speculate. Also worth considering is Alberti’s claim that a recognizable face draws the eye more readily even than a better painted anonymous one.<sup>138</sup> Masaccio’s face in addition to other identifiable Florentines in the *Tribute Money* gave the viewer several opportunities to pause and reflect upon the familiar face, and perhaps to consider the significance of the figure’s presence at so august an occasion. As already noted, the most recent cleaning revealed that the figure identified as Masaccio originally stretched out a hand to touch St. Peter, a gesture later painted over by Filippino.<sup>139</sup> While perhaps simply reflecting – or even helping to inspire – Alberti’s subsequent instruction to include a figure who can focus a viewer’s attention on pertinent aspects of a painting, it is interesting to note that this injunction and its effect appears to reflect the instructions given by Quintilian to public speakers.

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<sup>136</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 98.

<sup>137</sup> Many have speculated that Brunelleschi, Donatello, Masolino and Alberti number amongst the portraits included in the chapel. For commentary, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 336.

<sup>138</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, p. 93.

<sup>139</sup> Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 336.

Chapter III of Book XI of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* is concerned with the orator's delivery and gesture for effective public speaking.<sup>140</sup> Quintilian gives information about rhetorical body language and speaks of gesture as a "form of speech," and a "kind of physical eloquence," which must, as the voice, "obey the impulse of the mind."<sup>141</sup> Choreographing the calibration of the mind and body through gesture, Quintilian advises the orator on the usage of several specific gestures and the correct moment of their deployment.<sup>142</sup> No specific passage directly addresses Masaccio's canceled gesture; nevertheless, the attention focused in Quintilian's work on the "art of gesture" and its proper deployment clearly had currency within the Renaissance pictorial tradition. Quintilian's encouragement of a gesture indicating the orator's current topic of conversation is likely reflected in Masaccio's gesture to St. Peter as the focus of that portion of the painting.<sup>143</sup> The exact nature of Masaccio's gesture – the placement of his hand on St. Peter's body, the attitude of the fingers (matters of importance to Quintilian) – is impossible to reconstruct. Nonetheless, the gesture puts Masaccio in the role of rhetorician, gaining the viewer's attention and directing it appropriately.

The contemplative religious rationale already explored may have had some bearing. Masaccio's gesture might also indicate a deeper desire to connect to the divine – or to represent this sentiment within the painting – and can perhaps be read as the type of personal interaction

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<sup>140</sup> *Institutio Oratoria* (Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian with an English Translation by H. E. Butler in Four Volumes*, trans. H. E. Butler (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1920)) is the only text written by Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (c. 35 - 95 CE) to survive. The orator's textbook deals with the theory and practice of rhetoric, and also expounds upon the necessary foundational education and the development of the orator. Known in a fragmentary state during the Middle Ages, interest in the text was revived during the Renaissance following the discovery of a complete, previously unknown manuscript. Petrarch's letter addressed to Quintilian indicates the ancient author's continued importance, however, despite the then-incompleteness of his texts, something which Petrarch mourns in his epistle. See *Familiaris XXIV, 7*: Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters. Rerum familiarium libri XVII-XXIV*, pp. 329-331. Very likely Quintilian's practice of encouraging his readers to correlate the styles of rhetoric and the visual arts played a role in Petrarch's formation of his own ideas about contemporary works of art and their makers, and how he wrote about them. Quintilian's comments on the history of art in this connection are among the most important by any ancient writer. See John Onians, "Quintilian and the Idea of Roman Art," in *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture in the Roman Empire*, ed. M. Henig (Oxford: 1990). For further discussion, also see Fritz Graf, "Gestures and Conventions: the Gestures of Roman Actors and Orators," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>141</sup> Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria*, XI, iii, p. 245, and XI, iii, p. 279.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, iii, pp. 291-297.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, iii, p. 291. The passage reads: "...I should, therefore, permit him to direct his hand towards his body to indicate that he is speaking of himself, or to point it at some one else to whom he is alluding...."



prescribed in the *Meditations* and contemporary sermons.<sup>144</sup> Although this detail has been obscured, the self-image is nonetheless the figure in closest proximity to St. Peter save for the Carmelites who kneel at the saint's feet with bowed heads. It is, of course, dangerous to inhabit religious devotion or feeling in the gestures and works of painters; no special piety has ever been assigned to Masaccio, nor is there need to do so here. Instead, it might have made sense to read in such a gesture the proximity and, perhaps, interaction that the viewer is enjoined to imagine in his or her own meditations on the scene.

#### 4.6 THE GENERATION AFTER MASACCIO

On the surface, it might seem puzzling that the practice of embedded self-portraiture did not spread more rapidly directly following Masaccio's famous example.<sup>145</sup> The Brancacci chapel was evidently well known even during the early years following its completion; Vasari attests to its fame throughout the remainder of the 15<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in his *vita* of Masaccio, giving a who's who of the artists who studied and admired it.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that the next Florentine embedded self-images were done about ten years after Masaccio's activity in the Brancacci chapel: Fra Filippo Lippi's possible self-portraits in the Barbadori and Maringhi altarpieces, dated to 1437-1439 and 1439-1446 respectively.<sup>147</sup> Why were there no more embedded self-portraits painted by Masaccio's generation during the 1430s?

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<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, in donor portraits in which saints are seen presenting the donors to the Virgin or Jesus, it is the saint who gestures to the donor, and not the other way around. Moreover, regarding any "personal interaction," it must be admitted that St. Peter seems oblivious of the figures ringing him, who in turn seem largely oblivious of each other.

<sup>145</sup> Lorenzo Ghiberti's self-portrait of 1424 falls outside of the parameters of the present discussion, as it is difficult to classify the sculptural self-image, set in a roundel in an area bordering reliefs on the Florentine Baptistery's Doors, as "embedded."

<sup>146</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 132, lists the following artists: Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Filippino, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, Andrea del Verrocchio, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, Fra Barolomeo, Mariotto Albertinelli, Michelangelo, Raphael, il Granaccio, Lorenzo di Credi, Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, il Franciabigio, Baccio Bandinelli, Alonso Spagnuolo, Pontormo, Perino del Vaga and Toto del Nunziata.

<sup>147</sup> Although *Ibid.*, Testo III, p. 366, asserted that Gentile da Fabriano's Strozzi Altarpiece contains his self-portrait, this proposed self-image is not convincing. More likely later self-portraits can be found of Filippo along with his assistant Fra Diamanti in the *Funeral of St. Stephen* in the chapel dedicated to the saint in Prato's cathedral (c. 1460), and in the *Dormition of the Virgin* along with his son, Filippino, in Spoleto's cathedral (1469). See for discussion Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, pp. 57-60, and Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*, p. 140 and pp. 156-157.

One explanation might be the lack of similar kinds of large fresco commissions or the type of narrative panel painting that might have given the artist sufficient space and cause for this type of *invenzione*. Alternatively, one must consider other painters with active careers in Florence during the decade in question. Artists such as Lorenzo Monaco and his followers would have catered to fashionable Florentine tastes during the 1430s, while more conservative patrons might have preferred the works of painters like Bicci di Lorenzo, Mariotto di Nardo and Lorenzo di Niccolò.<sup>148</sup> While Lorenzo Monaco's paintings might have changed following the reception of Masaccio, his style remained very much his own, and portraiture was not a facet of it. Fra Angelico worked in Fiesole and Florence during this decade, but his style never included much portraiture even in those works whose subjects might have lent themselves to it.

Other well-known artists of the succeeding decades were still in training. While the later careers of Fra Filippo Lippi and Piero della Francesca – two painters of embedded portraits and likely one if not more self-portraits within their works – show lessons learned from Masaccio, during the period in question neither can be documented as having an independent career in Florence. Certainly, neither had the stature to win the type of commission that would have provided the same scope that Masaccio had had to work with in the Brancacci chapel. One way or another, it appears that a new generation of artists was required before the ideas Masaccio demonstrated could be revisited and expanded. Moreover, as the popularity of artists such as Neri di Bicci attests, one cannot always blame an artist for a lack of “innovation” within his work. It has been demonstrated that some Renaissance patrons favored “old fashioned” or earlier styles of painting for their commissions instead of the latest innovations.<sup>149</sup> Thus, it is not, perhaps, entirely surprising that it took some time for the new ideas present in the Brancacci chapel to become appreciated by the population at large, and not simply by specialists.

The prevailing theories regarding those embedded self-portraits created following Masaccio beginning around the 1440s, even more so than those created prior, tend to consider them within the currents of artistic identity and an artist's self-exploration or subjectivity, framed by considerations of changing social status linked increasingly to an intellectualizing of the artist.

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<sup>148</sup> Cole, *Masaccio*, p. 210.

<sup>149</sup> One famous example is the *Madonna della Misericordia* polyptych begun by Piero della Francesca c. 1445 for the Compagnia della Misericordia of his native Sansepolcro, and completed about twenty years later. Elements such as the gold background and gothic style framing may appear somewhat old-fashioned when compared with styles practiced in larger city centers, and were likely dictated by the commissioning body.

Although some scholars might make a vague reference to the possibility of a religious or other motivation for embedded self-imagery prior to Masaccio, afterwards, with few exceptions, the tone of current scholarship is decidedly both secular and slanted to the desires and issues surrounding the artist socially, intellectually and personally.<sup>150</sup>

Nevertheless, only two generations after Masaccio there are several from which to choose, as self-portraits have been identified in paintings by Fra Filippo Lippi, Domenico Veneziano, Andrea del Castagno, and Alesso Baldovinetti, amongst others. Discussion of these artists' self-images is by necessity limited, as some paintings are lost or too damaged to consider, as is the case for images of Andrea del Castagno and Alesso Baldovinetti. Others are simply too suspect, such as suggested self-portraits by Fra Filippo Lippi in two altarpieces of the late 1430s and 1440s. Instead, in the initial section of the following chapter, I wish to concentrate on a single Florentine artist following Masaccio whose self-portraits are generally accepted without question in order to investigate the theme. I will focus on two self-images by Benozzo Gozzoli (1420, Florence - 1497, Pistoia).<sup>151</sup> Having begun his career in Florence, Benozzo gained fame in the provinces, and then returned to accept one of the most prestigious Florentine commissions of the decade.<sup>152</sup> The remaining sections will investigate three other embedded self-portraits by artists of the following generation.

Embedded self-portraiture during the mid-Quattrocento in the hands of these and other painters in Florence may be said to follow similar lines to those found in Masaccio's single but highly influential example, although the reasons explored concerning the reading and plausibility of Masaccio's self-portrait must be expanded to include the new situations and ideas of the later period. These later self-images were, of course, embedded in other subjects; the first surviving autonomous self-portrait does not appear until much later in the century. All of the subjects were religious in nature, and were commonly associated with the Madonna or Madonna and Christ

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<sup>150</sup> The primary exception is the already noted work of Holmes, *Fra Filippo Lippi*.

<sup>151</sup> Benozzo di Lese is better known today as Benozzo Gozzoli, so named by Vasari (*Le vite*, Testo III, p. 375).

<sup>152</sup> Interestingly, despite contemporary good-opinion, the reputations of both Benozzo and another artist to be discussed in the next section, Domenico Ghirlandaio, suffered in the hands of subsequent critics. See, for example, Bernard Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938). For Domenico's critical reputation and the above quote, see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 1-9. Despite this, it has been noted that contemporaries' opinions of the painters and their work were favorably inclined, and both were rarely unemployed.

Child, though the artist's proximity to these figures varies.<sup>153</sup> Inclusion within such scenes appears to be a theme for many Quattro- and Cinquecento self-portrayals and donor portraits alike, and may spring from a desire for salvation and the popularity of the idea of the Madonna as intercessor for mankind on the part of both patron and artist. At the same time, self-images generally seem to betray an extraordinary self-consciousness, a sense that the figure remains apart or more self-aware than the other figures, and wishes others to note his presence as well.

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<sup>153</sup> It must, of course, be noted that Masaccio's self-portrait is *not* in such a context. Nevertheless, an important Marian altarpiece was part of the chapel, and while this argument may be suspect, Masaccio's self-portrait on the inside end of the east wall would appear in relatively close proximity to both any altarpiece contained in the chapel *and* to St. Peter.

## 5.0 FLORENTINE QUATTROCENTO EMBEDDED SELF-PORTRAITURE AFTER MASACCIO

### 5.1 BENOZZO GOZZOLI

In 1459, Benozzo Gozzoli, having won renown in Lazio and Umbria following his collaborations with Fra Angelico, returned to Florence after an absence of about twelve years.<sup>1</sup> Upon reentry, he procured the prestigious commission of the *Journey of the Magi* for the chapel of the recently-constructed Medici family palace.<sup>2</sup> Built between 1450 and 1455 by Michelozzo, the small chapel at the heart of the new palace was to become, upon its completion in December of 1459, an important political and pious space.<sup>3</sup> Although which Medici family member, Cosimo 'il Vecchio' or his son Piero, exerted the most control over its decoration was at one point debated, the surviving documentation indicates that Piero, Cosimo's eldest son, oversaw the work.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Cosimo's links to the confraternity of the Magi which met at San Marco, the site of extensive Medici patronage, are well-known, and it seems sure that the family's patriarch chose

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<sup>1</sup> For information regarding Benozzo's career prior to the Medici Chapel, see Diane Cole Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), Chapters One and Two.

<sup>2</sup> Most scholars agree on Piero's control over the chapel's decorations: see Rab Hatfield, "Cosimo de' Medici and the Chapel of his Palace," in *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici 1389-1464*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and Cristina A. Luchinat, ed., *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi Florence* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Numerous discussions of the famous chapel detail its construction, iconography, and subsequent use: for a few examples of relatively recent scholarship, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, Chapter Three; Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Early Medici and Their Artists* (London: University of London, 1995); Kent, *The Patron's Oeuvre*, pp. 303-328; Cristina A. Luchinat, "Benozzo Gozzoli's Chapel of the Magi Restored and Rediscovered," in *Early Medici and Their Artists*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (London: Birkbeck College, University of London, 1995); Cristina A. Luchinat, "Journey Towards the Sacred. Medici and Other Contemporary Portraits in the Cappella dei Magi," in *Stanze segrete raccolte per case: I Medici Santi-Gli arredi celati / Secret Rooms Collected by Chance: The Medici Saints - The Hidden Treasures*, ed. Cristina Giannini, Collana Cultura e Memoria (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2004); Luchinat, *The Chapel of the Magi*. While structurally at the core of the palazzo, the chapel was originally accessible only from the large staircase on the west or from a private room on the east.

<sup>4</sup> Gombrich, "The Early Medici," p. 48, argues for Piero's greater involvement.

the subject and very likely the artist as well.<sup>5</sup> Diane Ahl notes that at the time in question, Benozzo was the most experienced fresco and portrait painter in Florence, and moreover, would have already been well-known to the Medici thanks to his early collaboration with Fra Angelico in San Marco.<sup>6</sup> The Medici, one of only two families who had won the privilege of a family chapel within their dwelling and the sanction of a private altar, created a space that would increasingly during the next few decades become the seat of city government as Cosimo's veritable receiving hall.<sup>7</sup> Intriguingly, in this small, jewel-like locus of political power and personal piety, Benozzo created not only one, but in fact two self-portraits.<sup>8</sup>

How do these self-images come to be included within their impressive surroundings? Benozzo's double-presentation is a perplexing business; to my knowledge, there is no precedent for it in Italian art. It is repeated neither by later artists who painted self-images, nor by Benozzo himself at any of the other sites where he is believed to have created self-portraits. Benozzo added his self-portraits to *Augustine's Departure from Rome* in Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano (1464/5) and to *Joseph and his Brothers in Egypt* (1477), a scene he painted for Pisa's Camposanto. A more recent suggestion of a self-image in Orvieto is unconvincing in its lack of resemblance to Benozzo's secure self-portraits.<sup>9</sup> How do the Medici examples fit into the

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<sup>5</sup> Hatfield, "Cosimo de' Medici."

<sup>6</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85, reports three portable altars. John K. Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1987), p. 30, asserts that of these three, two were in Medici properties – the Medici Palazzo and the one created in the older house next door – and one in the Minerbetti household, also called an *oratorio*, inventoried in 1502.

<sup>8</sup> Cristina A. Luchinat, "Medici e cittadini nei cortei dei Re Magi: ritratto di una società," in *Benozzo Gozzoli: La Capelle dei Magi*, ed. Cristina A. Luchinat (Milan: Electa, 1993), recognizes Benozzo three times – twice in the group leading the young king Melchior. The proposed second figure, who appears higher on the wall having made the turn and wearing a brimmed hat, I find completely untenable. There seems to be insufficient resemblance amongst the three figures to support the claim. Moreover, Luchinat does not appear to have argued for this identification in her subsequent publications on the subject of the Medici palace frescoes. Nevertheless, the identification finds support in a recent textbook on Renaissance court life; see Anabel Thomas, "Fifteenth-Century Florence and Court Culture Under the Medici," in *The Renaissance in Europe: a Cultural Enquiry*, ed. David Mateer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 181, though I know of no other publication that does so. For illustration of the two accepted self-portraits in the chapel, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 98, figs. 117 and 118.

<sup>9</sup> For illustration, see Anna P. Rizzo, *Benozzo Gozzoli: un pittore insigne, "pratico di grandissima invenzione"* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), p. 39 and figure 35, p. 44. Rizzo recognizes Benozzo's hand and his face in a portion of the vault painted in the Chapel of San Brizio in the Duomo of Orvieto with Fra Angelico painted between 1447 and 1449. While I do not argue against Benozzo's hand, I find the assertion of a self-portrait in this context unconvincing, and would dispute the identification on the grounds that it does not resemble his later self-portraits in visage or in presentation. Further, it would seem doubtful that so self-aware and self-promoting an artist as Benozzo would have inserted his first self-image in so un-prestigious a spot even at an early stage of his career. Instead, Benozzo is recognizable in company populating the choir fresco, *St. Augustine's Departure from Rome*, dated 1464-1465 in San Gimignano's Sant'Agosto, by his resemblance to his earlier self-image in the Medici Chapel, and is

program as a whole? What purpose might they have served? Equally curious is why the Medici would have allowed the inclusion of a craftsman in a space that, while ostensibly glorifying the infant Christ and the Magi, also exalted themselves and their closest partisans.

Thanks to continual scholarly and popular interest in the Medici, this chapel has seen nearly as copious an amount of ink spilled on its behalf as the Brancacci Chapel, making a lengthy discussion of its history and interpretations unnecessary here. Instead, we can turn our attention directly to Benozzo's self-images and consider their presentation within the chapel. The first in terms of the procession – that is, seemingly the furthest from its culmination – looks out from the east wall in the initial scene of the Magi's journey in the group preceding the youngest of the Three Kings, traditionally identified as Caspar.<sup>10</sup>

Benozzo displays himself as part of the entourage following the youngest king. He is dressed in red garments with none of the ambiguity of posture and position that one finds in his second self-image in the space. Instead, we see Benozzo positioned in the third rank behind his wealthy patrons Cosimo and Piero de' Medici, who ride in front, and Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, who many believe are in the second rank just before him. The artist's expression is calm, and from this self-portrait we are allowed to recognize Benozzo's other self-image in this chapel and in his other works: the gold script on his headgear – a modest red *berretto* – offers

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mentioned in the Latin inscription on the unfurled banner centered above the scene. Although Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 378, identifies Benozzo in company with others in *the Meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* in Pisa's Camposanto, Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 179, recognizes a self-portrait instead in the fresco of *Joseph and His Brothers in Egypt* (1477). I agree with Ahl's suggestion. The cenotaph commemorating his efforts in the Pisan complex attest to his patrons' satisfaction in his work, and by this point he had already created two other self-portraits, making the possibility of a third not unlikely. Unfortunately, while I accept that Benozzo almost certainly painted a self-portrait here, the ruined frescoes do not permit certainty of its original placement. I would, however, tend to give Ahl more credence in her assertion, as it was at the foot of this fresco that the Pisans placed the cenotaph honoring the artist. While Ahl obviously disagrees with Vasari, she does not address the earlier author's identification, nor does she articulate her argument for this location of the self-portrait. Nevertheless, it is in the scene in which she notes the following inscription appearance on the painted loggia (See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 194): "How beholdest thou birds, fish, and monsters prodigious,/Sylvan greenery or heavenly habitations?/Children, youths, mothers, and hoary-headed elders,/Their countenances live with decorous charm?/Who fashioned these images of such varied form/Was not Nature, her genius engendering that brood./This is the work of Benozzo: by his art their visages live:/O gods above, endow them with voice as in life!" (*QUID SPECTAS VOLUCRES, PISCES, ET MONSTRA FERARUM, ET VIRIDES SILVAS AETHEREASQUE DOMOS ?ET PUEROS, IUVENES, MATRES, CONOSQUE PARENTES ?QUEIS SEMPER VIVUM SPIRAT IN ORE DECUS ? NON HAEC TAM VARIIS, FINXIT SIMULACRA FIGURIS/NATURA INGENIO FOETIBUS APTA SUO:/EST OPUS ARTIFICIS : PINXIT VIVA ORA BENOZZUS:/O SUPERI, VIVOS FUNDITE IN ORA SONOS.*) It seems reasonable, as Ahl implies but neglects to state clearly, that Benozzo's self-portrait and laudatory inscription appear in conjunction with each other, and that the Pisans would have recognized the self-portrait and deemed its vicinity an appropriate place to install the cenotaph honoring the artist.

<sup>10</sup> For an illustration of the east wall, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 90, fig. 106.

proof of his identity [*OPVS BENOTTI D*]. This is the sole identification – and interestingly, could also be deemed the artist’s signature – of any of the many portraits included within the cycle. Moreover, not only does this inscription tell us who he is, but as Ahl notes, transforms his signature into a clever pun that alludes to the murals as works that are renowned (*ben noti*) and invites the viewer to take note of Benozzo and his work (*noti bene*).<sup>11</sup>

This signature should be considered in light of the one the artist provided only seven years before at San Francesco in Montefalco, an Umbrian town closely associated with Assisi. The extensive St. Francis cycle, then the city’s largest post-Fra Angelico cycle, was introduced by two inscriptions placed on both of the site’s two entrance pillars. One informs us of the chapel’s dedication, and of the activities of the over-seeing friar: “In praise of the omnipotent God and his most blessed Mother and of blessed Francesco, Antonio, Ludovico, Bernardino, Clare and Eleazaro: this work was made by the order of Friar Jacopo da Montefalco of the Frati Minori.”<sup>12</sup> The other lauds the artist: we are informed that “In the name of the most Holy Trinity, this chapel was painted by Benozzo of Florence in the year 1452. See for yourself, O Reader, what sort of painter has made the preamble.”<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Creighton argues that most translations of the last phrase are not effective, and instead insists that the reader is being told that if he truly looks, he will see for himself what a (good) painter Benozzo is.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, one may regard the Medici Chapel signature as equally self-laudatory as the one made at the site where Benozzo helped to cement the reputation that apparently caught Piero de’ Medici’s interest.

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<sup>11</sup> The “D” might stand, as Luchinat, “Medici e cittadini,” p. 367, suggested, for “de Lese.” However, given the wording of Benozzo’s most frequent signature, I think it most likely stands for “de Florentia.” The words are not the only lettering in the chapel: only a few of the angels who appear on the two walls flanking the altar *do not* possess inscriptions painted *a secco* onto their finely punched and decorated gold-leaf halos, and a few have inscriptions on their robes. The only other inscription in the chapel is the word “SEMPER” inscribed on a tunic of the man who leads Piero’s horse. The interpretation of Benozzo’s punning allusion to the excellence of his work in his signature/inscription is from Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 96.

<sup>12</sup> Text quoted in Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 239: *AD LAUDEM OM[N]IPOTENTIS DEI AC BEATISSIME MARTRIS EI[US] ET BEATI FRANCISCI ANTONII LUDOVICI BE[R]NA[R]DINI CLARE E T HELZEARE ET HOC OPUS FECIT FIERI FRATER IACOBUS DE MONTE FALCONE ORDINIS MINORUM*. My thanks go to Marianna Cerno for the translation.

<sup>13</sup> Translation from Ibid. : *I[N] NOMINE SANCTISSIME TRINITATIS HA[N]C CAPELLAM PINSIT BENOTIUS FLORENTINUS SUB ANNIS DOMINI MILLESIMO QUADRI[N]GENTESIMO QUINQUAGESIMO SECUNDO. QUALIS SIT PICTOR PREFATUS I[N]SPICE LECTOR*

<sup>14</sup> Creighton Gilbert, “Benozzo’s Graphic Arguments for the Honor of Painters,” in *Benozzo Gozzoli: viaggio attraverso un secolo. Convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze-Pisa, 8-10 gennaio, 1998*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo and Alessandra Malquori (Pacini Editore: 2003), p. 41.



In his second self-image, Benozzo presents himself to the far right of the west wall in a transitional moment as the kings' entourage makes its turn up the mountain, his chest, shoulders and face just visible above the head of a restive horse.<sup>15</sup> He is identifiable due to the resemblance between this figure and the self-identified one that appears later in the same progression. He wears a red tunic of fine woolen cloth, though notably not quite as fine as some others visible in the scene.<sup>16</sup> This garment does not appear to be the *cioppa* or *lucco* commonly worn by the class from which the city drew its office holders, and featured in the cycle.<sup>17</sup> That garment is characterized, even in the small amounts visible in the crowded scene, by many pleats across the torso, suggestive of the amount of cloth used in the garment and thus a sign of its worth and its wearer's wealth and social status. Benozzo's garment might instead be the shorter *giubbia* or *villano*, and its smoothness across the painter's chest indicates that less cloth was used in the garment's construction. In a society that used clothing to differentiate its citizens, Benozzo shows himself as somewhat less wealthy than those surrounding him.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the blue turban style headdress with its sash trailing over his right shoulder draws attention to his self-presentation in the midst of the predominantly red *berretti* of his nearest companions. Headgear came in a wide range of styles during the period, and was used to give a wearer height and presence.<sup>19</sup> Benozzo distinguishes himself by his costume, but not so much as to distract the viewer from other nearby notables.

Benozzo's posture is strangely ambiguous. He cannot, as Ahl asserts, be looking over his shoulder, and therefore have his back to the viewer.<sup>20</sup> The amount of his face visible – a full three quarters with both eyes in evidence – would simply not be in keeping with the amount of Benozzo's back in evidence, and it is a position physically impossible to attain. Moreover, the

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<sup>15</sup> For illustrations of both portrait details from this cycle, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 98, figs. 117 and 118.

<sup>16</sup> See Carole C. Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), for an engaging study of Renaissance clothing, especially Chapter Five and its discussion of dyestuffs. Red, according to Frick's research, was the most popular color in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence, leading to the development of a visual hierarchy based upon dye-prices and the intensity of the color produced.

<sup>17</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150, for a brief discussion of the clothing ensembles worn by males during the Quattrocento, and the social status different styles indicated. That Benozzo was the son of a tailor and thus presumably even more familiar with cloth than the average artist (or fashion-conscious Florentine), is noted by Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence*, pp. 90-94, and Jacqueline Herald, *Renaissance Dress in Italy 1400 - 1500*, ed. Aileen Ribeiro, The History of Dress Series (London: Bell & Hyman Limited, 1981), pp. 57-58, for discussions regarding the amount of cloth used in fashionable Florentine Renaissance garments.

<sup>19</sup> Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p. 158.

<sup>20</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 96 and p. 98, describes Benozzo as looking over his shoulder in the act of turning to follow the entourage through the mountains.

observable portion of his neck is seen from the front; one can see a cord in the neck made prominent due to the side-long look as well as the merest shadow of an Adam's apple. Even more problematic, however, is the hand that appears only inches from his face. From what we know of self-portraits, which have featured the prominent or self-conscious display of the artist's hand in the past, we would like this hand and its peculiar gesture to be Benozzo's, but this cannot be. Moreover the hand may appear slightly too large to be his.

Although Ahl argues against Cristina Luchinat's assertion that this hand belongs to the figure above and to the right, Luchinat's argument, based upon a period treatise, is supported by spatial evidence.<sup>21</sup> We cannot, as Ahl argues, be seeing this portrait from the back. Nevertheless, it is *only* possible to accomplish the position of the hand in relation to Benozzo's face if the figure has his back to us. The only other explanation is that we are seeing the figure from the front with his arm and hand coming across his body, which is plainly not the case. The only possible conclusion is that the hand does not belong to Benozzo.<sup>22</sup> Ahl does, however, argue a convincing point: the self-portrait and hand were done in the same *giornata*, which might indicate their conception as a unit. Although logically and spatially speaking the hand is not Benozzo's, and may in fact follow Luchinat's "esoteric," as Ahl called it, interpretation, it might also – mere inches from the artist's face, palm facing forward, two fingers v-ed apart and thumb prominently displayed – signify more than simply the hand of another figure. One would not expect an artist of Benozzo's caliber to have made this type of mistake, nor yet his patrons to have allowed one to remain. In the end, while I do not think the hand can be read as belonging to the painted figure of Benozzo, I would agree with Ahl's assertion that its placement suggests the skill of the hand that painted the chapel.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the hand of the artist was often something of interest to patrons; sufficient existing contracts attest to the value of the master's own hand in a fresco or panel produced by his workshop.<sup>24</sup> In a sense, one may read the hand as

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 298, n. 294, counters Luchinat, "Medici e cittadini nei cortei dei Re Magi: ritratto di una società," p. 368, who argues that the gesture instead belongs to the figure above and to the right of Benozzo, whom Luchinat identifies as Francesco Sassetti, then in his 30s. Luchinat interprets the gesture as symbolic of the number "5,000" according to a digital system described in a 1491 treatise by F. Calandra (*Aritmetica*, Florence). Ahl disputes this association as being too esoteric.

<sup>22</sup> My thanks go to Professor Anne Leader who kindly spent several minutes attempting to follow Benozzo's example leading to the conviction that it could not be done.

<sup>23</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, p. 215, discusses the phenomenon of the artist's prominently displayed hand, citing the gesticulation of St. Thaddeus in Taddeo di Bartolo's *Assumption*, which he argued anticipated Benozzo's gestural emphasis. He also mentions an epitaph inscription on a commemorative monument to Giotto erected by

referencing Benozzo's whether or not the position is physically tenable, just as we may read the cycle as a whole as Benozzo's work.

There is no obvious or clear leap from Masaccio's self-portrayal in the Brancacci chapel to this pair of self-portraits, nor does there need to be one. Nonetheless, although Ames-Lewis asserts that the only self-portrait Benozzo is sure to have seen was Lorenzo Ghiberti's, there would seem to be another possibility.<sup>25</sup> Since the first artist whom Vasari lists as having studied at the Brancacci chapel is Fra Angelico, it seems reasonable to me that the friar-painter's junior partner might have had a peek at the chapel, too. It might be possible to argue that the images are presented somewhat similarly; while both address the viewer with direct glances, both are mostly covered by near-by figures. Both figures are somewhat marginalized but are made compelling by their outward, focused gazes, although I do not take this to be an indication of Benozzo's knowledge of Masaccio. Instead, I believe this follows their function within the scenes: the circumstances set the terms of each portrayal. This makes Benozzo's self-identification all the more intriguing.

The use of inscriptions within Renaissance paintings is a subject that has inspired little scholarship.<sup>26</sup> We know that Vasari scoffed at the practice in the 1568 life of Buonamico Buffalmacco, an attitude shared by his advisor Vincenzo Borghini, who wrote in 1565, "...it is a

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Lorenzo de' Medici in the Duomo which drew attention to the painter's *recta manus*. Discussing Benozzo's "strangely disembodied right hand," he asserts that the artist invites the observer to recognize his skill as a painter and to claim the cycle is 'di sua propria mano' or 'by his own hand' after the standard phrase in artistic contracts. It is worth noting that the chapel presents us with an unfortunately largely indecipherable lexicon of meaningful hand-gestures associated with the witnessing or meditation of the divine. The angels on the two flanking walls of the altarpiece have hands depicted in several different gestures, many of them known from earlier examples, but presented here *en masse*.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Ames-Lewis, "Benozzo Gozzoli e l'immagine di sé come artista," in *Benozzo Gozzoli: viaggio attraverso un secolo. Convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze-Pisa, 8-10 gennaio, 1998*, ed. Enrico Castelnuovo and Alessandra Malquori (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 2003), especially pp. 31-33. See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, pp. 18-22, for a brief discussion of Benozzo's association of three years with the Ghiberti workshop and the East Doors (Gates of Paradise).

<sup>26</sup> The only study I have discovered of any length on the subject is Dario A. Covi, *The Inscription in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1958). For one of the few more recent instances see Roger Tarr, "'Visibile parlare': the Spoken Word in Fourteenth-Century Central Italian Painting," *Word and Image* 13, no. 3 (1997). *Tituli*, however – the word given to the class of versified inscriptions inscribed at the base of pictures or seen placed on altars, capitals or windows of painted churches that serve to identify subjects or explain meaning – have seen somewhat more investigation. For a recent example regarding the work of Perugino, see Roberto Guerrini, "*Immensum templum*: Tituli e tradizione classica in Perugino," in *Pietro Vannucci detto il Perugino, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio 25 - 28 ottobre 2000*, ed. Laura Teza (Perugia: Volumnia Editrice, 2004). See also Éric Palazzo, "Tituli et enluminures dans le haut Moyen Age (IXe - XIe siècles): fonctions liturgiques et spirituelles," in *Épigraphie et iconographie: actes du colloque tenu à Poitiers les 5-8 octobre 1995*, ed. Robert Favreau, *Civilisation médiévale*; 2 (Poitiers: Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 1996).

natural thing that painters do not leave space, or only a little, for words... I believe that they are lost, those who leave the letters in and cut out the figures.”<sup>27</sup> Sixteenth-century standards proclaimed the inclusion of inscriptions or words within paintings tantamount to admitting a lack of ability to impart meaning without them, an attitude that prevailed during the next two centuries.

During the Quattrocento, however, the practice was still very much alive; in fact, Dario Covi said the century possessed “inscription consciousness.”<sup>28</sup> Benozzo’s use of the practice was varied and extensive throughout his work, if not particularly innovative in style.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, his identified self-portrait should be recognized as unusual. From the number and variety of inscriptions visible in works immediately prior to the Medici Chapel cycle and in his later frescoes, the insertion of words was not only a known quantity in his work, but was a prominent enough feature that it can scarcely have gone unnoticed by his patrons or caused any surprise. Nevertheless, although Benozzo identified himself as the creator (and once the restorer) of several works of art, nowhere else did he wed his portrait to such an explicit proclamation of identity and authorship.<sup>30</sup> In doing so, he displays the self-consciousness remarked upon by Ames-Lewis; the origins and purposes of this subjectivity bear further investigation.<sup>31</sup>

I return now to my earlier question: what purpose did Benozzo’s images serve in the eyes of a viewer, either Medici family members or those accorded the privilege of being received in the illustrious chapel?<sup>32</sup> These are not, of course, questions that can be answered with certainty.

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<sup>27</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, p. 171, remarks that the practice of painting words issuing from the mouths of figures pleased the “thick-witted” (*sciocchi*) of Buffalmacco’s day as much as it did the “boors” (*goffi*) of Vasari’s own. The incident eliciting this commentary was not included in the 1550 *vita*. Borghini’s quote can be found in M. G. Bottari and S. Ticozzi, *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura ed architettura* (Milan: 1822): “...è cosa naturale de’ pittori non lasciare spazio o pochissimo per parole... Credo io che paia loro tutto perduto quello che si lascia alle lettere, e tosi alle figure.” [my translation]

<sup>28</sup> Covi, *The Inscription in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting*, p. 293.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29. I have not counted all of Benozzo’s inscriptions and *tituli*, but his signature seems to appear in a greater number of contexts than is true of any other 15<sup>th</sup>-century painter.

<sup>30</sup> Benozzo recorded his contributions to Lippo Memmi’s *Maesta* (1317) a work of fresco and tempera painted on a wall of the *Sala di Dante* of San Gimignano’s Palazzo Comunale: BENOZIUS FLORENTINUS PICTOR RESTAURAVIT ANNO DOMINI M.CCCC.LXVII. See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, pp. 258-259, for a catalog entry.

<sup>31</sup> Ames-Lewis, “Benozzo Gozzoli,” p. 29, argues that Benozzo’s work evidences a highly developed and elevated sense of identity.

<sup>32</sup> A youthful Galeazzo Maria Sforza wrote to his father Francesco (April 1459) of his reception in the chapel even before its wall decorations were begun during a diplomatic visit to their Florentine friends and allies. Portions of the letters appear in translation in Kent, *The Patron’s Oeuvre*, p. 306. They are also found in part published by Magnani, *Relazioni private tra la corte Sforzesca di Milano e Casa Medici, 1450 - 1500* (Milan: 1910), p. xiv.

Nevertheless, I hope to suggest some ways in which a Medici member or visitor to the chapel might have understood these inclusions. My approach to this problem is to consider how the audience of the work – the Medici or other viewer – was meant to perceive the character and place of Benozzo in his painting.

We know from Alberti that the recognizable face of a known, historic individual has a clear and desirable place within the narrative rendered in an *istoria*. We are told that a known countenance draws the eyes of the viewer even more successfully than the most skillfully painted anonymous or type visage. Alberti also explained to the reader that the best paintings included many naturalistic details, and were copious with things that caused the eye to wander freely throughout a scene.<sup>33</sup> Benozzo's frescoes would seem to be founded on the same preferences; certainly, the chapel offered visitors many details that would have engaged their attention. This is obviously not a cycle meant to be seen with great hurry; the biblical account of the birth of Christ and the subsequent foreign visitors described by Matthew the evangelist have seen considerable expansion on the walls of the chapel.<sup>34</sup> Transferred from the exotic East to the Tuscan countryside, the three Magi transformed into Kings are painted with Gentile-like flourishes – exotic animals, elegantly caparisoned horses, rich embroideries and brocaded textiles decorated *a secco* with pure gold. It seems that Benozzo, working in a whirlwind 150 *giornate*, took pleasure in describing the pageantry of a full court retinue.<sup>35</sup> The cycle's richness, complexity and specificity of individuals combined with the details of the Tuscan countryside would indicate that ideally the frescoes were best seen slowly, with a leisurely, wandering eye and the ability to move with the progression.

There are dangers in considering Benozzo in isolation from his surroundings. In isolation is, however, exactly how his self-portraits have generally been considered in both general discussions of Quattrocento self-portraiture and more specialized discussions regarding what has been described as the artist's extraordinary self-consciousness. Without disputing the estimation of Benozzo as one of the period's most self-aware artists, I would argue that Benozzo's self-

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<sup>33</sup> Alberti, *On Painting*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>34</sup> It is often forgotten that while both Matthew and Luke wrote of the birth of Christ, Luke described only the visit of the shepherds, and Matthew, writing independently, told only of the Magi. *Matthew*: 2.1-16; *Luke* 2.1-40.

<sup>35</sup> Cristina A. Luchinat, *I restauri nel Palazzo Medici Riccardi: Rinascimento e Barocco* (Cinisello Balsamo: 1992), p. 378, provides a diagram of the frescoes divided by *giornate*. The chapel's decoration began in the summer of 1459 and ended in December of the same year.

images and self-identification within the Chapel of the Magi are far less conspicuous than one would presuppose.

Although to see the image of Benozzo's self-portrait reproduced on a page of a monograph and pared down to a detail is enough to make anyone familiar with Quattrocento self-images marvel at the artist's presumption, the effect in person is far less striking. When considering how it might have been viewed by its privileged viewers, one must take into account several factors. The light by which it was viewed must have been provided by lamps or candles: this was ensured by the chapel's position within the center of the house far from any source of natural light.<sup>36</sup> The only original light sources available were two small, round windows with panes of thin alabaster sheets which cannot have shed much light. The richness of the frescoes – several portions done *a secco* for greater luminosity – with its multitudinous figures offers the visitor a plethora of images. To see the progression of the royal retinue properly necessitates the viewer's movement, too, something the space's tight confines make difficult to accomplish. Although the chapel was obviously meant to be seen by candlelight, even today's strong electric lights do not make the gold lettering identifying the artist any easier to see within the context of the chapel's rich, saturated hues and extensive use of gold leaf employed throughout the small, notoriously dim space. Not only is the self-identification easy to miss, even someone aware of its existence would require a stepladder to actually decipher it; in person, the thin, gold letters fade considerably against the embroidery and embellishing patterns used on the hats and helmets of other nearby figures. The black inscriptions on the angels' haloes are far more legible than Benozzo's gilt one; this was clearly Benozzo's intention. His self-identification is visible primarily once you know of its existence.

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<sup>36</sup> The structure visible today does not reflect its original appearance. It seems that all of the windows now in place were later additions. See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, pp. 219-220; Luchinat, *I restauri nel Palazzo Medici Riccardi: Rinascimento e Barocco*, p. 66; Cristina A. Luchinat, "Il restauro del ciclo pittorico," in *Benozzo Gozzolo. La Cappella dei Magi*, ed. Cristina A. Luchinat (Milan: Electa, 1993), pp. 16-21, for brief discussions of the changes the chapel underwent, including additional windows and a door that destroyed sections of the frescoes. Ironically, the visitor the chapel today will notice that these added windows do not allow any substantial additional light into the space. At some point prior to the Riccardi's acquisition of the palazzo in 1659, the space had already been altered. Cristina A. Luchinat, "The Chapel of the Magi," in *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi Florence*, ed. Cristina A. Luchinat (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), pp. 16-17, publishes a hitherto unknown description – undated and anonymous – found in the Riccardi papers [Florence, Archivio di Stato, Riccardi 386, cc. 1r-2r] that described the chapel's contemporary illumination saying "This sanctuary is lit by a round window above the altar, which admits little light. As in old churches, this was not deemed necessary and was considered to be a distraction in a place of prayer." Luchinat, "The Chapel of the Magi," p. 24, n. 76, states that research done by Giuseppe De Julius suggests the document dates to after 1706.

It seems clear that the *idea* of Benozzo's self-images arrests the modern viewer (or better, the modern specialist) far more than the actual figures, which owing to the chapel's dimness were not discussed – and were likely unrecognized – before the last century. Only the visitor who possessed both considerable time and excellent vision had a chance of noticing that one of Benozzo's twin images was self-identified without it being pointed out.<sup>37</sup> Though the chapel is mentioned in both the *Libro di Antonio Billi* and the *Anonimo Magliabechiano*, the reader is told nothing more than that the cycle exists within the Medici Palace and was painted by Benozzo – certainly no descriptions were tendered nor identifications suggested.<sup>38</sup> Vasari's slightly later account reads almost identically. Considering the biographer's need for portraits, that he gives the space short shrift is in itself quite telling of just how dim or inaccessible this chapel was. The space must have been almost impossible to see if the normally intrepid portrait-hunter missed such a readily available cache. On the other hand, if the self-images were as eye-catching as they appear in published details, they probably would not have made it past Piero de' Medici's critical gaze. From his famous objection to a pair of seraphim resulting in their removal – surely a less objectionable inclusion than a presumptuous artist's self-portrait – it would seem clear that if he had found the self-images (or inscription) distracting or inappropriate, he would have likewise dictated their elimination.<sup>39</sup>

Instead, in order to account for Benozzo's presence within the chapel he must be considered as he showed himself: as part of an elect group. The artist incorporated himself twice into the clusters of portraits displaying men of importance to the Medici and to Quattrocento

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<sup>37</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 376, acknowledges the chapel in a single line. Nevertheless, for any viewer who had the requisite amount of time, these images are placed at the primary locations where one might hope to see them – the two long walls flanking the two narrower ones that frame the altarpiece. In this area of the chapel, a viewer may stand and turning 90° in either direction, see the two images.

<sup>38</sup> Benedettucci, *Il Libro di Antonio Billi*, p. 96, and Ficarra, *L'Anonimo Magliabechiano*, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 86. Benozzo wrote Piero de' Medici three times in the period July – September, 1459. The first of these, dated July 10, 1459, reports, "Yesterday I had a letter from your Magnificence through Ruberto Martegli from which I understand that you think that the seraphim I made are out of place. I have only made one in a corner among certain clouds; one sees nothing but the tips of his wings, and he is so well hidden and so covered by clouds that he does make for deformity at all but rather for beauty...I have made another on the other side of the altar but also hidden in a similar way. Ruberto Martegli has seen them and said that there is no reason to make a fuss about them. Nevertheless, I'll do as you command; two little cloudlets will take them away..." The translation is from Gombrich, "The Early Medici," pp. 48-49, who cites Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti*, pp. 191-194, for the letter's original publication in Italian. For a more recent reprinting of these three epistles in the Italian, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 277. The general tone of Benozzo's letters to his patron indicates that Piero often delayed paying or supplying his artist. Withholding either would doubtless have encouraged Benozzo to remove any offending portion of the painting had Benozzo sensed any hesitancy on the part of his picky patron.

Florence.<sup>40</sup> The physical context of Benozzo's self-images being what it is – surrounded by Medici family members and partisans – it must be recognized that however extraordinary the existence of Benozzo's self-portraits, their actual renditions are no more eye-catching or striking than any of the other figures in the luxurious setting but for the outward glance.<sup>41</sup> Amongst the numerous figures, there are at a minimum thirty portraits, many of which have been identified, albeit with varying degrees of certainty.<sup>42</sup> Given the relative importance indicated by clothing and physical position within the retinue, Benozzo's placement is suitably modest.

A consideration of visibility within the chapel gives rise to another issue which bears noting. Without doubt, the Palazzo Medici chapel was a prestigious location of great importance for the family: beyond any political cachet it provided, family members would have occasionally attended mass and used the space for private devotion in addition to receiving important guests there. Nevertheless, the paucity of contemporary descriptions, or indeed any before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, indicates how little known its marvelous details were – and also its portraits. This is in itself an interesting point to observe. Much of how portraiture is currently understood relies heavily on the visibility of the image. Modern scholarship discusses the Renaissance manifestations of the genre in several lights, some of which have already been discussed. Quattrocento portraiture was commemorative in function, but it also proffered an example of virtue; it was a model for one's descendants. It often served to demonstrate the links between individuals and groups – as we see here – amongst themselves and to a holy figure whose actions

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<sup>40</sup> Peter Meller, "Ritratti 'bucolici' di artisti del Quattrocento," *Emporium* XC (1960): pp. 3-10, argues that Benozzo is also found in the figure of a shepherd in the fresco decorating the west wall adjacent to the sanctuary. Although this is an interesting theory, there are enough known self-portraits of Benozzo that all resemble each other sufficiently to indicate on the basis of comparison that this is *not* Benozzo. Moreover, given the nature of Benozzo's other appearances, the guise of a humble shepherd would not appear to coincide with the artist's view of himself. The term men as used in the phrase above is correct: no women save the Virgin in Filippo Lippi's altarpiece appear in the chapel.

<sup>41</sup> While the outward glance is often associated with the rendition of an artist within a fresco, other figures in the cycle also appear to meet the viewer's gaze. Notice, for example, that the young king Caspar's eyes seem trained on the same trajectory as Benozzo's, looking out from the same wall.

<sup>42</sup> Marcello Bellini, "La Capella dei Magi nel Palazzo Medici-Riccardi," in *Cappelle del Rinascimento a Firenze*, ed. Mario Carniani and Antonio Paolucci (Florence: Editore Becocci, 1998), p. 50, puts the number of portraits in the chapel at between thirty and thirty-five, while from her numbering system, Luchinat, "Medici e cittadini," p. 364, appears to accept thirty-three as portraits, or thirty-one in addition to Benozzo's two. For other studies suggesting identifies of famous Medici family members and partisans, see for example P. Kaplan, *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1985); Karla Langedijk, *De portretten van de Medici tot omstreeks 1600* (Amsterdam: 1968); Karla Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici, 15th-18th Centuries*, 2 vols. (Florence: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1981-1983); "Meller, "Ritratti 'bucolici' di artisti del Quattrocento," pp. 3-10; Jacques Mesnil, "Sigismondo Malatesta e Galeazzo Maria Sforza in un affresco del Gozzoli," *Rassegna d'Arte* IX (1909): p. 74f; A. Muñoz, "La tomba e il ritratto del patriarca di Costantinopoli (1439)," *Rivista d'Arte* VI (1909): pp. 115-119.



the individuals portrayed might appear to witness. Such displays were for the spiritual benefit of those portrayed, and further made the viewer aware of both the piety of the depicted individuals and the viewer's own need for salvation.

It must be recognized, however, that these and other interpretations put forth regarding Renaissance portraiture presume one simple fact: that an image was entirely visible and thus recognizable. This is in contrast, however, to the situation I think existed within the Medici palazzo's Chapel of the Magi. Instead, the modern viewer does well to remember that pre-modern art was not always positioned where it would show to advantage – at least not to human eyes. Much like a finely carved statue or an exquisite historiated stained glass window adorning the uppermost level of a cathedral façade, the simple fact of the portraits' existence mattered as much as their visibility to any mortal viewer. An omnipotent creator was aware of the devotion displayed in the creation of a work dedicated to a holy figure, whether human eyes could perceive it or not. A similar situation is found within the Medici's chapel; it seems logical that only those most familiar with the chapel – presumably Medici family members – would have had the opportunity to recognize the figures portrayed without aid. For those others portrayed, the benefits were not primarily those of general recognition within the august company, but rather those of patronage and partisanship. The political and spiritual advantages derived from their personal knowledge of participation in the holy event along with their friends/allies, the Medici outweighed concerns of being recognized by other men. It also seems plausible that the Medici reserved for themselves the privilege of pointing out those figures present in the cycle to interested viewers. In this, Benozzo's placement of the portraits would have assisted their efforts; they are figured close to the altar where one presumes there would have been candles already in place, in addition to any others that might have been necessary to aid such an exercise.

The issue of the visibility of any particular portrait aside, Piero de' Medici was clearly looking for a portraitist with other talents for the family chapel. It would be absurd to assume it was only by happy accident that his choice of artists proved to be so talented in this regard, especially considering the acclaim garnered by Benozzo's involvement in the creation of the lost coronation regalia used in the ceremony that crowned Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini as Pope Pius II the previous year.<sup>43</sup> The standards, according to Ahl “displayed [Benozzo's] prowess above

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<sup>43</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 81.

all else as a portraitist.”<sup>44</sup> At the same time, although Benozzo’s facility with portraiture would have been well-known, so would have been the sensitivity of his Franciscan cycle at Montefalco. Cosimo and Piero would have chosen their artist with these factors in mind.

It is useful, when considering the part Benozzo plays within the narrative, to see him within two simultaneous contexts: as part of the portrayal of Medici partisans and also as part of the courtly retinue in noble service to ancient kings. That Benozzo appears ultimately as a retainer to the Magi – and not simply the Medici – has been overlooked. I want to address this issue and its implications first. Although described simply as “Magi” in Matthew’s account, a tradition of portraying the mysterious visitors as eastern kings has long been in place in Christian art.<sup>45</sup> The biblical episode was, as has been amply demonstrated by Rab Hatfield, of great importance to Quattrocento Florentine society.<sup>46</sup> As the iconography developed in response to changing needs, the Magi might be represented as white or black, as representative of the three ages of man or different parts of the world, but their visual depictions remained unquestionably royal in nature. In this vein, one might consider Benozzo’s presentations of himself within the *Journey of the Magi* as that of a highly regarded court artist. Some of the most famous and cultured rulers of the past had been praised for their interest in the various visual arts – and had been known for the quality of the artists favored with their patronage. Texts such as Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, discussed above as a model for art patrons, were popular in the Renaissance and alluded to often by those who wrote about the arts. Several chapters – most especially Book XXXV on the subject of ancient painting – give the names of artists whose works were highly prized by ancient monarchs to the extent that to preserve them, wars were knowingly lost.<sup>47</sup>

Petrarch, a key figure for re-establishing painting and sculpture as part of the discourse of humanism, displayed his familiarity with Pliny’s text and the contents of its chapters on painting

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the three kings iconography and its meanings and context in Christian history and European society, see Richard Trexler, *The Journey of the Magi: Meanings in the History of a Christian Story* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Rab Hatfield, “The Compagnia de’ Magi,” *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970); Rab Hatfield, *Botticelli’s Uffizi “Adoration”: A Study in Pictorial Content* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

<sup>47</sup> Pliny, *The Elder Pliny’s Chapters on the History of Art*, pp. 139-141, describes of a painting by Ialysos that caused King Demetrios to refrain from setting fire to Rhodes in order to preserve it. Demetrios likewise showed his devotion to the arts by keeping Protogenes, a painter who chose to remain outside the walls of a besieged city, safe during the conflict at the cost of victory.

and sculpture in Books XXXIV - XXXVI.<sup>48</sup> In his own chapters on painting and sculpture from *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, written between 1354 and 1366, Petrarch's conversancy with the ancient text is evident in the dialogue between Reason and Joy. Reason, soliloquizing on the subject of the ancient arts, invokes the "great pride" reported by Pliny of Alexander of Macedonia for the monarch's choice of Apelles, Pyrgoteles and Lysippus as artists above the rest to whom the ruler gave the sole privileges to paint, engrave and sculpt the monarch's images.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps even better known is Petrarch's comparison of Simone Martini with Apelles, which argues that the latter must yield to the modern painter. Other Renaissance authors discussing the arts, including Filippo Villani in the Trecento and Leonardo Giustiniani in the first quarter of the Quattrocento, showed themselves also to be well-acquainted with Pliny and other texts by ancient authors that discussed famous artists of the past who had been favored by monarchs and other nobles.<sup>50</sup> It is worth noting that while Petrarch's text is not documented as part of the Medici library, Piero commissioned a handsome copy of the *Natural History* that was completed by June of 1458.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the idea of artists as members of ancient courts would have been known by then. It seems credible that some viewers, if made aware of the self-portrait, would have made this association.

Moreover, the period itself had already recognized a few artists with court appointments and other honors and titles. During the early Quattrocento, a favored court artist might be made a *valet de chambre* or a *familiaris*.<sup>52</sup> Pisanello was given the title of *familiaris* by Gianfrancesco Gonzaga of Mantua in 1439, while over a hundred years previously, Giotto's letter of appointment to the same position by King Robert of Anjou in 1330 described the artist as "our

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<sup>48</sup> For this argument, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, p. 53.

<sup>49</sup> Cited and translation published in *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>50</sup> For the former, see the *vita* of Giotto written by Villani, Villani, and Villani, *Croniche*, p. 450. Filippo Villani's debt to Pliny is clear the portion giving the author's justification of the inclusion of the segment, which cites the ancient privileges of Zeuxis, Apelles and others. In the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Giustiniani (d. 1446) wrote a letter recommending a gift, saying that he knew well "how much interest, honor and respect the art of painting has been cherished by kings, peoples and nations...." and then going on to cite several ancient artists discussed by Pliny. For the letter, see B. Fenigstein, *Leonardo Giustiniani* (Halle: 1909), p. 20; for a translated portion, see Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, pp. 97-98. Lorenzo Ghiberti's discussion of ancient art at the beginning of his unfinished *I commentarii*, too, owes a debt to the ancient author; see Ghiberti, *I commentarii*, pp. 1-31. Similarly, see the text of the Ficarra, *L'Anonimo Magliabechiano*.

<sup>51</sup> For information on this text and Piero's library generally, see Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Library and Manuscripts of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici*, Outstanding Theses from the Courtauld Institute of Art (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984), especially pp. 84-85. Piero gained a second copy of the text upon the death of his brother Giovanni de' Medici.

familiar and faithful servant.” The Sieneese painter Andrea Vanni was allowed to sign a work made at the Neapolitan court of 1355 as “painter and most familiar servant to our lady Queen Joanna.” Moreover, Italians were the only artists favored in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century with knighthoods: Dello Delli’s knighthood in Spain, for example, was confirmed upon his return to Florence; while in 1458, Pietro da Milano was similarly honored by King Ferrante of Naples. Likewise, a few months before Benozzo began decorating the Medici chapel, Andrea Mantegna was referred to as “*carissimum familiarem nostrum*” by Ludovico Gonzaga in his appointment charter dated January 30, 1459.<sup>53</sup>

I do not make this point in order to suggest that Benozzo displayed any ambitions toward a court appointment himself. The artist was prolific and won many important commissions during the sixty-year span of his long career, notably one that coincided with some of the most artistically exciting years of the Renaissance. Nevertheless, although Benozzo painted for more than one pope, nothing of his pattern of patrons suggests that he sought royal or noble patronage.<sup>54</sup> One might surmise that he had sufficient difficulty in gaining his payment and necessary supplies from Piero without adding court intrigues to the mixture. However, if one considers how a 15<sup>th</sup>-century viewer and Medici partisan or privileged ally might have viewed the interior of the famous chapel and understood the presentation of the artist within the fresco, a credible reading is to see Benozzo as a respected court painter. Benozzo’s self-portrait is thus not out of place even in the lofty company of his patrons and their friends and allies. Instead, seeing the artist in the context of the three holy Kings would have allowed the viewer to make erudite associations about ancient courts and the artists they had honored, perhaps leading to further associations concerning Benozzo and his place within the company.

Furthermore, although the cycle was created in Republican Florence in the home of a patron famous for his reluctance to appear ostentatious in the eyes of his fellow-citizens, the Medici were also Florence’s most prominent political family who had wheeled and dealt their way to the top. Florence lacked a traditional court, a formidable political weapon for dealing

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<sup>52</sup> For a general study on the culture, history and make-up of Italian Renaissance courts, see Sergio Bertelli, Franco Cardini, and Elivira G. Zorzi, *Le corti italiane del rinascimento* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1985).

<sup>53</sup> For citation of these and other Renaissance artists with court connections, see Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>54</sup> In addition to the standards that Benozzo painted for Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini upon his coronation as Pope Pius II, Benozzo acted as Fra Angelico’s associate and collaborator in works painted for Eugenius IV and Nicholas

with foreign powers, but the Medici palazzo could nonetheless serve the city as a focus of court activities. It has been argued that Piero's own artistic tastes were more in keeping with the court-associated styles prevalent in Ferrara and Venice than with those of his own city. In addition, he was likely influenced by the model of Este family patronage and its court in his choice of decorations for the Medici palazzo.<sup>55</sup>

Recognition of these factors tempts leads to speculation about other goals Benozzo might have had and what he wanted to express to his patrons – and potential patrons – with his images. Just as Benozzo shows himself as a court artist to the Magi, the viewer must have also understood him as a Medici partisan bound by the ties of patronage that typically obligated members of Mediterranean societies to one another. Benozzo may appear in the company of the monarchs, but he – like the other portraits he paints into the scene – is still present by the consent of his patrons, whose servant he declared himself to be in letters addressed to Piero in 1459 and Lorenzo de' Medici in 1467.<sup>56</sup> This statement of fealty is visually manifested in his depiction of himself in their company, in the second rank on foot behind the leading horses. Although Benozzo is not known to have won any other Medici commissions, it is possible that Lorenzo smoothed the way for the artist towards one of his last and most important projects. Benozzo began work on Pisa's Camposanto frescoes in 1468 after negotiations with Andrea Mantegna fell through; perhaps Lorenzo promoted Benozzo in the other's stead.<sup>57</sup> Although Benozzo was not their first choice, the fact that the *committenti* had previously chosen Mantegna speaks to the caliber and expertise the Pisans desired and were willing to pay for. That Benozzo maintained contact with the Medici is evidenced by the letter of the previous year. Moreover, Lorenzo – although not the commissioner of art his father and grandfather had been – was famous

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V in Rome. For discussion of Benozzo's standards for Pope Pius II, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 81 and p. 273.

Regarding his collaboration with Fra Angelico for latter pair, see *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>55</sup> Piero's interest in the Este's patronage had probably first been peaked during 1437 – 1439, when he looked after the family's interests at the Council of Ferrara. See Francis Ames-Lewis, "Piero (di Cosimo) [the Gouty] de' Medici, Lord of Florence," *Grove Art Online* (accessed January 21, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Two of the 1459 letters that Benozzo addressed to Piero close with the painter recommending himself as "*il vostro servidoro*." See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 277. Although he does not close in this way in his letter to Lorenzo dated July 4, 1467, which thanks the young Medici for his intervention on behalf of a workshop *garzone* accused of theft, the tone of the letter clearly invokes his earlier links with and devotion to the house. For the letter's recent publication, see *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>57</sup> For the suggestion that Lorenzo advocated the artist's name for the Camposanto commission, see *Ibid.*, p. 160.

throughout Italy for his judgment of artistic merit, something that was frequently sought, and he often recommended worthy artists for important commissions.<sup>58</sup>

It is interesting to regard the self-portraits in the Medici palace chapel as a negotiation between patron and client. A great deal of research has been carried out over the past several decades on the subject of Renaissance attitudes towards friendship, patronage, *clientelismo* and *mecenatismo*, though the ways in which the two latter terms are used by scholars are occasionally criticized.<sup>59</sup> Benozzo, an undeniably self-conscious artist who painted what are probably his first self-portraits in the Medici palace chapel, created with them a different kind of memorial than he had previously been granted in inscriptions. Here for the first – although not the last – time, Benozzo's images compete with words to convey his memory and identity to his viewers.

The exact nature of the relationship between artist and patron which allowed this memorial to Benozzo to exist cannot be discussed with any great claim to accuracy. Nevertheless, the period in which Benozzo painted the chapel is one of transition that would see marked changes in the ways in which individuals would discuss contemporary works of art and those who had made them. Michelozzo's role, for example, as Cosimo's principal architect for the Medici palace was all but obliterated in contemporary literature, which instead presented Cosimo as the sole *genitor* of the buildings he had financed.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, who could forget

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<sup>58</sup> Poliziano, cited in Christopher Hibbert, *The House of Medici: Its Rise and Fall* (New York: Morrow, 1975), p. 122, referred to Lorenzo as "the laurel who sheltered the birds that sang in the Tuscan spring..." Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture," p. 203, cites a similar phrase "Florence beneath the Laurel's Shade" (*Lauri sub umbra*), the title of a contemporary sonnet by Bernardo Bellincioni which is published at p. 440. Moreover, it was not at all uncommon for towns under the dominion of Florence to request Lorenzo's assistance in resolving disputes involving works of art and architecture. For discussion, see William J. Connell, "Changing Patterns of Medicean Patronage, The Florentine Dominion During the 15<sup>th</sup> Century," in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, ed. G. C. Garfagnini (Florence: Olschki, 1994). Whether or not Lorenzo recommended Benozzo for the job, the Pisans demonstrated considerable satisfaction in their artist with the singular honor of a cenotaph dated 1484, the year of the frescoes' completion, dedicated to the artist some thirteen years before his death. In light of the fame of the Camposanto as a burial space, this is no small accolade. For discussion, see Ames-Lewis, "Benozzo Gozzoli e l'immagine di sé come artista."

<sup>59</sup> An example of a discussion of these terms can be found in Tracy E. Cooper, "Mecenatismo or Clientelismo? The Character of Renaissance Patronage," in *The Search for a Patron in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. David G. Wilkins and Rebecca Wilkins (Lewiston: Mellen, 1996). Nevertheless, recent criticism of the terms is found in Kent, *The Patron's Oeuvre*, p. 8, and Burke, *Changing Patrons*, pp. 4-5, who both argue that since neither term was used during the Renaissance, their use is anachronistic.

<sup>60</sup> For discussion, see Harriet Caplow, *Michelozzo* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), pp. 52-59. In the texts that Caplow discusses, Michelozzo is not named, and emerges only a century later in Vasari's *Lives*. The same had already been noted by Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," pp. 40-42, who also pointed out that contemporary writers on the arts, including Vespasiano and Filarete, were silent regarding Michelozzo's involvement in Cosimo's buildings.

Giovanni Rucellai's famous proclamation of his creative role on the façade of Santa Maria Novella that he had financed? "I, Giovanni Rucellai, son of Paolo, made this in the year of our Lord 1470."<sup>61</sup> Others might remember that the design is that of Leon Battista Alberti, but as its financier, Rucellai tells the world that he "made" it.<sup>62</sup>

In several of his other commissions before and after the *Journey of the Magi*, Benozzo made (or was allowed to make) a much clearer claim for his own role in the creation of a cycle he had painted. At least fifteen signatures survive associated with various panels and fresco cycles painted throughout his lengthy career; slightly more than half are some variation of one of his earliest: OPUS BENOZII DE FLORENZIA.<sup>63</sup> Two signatures, however, are notably different: both of them offer the artist unusual praise, while one also names a second individual as another primary actor in the commission.<sup>64</sup> Of all of the artist's signature inscriptions, the one Benozzo used in the Medici chapel is the most direct in its identification of the artist's image, while also being arguably the wittiest and, in terms of visibility and length, the most discreet. Discretion and perhaps wittiness too, might have been considered appropriate given the context.

There is sufficient variation in signatures and inscriptions placed on Quattrocento works of art – alternatively assigned to an artist or commissioner – in addition to numerous instances when they are simply not present, to make it obvious that an artist was to some extent constrained in his claim to his work. Perhaps it was considered inappropriate in some circumstances, or simply not the desire of his patrons, who wished instead to commemorate their

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<sup>61</sup> "IOHANES-ORICELLARIVS-PAV-F-AN-SAL-MCCCCLXX" appears on the façade of Florence's Dominican church above the row of sails that served as another means to signal the merchant-banker's contribution.

<sup>62</sup> Domenico da Corella (1403-1483), a friar who spent most of his life at S. Maria Novella, and who was its prior from 1436 to 1453, remarked in his *Theotocon* (Baldassarri and Saiber, eds., *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, pp. 248-249), regarding the church's façade. "Inflamed with an intense love for the Holy Mother, Giovanni Rucellai paid for the entire construction with his own money. Thanks to him, the outside of the church is now embellished with a new façade of colored marble. People praise him to the heavens and duly show him their immense gratitude. To this work is also linked the glory of Battista Alberti who managed to create it through his art and skill. He adorned the façade with fruit-laden branches that stretch above the church doors and decorated the marble with varied designs. The façade was thus renovated and rendered more beautiful, thanks to the ability of this distinguished artist."

<sup>63</sup> This is the text Benozzo used in the chapel of St. Jerome in the church of San Francesco, Montefalco. The cycle dedicated to the saint is dated 1452. For a catalog entry, see Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, pp. 231-232. Although fifteen of Benozzo's signatures survive, it is likely that some lost or damaged works bore inscriptions that are no longer extant. Moreover, the consistent invocation of Florence as Benozzo's city of origin even – or perhaps especially – when traveling abroad might indicate the prestige of the foreign artist precisely *as* a foreigner.

<sup>64</sup> The inscription from the scene of *Joseph and His Brothers* from the Camposanto, Pisa is the most laudatory of any inscription concerning Benozzo. The second inscription alluded to and already mentioned is from Montefalco's cycle dedicated to St. Francis.

own activities, as was the case for a few of Benozzo's commissions.<sup>65</sup> Traditional ideas of modesty and humility may also have influenced some artists who, working for the glory of God and their livelihoods, simply did not wish to advance or attach their identities to their works. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the exaltation or commemoration of some artists, the patron, too – as is found in some of Benozzo's paintings – occasionally claims a share of fame and recognition to be shared, or not, with the artist. This element of Renaissance patronage makes Benozzo's presentation within the Medici palace chapel all the more intriguing with regard to the relations between patron and artist, and to which party went the claim of creation.

For these reasons, it would seem to me that the presence of Benozzo and his identifying inscription reflect a far more interesting relationship between painter and patron than has been previously considered for the individuals in question. Other Quattrocento painters patronized by the Medici did not commemorate their involvement in works of art to Benozzo's extent, although history has judged them to be finer artists.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps Benozzo's portraits and self-identification reflect what might be termed patronal generosity, if not the amorphous Renaissance concept of *amicizia* or friendship, the grease that kept the Florentine political system and social life operable. One may recall that Benozzo's second letter to Piero dated September 9, 1459, addressed his patron as "my most singular friend" (*Amicho mio singularissimo*).<sup>67</sup> It would seem possible to see Benozzo's presence in the company of his patrons as his declaration of being "for the Medici" as much as any other partisan present. Therefore, I think the fact that his images remain might reflect the Medici's acceptance of the type of instrumental friendship that Benozzo would later invoke in a letter to Lorenzo. Having likely asked for Lorenzo's assistance in a dispute involving one of his *garzone*, Benozzo thanks Lorenzo for his aid, which itself might

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<sup>65</sup> One example of a patron commemorating his own part in a commission from Benozzo's oeuvre is an altarpiece painted for the Compagnia dei Fiorentini of Pisa in 1477. Although the inscription has been strengthened, it reads: "This altarpiece was furnished on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 1477, in the time of the most dignified captain, the magnificent Lotto di Giovanni Salviati" (QUESTA TAVOLA FU FORNITA A DI XXVII DI MARZ.O M.CCCC.LXXII AL TE[M]PO DEL MAGNIFICO HUOMO L[O]TTO DI GIOVAN[N]I SALVIATI CA[PITAN]O DI[GNI]SS[I]MO.) Benozzo's participation is not recorded anywhere on the piece in this case. See Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, pp. 238-239, for a catalog entry.

<sup>66</sup> These include Fra Angelico, Domenico Veneziano, Fra Filippo Lippi, Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Filippino Lippi, and, it is generally accepted, Paolo Uccello, although the latter's *Battle of San Romano* is argued to have been originally owned by the Bartolini family. See Gilbert, "What Did the Renaissance Patron Buy?" p. 446, for discussion.

<sup>67</sup> Ahl, *Benozzo Gozzoli*, p. 277.



have been activated if Lorenzo was the artist's advocate in the Camposanto commission less than ten years after the painting of the Medici palace chapel.

Before moving on to embedded self-images from the next generation, the puzzling issue of Benozzo's double-presentation must be addressed, if only to acknowledge the fact that it is one that continues to perplex scholars. In visual terms, were one to recognize that the faces are of the same individual, Benozzo's visages might provide a punctuation of sorts to the cycle. Gazing out from the wall containing the Medici portraits, the self-identified artist serenely regards the viewer in order to introduce himself, only to represent himself on the opposite wall, a hand painted beside his face as if in a gesture of good luck and farewell. As Ahl has suggested, the two appearances on the east and west walls of the chapel may have been intended as a measure to help the viewer understand that one viewed a true progression of the Kings' courts towards the birthplace of the newly-born Christ Child. The presence of the same face twice would have marked the retinue's progress as it neared its culmination.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, it is interesting to consider Benozzo's double-presentation in light of Andrea Orcagna's self-portrait in the *Dormition of the Virgin* on the back of the Tabernacle in Orsanmichele. Andrea made himself known to the viewer by means of both an inscription and a self-portrait, and I argue that Benozzo acts similarly and, in fact, goes farther than Andrea by signing his own self-portrait and then recording his image a second time. Moreover, as will be explored in the next section, Benozzo's extraordinary self-consciousness appears to find sympathy amongst the next generation of Florentine self-portraitists who, although they do not sign their self-images in the same manner, nevertheless take measures to make themselves known to their viewers.

## **5.2 FLORENTINE EMBEDDED SELF-PORTRAITURE OF THE 1470S AND 1480S**

From the 1460s and beyond, embedded self-portraits and other portraits of artists are reported to have cropped up with some regularity in the works of a few Florentine artists at home and outside the city. These appearances occur in a variety of frescoes and panels made for the great and small churches of Florence, as well as for great and small patrons. This section will explore

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

three artists who produced self-portraits during the latter half of the Quattrocento in Florentine paintings. The three artists under consideration here – Sandro Botticelli (c. 1447 – 1510), Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449 – 1494), and Filippino Lippi (c. 1457 – 1504) – present themselves as a compelling group upon which to focus. Three acclaimed artists working in a city that prized its artists, each is believed to have created at least one embedded self-portrait in that city. That each artist is also one of the four mentioned within a fascinating, often-quoted letter of c. 1490 written by an anonymous agent of Ludovico Sforza concerning possible Florentine painters to employ at the Certosa di Pavia, only makes them more interesting to study as a group as regards the phenomena of embedded self-portraiture.

Before going further, it is worth quoting the pertinent parts of the letter:

Sandro Botticelli, an excellent painter both on panel and on wall. His things have a virile air and are done with the best method and complete proportion. Filippino, son of the very good painter Fra Filippo Lippi: a pupil of the above-mentioned Botticelli and son of the most outstanding master of his time. His things have a sweeter air than Botticelli's; I do not think they have as much skill. Perugino, an exceptional master, and particularly on walls. His things have an angelic air, and very sweet. Domenico Ghirlandaio, a good master on panels and even more so on walls. His things have a good air, and he is an expeditious man and one who gets through much work. All these masters have made proof of themselves in the chapel of Pope Sixtus IV, except Filippino. All of them later also in the Spedaletto of Lorenzo di Magnifico, and the palm of victory is pretty much in doubt.<sup>69</sup>

The unknown agent, who implies familiarity with Florentine painters and their paintings, selected four artists who are still considered amongst the best of those working in the city during the last few decades of the Quattrocento.<sup>70</sup> It is, of course, likely that this acclaim was a factor in their creation of embedded self-portraits. Moreover, it is without doubt that all four artists and their respective works were well-known to each other; they had worked with one another or

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<sup>69</sup> Originally published by P. Müller-Walde, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Leonardo da Vinci," *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 18 (1897), the text is often quoted. For discussion and a reprinting of the text in Italian and its English translation, see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 25-27 and p. 160: *Sandro de Botticello pictore Excellen<sup>mo</sup> in tavola et in muro: le cose sue hano aria virile et sono cum optima ragione et integra proportione. Philippino di Frati Philippo ottimo: Discipulo del sopra dicto et figliolo del piu singulare maestro di tempo suoi: le sue cose hano aria piu dolce: non credo habiano tanta arte. El Perusino Maestro singulare: et maxime in mure: le sue cose hano aria angelica, et molto dolce. Domincio de Grilandaio bono maestro in tavola et piu in muro: le cose sue hano bona aria, et e homo expeditivo, et che conduce assai lavarò: Tutti questi predicti maestri hano facto prova di loro ne la capella di papa syxto excepto che philippino. Ma tutti poi allospedaletto del M<sup>co</sup> Laur<sup>o</sup> et la palma e quasi ambigua.*

<sup>70</sup> Of these artists, only the three mentioned above will be discussed now. Pietro Perugino will be discussed in Chapter Five.

within the same spaces more-or-less at the same time. The implications are intriguing: unlike earlier examples for which it is possible only to speculate if an artist had seen another's self-image, here each would have had ample opportunity to see the self-portraits of the others.<sup>71</sup> This alone makes their creations of self-portraits within the same ten year period worth another look. Moreover, to my knowledge, no one has considered how their self-portraits might relate to one another.

My interest in this group has not greatly changed from that of earlier discussions. This is worth reiterating in light of the swift changes that artistic reputation and status underwent during the last two or three decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Even before the creation of the Cinquecento "superstars" Michelangelo and Raphael, both of whom died wealthy men, many artists of the second half of the Quattrocento were famous, well paid, and ideas about them and their worth were changing.<sup>72</sup> Evidence suggests that artists were being paid and written about more than in the past, and were themselves angling for higher status in society.<sup>73</sup> Antonio Paolucci, commenting on a painting that will be discussed below, said of an embedded self-portrait to be found there that "no one doubts" the identification, at least in part because "in [the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century,] artists had attained for the most part an elevated concept of their professional and social role, and commissioners were ready to grant them suitable visibility and public recognition."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> These artists crossed paths with considerable frequency. Botticelli is recognized as the teacher and a major influence on the style of Filippino to the extent that Berenson originally dubbed several of the latter's works as those of an invented "Amico di Sandro," (1899), only reassigning many of them to Filippino in 1932, a judgment with which many critics concur. The pair collaborated often. Botticelli and Ghirlandaio remained in the other's orbit throughout the last two decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century up to the latter's death in 1494. In 1480, Botticelli received a commission to paint a pendant to Domenico's *St. Jerome* painted earlier in the year in the church of Ognissanti, *St. Augustine's Vision of the Death of St. Jerome*. Domenico and Botticelli were two of the Florentine artists chosen to be sent to Rome to paint the walls of Sixtus IV's Vatican chapel in 1481, and were also both at work in the autumn of the next year in the *Sala dei Gigli* of the Palazzo della Signoria. All of the artists mentioned in the famous letter were chosen to decorate Lorenzo de' Medici's Lorenzo de' Medici's villa at Spedaletto, near Volterra.

<sup>72</sup> Regarding Michelangelo's wealth, see Rab Hatfield, *The Wealth of Michelangelo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002); Rab Hatfield, "The High End: Michelangelo's Earnings," in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th - 17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell'Arte in Italia, secc. XV-XVII*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2003).

<sup>73</sup> A single example, Sandro Botticelli's name appeared in discussions regarding his artistic talents in no less than five instances prior to Vasari's biography in the *Vite*. For publication and discussion of these occasions, see Umberto Baldini, *Botticelli* (Florence: Edizione d'arte il Fiorino, 1988), pp. 123-124.

<sup>74</sup> Antonio Paolucci, "Sandro Botticelli e il potere dei Medici," in *Botticelli e Filippino. L'inquietudine e la grazia nella pittura fiorentina del Quattrocento* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2004), p. 72, wrote concerning Botticelli's embedded self-portrait in the *Adoration* created for Guasparre dal Lama's Santa Maria Novella altar that "*Nessun dubbio .... in questa'epoca gli artisti hanno ormai raggiunto un concetto assai alto della loro professione e del loro ruolo sociale e i committenti sono pronti a concedere loro adeguata visibilità e pubblici riconoscimenti.*"

That being said, however, in a mercantile society like the one in which Florentine artists worked, no merchant was going to allow himself to be short-measured. “Florentine intellectuals are very sharp, and operate strenuously in every area,” reported the humanist writer Francesco Filelfo da Tolentino in 1432.<sup>75</sup> It is commonly acknowledged that it was primarily during the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that the remarkable ascent of the status and reputation of Italian artists began to pick up pace; prior gains were significant but paled in comparison with later soaring reputations – and prices. Some commissioners had, sometimes grudgingly, come to regard the artist as part of a particular group that sometimes required special handling, and were readier even than in the past to grant them visibility and public recognition. Although embedded self-portraits become more frequent during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, they are not found in every painter’s *oeuvre* or in every important or “visible” commission. Additionally, those artists thought to have created a self-image rarely made more than one or possibly two embedded self-portraits, a minute number when compared with the relative output of fresco cycles and panels containing portraits by the same artists.<sup>76</sup> These factors tend to suggest that even at the eve of the 16<sup>th</sup> century it is still highly doubtful that it was solely the artist’s decision to place him in a commissioned painting.

If some Renaissance artists were being granted greater visibility and public recognition, these factors of visibility and recognition in some way affected both the *committente* and the commissioned work of art. In this section, I will briefly examine the circumstances surrounding commissions that included embedded self-images of Sandro Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, and Filippino Lippi in order to make some initial suggestions. I think that increasingly during the last three decades of the Quattrocento, there is reason to believe that the reputation and regard in which an artist was held by Renaissance society was a commodity harnessed by the commissioner to the commission itself, and that many late-Quattrocento embedded self-portraits can be interpreted as a sign of this negotiation. This is a subtle but important distinction to make regarding the history of embedded self-images, which are often seen as generating solely from the artist’s desires – desires which we can only surmise were indulged by his patron.

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<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Kent, *The Patron's Oeuvre*, p. 122.

<sup>76</sup> The exceptions to this are artists such as Benozzo Gozzoli, already discussed, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Filippino Lippi, who respectively painted four, three and two embedded self-images. Instead, it seems to have been more common that – from evidence gathered from written accounts and existing paintings – that an artist might create one self-portrait during his entire career.

Nevertheless, indulgent is not the word that comes to mind when describing two of Domenico Ghirlandaio's most important Florentine patrons, rival Medici bankers Francesco Sassetti and Giovanni Tornabuoni, for whom the artist painted fresco cycles including two self-portraits.<sup>77</sup> Of Guasparre di Zanobi dal Lama (c. 1409 – 1481), one of Sandro Botticelli's early patrons for whom he painted the *Adoration of the Magi* (c. 1475) for the altar of the Magi in Santa Maria Novella, we lack sufficient information to say either way.<sup>78</sup> Rab Hatfield has commented that were it not for the famous panel, its patron Guasparre di Zanobi dal Lama (c. 1409 – 1481) might well have gone forever unsung, so unprepossessing an individual was he.<sup>79</sup> Another self-portrait of these years is intriguing by virtue of its context although it is opaque as regards the circumstances of its commission. Filippino Lippi, perhaps known as much for the scandalous events surrounding his conception as for his own talents, is reported by Vasari as having included his own image in the *Crucifixion of St. Peter*, a fresco painted to complete the already-famous Brancacci Chapel.<sup>80</sup> Patronal indulgence alone would not appear to be sufficient

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<sup>77</sup> The documentation of these commissions, respectively in Santa Trinità (1482 - 1485), and in the Cappella Maggiore of Santa Maria Novella (1486 - 1489), is secure. Domenico is easily recognizable in frescoes of the *Resuscitation of the French Notary's Son* and the *Expulsion of Joachim*, respectively. A third likeness occurs in the *Adoration of the Magi* (1488), an altarpiece commissioned by Francesco di Giovanni Tesori, prior of the Ospedale degli Innocenti, for an altar within the foundling hospital's church. Incidentally, the predella for this panel was the cause of a renegotiated contract. See Paul E. Küppers, *Die Tafelbilder des Domenico Ghirlandaio* (Strassburg: J E Heitz, 1916), pp. 86-87. A visual comparison of the works confirms that the same man is represented in all three.

<sup>78</sup> Vasari tells us this painting was found in his day on an altar positioned "to the left on entering by the middle door" of the church. Herbert Percy Horne, *Botticelli, Painter of Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 39, asserts on the basis of the "Sepolcrario" or register of all of the chapels, tombs and inscriptions of the church preserved in the Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence and originally dated 1617 (copied in 1729), that the painting was originally installed to the right of the middle door of the façade along with a marble sepulcher on the altar of the Magi owned by Giovanni Lami (Giovanni dal Lama). While it was removed from this location at some point after Vasari's publication of the *Lives* (whose account was based either on faulty memory or perhaps includes a simple mistake), it was certainly in the church while Domenico was at work on the Tornabuoni Chapel frescoes. Interestingly, the *Adoration* was long believed to have been lost, while the existing panel, held in the Uffizi, had been misattributed to Domenico Ghirlandaio. It was only given back to Botticelli in 1845 by Carlo Pini (see the edition of Vasari's *Vite* published by Le Monnier, vol. V, p. 116, n. 1) based on Vasari's descriptions of the figures of the Three Kings as Medici portraits.

<sup>79</sup> Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, pp. 1-32, gives the fullest account of Guasparre's life. Guasparre, the son of a barber, was the official broker of the corporation of money-changers before being discovered as having committed fraud, at which point he was fined and banned from the guild. Employment in the guild would have doubtless brought him into association with the Medici, but it was nevertheless not considered an honorable profession during the period, being often synonymous with usury. Jacques Mesnil, "Connaissions-nous Botticelli?" *Gazette des Beaux Arts* ser. 6, no. IV (1930): pp. 82-84, suggested that Guasparre probably owed his fortune to a business connection with the Medici family.

<sup>80</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 561. Two of the most recent texts published on the artist by authors in collaboration identify Filippino twice in this fresco: see Jonathan Nelson, "Filippino nei ruoli di discepolo, collaboratore e concorrente del Botticelli," in *Botticelli e Filippino. L'inquietudine e la grazia nella pittura fiorentina del Quattrocento* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2004), p. 86, and Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, figure 2, p. 14 and figure 177, p. 199.

cause for these self-images, and as we shall see, the *comittenti* likely perceived some benefit from their artists' self-inclusions.

Chronologically, the earliest of these painters to have painted his self-portrait was Sandro Botticelli, who likely painted his own image on the periphery of a group of embedded portraits – some identified as idealized Medici portraits and one of his patron, Guasparre – in his c. 1475 *Adoration*.<sup>81</sup> It is true that this identification is not universally accepted nor yet terribly old, though it has long attracted scholars who appear readier to accept it over many others of longer tradition.<sup>82</sup> Botticelli is identified as the striking figure in a yellow ochre robe to the far right of the scene. The placement is peripheral, perhaps, but nevertheless highly visible. This visibility – rendered by the strong yellow of the figure's mantle, his arresting expression, and his proximity to the viewer – cast doubt on the identification for at least two scholars. The majority of art historians, however, accept it as a self-image.

I would agree with those who object to the identification of Botticelli on the grounds of his startling visibility within so illustrious a group except for a few considerations. Domenico Ghirlandaio's later secure self-image seems to me to lend support to the idea of a preceding image of the type Botticelli proffers. Domenico's fresco self-portraits have much in common with Botticelli's presentation of himself: both figures are shown full-length and entirely visible, standing at the edge of groups. In addition, both figures regard the viewer with the intent outward-focused gaze thought inherent to the self-image made with the aid of a mirror. By virtue of placement and the intensity of their gaze, they appear more self-aware than nearby figures. These facts are made more relevant when one remembers that other supposed self-images to date have not shown the artist's full figure, but instead have placed him behind others, with primarily his outward gaze and possibly the display of his hand distinguishing him from his surroundings. Both Botticelli and Ghirlandaio were active in Florence during the 1470s through the mid 1490s, each in the other's orbit, and working in different but complimentary styles. Scholars have,

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<sup>81</sup> Apparently, the first scholar to recognize Botticelli in the *Adoration* was Hermann Ulmann, *Botticelli* (Munich: Vornals Friedrich Bruckmann, 1893), p. 59, although this is rarely acknowledged by later scholars with the exception of Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration,"* p. 100. Baldini, *Botticelli*, p. 75, while calling the proposed figure the best and most secure image of the artist, nevertheless did not give a source for the identification. Writing considerably closer to Ulmann in 1908, Horne (1980, p. 42) originally noticed that it "has long been recognized" as such, while L. P. Ettlinger and Helen S. Ettlinger, *Botticelli* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), p. 41, misattribute the identification to Vasari, who does not, in fact, mention the now-famous figure in his account of the painting in Botticelli's biography or elsewhere.

moreover, discussed the pair as rivals; their talents deliberately pitted against each other by no less a family than the Medici.<sup>83</sup> It would make sense to think that Ghirlandaio's self-portraits – one of which appeared in the same church as Botticelli's – might have had some precedent.

Filippino Lippi's self-portrait in the Brancacci Chapel is a fascinating example that, I think, tends to lend credence to the idea of Masaccio's presence in the same space. The unclear sequence of events leading to Filippino's selection for the completion of the project causes some difficulties. Why was he chosen and by whom? Why had the frescoes not been completed in the intervening fifty years? In fact, although Vasari reports Lippi's involvement in the chapel in both editions of the *Lives*, there seems to have been some confusion on the part of 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars regarding what portions were attributable to Filippino. This confusion led to the identification of Masaccio as the figure that today is believed to be Filippino, an occurrence whose implications will be discussed below.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, even once reattributed to Filippino, difficulties remain, for far more attention has been given to the original work by Masaccio and Masolino than to Filippino's later additions. It was probably in or around 1460 that the Carmelites installed the antique image of the Madonna known as the *Madonna del Popolo* that still resides there today in order to erase the presence of former patrons who were by that time an embarrassment at best. This coincides with the period in which the *Compagnia di Santa Maria del Popolo* was created, following which the chapel became the meeting place of an active cult.

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<sup>82</sup> Ettliger and Ettliger, *Botticelli*, p. 41, reject the identification of Botticelli in this figure on the grounds that "it is unlikely that a 15<sup>th</sup>-century painter would have included his own full-length likeness in so prominent a place."

<sup>83</sup> The pair's work is known from several of the same spaces. Taking into account the likelihood of a prominent role assumed by the Medici regarding the choice of Florentine artists sent to paint the lower walls of the Sistine Chapel, as well as frescoes painted in the Palazzo Signoria c. 1481, this would appear to be a reasonable statement. For two recent sample discussions, see Nicoletta Pons, *Bartolomeo di Giovanni: Collaboratore di Ghirlandaio e Botticelli / Bartolomeo di Giovanni: Associate of Ghirlandaio and Botticelli* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2004) and Andrew C. Blume, "Botticelli and the Cost and Value of Altarpieces in Late Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th - 17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell'Arte in Italia, secc. XV-XVII*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: 2003).

<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that although Vasari mentions Filippino as having worked in the famous chapel in both accounts, there are slight variations between the editions. For a comparison, see Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 560-561. The differences between the two accounts might explain some of the confusion on the part of some scholars, who misattributed the scene of the *Dispute with Simon Magus* to Masaccio instead of Filippino. For discussion, see Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, p. 331 and Baldini and Casazza, *La Cappella Brancacci*, p. 246. Following Vasari's 1568 discussion, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (when C. F. Rumorh, *Italienische Forschungen*, ed. J. Von Schlosser (Frankfurt: 1827 and 1920), pp. 376-381, following Vasari's assertion of the same from the 1550 account, re-attributed the fresco in 1827 to Filippino) scholars appear to have credited Filippino with intervention solely in the *Resurrection*. Nevertheless, authors prior to Vasari were also well aware of Filippino's contribution, which was noted by Antonio Manetti and Albertini, and in the *Libro di Antonio Billi* and the *Anonimo Magliabechiano*.

In 1474, however, the decree of banishment against the Brancacci was lifted, and they would have been able to reenter Florence as rehabilitated citizens; in fact, Peter Meller identifies Tommaso di Giuliano Brancacci as Filippino's patron.<sup>85</sup> The date of the commission is not documented, but is usually put at some point between 1480 and 1485, when Filippino would have been between twenty-three and twenty-eight years of age.<sup>86</sup>

### 5.2.1 Sandro Botticelli

Considering the wealth of Botticelli scholarship and Rab Hatfield's classic text on his famous *Adoration of the Magi*, I do not seek to introduce a new interpretation regarding the painting's iconography or meaning. I am concerned, however, with how the self-image of Botticelli and those of the other artists under discussion here reflect the changes apparent in late 15<sup>th</sup>-century estimations of artistic worth and social status. Botticelli painted Guasparre dal Lama's *Adoration* almost twenty years after Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco cycle for the Medici palace. This was likely the artist's second altarpiece for a Florentine church, and was almost certainly painted during the artist's early career, probably only a few years after his membership was noted in the *Libro Rosso* of the *Compagnia di San Luca* in 1472.<sup>87</sup> It is also the painting that Vasari saw fit to spend the most time describing it a "small panel with figures three-quarters of a *braccio* in length" (*una tavoletta piccolo di figure di tre quarti di braccio l'una*), and going on to praise it for its

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<sup>85</sup> Meller, "La capella Brancacci," III, p. 186 & IV and p. 273. This suggestion, however, does not appear to have found much support. Nevertheless, that Vasari describes the chapel as "de' Brancacci" in both accounts might tend to suggest the family's continued involvement once readmitted into the city. As Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, p. 193, argues, it also might counter the suggestion of a *damnation memoriae* that some have argued (and others dispute) led to cancellation of Brancacci figures painted by Masaccio in the *Raising*.

<sup>86</sup> Dating of Filippino's work in the chapel is put between 1481-1482 by Casazza ("La Cappella Brancacci dalle origini a oggi," p. 306) and Zambrano and Nelson (*Filippino Lippi*, p. 336), between c. 1480-1483 by Elizabeth E. Barker, "Chronology: The Life of Filippino Lippi," in *The Drawings of Filippino Lippi and His Circle*, ed. George R. Goldner and Carmen C. Bambach (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, 1997), p. 3, while Luciano Berti and Umberto Baldini, *Filippino Lippi* (Florence: Edizioni d'arte il Fiorino, 1991), p. 170, assert that Filippino's intervention in the chapel is generally dated between 1484-1488, though they date it to between 1481-1483. Scholars date the work by a combination of stylistic considerations and Vasari's identification of the portrait of a young Francesco Granacci (b. 1469) in the resurrected boy. Also difficult to determine, however, is Filippino's birth year. The majority of scholars put it at around 1457, which will be accepted here.

<sup>87</sup> Painted probably around 1475, the *Adoration* for Guasparre dal Lama was the third work of that subject Botticelli created, and the first done as an altarpiece. For illustration, see Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, CP and fig. 1. It is possible that his *St. Sebastian* painted in 1473/74 for the church of Santa Maria Maggiore was the painter's first altarpiece, and the *Adoration*, his second. See Andrew C. Blume, *Studies in the Religious Paintings of Sandro*



tenderness, beauty, variety and technical skill.<sup>88</sup> Much of the author's approval undoubtedly stemmed from the three idealized Medici portraits he describes therein.

In several established European monarchies, it was not uncommon for the likenesses of rulers to be censored in an attempt to control their reproduction.<sup>89</sup> Rendering known likenesses in the faces of the Magi present at one of the most important events in Christian history might have been problematic in another time and place, especially as Antonio Paolucci points out, for a painting within a Dominican church, the order most associated with a concern for correct orthodox liturgical and theological practice.<sup>90</sup> This appears not to have been a concern in Republican Florence, however, in spite – or rather because – of the Medici's political, cultural and social hegemony. While scholars do not always agree with Vasari's estimation of embedded portraits elsewhere, it seems there is a consensus concerning the idealized depictions of Cosimo il Vecchio, Piero and Giovanni, although none was still living by the time the picture was made.<sup>91</sup> Various suggestions of other portraits including those of Lorenzo il Magnifico and Giuliano de' Medici, as well as likenesses of Pico della Mirandola and Poliziano, are sometimes doubted.<sup>92</sup> The portrait of the donor, Guasparre, the only figure who indicates himself, appears to fit the conventions of the embedded portrait of a patron.<sup>93</sup>

Botticelli's relations with the ruling branch of the Medici family, and which of those dealings might have occurred prior to the *Adoration*, are important factors to consider. Moreover, one should remember that the painting was by any estimation a relatively early work

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*Botticelli* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1995), pp. 7-9, for discussion regarding the *St. Sebastian* panel and its possible function within the Florentine church.

<sup>88</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 515.

<sup>89</sup> Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 202, discusses the diffusion and control various rulers tried to maintain over the images of their likenesses.

<sup>90</sup> Paolucci, "Sandro Botticelli e il potere dei Medici," p. 70. There was, nonetheless, precedent for portraying living people in these guises in both literary and pictorial formats. For discussion, see Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5, points out that this was likely a consensus shared by the later Medici themselves, in whose collection the painting came to be. The exception to this acceptance is Langedijk, *De portretten van de Medici tot omstreeks 1600*, pp. 73-76, who refuses to recognize any member of the Medici in the painting.

<sup>92</sup> For these suggested identifications, see Ulmann, *Botticelli*, p. 59. Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, p. 31, recognizes Giuliano in the youth with a sword to the left; and Ronald Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work*, vol. 1 (London: Paul Elek, 1978), p. 45; Ronald Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli: Complete Catalogue*, vol. 2 (London: Paul Elek, 1978), p. 37, supports Ulmann's identifications of Lorenzo and Giuliano in the famous panel.

<sup>93</sup> Jacques Mensil, *Botticelli* (Paris: 1938), p. 94. Given that the figure, clearly a portrait, fits Guasparre's age at the time of the painting and in light of the self-indicative gesture – described by Paolucci, "Sandro Botticelli e il potere dei Medici," p. 82, as in keeping with the discretion of the generous head of household who does not care to make too much of an exhibition of himself – there does not appear to me to be any reason to doubt this identification. For illustration, see Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, fig. 53.

in Botticelli's career (albeit towards the end of this period), even were it painted slightly later than the c. 1475 date normally given it.<sup>94</sup> It was, however, according to Vasari at least, on its apparent merit that Botticelli was chosen as one of the three Florentine artists to be dispatched to Rome to paint the aforementioned Sistine chapel, catapulting the painter into the Florentine artistic limelight.<sup>95</sup> Although evidence suggests Botticelli was well acquainted with both primary branches of the Medici family after 1480, what is of concern at present are his dealings with them prior to that date.

Antonio Paolucci, the same scholar who argues that no one doubts Botticelli's presence in the *Adoration*, claimed a reason for Botticelli's presence was that by the time of its creation, the painter was a favored Medici artist.<sup>96</sup> This is an intriguing possibility, but because dating Botticelli's work is often difficult and the commissions of many paintings have been reassigned over the years, it is worthwhile considering the evidence and the implications of this claim.<sup>97</sup> What suggests that Botticelli was highly esteemed at so early a date? More to the point, if he were *not* held in so high a regard, how may one interpret his self-portrait? If it is possible to argue that it is not, as Paolucci claims, because Botticelli was already a painter "*gradito alla famiglia*," in what light are we to regard his appropriation of Medici images on behalf of his un-illustrious patron, and the insertion his own?<sup>98</sup> While the familial association of the Medici with the Magi is well known, and their inclusion in the panel explicable, if Botticelli were less known to them than previously surmised, then the inclusion of Botticelli's own image takes on different connotations.

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<sup>94</sup> Amongst the later dating assigned to the panel, Horne, *Botticelli, Painter of Florence*, p. 40-49, would put its creation c. 1477; Yukio Yashiro, *Sandro Botticelli and the Florentine Renaissance* (London: The Medici Society, 1925), p. 30, between 1478 and 1481 for stylistic reasons. Botticelli's mature period is generally put beginning in the 1480s.

<sup>95</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 516.

<sup>96</sup> Paolucci, "Sandro Botticelli," p. 72.

<sup>97</sup> It is worth quoting Sharon Fermor, "Botticelli and the Medici," in *The Early Medici and Their Artists*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (East Sussex: Birbeck College, University of London, 1995), p. 169, in this instance: "Despite the fact that a mere handful of Botticelli's extant works can be conclusively linked with the family – and not one can be decisively linked with Lorenzo – art historians continue to reiterate the image of Botticelli as virtually a product of Medici patronage." I agree with her stance, in that several scholars appear grossly to overstate the evidence. For example, Hugh Ross Williamson, *Lorenzo the Magnificent* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974), p. 68, would have Botticelli and Lorenzo as close as brothers and Piero and Lucrezia de' Medici acting as adoptive parents.

<sup>98</sup> Paolucci, "Sandro Botticelli," p. 72, goes on to claim that it was quite probable that Guasparre had chosen Botticelli because of his knowledge – as all Florence supposedly knew – that Botticelli was then the artist most familiar with the Medici the painting was designed to honor.

Of course, Botticelli was clearly known to the Medici. Even if Lorenzo il Magnifico was not the commissioner of the famous *Primavera*, there is still sufficient evidence to argue that Botticelli had cordial relations with Florence's *de facto* ruler and his family.<sup>99</sup> Vasari, as should surprise no one, would have Botticelli firmly knit into the fabric of Medici largesse. He reports that the artist "was held in great regard" by Lorenzo and so long as he lived "[Botticelli] was always assisted by him," – assistance Vasari said the artist required towards the end of his life. Vasari also reports that Botticelli created "many things" for Lorenzo the elder, specifically citing the famous *Pallas and Centaur* known from the inventory of 1492 as then kept in Piero's chamber.<sup>100</sup> An instance of Lorenzo il Magnifico's regard for the painter might be found in his choice of works by Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino and Filippino Lippi for his villa of the Spedaletto near Volterra, as mentioned in the letter, already cited, of c. 1490 to Ludovico Sforza. It also appears likely that Lorenzo had some say in the decision to select Botticelli to paint the portraits of infamy that were displayed on the Bargello following the 1478 Pazzi conspiracy, and it is equally likely that the artist was personally chosen to be one of those who traveled to Rome to paint the walls of the Vatican chapel of Sixtus IV. At some point after Giuliano's murder in 1478, Botticelli painted the assassinated youth's portrait.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, as Andrew Blume has pointed out, almost the entirety of Botticelli's Florentine commissions come from Medici-associated families and institutions.<sup>102</sup> Considering Lorenzo's reputation as an arbiter of taste and a frequent advisor at home and abroad concerning artistic matters, it seems plausible that even if he did not directly recommend the artist, the Magnifico's taste would have been honored by his friends and associates.

Nevertheless, prior to the creation of the *Adoration*, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that Botticelli could have been considered a favorite of the Medici themselves. One might argue that the association of his master, Filippo Lippi, would have put him in their circle,

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<sup>99</sup> Horne, *Botticelli, Painter of Florence*, pp. 49-62. More recently, however, Fermor, "Botticelli and the Medici," and Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), would re-attribute the commission to Lorenzo.

<sup>100</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 513.

<sup>101</sup> The *Portrait of Giuliano de' Medici* (National Gallery, Washington D.C.) is generally thought to be a posthumous work. Nevertheless, Ronald Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 63 would date it instead to c. 1476-1477, one or two years prior to Giuliano's death. Lightbrown accounts for the downcast eyes and "pensive expression" (p. 60) as mourning for the recently-deceased Simonetta Vespucci, a famed Florentine beauty.

<sup>102</sup> Blume, *Studies in the Religious Paintings of Sandro Botticelli*, p. 157.

as well as Botticelli's brother's acquaintance with Lorenzo.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Botticelli had worked in Florence – a city he worked outside of only twice during his entire career – for about a decade prior to the only Medici commission the artist might have had before receiving Guasparre's patronage.<sup>104</sup> I think Paolucci's statement must be denied, or at least recognized as conjecture.

Yet to my mind, Botticelli's lack of direct connections with the Medici family prior to his creation of Guasparre's *Adoration* makes his prominent self-inclusion all the more interesting. Instead of Guasparre's choosing an artist already well-beloved by the Medici as Paolucci claims, it is tantalizing to postulate that both patron and artist were speculating, both attempting to build reputations and to catch – and flatter – the roving Medici eye. Additionally, instead of arguing that Guasparre chose the Medici's favorite painter, it would seem more credible to say that the social-climbing money broker chose an artist beginning to be esteemed and patronized by a group he dearly wished to become part – those of favored Medici partisans. Finding a direct Medici commission for Botticelli prior to 1480 is difficult; finding a Medici-associated one fairly easy. Some of Botticelli's important early commissions came from ardent Medici followers. Around 1470, Tommaso Soderini, a loyal Medici supporter and member of the *Sei della Mercanzia*, had convinced that body to give Botticelli the highly-prestigious commission of two of the seven Virtues to be figured in the Palazzo della Mercanzia situated in the Piazza della Signoria.<sup>105</sup> Around the same time, the artist painted his second *Adoration* (London, National Gallery) for Antonio Pucci, another known Medici partisan. The well-known *Portrait of a Man holding a Medal of Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici* (Florence, Uffizi) painted c. 1474-1475 is an enigmatic picture in many ways, but was nevertheless undoubtedly created for a Medici partisan,

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<sup>103</sup> Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli*, p. 58, suggests that the Botticello who was an intimate of Lorenzo can be identified with Botticelli's brother Giovanni.

<sup>104</sup> Botticelli painted his first *Adoration* (London, National Gallery) as an independent master probably around 1465. The painter's first Medici commission was probably a lost standard believed to have been commissioned from Giuliano de' Medici for the occasion of a procession before the famous joust held in his honor on January 29, 1475, as recorded in Poliziano's *Stanze per la Giostra*. See Ibid., pp. 64-65, for discussion of the event and Botticelli's contribution to the spectacle. Botticelli's known painting commissions outside of Florence are a brief episode in Pisa during which time he was called to contribute to the Camposanto paintings in Pisa being executed by Benozzo Gozzoli, and the more famous period in Rome painting frescoes of *Scenes from the Life of Moses*, *The Temptation of Christ* and *The Punishment of Korah* in the Sistine Chapel.

<sup>105</sup> For this series, Botticelli, though contracted to paint two figures, painted only the figure of *Fortitude* today in the Uffizi. He was paid forty florins for his efforts – an amount great than what was paid to Piero del Pollaiuolo for his figures. Botticelli was only given the commission after Piero fell behind schedule. For discussion of this commission, see Ibid., pp. 42-46.

often suggested to be an unidentified godson of the elder Cosimo. Thus, it is possible that in addition to the other portraits here, Guasparre and Botticelli appear in a collaboration of sorts. Both can be considered, to one degree or another, associated with the Medici, and perhaps both desired a closer intimacy. If this suggestion is correct, only one of the pair could be said to have achieved his aim.

It is clear that Guasparre pinned a great many hopes and aspirations to his altar in Santa Maria Novella.<sup>106</sup> Prior to the conception of his only offspring and his own subsequent death, Guasparre had gone so far as to make his altar the heir to his then-growing fortune should he die without issue.<sup>107</sup> While undoubtedly motivated by a concern for the state of his soul – certainly stained by his questionable occupation – it would still seem that worldly considerations figure prominently in the construction and theme of the altar. How serendipitous it must have appeared to Guasparre that his own name saint would have been so easily and clearly linked to the patrons he wanted to attract and flatter. If my hypothesis has merit, there is the further intriguing possibility that Guasparre might have encouraged (or at least not discouraged) Botticelli's self-image in the midst of the other more august representations as a means to highlight his – Guasparre's – own worth as a discerning patron and as a businessman who was going places.

Botticelli's self-portrait itself should be more closely examined before going further. The figure seems to be unusually prominent, as already mentioned, due to the combination of stance, presentation and proximity to the viewer. The degree to which this self-image differs from those created previously is remarkable. Part of the crowd, Botticelli is nevertheless separate. It is true that in terms of a spiritual hierarchy, he holds the least advantageous position; that is, he shows himself furthest from the spiritual grace symbolized by the figuration of the newborn Christ and the adoring Madonna to which the portraits of the Medici and Guasparre are significantly closer. Prior Florentine self-portraits tended to incorporate figures more fully into groups of other portraits, as is seen in the representations of Masaccio and Benozzo. It appears that other supposed self-portraits created in Florence were similarly presented – the artist's image

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<sup>106</sup> While the total sum Guasparre paid for his chapel (an amount constituting the costs of obtaining the right to construct a chapel, carving of the marble altar and frame, commissioning Botticelli for his painting, and later providing for the maintenance of the chapel) is unknown, it is clear that he must have paid a great deal. For discussion, see Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, pp. 21-22. While the panel (111 x 134 cm) is smaller than many 15<sup>th</sup>-century altarpieces, presumably the marble carvings of the altar, since dispersed, would have created the rich affect mentioned in the older accounts. See for example Modesto Biliotti's description in his *Chronica* of 1586, quoted in Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli*, p. 64 and n. 65.

discernable but subtle. Furthermore, Botticelli's full-length portrait is entirely visible, rather than partially obscured as Masaccio's, or from the shoulders up like Benozzo's. Instead, Botticelli's figure is almost a challenge and certainly does not escape notice – and perhaps it was not meant to.

What interests me is how the 15<sup>th</sup>-century visitor would have viewed such a prominent display of the artist – or such a striking anonymous portrait, presuming the artist's identity was not known; which trope or reasoning he or she would applied in order to understand it. The conspicuous context of Guasparre's altar as the site of his eventual burial in conjunction with the self-portrait of Botticelli is worth considering in another light. A fascinating example of Renaissance recognition of fame as a rare motivator particularly of artists that might have bearing here, although seldom acknowledged in scholarly literature, was nevertheless well-enough known to have been quoted in the Renaissance and is that of the ancient Roman poet, Ennius (239-169 BC).<sup>108</sup> Cicero speaks of the famous Latin author in the *Tusculan Disputations* in a passage discussing man's pursuit of fame as a means by which to gain immortality. Cicero bids us, "Behold, my fellow countrymen, old Ennius' sculptured face. He told the glorious story of your fathers' mighty race."<sup>109</sup> The poet Ennius, patronized by Scipio Africanus, was greatly honored by his noble patron; the quoted passage alludes to the fact that the sculpted image of the old poet in question had been included within the Scipio family tomb, thus greatly honoring the ancient author with the immortality Ennius is said to have craved.

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<sup>107</sup> Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, p. 14.

<sup>108</sup> The epic poet/dramatist Ennius is regarded as the founder of Roman literature and is best known for the *Annales*, a history of Rome from the fall of Troy up to his own period, which is considered to have been the national epic prior to Virgil's *Aeneid*.

<sup>109</sup> The passage (see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:34) is worth quoting in its entirety: "Again, in this commonwealth of ours, with what thought in their minds do we suppose such an army of illustrious men have lost their lives for the commonwealth? Was it that their name should be restricted to the narrow limits of their life? No one would ever have exposed himself to death for his country without good hope of immortality. Themistocles might have led a quiet life, Epaminondas might have done so, and not to quote old time instances from foreign history, I might have done so; but somehow it comes about that there is in men's minds a sort of deeply rooted presentiment of future ages, and this feeling is strongest and most evident in men of the greatest genius and the loftiest spirit. [...] So far, I am speaking of statesmen, but what of poets? Have they no wish to become famous after death? What then is the meaning of the passage, 'Behold, my fellow-countrymen, old Ennius' sculptured face! / He told the glorious story of your fathers' mighty race.' He demands the recompense of fame from those whose fathers he had rendered famous, and the same poet writes: 'Let no one honor me with tears or on my ashes weep. / For why? from lips to lips of men I pass and living keep.' But why stop at the poets? Artists wish to become famous after death. Or why did Phidias insert his likeness on the shield of Minerva, though not allowed to inscribe his name on it? What of our philosophers? Do they not inscribe their names upon the actual books they write about contempt of fame?"

The currency of the passage during the Italian Renaissance was being demonstrated more or less contemporarily at the newly constructed palazzo of the Sienese cardinal Francesco Todeschini Piccolomini (Siena, c. 1440 – October 13 1503; elected Pius III, 1503). The nephew of Pope Pius II and important sculptor-collector built a palace in Rome on the ruins of the Theater of Pompey near the future site of Sant'Andrea della Valle and near his titular church of Sant'Eustachio after having been made a cardinal by his uncle in 1460.<sup>110</sup> Completed in the early 1470s, the palazzo was the location of Piccolomini's impressive antique sculpture collection displayed in a colonnaded portico in the courtyard set behind the structure.<sup>111</sup> According to Adinolfi, two "welcoming" inscriptions were placed at the entrance, one to either side. It has been recently noted that these passages quoted Cicero's line regarding Ennius: "*Aspicite o cives senis Ennii imagines formam / Heic vostrum panxit mauma facta partum.*" Thus, at the entrance to a famous collection of precious antiques the viewer was encouraged to remember both the glories of the ancient past whose fragments still survive to be enjoyed by discerning, educated individuals, and the potential for fame those works of art brought the creator.

Of course, nothing of our knowledge of Guasparre dal Lama suggests he was a particularly educated man, in contrast to Francesco Piccolomini, who studied pontifical law at the University of Perugia and had taken a doctorate prior to having been made a cardinal.<sup>112</sup> Presumably, however, the former would have received a normal Florentine schoolboy's education while gaining sufficient knowledge of arithmetic prerequisite for his occupation. Nevertheless, Cicero was one amongst the most read, collected and – eventually – published ancient authors during the Renaissance; his writings were part of the medieval schoolboy's curriculum before and after the advent of humanism. No less a figure than Petrarch had placed the *Tusculan Disputations* second in a list of his most prized books, and cited the work in excess

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<sup>110</sup> Carol Richardson, "Housing Opportunities of a Renaissance Cardinal," *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 4 (2003): p. 609. By 1593, the ruins of the palazzo can be discerned in a plan showing the construction of Sant'Andrea della Valle. See Richardson, "Housing Opportunities," p. 610, n. 618, and Ottavio Panciroli, *Tesori nascosti dell'alma città di Roma: si sono aggiunti tre indici, uno delle chiese, l'altro delle reliquie, il terzo dell'indulgenze* (Rome: Zannetti, 1625), p. 799.

<sup>111</sup> Pasquale Adinolfi, *Roma nell'età di mezzo* (Rome: Bocca, 1881). I would like to express my thanks to Kathleen Christian for sharing her information regarding Ennius and the Piccolomini context prior to its inclusion in an upcoming publication.

<sup>112</sup> Regarding Piccolomini's education, see Richardson, "Housing Opportunities," pp. 607-608.

of six hundred times in the letters collected in his *Familiars*.<sup>113</sup> In the 1430s, Matteo Palmieri wrote an adaptation of a Ciceronian work he entitled *Della Vita Civile*, and thereafter, it was not uncommon to find other adaptations of Cicero's dialogues in the libraries of Florence.<sup>114</sup> Admittedly, there does not seem to be any means by which one can reasonably suggest that Guasparre and Botticelli would have been aware of and promoting the trope of the artist's image included in the context of his patron's family tomb, as Botticelli's could be said to have figured in its original context. Nevertheless, the possibilities are fascinating as regards future self-images and their comprehension by viewers. It seems possible that well-educated Florentines might have made this kind of erudite association.

Alternatively, a less high-minded explanation might suffice. The modern aspect of Santa Maria Novella with its *pietra serena* altars measuring the expanse of white-washed walls is much altered from the crowded Renaissance one that necessitated the awkward installation of a new and by all accounts beautiful altar on the entrance wall. The number and age of the prized transept chapels in the mendicant churches of Florence attests to the places considered privileged – the closer to the main altar the better – and those that were not.<sup>115</sup> A money broker during the period in question was employed in an intrinsically chancy profession, and the masses that Guasparre contracted for the good of his soul after his death attests to his concerns for the afterlife, something he shared with many of his peers. A dearth of published information on the general audience of Italian Renaissance altars and altarpieces renders suggestions speculative at best, but I think that the lavishness of Guasparre's altar was deliberately calculated to attract passers-by. After causing the viewer to pause to admire the chapel's beauty, surely a drop of that regard might have fallen on the patron whose arms must have been visible, gathering perhaps yet one more prayer for the money-broker's soul.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Albert Rabil, "Petrarch, Augustine, and the Classical Christian Tradition," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy. Volume 1: Humanism in Italy*, ed. Albert Rabil (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 95-96. The list in question of "specially prized books" is one of three found on the flyleaf of a manuscript that Petrarch had owned. The *Tusculan Disputations* is the second text named on the first list.

<sup>114</sup> Hans Baron, "Cicero and the Roman Civic Spirit in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 22, no. 1 (1938): p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> For a discussion of the early history of the altars of S. Maria Novella, see Giurescu, *Trecento Family Chapels*, pp. 19-33, pp. 78-84, pp. 100-116, and pp. 180-211.

<sup>116</sup> While not a subject that has undergone much study, as Burke, *Changing Patrons*, pp. 120-121 points out, it seems reasonable that even many "private" enclosed chapels in the popular churches were often open for the use of the lay congregation, and the images there had larger audiences than only those who paid for them or officiated at rites.



Although it is possible to call it a “chapel,” Guasparre’s construction within the Dominican church was an altar and tomb combination without walls or barriers.<sup>117</sup> In a different context, we know that a significant motivation for those who installed public street tabernacles on the corners of private palaces was to attract the attention of passers-by who would have presumably included a prayer for the soul of the pious citizen who had built the tabernacle.<sup>118</sup> Not prestigiously located, Guasparre’s altar was nonetheless in a highly-trafficked area between the central and eastern doors on the church’s inner façade wall, a point described by Hatfield as just to the right as one entered the church by the main door.<sup>119</sup> Located on the retro-façade of the entrance wall in the portion of the church consistently accessible to the laity, Guasparre’s chapel would have been highly visible.<sup>120</sup> The necessity of “devotees” to a patron has been discussed elsewhere, for as Trexler put it, “the very salvation of the good people of Florence depended on those with less status.”<sup>121</sup> The lavishness of the altarpiece’s presentation coupled with a popular subject matter and an eye-catching depiction were likely part of a common strategy to attract the visitor who would have added his or her prayers for Guasparre’s soul to the masses stipulated in Guasparre’s original testament.<sup>122</sup> If Alberti’s notion that the well-known face attracted the viewer better than even the most beautiful anonymous figure is correct, then perhaps the attention-grabbing quality of Botticelli’s bold visage might have played a role in attracting the eyes of worshippers in a fashion that was becoming more typical in Italian sacred spaces.

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<sup>117</sup> The Renaissance usage of the term “chapel” referred to its liturgical function, and could be used to refer to any altar within a church where a mass was celebrated.

<sup>118</sup> One reason to display arms was to induce others to pray for the person whose arms were visible. A letter from Lapo Mazzei to Francesco Datini (1435 – 1410), the famous “Merchant of Prato,” comment that “a million persons might pass your house after you die; only a few will go pray for you from noticing your house. But if you have that figure [of the Virgin] placed at the corner [outside the walls] someone will kneel there daily for centuries without end, and there won’t be one day when a prayer is not said for you.” Lapo Mazzei, *Lettere di un notaro a un mercante del secolo XIV, con altre lettere e documenti*, ed. C. Guasti, vol. I (Florence: LeMonnier, 1880), p. 106, and translation from Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 97.

<sup>119</sup> Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, p. 20. An openwork iron screen surrounded the chapel.

<sup>120</sup> Santa Maria Novella’s fourteen *braccia* deep (26.5 ft) rood screen or *ponte* and its attached altars were not dismantled until 1565-66 when the church was “renovated” by Vasari to a design by Francesco da San Gallo acting on Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici’s orders. For discussion of the structure and a discussion of its patronage history, see Giurescu, *Trecento Family Chapels*, pp. 182-197; Marcia B. Hall, “The Ponte in S. Maria Novella: The Problem of the Rood Screen in Italy,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974). The area above the rood screen was likely accessible to many (male) lay members of church on occasion. See Giurescu, *Trecento Family Chapels*, pp. 207-211, for a discussion of the space and who had – and did not have – access.

<sup>121</sup> Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 97.

<sup>122</sup> For discussion of Guasparre’s wishes regarding his chapel after his death, see Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, pp. 22-29.

Guasparre, certainly visible, nonetheless takes a more modest role, but perhaps its discretion better fits the type of presentation, the *bella figura* to borrow the modern sense, that he wanted to make.

### 5.2.2 Filippino Lippi

Less has been written about the self-portrait of Filippino Lippi in the Brancacci Chapel than of any of the other self-portraits presently under discussion. While dutifully noted in monographs on the famous chapel, his presence is often politely downplayed in favor of discussion of his earlier and more illustrious companions. A lack of secure documentation regarding his work in the chapel only exacerbates the problem. It is impossible to say with any certainty who gave Filippino the commission to bring the partly decorated chapel to completion, although possibly it came from one or more of the members of the *Compagnia del Popolo*.<sup>123</sup> It is also possible that some of those individuals believed to have been portrayed in the *Raising of the Son of Theophilus* painted early in the course of Filippino's campaign played a role.<sup>124</sup> There were powerful and ambitious men in the Oltrarno territory of the *Drago Verde*, and families such as the Soderini, del Pugliese, Serragli, Bonsi, Antinori and Lanfredini were pursuing their own familial interests both in the Carmelite church and in Florentine politics generally.<sup>125</sup> Patricia Zambrano suggests that Tommaso Soderini, whom Vasari recognized in the *Raising*, and Lorenzo de' Medici might have been involved, and that Lorenzo advanced Filippino's name for the project.<sup>126</sup>

What may appear to be the most facile explanation for the choice of Filippino as the painter to complete the chapel nevertheless appears to make a great deal of sense. Filippo Lippi had disgraced himself as a Carmelite, but had nonetheless been officially pardoned and

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<sup>123</sup> Nelson, "Filippino nei ruoli di discepolo," p. 86, notes that no one of this group primarily made up of religious women would have been a very prestigious commissioner, and further, that hitherto completing the famous chapel none of Filippino's documented commissions were Florentine in a strict sense. That the chapel was still incomplete in early part of the Quattrocento is known from Felice Brancacci's testament calling for its conclusion in a document dated September 5, 1432.

<sup>124</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 561, mentions specifically that Filippino added many portraits to the frescoes he painted in the Brancacci chapel, naming Francesco Granacci, Tommaso Soderini, Piero Guicciardini, Piero del Pugliese, Luigi Pulci, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Sandro Botticelli, Raggio the broker and "many other friends and great men." (...*molti altri amici e grand'uomini*....)

<sup>125</sup> Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, p. 183.

subsequently his professional worth was repeatedly recognized by powerful and protective patrons. It seems credible that Filippino, a painter with so obvious a link to the Carmelites and the chapel, might have seemed an auspicious choice to finish the job, especially since he might have possessed drawings or other relics from his father reflecting Masaccio's original designs. Furthermore, while an established painter who had trained with a master of growing fame, Filippino was still young and perhaps a commission with such a prestigious pedigree would have been a desirable project to the degree that honor and fame were more important concerns than money alone.<sup>127</sup> That some better-known Florentine masters had recently been dispatched to Rome might also have made Filippino an attractive choice.<sup>128</sup> However he might have come to accept the commission, Filippino obviously made a sincere effort to continue the style of the previous painters, and also to continue the tradition of embedded portraiture.

The portions of the Brancacci Chapel painted by Filippino are not inconsiderable. The entire lower register on the west wall and the central section of the fresco on the east wall are by his hand. These areas are comprised by several scenes of St. Peter's life: *The Dispute with Simon Magus and the Crucifixion of St. Peter*, *St. Peter Visited in Prison by St. Paul*, and *St. Peter liberated from Prison* on one side, and sizable portions of the *Raising of the Son of Theophilus* on the other.<sup>129</sup> Simply by distinguishing each painter's work within the Brancacci Chapel, Filippino must by necessity be recognized as having painted about a fourth of one of the most famous chapels of Italian Renaissance art.

In his portion of the *Raising*, if we may consider Vasari's claims, Filippino portrayed the painter Francesco Granacci, Tommaso Soderini, Pietro Guicciardini, Piero del Pugliese, Luigi Pulci, Antonio Pollaiuolo, Sandro Botticelli, a man Vasari names only Raggio the broker and himself. Other writers have sought to increase the identifications in this company. Moreover, it has been put forth that rather than a single self-portrait, Filippino painted his self-image in two subsequent scenes. These supposed self-images are identified in two figures of which only the faces are visible – their bodies being hidden by full-length figures presented in profile beside

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 187-189.

<sup>127</sup> Blume, "Botticelli and the Cost and Value of Altarpieces," notes that often the prestige of a commission could affect considerations of price. For a truly prestigious commission, the rewards to the creator were not, it seems, always monetary.

<sup>128</sup> Admittedly, given the difficulty in dating Filippino's work in the chapel, it is possible that the painter did not go to Rome because he had recently begun this commission. For this suggestion, see Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, p. 181.

them – and who look out from the outer-most right edges of the *Crucifixion* and *Dispute*.<sup>130</sup> I cannot, however, share Patrizia Zambrano’s belief that the two figures are “unequivocally” the same individual, as fascinating as this possibility would be. I do not see sufficient resemblance between the two figures to agree with the notion that Filippino appears twice in the cycle, even permitting a dating scheme like that proposed by Meller, who would have Filippino adding his self-portraits at the beginning (c. 1482) and end (c. 1489) of the project.<sup>131</sup> It is true that the identical positioning of the figures’ faces, both appearing in three-quarters view, gives them a superficial resemblance. Nevertheless, even allowing for a passage of seven years from one self-portrait to the next, the features appear to me to be too individual to identify them as the same person.

The figure appearing to the far right in the *Crucifixion* scene appears to be perhaps in his early twenties, but when compared with the figure traditionally identified as Filippino in the *Dispute*, it appears to me that there are too many disparities in facial features to allow for the identification. The eyes of the figure from the *Crucifixion* are a lighter color and inner curves of the eye-sockets of each figure seem to have different heights. The *Crucifixion* figure’s nose appears broader with a thinner bridge and a more bulbous tip. Moreover, the lower halves of the faces do not compare well to each other; the face from the *Crucifixion* has a noticeably shorter lower lip and gives the two faces different proportions. I do not dispute the possibility that Filippino started the program during his mid-twenties and finished in his early thirties; however, these are not years in which facial features are given to great changes. Taking into account the identical positioning of these figures, I think their resemblance to each other would be greater if they were indeed intended to represent the same person.

Instead, I think that Filippino painted his self-portrait once within the Brancacci chapel in the scene depicting St. Peter and St. Paul in dispute with Simon Magus before the emperor Nero. Admittedly, my reasoning for this is largely based on Vasari’s identification. Nonetheless, it has long been noted that Vasari’s accuracy increases when writing about subjects and events nearer to his own lifetime. While Filippino died seven years before Vasari was born, it is reasonable to

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<sup>129</sup> For illustrations, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 139, Pl. 96 and p. 115, Pl. 78.

<sup>130</sup> As already noted, Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, figures 11 and 199, illustrates what she considers “unequivocally” to be Filippino’s two self-portraits in this cycle following Meller, “La capella Brancacci,” IV, pp. 282-287. Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria*, p. 117, allows that it is possible, but does not appear to support completely the suggestion.

assume that individuals who had known Filippino were able to identify his self-image for Vasari when the latter went in search of portraits, which the author remarks he had done since his youth.<sup>132</sup> The fact that Vasari spent a good deal of time studying Filippino's work in the Brancacci Chapel is verified by the fact that he copied portraits from it to illustrate the lives of Sandro Botticelli, Antonio Pollaiuolo, and Filippino himself. That Vasari – who in addition to noting the various artists who had studied there undoubtedly had done so himself if only during the course of mining it for portraits – did *not* discern the same individual twice is significant. Given Vasari's predilection for molding biographical information into morality plays, had he perceived sufficient resemblance between the two figures to surmise they represented the same figure, the painter's life would have likely become fodder for an exposition on the dangers of excessive pride – just as his father's had illustrated the consequences of lust and imprudence. Instead, Filippino is portrayed as a model artist whose sober, hard-working life was just barely able to cancel out the sins of his notorious father.<sup>133</sup>

Of the figure itself, little is visible other than Filippino's face, though a narrow slice of his red robes is visible as is a single grey-blue hose-covered foot. The aqua-colored band of the artist's collar coordinates with the robes of the figure that stands beside him, whose face is visible in nearly-lost profile as he regards the action taking place. The pair taken together might seem to fulfill Alberti's injunctions: the figures, almost close enough to appear to be one individual, at once engage the viewer by means of the focused glance outward and indicate the importance of the sacred action taking place by means of the intent gaze inward, although neither gesture by hand.<sup>134</sup> It seems unlikely to be sheer coincidence that this posture is a mirror for that of Masaccio and the figure sometimes identified as Alberti that appears in the opposite corner of

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<sup>131</sup> Meller, "La capella Brancacci," IV, pp. 282-287.

<sup>132</sup> The phrasing Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 561 uses to mention the self-portrait, "*se stesso così giovane come era*" [his own (self-portrait) as he was (as a young man)] is in itself intriguing, and possibly suggests that the writer had seen or otherwise knew of Filippino's later appearance.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, Testo III, p. 568, describes Filippino as "...*essendo sempre stato cortese, affabile e gentile...*" ("having ever been courteous, affable, and kindly...") and regards the painter as having "...*ricopri la macchia, qualunque ella si sia, lasciatalgli dal padre...non pure con l'eccellenza della sua arte, nella quale non fu ne' suoi tempi inferiore a nessuno, ma con vivere modesto e civile, e sopra tutto con l'esser cortese et amorevole....*" ("blotted out the stain (if stain it was) left to him by his father... not only by the excellence of his art, wherein he was inferior to no man of his time, but also by the modesty and regularity of his life, and, above all, by his courtesy and amiability....") For the translation, see Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 570.

<sup>134</sup> It is worth noting that the other figure that Zambrano asserts is a self-portrait is presented in an identical manner with the figure that Vasari identifies (and illustrates) as Botticelli. This fact of presentation alone, however, cannot convince me that the figure represents Filippino.

the chapel. I would even go so far as to suggest that it was to emphasize the similarities between the self-presentations that Filippino cancelled out the gesture Masaccio's image originally made to touch St. Peter. It is impossible to know with certainty why the gesture was eliminated; perhaps it was considered indiscreet or compositionally undesirable. Nonetheless, its removal subtly underscores a similarity that otherwise might not be as apparent. Moreover, it was a gesture that Filippino, including his self-image during the penultimate *giornata* of the scene, could not reasonably emulate given his closer proximity to one of the more notoriously unstable Roman emperors than to either saint. Perhaps Filippino's modest self-presentation stemmed as much from the painter's desire for visual unity as from a rejection of the "arrogance" traditionally attributed to his famous teacher's image.

The concepts of fame and memory – and a lack of arrogance – seem to be especially pertinent to the study of Filippino's work and his self-portrait within the Brancacci Chapel. Rather than frescoing a new chapel with the type of compositions that a young artist might hope would make his reputation, or replacing dim, old-fashioned paintings with entirely fresh work, Filippino clearly understood that his task was to meld his style with that of the earlier painters and to complete decorations that presumably were already highly-lauded.<sup>135</sup> With the ease of hindsight today, anyone familiar with 15<sup>th</sup>-century painting can discern the hands of the early and late Quattrocento masters, but more than a century's worth of attributions to Masaccio and Masolino of the scenes of the *Crucifixion* and the *Dispute* attest to Filippino's success in blending, if not burying, his own style.

Filippino's self-inclusion in the penultimate *giornata* may recall an artist's signature, a sign the artist added once he or she had finished, signaling perhaps the work's completion, its association with the artist who stands as its creator, or an artist's satisfaction with it. A semiotic study of self-portraits as signatures, however, would not consider an embedded self-image of this type to be genuine *index*. That is, as an image that *could* have been added later or by another, it

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<sup>135</sup> Few records exist regarding the chapel and its decoration, so a lack of documentation regarding its immediate reputation does not surprise. It is mentioned in two of the earliest sources regarding artistic treasures of Florence – the *Libro di Antonio Billi*, the *Anonimo* – however, attesting to its fame. The fact that it was completed rather than begun anew does the same. True, the account by an anonymous 18<sup>th</sup>-century friar mourns the fact that Vittoria della Rovere, the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, forbade the redecoration scheme desired by Marchese Ferroni around 1690, but her doing so bears witness to the status that the chapel probably had enjoyed for some time. For discussion and the publication of pertinent passages of the document, see Joannides, *Masaccio and Masolino*, p. 315.

cannot be taken as proof positive to indicate the presence or intervention of the artist.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, however many never-named workshop assistants worked within the chapel, Filippino records his own association, presence and likeness there in a mode that, although a purposeful intervention of his own identity within his depiction of the legendary events, is also a mirror of Masaccio's earlier self-image within a portrait-saturated space, and one that blends almost seamlessly into the fabric of the chapel.

I doubt that it surprises the scholar accustomed to the claims of Vasari and later writers regarding the presence and identification of embedded self-images that Filippino would have desired to include his image within the Brancacci Chapel. Given the importance of the space as a focus for religious and political power, and what we can surmise was the fame of its original artists, one may suppose that it did not over-surprise a Florentine viewer, either.<sup>137</sup> A number of their fellow citizens had long been performing various roles in the narratives painted in and around Florence, whether as donors, witnesses or participants in the scenes in which they appear. The inclusion of portraits in family chapels has been interpreted rightly as only a single strategy employed by Florentines "to secure, to maintain, and to make memorable their position over time."<sup>138</sup> Collective, familial and individual identities were indelibly linked. Coupled with this was recognition of the human desire for fame as recorded by ancient and modern authors, even while the latter group ironically decried the lack of humility inherent in its pursuit. As finding one's peers in paintings that they and their friends/patrons had commissioned became more common, it seems logical that recognition of an artist's desire for fame and the preservation of his memory – in part represented in his self-portrait – would render his company with other portraits comprehensible.

Due in part to the period in which it was painted, one cannot leave the consideration of Filippino's self-portrait within the Brancacci Chapel without also mentioning another self-image probably painted around the same time that explicitly links Filippino with a powerful Oltrarno

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<sup>136</sup> Gandelman, "The Semiotics of Signatures," p. 83.

<sup>137</sup> It would seem to reflect a similar situation when later Luca Signorelli included his own self-portrait with that of Fra Angelico in a cycle the former completed for the Duomo of Orvieto in 1501, begun by Fra Angelico in the 1440s.

<sup>138</sup> Patricia Rubin, "Art and the Imagery of Memory," in *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*, eds. Giovanna Ciapelli and Patricia Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 68-69.

family that might have been associated with the Brancacci Chapel commission.<sup>139</sup> It is upon considering this image, however, that the difficulty in dating both it and Filippino's contribution to the Brancacci Chapel becomes more problematic. Since 1933, the Denver Art Museum has owned a double-portrait first attributed to Filippino by Roberto Longhi, who also identified the figures as Piero del Pugliese and Filippino himself based on comparisons to other known depictions; the panel can probably be dated c. 1484.<sup>140</sup> The picture presents the pair as bust-length figures standing in front of a shelf supporting several stacked volumes, while a single volume stands propped open to a page of illegible writing.<sup>141</sup> The figure identified as Piero is positioned facing the picture plane with his head tilted slightly towards Filippino, and has an unfocused gaze. His figure is large, imposingly broad, and partially obscures his companion, who appears slightly behind him. Filippino, in turn, presents himself in profile facing Piero, with his lips slightly parted as if contemplating speech.

The painting is an anomaly in many ways. As Jill Burke observes, it represents what might be the unique Quattrocento occurrence of a patron and artist figured together in a painting, although similar relationships, celebrated in print, might have been slightly more common if not possessing the true warmth that seems to have existed between the pair.<sup>142</sup> The painting was honored in a pair of poems by Alessandro Bracessi written in Latin shortly after the panel's creation.<sup>143</sup> Bracessi's poems, one in elegiac couplets, refers directly to the panel, and expresses

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<sup>139</sup> In addition to the two self-images discussed here, it should be noted that the Uffizi possesses a detached portion of a fresco that has been sometimes considered a self-portrait. For a catalog entry, see Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, pp. 359-360, who along with Jonathan Nelson, refutes the suggestion.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335. A better illustration can be found at Burke, *Changing Patrons*, p. 86, fig. 23.

<sup>141</sup> Burke, *Changing Patrons*, p. 86, notes that the single legible word is *convengono* or "they come together" in modern Italian on the third line of text.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86 and chapter 84, examines the painting as a document recording the friendship between the somewhat unlikely pair.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223: *In Picturam*: Vix sibi tam similes Petrus est Puglisius ipsi, / Quam similis vero est picta tabella Petro, / Expressit mira quem nobilis arte Philippus / Sic ut iure queas dicere Apellis opus. / Atque simul sese tabula sic pinxit eadem, / Protinus a picto distet ut ille nihil, / Ut pictos siquis cum veris conferat, horum. / Pictus uter fuerit, non bene nosse queat. *In Eundum*: Tam veris simils sibi Philippus / Et Petro simul aurea tabella / Expressit facies manu perita / Quam vultus resident utriusque veri: / Ut pictis nisi vox et aura desit, / Nec vivi careant nisi tabella. / Hoc si fiet, erunt pares utique. See Alessandro Bracessi, *Carmina*, ed. A. Perosa (Florence: Bibliopolis, 1944), p. 122. [My thanks go to Marianna Cerno for an English translation: *In Picturam*: Piero del Pugliese scarcely resembles himself as, in truth, how closely the painted panel resembles Piero that noble Filippo expressed with admirable art, so that rightly it could be said to be the work of Apelles. Furthermore [Filippo], painted himself in this panel so that he is not different from the painting at all, so that if someone confronted it with the real Piero he would not know which was the painted one. *In Eundum*: So much similar to the true ones, himself and Pietro, Filippo in a gilded table expressed as the semblances with experienced hand both the true faces, so that the painting lacks nothing but the voice and the soul, and the living ones lack nothing except the table; and if this were not true, they would be the same.]



the popular notion that the painted faces are identical to the real ones – and further, if the painted image was given a voice and a soul, and the real people put on a panel, they would be entirely equal. The learned reference to Apelles only cements the visualization of a painted panel that could fool its onlooker into thinking he saw the actual individuals.

Zambrano believes on stylistic grounds that the painting was executed in the 1480s when Filippino would have been working in the Brancacci Chapel; moreover, Filippino's likeness is comparable to that which appears in the chapel, making the suggested date credible.<sup>144</sup> Burke argues that the painting of the pair testifies to the friendship the two shared up to Piero's death and that was forged during a period in which new social relationships were being worked out between purchasers and producers of the visual arts. She argues that in a city like Florence, where more explicitly courtly notions of service were problematic, friendship could provide a conceptual basis for the relationship between two men of such disparate ages and social classes as Piero and Filippino. Furthermore, the concept of friendship permitted the "notion of an intellectual, quasi-spiritual link" between them, "implying that the artist would be able to fulfill the patron's needs without stringent contractual terms" and as such, "endowed the relationship itself with an air of virtù."<sup>145</sup>

Piero del Pugliese is one of the eight men Vasari identifies in the portions of the chapel attributed to Filippino. Burke has recently traced the del Pugliese family's relations with the Carmelite church, and it is apparent that in the 1480s brothers Piero and Filippo del Pugliese, as maintainers of a recently-won family chapel in the mendicant church, would quite possibly have had an interest in the completion of the famous chapel, though no more secure a link between Piero and the chapel can be found.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately, one can only speculate which, in this case, came first. Did their friendship begin before Filippino's work in the Brancacci chapel? Could Piero in fact have helped his young friend obtain the commission? Alternatively, did their prolonged relationship, demonstrated by several commissions as well as archival documents,

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<sup>144</sup> Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, p. 334.

<sup>145</sup> Burke, *Changing Patrons*, p. 98.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29 notes that Piero and his brother Filippo had succeeded in the difficult task of obtaining a prestigiously located family chapel from the Guidoni family in 1465. Later around 1488 Piero is listed as an *operaio* of the church, attesting to a long-running interest in the church's affairs; moreover, as Burke notes (p. 90), Piero likely acted in this role prior to the late 1480s.

begin subsequent to the chapel's decoration?<sup>147</sup> Is it possible that the embedded portraits of either party within the Brancacci chapel came about because of the relationship? Nevertheless, while it is to be hoped that further archival research might uncover the answers to these questions, they are not likely to change our sense of the painting as an extraordinary testimony to the transformations of patron and artist relations in the ultimate decades of the Quattrocento.

### 5.2.3 Domenico Ghirlandaio

Vasari's description of Domenico Ghirlandaio's self-portrait in Santa Maria Novella's *cappella maggiore* in the *Expulsion of Joachim* painted for Giovanni Tornabuoni allowed later art historians to identify the two other self-portraits painted during the artist's prolific if relatively short career.<sup>148</sup> Only once does Domenico appear without his younger brother and partner, Davide (1452-1525) and other members of his family and close associates.<sup>149</sup> Recognized during his lifetime as a highly proficient and "expeditious" painter, he worked steadily from his earliest known fresco of c. 1467-1470 until his premature death in 1494 at the age of forty-five, and was mentioned in several contemporary documents regarding famous painters and their work.<sup>150</sup> Because of their context within two of the larger and more important Florentine fresco cycles of the 1480s made for rival Medici bank managers, Domenico's first two self-portraits have seen

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<sup>147</sup> Around 1480-1481 is the date generally given to the execution of the *Apparition of the Virgin to St. Bernard*, one of Filippino's first major commission – and first commission for Piero, whose donor portrait appears in the lower left corner – painted for the del Pugliese chapel in the monastery church of the Campora (destroyed) attached to a Benedictine monastery just outside the Porta Romana. See *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, for discussion of their relationship and other commissions given to Filippino, and Zambrano and Nelson, *Filippino Lippi*, pp. 346-348 for a catalog entry.

<sup>148</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 484-485. Based on this identification, Domenico was subsequently recognized as the last figure to the extreme right in the scene of the *Resuscitation of the Notary's Son* in Francesco Sassetti's Santa Trinità chapel, and lastly as the figure just to the left of the youngest king in the *Adoration of the Magi* commissioned for the high altar of the recently founded Ospedale. Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria*, p. 117, suggests that Ghirlandaio probably painted his first self-image in the scene of the Sistine Chapel's *Resurrection of Christ*, later destroyed. This is a possibility given the prestige of the location and the fact that other artists who painted there during the 1481-1482 decoration campaign may have also included self-images in their work; nevertheless, as the painting is destroyed, the suggestion cannot be reasonably discussed in the present context.

<sup>149</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 491, casts Davide's role as that of the workshop's administrator, although the statement made by Tommaso in the 1480 *catasto* report describes the younger son as Domenico's helper, and states that he was still learning the art of painting at the time. After Domenico's death, Davide continued painting and maintained a workshop in the parish of San Michele Berteldi according to his *Catasto* report of 1495. See Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 155-160 and pp. 319-328, for discussion of Davide's collaborative and independent works.

<sup>150</sup> For discussion of Ghirlandaio's critical reputation prior to Vasari, see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 2-3.

more concentrated study than his last known example. Domenico's third embedded self-image is found in the panel painted for the main altar of the church connected to Florence's founding hospital, and in spite of the density of records documenting the commission, remains comparatively ignored.

Domenico's self-consciousness has certainly not been ignored, although his self-images have seen less study than their contexts. Notably, the Sassetti and Tornabuoni chapels with their portrait galleries of Florentine worthies have seen the most discussion beginning with Aby Warburg's classic article of 1902, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie," and continuing almost until the present day.<sup>151</sup> Domenico's self-portraits are rendered extraordinary by their creation within a relatively short period of time in what appear to be overlapping – or at least subsequent – commissions. The fresco cycle in the Sassetti Chapel dedicated to St. Francis was painted between 1479 and 1485, while the Tornabuoni chapel was frescoed on its heels between 1485 and 1490 with scenes from the life of the Virgin. The panel of the *Adoration of the Magi* containing Domenico's self-portrait was begun in 1486 and completed in 1489: the result is three separate works located within two square miles of each other containing self-images, which puts Domenico at the forefront as the painter of the greatest number of known self-portraits of Quattrocento artists within the city of Florence.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Regarding these two chapels, see especially Eve Borsook and Johannes Offerhaus, *Francesco Sassetti and Ghirlandaio at Santa Trinitá, Florence: History and Legend in a Renaissance Chapel* (Doornspijk, Holland: Davaco, 1981); Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 67-102 and pp. 230-243; Rab Hatfield, "Giovanni Tornabuoni, i fratelli Ghirlandaio e la capella maggiore di Santa Maria Novella," in *Domenico Ghirlandaio, 1449-1494: atti del convegno internazionale, Firenze, 16-18 ottobre 1994*, ed. Wolfram Prinz and Max Seidl (Florence: Centro di, 1996); Schmid, *Et pro remedio animae et pro memoria: Bürgerliche repräsentation in der Capella Tornabuoni in S. Maria Novella*; Martin Seidel, "Devotion, Repräsentation, Historiographie und/oder Politik? zur ikonographischen Genese und Anordnung sowie zu Vorbildern von Domenico Ghirlandaios Freschen in der Sassetti-kapelle," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 5 (1997); Aby Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie. Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinità: The Portraits of Lorenzo de' Medici and His Household (1902)," in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance. Texts and Documents*, ed. Aby Warburg and Kurt W. Forster (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institution for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999); Aby Warburg, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunctions to His Sons," in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance. Texts and Documents*, ed. Aby Warburg and Kurt W. Forster (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institution for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999). See Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 77, fig. 71, for an illustration of the *Expulsion of Joachim* from the Tornabuoni Chapel, and p. 163, fig. 173, for one of the *Resuscitation of the Notary's Son*, both frescoes containing Domenico's self-portrait.

<sup>152</sup> Ronald G. Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, trans. Fiorella K. Signorini, Paolo Santoro, and Nori Zilli (Florence: Octavo Franco Cantini Editore, 1997), p. 70, states that it was not even two months after having contracted with Giovanni Tornabuoni for the Cappella Maggiore that Domenico accepted the commission for the Innocenti altarpiece. For an illustration of the altarpiece, see Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 163, fig. 173, and for a detail of Domenico's self-portrait, p. 184, fig. 193.

I wish to consider first the only one of these self-images that features Domenico's self-portrait without his workshop companions.<sup>153</sup> In fact, the only other portrait in the scene has been identified as that of Francesco di Giovanni Tesori, the prior of the foundling hospital, in the figure immediately to Domenico's right.<sup>154</sup> This fact at once makes Domenico's appearance unusual in comparison with his other self-images, but more in keeping with many self-portraits of other artists identified throughout Florence and Italy generally, which were less likely to contain the numerous portraits for which Ghirlandaio's work is known. Additionally, the commission's unusually rich documentation chronicling the altarpiece from the signing of the contract to final payment gives further insight into many aspects worthy of consideration.

The *Adoration of the Magi* painted for Florence's Ospedale degli Innocenti is one of Domenico's numerous panels of the type recommended by Ludovico Sforza's anonymous agent. The panel was first documented in a contract that, dated October 23, 1485, is today known from a copy made about seven months later in June of 1486.<sup>155</sup> The contract appears to be fairly standard: Domenico agrees to paint for 115 florins an already agreed-upon iconography on a panel with which he would be provided using good colors (some of which are specified along with their costs) within thirty months, at the risk of a fifteen florin penalty for late delivery, following a design that likely the artist had already tendered. Fra Bernardo di Francesco, the

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<sup>153</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 484-485, first identifies Domenico's immediate companions in the *Expulsion of Joachim* in the Tornabuoni chapel as Alesso Baldovinetti, described as Domenico's teacher in painting and mosaic, Bastiano da S. Gimignano, Domenico's disciple and cousin, and Davide, his brother.

<sup>154</sup> Some suggest that the two figures next to St. Joseph should be identified as portraits (see J. A. Crowe and G. B. Cavalcaselle, *Storia della pittura in Italia*, XI vols., vol. VII (1896) (Florence: LeMonnier, 1886-1908), R. Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, XIX vols., vol. XIII (1931) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1923-1928), and most recently Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*), but I tend to agree with Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 261, that these figures do not appear sufficiently differentiated to be portraits. Moreover, the numerous portraits that appear throughout Domenico's paintings are dressed in noticeably contemporary rather than "Biblical" or exotic clothing. These figures sport exotic headgear and embroidered robes of a type more in keeping with the traditional depictions of the three kings than with the sober appearance mandated by Florentine sartorial tradition and sumptuary laws. Francesco di Giovanni Tesori has been recognized by Luciano Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze* (Milan: Electa Editrice, 1977), p. 227; Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 286, and Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 261, as the figure soberly dressed in black to the left of Domenico. Tesori was elected prior of the hospital in 1482 and assumed the concurrent post of treasurer in 1483 according to Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536*, ed. Marvin Becker, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Civilization (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1990), p. 152, likely because of the distressed financial situation the hospital experienced between 1483 and 1484. It is presumably for this reason also that Francesco declined his salary, although he was required by the administering Silk Guild to "observe the practices of his predecessors." For a discussion of the financial situation of the hospital between 1473 and 1488, see Bruno Dini, "La ricchezza documentari per l'Arte della Seta e l'economia fiorentinanel Quattrocento," in *Gli Innocenti e Firenze nei secoli. Un ospedale, un archivio, una città* (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte (SPEC), 1996), pp. 169-172.

contract's copyist, was required to approve any compositional changes and the completed work. The documentation also gives us the names of the artisans who provided the frame, its decoration and finally the predella panels, and the schedule and amounts by which all of them, including Domenico, were paid.

As Ronald Kecks has noted, the *Adoration* painted for the foundling hospital does not follow the standard iconography, and is instead much amplified.<sup>156</sup> The painting is unusual for containing, in addition to the more standard inclusion of the Annunciation to the Shepherds in the upper right portion, a small vignette in the upper left corner of the Massacre of the Innocents, an appropriate inclusion given the context. Furthermore, the barn that sheltered the holy family is under construction by two men who are filling in the spaces between the classically-decorated square pillars with bricks. Other unusual elements include an adult St. John the Baptist who, looking out to the audience while gesturing to the infant Christ, kneels in the left foreground beside a similarly kneeling Innocent who has blood on his cheek and arm from a wound in his temple. Another injured Innocent with a wound high on his shoulder is being presented by St. John the Evangelist, the patron saint of the *Arte della Seta* (or *Por Santa Maria*), the guild that had administered the hospital since its recent conception.

While unusual, all of these elements appear easily explicable upon cursory investigation of contemporary circumstances. During the Quattrocento, the Ospedale was not the venerable institution it would become, but instead a new entity in the Florentine scene. Although the Silk Guild had taken guardianship of abandoned Florentine children in 1294, it was not until 1419 that, in collaboration with the commune, they decided to build the hospital for which Filippo Brunelleschi, now one of the guild's most famous Quattrocento members, designed a façade.<sup>157</sup> The initial 15<sup>th</sup>-century construction took several years to complete: the church was not inaugurated until January 25, 1445 and on February 5, 1445, the hospital enrolled its first female infant, Agata Smeralda, who was soon fostered by a wet nurse, as would be the standard Quattrocento practice.<sup>158</sup> The church was consecrated a few years later on April 11, 1451, by

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<sup>155</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 352-357, and pp. 259-261.

<sup>156</sup> Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 285.

<sup>157</sup> Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze*, p. 9.

<sup>158</sup> A description of the ceremony of the church's inauguration is found in Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine divise ne' suoi quartieri*, vol. VIII, p. 117, who quotes from a manuscript entitled *Privilegia Artis Porte S. Marie*. The ceremony, involving the "Comune ed Il Popolo Fiorentino," included a procession from the Duomo to the new church of the Hospital, and many ecclesiastical officials. A portion of the account is published in Luciano

Bishop Antonino Pierozzi (St. Antoninus).<sup>159</sup> Under the energetic priorship of Francesco di Giovanni Tesori (1482-1497), the hospital and its church saw yet more construction and beautification, which likely accounts for the construction efforts visible in the painted scene.<sup>160</sup> The hospital's mission to foster, protect and rear abandoned and orphaned children plausibly explains both the choice of the Adoration – the giving of gifts to an infant, essentially the institution's charge – and the presence of the vignette of the Massacre as well as the two small escapees who worship the holy child whose own eventual sacrifice would be greater than theirs. Moreover, while presumably the Massacre was too distressing a subject for the main altar, the altar's dedication was in fact to the Holy Innocents rather than to the Adoration. St. John the Baptist had long been the city's patron saint, while St. John the Evangelist was the patron of the guild responsible for the administration and guidance of the charitable institution. Furthermore, the very sumptuousness of the brocades and silks worn by the kings and their entourage might find partial explanation in the Silk Guild's administration.

Nothing appears to be known about the background of the prior under whose guidance the hospital's complex was completed, and who is further considered responsible for its enrichment during his fifteen-year tenure. He seems to have taken his duties regarding the “construction, building, maintenance, and increase” of the hospital seriously, and was clearly esteemed by the *Arte della Seta*. This regard is indicated by the guild's installation of a marble tomb-slab in Tesori's honor dated 1498 set in the pavement before the main altar, which itself

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Artusi and Antonio Patruno, *Gli Antichi Ospedali di Firenze. Un viaggio nel tempo alla riscoperta dei luoghi d'accoglienza e di cura Origine Storia Personaggi Aneddoti* (Florence: Semper Editrice, 2000), pp. 199-200. See Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 189, regarding the differences between the Quattrocento and Cinquecento practices of the hospital.

<sup>159</sup> Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze*, p. 11. The event is one of seven figured in the predella panel painted by Bartolommeo di Giovanni. While not as elaborate as the scene Vasari describes for Masaccio's lost depiction of the consecration of the Carmelite church in 1422, the fact that the predella primarily depicted Biblical scenes (*Martyrdom of St. John the Evangelist, Annunciation, Marriage of the Virgin, Deposition, Christ's Presentation in the Temple* [contracted to depict the *Purification of the Virgin*, it does not appear to be so], and *Baptism of Christ*) suggests the importance of the event and its documentation to the church, as does the fact that the scene is specifically named as one to be painted in the predella in a document dated July 30, 1488 (1489). In the scene, the bishop Antoninus is shown sprinkling holy water on the entry to the church before two standing clerics and four kneeling Florentine citizens.

<sup>160</sup> The superintendents or priors of the hospital were intended to be men – not necessarily clerics – of “foresight ... suitable and of good reputation...” with “the knowledge, inclination and aptitude to govern and rule.” They were also given the responsibility to distribute hospital revenues “in aid of the miserable persons and aforesaid children, as well as in the construction, building, maintenance, and increase” of the hospital. Archivio dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence, Testamenta et Donationes (IX, 1), fol. 35r, 13 February 1421, quoted in Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 151. The term of office was set at two years, but could be adjusted at the will of the guild's consuls. The prior was also empowered to rent property, terminate leases and to hire and fire the labor of those properties.

was positioned beneath the *Adoration* the prior had commissioned more than ten years before.<sup>161</sup> The slab's inscription testifies to Tesori's administrative abilities, and, it would seem, rightly so. Under his guidance, the hospital's church was greatly embellished: in addition to gaining its main altarpiece from one of the most popular artists of the city, the altar dedicated to St. Catherine maintained by the Lenzi family was refurbished, and the del Pugliese altar enriched with an altarpiece painted by Piero di Cosimo.<sup>162</sup> Numerous other paintings and pieces of church furniture were obtained during Tesori's tenure, and many architectural elements of the complex were completed, including the complex's principal courtyard, a masonry staircase, and the completion of the male and female portions in the necessarily divided institution. Several richly decorated choral graduals also date to the period of Tesori's office.<sup>163</sup>

At the time of its founding, the Florentine Ospedale degli Innocenti was the only hospital of its kind known in the western world that ministered to abandoned and orphaned children, though not the only institution or group with this charge in the city.<sup>164</sup> Moreover, during the politically and economically unstable years of the early mid-Quattrocento, rhetoric concerning charitable institutions such as the Innocenti and nearby hospital of Santa Maria Nuova spoke of the "divine mercy" that "might not unreasonably be hoped for, to the end of preserving the liberty of the people of Florence and also preserving [the patrimony of] the benefactors of that hospital."<sup>165</sup> Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the foundling hospital struggled to maintain its nonprofit, tax-exempt status. This was an especially difficult proposition during the early years

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<sup>161</sup> For catalog entries, see *Guida artistica*, (Florence: 1920 and 1926), p. 22 and Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale*, p. 227. The slab was originally placed before the altar, but was removed to a position behind it after 1786, and later moved to the museum in the *Sala del Ghirlandaio*. A full-length portrait of Tesori is depicted on it which, although greatly worn, does not appear dissimilar to his portrait by Ghirlandaio. Given the identical tilts of the heads and what seems to be their similar shape, I think it probable that the unknown sculptor used Ghirlandaio's depiction as a model for Tesori's sculpted portrait. Inscribed on the slab is the inscription: THESAURO TUMULUM FRANCI / ARS INCLITA SERUM / SUMPTIBUS HOC MERITO / GRATA SUIS POSUIT / O-MIQ. VIRTUTE DECORATO / PRIORI HOSPITALIS HUIUS / VIX. AN LIII DI XV. MCCCCIIC. [Illustrious Art, rightly grateful to him for his prodigality, placed a late grave for Francesco Tesori, the prior of this hospital. He was honored by every virtue (and) lived fifty-four years and fifteen days. (year 1498).]

<sup>162</sup> Laura Cavazzini, "Dipinti e sculture nelle chiese dell'Ospedale," in *Gli Innocenti e Firenze nei secoli. Un ospedale, un archivio, una città*, ed. Lucia Sandri (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte (SPEC), 1996), pp. 119-121.

<sup>163</sup> Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze*, pp. 12-13, and Cavazzini, "Dipinti e sculture nelle chiese dell'Ospedale," pp. 117-126.

<sup>164</sup> Notably, the Compagnia del Bigallo also attempted to find homes for abandoned and lost children, as a fragment of the fresco painted by Niccolò di Pietro Gerini and Ambrogio di Baldese of *I Capitani della Misericordia affidano alle "madri" i fanciulli abbandonaati e smarriti* (1386) for the façade of the group's meeting space in a loggia at the corner of the Piazza San Giovanni and Via di' Calzaiuoli attests.

<sup>165</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Provvisioni Registri, 121, fols. 78v-79v, 29 October 1430; quoted in Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 66.

of its construction and administration – which also witnessed the first impositions of the *Catasto* – and in light of the gifts of money and properties from numerous pious citizens that were eyed with continual interest by the cash-strapped city. The language that hospital representatives employed in letters written to the commune spoke emphatically about the honor and grace that the city and the commune gained from the hospital's existence. While it is true that these letters were drafted largely as part of an attempt to stave off the fiscal and authoritative deprivations from both communal and ecclesiastical bodies, they nonetheless reflected the importance of the hospital to the community it served.<sup>166</sup> As Philip Gavitt put it, “Renaissance Florentines perceived that charity, tenderness, and compassion toward children were crucial to personal immortality, the survival of families, and the salvation of the State.”<sup>167</sup>

The result was a unique community within the larger framework of Florence, a city already home to many charitable hospitals, which also served as a symbol of the city to both its citizens and to the world beyond.<sup>168</sup> This fact may help to explain Domenico's presence within the altarpiece he painted for the Ospedale degli Innocenti.<sup>169</sup> Further, outbreaks of plague were not uncommon during the Renaissance, and any parent had cause to fear the sudden decimation of the extended family rendering the services of the hospital crucial to the continued survival of the family name. Christian charity to a special institution alone would not have been Domenico's motivation for acceptance of the commission, and it would have been strange had it been so; moreover, he earned more for the Innocenti altarpiece than he did for the Monticelli altarpiece painted only a few years before, or the *Visitation* made for Cestello a few years later.<sup>170</sup> On the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., Chapter Two (“Hospital, Church, and Commune,” discusses the complex economic, political, and religious ties of the Hospital to the Florentine state and its status within the Quattrocento Florentine commune. For further documentary evidence concerning the hospital, particularly its architecture, see Giuseppina C. Romby, “L'immagine dell'Ospedale fra storia, arte e impegno civile,” in *Gli Innocenti e Firenze nei secoli. Un ospedale, un archivio, una città*, ed. Lucia Sandri (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte (SPEC), 1996).

<sup>167</sup> Gavitt, *Charity and Children*, p. 273.

<sup>168</sup> For his statement of the international reputation enjoyed by Florence as a city concerned with the relief of the poor and sick, see Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, p. 73.

<sup>169</sup> There appears to have been no prior link between Domenico and the Ospedale. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 260, suggests that the Innocenti commission came out of Domenico's prior work for the church of the Gesuati, rather than any previous association with the foundling hospital or its prior. Closer association could be argued instead between Domenico and Santa Maria Nuova, to which he and his brothers had agreed to pay annually six *lire* for masses. See Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 16. Moreover, the confraternity to which Domenico and other male members of his family belonged, the Compagnia di San Paolo, had no obvious ties to the hospital.

<sup>170</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 248, notes that for the Monticelli panel (1483) Domenico was paid seventy florins, while he earned 100 for the *Visitation* for the Cestello (1491). For his last work, finished after his death by Davide, an altarpiece contracted in 1493 for a family chapel of Pandolfo IV Malatesta in the church of San Domenico in Rimini, the original contracted 130 florins was reduced in the end by an arbitrator to 115. See



other hand, balanced with the notion that an artist might work for less money on a prestigious commission was the perception that part of a work's virtue was perceived in its cost.<sup>171</sup> By allocating 122 florins for the church's main altarpiece, Francesco Tesori was purchasing a superior quality work made with precious materials – a work that has since been called the “jewel” of the church's Quattrocento acquisitions – that would honor a unique symbol of Christian charity within the city.<sup>172</sup>

As noted, Domenico accepted the commission for the Innocenti's altarpiece at a point perhaps overlapping the completion of the Santa Trinità frescoes, and certainly concurrent with his commission for the cappella maggiore in Santa Maria Novella. A constant stream of work came from the Ghirlandaio workshop, signifying that these were not his only projects in the years between 1485 and 1489.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, he had also only just completed another Adoration subject – that of the Shepherds – in 1485 as the Sassetti Chapel's crowning jewel. Certainly by the time he was commissioned for the hospital's altarpiece, Domenico had already made a name for himself both across Italy, as is proved by the Vatican frescoes painted relatively early in his career in the Biblioteca Latina (1475-1476) and slightly later the Sistine Chapel (1481-1482), and at home by a prestigious public commission in the *Sala dei Gigli* of the Palazzo della Signoria (executed 1482-1483).

As in other cases discussed, one must assume that Fra Bernardino di Francesco, the friar charged with making sure that the altarpiece followed the submitted model and with the approval of any changes made to it, approved the inclusion of the two portraits. One honored the industrious prior who was later recognized by the guild who had elected him for a far longer

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Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 171. The money Domenico earned for the Innocenti altarpiece is on par with that of other major Florentine altarpieces of the same decade, especially one that featured the master's own hand so extensively. See Michelle O'Malley, "Commissioning Bodies, Allocation Decisions and Price Structures for Altarpieces in Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th - 17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell'Arte in Italia, secc. XV-XVII*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2003) for a general discussion regarding relative costs of late-Quattrocento altarpieces.

<sup>171</sup> Blume, "Botticelli and the Cost," p. 158.

<sup>172</sup> Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale*, p. 235, called it the jewel of the museum's collection. The money Domenico earned for the Innocenti altarpiece is on par with that of other major Florentine altarpieces of the same decade, especially one that featured the master's own hand so extensively.

<sup>173</sup> For example, in 1486 Domenico finished an altarpiece figuring the *Coronation of the Virgin* for San Girolamo di Narni, a commission he had accepted in 1484 while working in the Sassetti chapel. Additionally, it was likely while painting Giovanni Tornabuoni's chapel that Ghirlandaio also produced a tondo of the *Adoration of the Magi* for his patron. For further discussion of Domenico's workshop and the works of art produced during the busy years of the 1480s, see especially Kecks, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 65-72.

term of office than had been officially sanctioned, as well as by later writers on the hospital who praised him as being the most dedicated of the Quattrocento priors to the beautification of the hospital complex. The other honored a painter to whom an important Florentine patron had recently granted a similar honor. While it is always tempting to regard the portrait of the artist in a special light – an image somehow apart whether by placement, role, or simply by identity – to a large degree we likely see Domenico for the same reasons we find other individuals portrayed within sacred narratives: to honor and preserve his memory, and to indicate his piousness. These factors were compounded by the artist's private and professional circumstances, which made the Domenico's self-commemoration within the panel temporally relevant and personally important.

It is worth considering the Innocenti self-image in the context of Domenico's other known self-portraits at this juncture in order to carry the analysis of these images further. Prior to the Innocenti panel self-portrait, likenesses of the artist and his brother that could be interpreted as representing the Ghirlandaio "corporation" or workshop appeared opposite numerous Sassetti portraits in the panel of the *Resuscitation of the Notary's Son*, the middle fresco on the altar wall and probably painted around 1482.<sup>174</sup> The Sassetti chapel in the Vallombrosan church of S. Trinità had been newly acquired, and the frescoes commissioned from Ghirlandaio celebrated the life of Sassetti's name saint of St. Francis, his family and its position within Quattrocento Florence – significantly tied to Lorenzo de' Medici's rising prominence.<sup>175</sup>

If Cadogan is correct in dating the actual painting of the fresco after 1482, then Domenico's self-inclusion comes directly on the heels of the important Sistine Chapel commission, and may account for his scarce presence during the concurrent work on the Palazzo Vecchio commission for the *Sala dei Gigli*. The suggestion that Lorenzo de' Medici played a significant role in the choice of Florentine artists sent to Rome must be reiterated at this juncture: if the proposed date is correct, then the changes made to the cycle during this period directly after Domenico's return – altered to include significantly more portraits, and significantly

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<sup>174</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 235, argues that the planning of the chapel took place over several years and it was likely after Domenico's sojourn in Rome for the painting of scenes in the Sistine Chapel that he went to work on this portion of Sassetti's chapel.

<sup>175</sup> For the history of Sassetti's acquisition of his chapel in the Vallombrosan church, see especially Warburg, "Francesco Sassetti's Last Injunctions," and Patricia Simons, "Patronage in the Tornaquinci Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence," in *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. F. W. Kent and Patricia Simon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 225-230.

Lorenzo's own – take on greater significance as regards Domenico's self-portrait.<sup>176</sup> In this case, Francesco Sassetti would not be the only individual concerned with the visible and close association of himself and his lineage with that of the Medici family. As Cadogan suggests, inserted portraits of Sassetti and his progeny – sons and daughters and their spouses – along with Medici portraits of Lorenzo and his sons into the traditional iconography indicated the vital connections between the two families, while the transfer of events that had taken place elsewhere to Florence cast the city and its fortunes in an auspicious light. She further proposes that Domenico's self-portrait had a similar inspiration as that of his patron, arguing that dynastic ambitions could have been propelling factors in the inclusion of the Ghirlandaio images, too, especially considering the recent births of Domenico's eldest sons and his own emancipation from his father's control.<sup>177</sup>

The self-image in the *Expulsion of Joachim* at Santa Maria Novella – one of the additional scenes not mentioned in the contract between Giovanni Tornabuoni and Domenico – was probably painted around 1488.<sup>178</sup> The fact that Domenico's self-portrait is found in a scene from the chapel's west wall – the first of the three decorated – clearly indicates that it was painted relatively early within the painting campaign before, in fact, Domenico had painted the majority of the Tornabuoni portraits that appear directly opposite on the east wall in the *Annunciation to Zacharias*. This observation leads me to two additional points: if one takes the traditional view adopted towards signatures as the artist's sign of a finished work, then clearly Domenico's self-image cannot be seen as functioning in this way, since it was painted significantly in advance of the chapel's completion. Obviously, other reasons must be sought to explain the self-portrait's presence. Further, the self-portrait along with portraits of other Ghirlandaio family members was a planned inclusion that would have been visible – and therefore could have been removed had Tornabuoni wished it – long before most of the chapel's decoration had been completed.

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<sup>176</sup> W. Welliver, "Alterations in Ghirlandaio's S. Trinità Frescoes," *Art Quarterly* 32 (1969).

<sup>177</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 235; contract published at pp. 350-351 in Latin. For an English translation, see D. Chambers, *Patrons and Artists in the Italian Renaissance* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970), pp. 173-175.

<sup>178</sup> This date is conjectured following the argument made by Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 241, that the bulk of the painting was done between 1488 and 1490, the documented completion of the chapel. Given that the scene is positioned on the lowest tier of the west wall, and that the painting progressed from the vault to the west wall, then to the altar wall and lastly to the east wall, it would seem reasonable that the scene of the *Expulsion* would have been done in 1488.

Domenico's self-portrait is presented in company with his brother Davide and two other men, one of them perhaps his father and the other a younger brother.<sup>179</sup> Cadogan asserts, reasonably enough, that Ghirlandaio – the Ghirlandai (or *Grillandai*, as they named themselves in the signature-inscription that appears in the *Birth of the Virgin* in addition to the official family surname of *Bigordi* that appears in the same scene), in fact – is present with the permission of his host, so to speak, and patron, who acknowledges something that Domenico's posture makes plain. Cadogan argues that Domenico is not merely a witness, but is comparable to an offerant at a would-be sacrifice, as is suggested by his gesture to himself in a pose that echoes that of the woman behind him approaching the altar with her sacrificial doves. In Tornabuoni's acknowledgement is inherent the sympathetic awareness that the Ghirlandaio, too, have significant ties to the church; it was the burial site for several family members including Domenico's first wife a few years before the commission and, only a few years after it, the artist himself.<sup>180</sup>

As noted before, Domenico's two self-inclusions in major Florentine fresco cycles share several notable similarities, and it is perhaps something in these similarities that gives rhyme and reason not only to Domenico's desire to include himself and members of his family or workshop, but also to his patrons' permission to do so. In the Santa Trinità self-portrait, the artist appears on the outside edge of the scene looking in, with Davide facing him in profile. Domenico presents himself in a full-length, self-conscious pose: one hand on his hip, the artist addresses the viewer with an arresting gaze. He is only partially visible; his head and face, a narrow portion of his right side clad in a blue fur-trimmed belted tunic and red mantle, and one hose-covered leg can be seen between the figures identified as Neri di Gino Capponi and Davide on the left, and the pilaster that ends the scene on the right. Nevertheless, Domenico's position coupled with his awareness of and outward glance to the viewer, all serve to distinguish him from the other portraits inhabiting the scene.

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<sup>179</sup> G. S. Davies, *Domenico Ghirlandaio* (London: Methuen and Co., 1908), pp. 109-110, identifies the older man as Domenico's father, Tommaso. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 90, supports the identification and further argues against the presence of Mainardi, suggesting instead that Domenico's younger brother Benedetto would be a more likely inclusion. In the case of Baldovinetti's possible image, it is regrettable that the image painted by Domenico cannot be compared with the portrait Baldovinetti supposedly made of himself in the company escorting Solomon in the lost scene of the *Meeting of Solomon in the Queen of Sheba*, also painted in Santa Trinità. See Ruth W. Kennedy, *Alessandro Baldovinetti: A Critical and Historical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938).

<sup>180</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 90.

These same factors seem to be in place again for the self-portrait in Santa Maria Novella painted only a few years later. More of Domenico's body is visible, clad in the same combination of blue tunic and red mantle – a favored color combination used repeatedly within the artist's frescoes – and again he appears at the fringes of the scene, although this time Davide, whose head appears just over Domenico's shoulder, is slightly more peripheral. Even more than in the self-portrait in the *Resuscitation*, Domenico's self-awareness is unmistakable. The greater visibility and the increased space of his image with its projecting elbow, graceful stance, and self-indicative gesture render him all the more distinctive. Only slightly older, the face is essentially the same: we see the same jaw line, but the older face is a bit fuller.

These highly visible self-portraits contrast with the more modest self-inclusion that Domenico presents within the *Adoration*. Here the scope for portraiture in the altarpiece was inherently reduced: only two portraits are embedded in the *Adoration of the Magi*. Francesco di Giovanni Tesori is the more visible of the two: clad in sober black, his loosely-cupped right hand is visible below his waist while the left gestures towards the turbaned, bearded man positioned on his right. We see more of Tesori than we do of Domenico, who is positioned directly on Francesco's left and slightly further back behind the youngest King. The painter presents himself more modestly: only a small 'v' of a red tunic with a black band at his neck is visible below the artist's face. Nevertheless, any claims to humility concerning Domenico's self-inclusion must be tempered by recognition of the prominence afforded him by his richly saturated red tunic contrasted against the black and yellow worn by the figures on either side, and by the framing of his face by the intersection of the projecting, jewel-tipped cross held by John the Baptist. Domenico's self-presentation may be discreet, but it hardly can escape the viewer's notice.

The decade of the 1480s was a busy one for the painter, professionally and personally.<sup>181</sup> This makes the degree to which Domenico seems to have taken to heart the standard phrase included in the contract between himself and Tesori insisting that work be executed by "his own

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<sup>181</sup> In addition to copious commissions during the 1480s discussed above, in 1484 Domenico gained emancipation from his father – a rare if not unheard of legal act with many significations – and the same decade saw the death of Domenico's first wife, Costanza di Bartolomeo Nucci, whom he had married sometime around or slightly before 1480, and his marriage in 1488 to his second wife, Antonia di ser Paolo di Simone Paoli. Additionally, at least six children were born in this decade. See Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 3, pp. 282-283, for the Ghirlandaio family tree. For discussion of the legal and social ramifications of emancipation during the Quattrocento, see especially T. Keuhn,

hand” (*sua mano*) unusual. The *sua mano* clause was typical within Quattrocento contracts, and was even more typically ignored. In fact, although Domenico’s personal attention did not extend much past an original cartoon in some instances, there is evidence that his level of participation is high for the three commissions in question.<sup>182</sup> Although the hand of an assistant is occasionally visible within the backgrounds of the Sassetti chapel frescoes, Domenico executed the principal figures – as had *not* been the case for work in the Palazzo dei Priori commission.<sup>183</sup> Within the *Adoration* altarpiece, Cadogan notes that there is evidence of only one other hand in peripheral locations.<sup>184</sup> Otherwise, Domenico’s hand alone painted the sizable panel, unsigned as is the case for the majority of the artist’s work.<sup>185</sup> Likewise, according to Cadogan, although the Tornabuoni cycle was executed by at most four hands, evidence of Domenico is everywhere.<sup>186</sup>

Concentrated participation alone does not explain Domenico’s inclusion within these frescoes, though it could be viewed as a contributing factor to an artist’s desire for self-commemoration. Instead, I think that the same concepts of family, honor, and one’s place and pride in one’s city that have come up repeatedly in this study are once again in evidence for both artist and patron. Unfortunately, no *catasto* report made by Domenico of his property is known; nevertheless, it would appear reasonable that, as Cadogan suggests, Domenico only formed a *bottega* in the traditional sense during the period of intense Florentine activity that coincided with these important commissions in the 1480s.<sup>187</sup> Perhaps still describable as an “itinerant” artist, nevertheless, Cadogan notes that Domenico seems to have been content to cluster his considerable activity within Florence and its confines rather than venturing further abroad. As has already been discussed, the period also coincides with Domenico’s legal emancipation, which resulted in his control, for example, over his own income and his first wife’s large dowry,

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*Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1982). A briefer discussion on emancipation as it concerned Domenico specifically can be found in Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 16.

<sup>182</sup> Marco Chiarini, “Bigordi, Domenico, detto (del) Ghirlandaio,” in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Alberto Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1968), p. 451, reiterates this view, asserting that often Domenico’s intervention was limited to the general idea and the execution of a few relevant parts, normally the heads.

<sup>183</sup> Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 236.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261, notes that a different hand is discernable in the painting of the two workmen behind the Virgin in a portion of the Massacre vignette, and identifies it as that of Bartolomeo di Giovanni.

<sup>185</sup> The original elaborate frame, created by Antonio da Sangallo, was long ago discarded; it is unlikely however, that Ghirlandaio signed it, as he did not generally sign altarpieces. While inscriptions appear often throughout Domenico’s work, ones that identify the artist and his workshop are infrequent.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

itself an indicator that the artist had married a woman of higher social status than his own. These factors in addition to the foundation of his own household could reasonably be seen as grounds for Domenico's desire to commemorate his activity in three scenes that are concerned with familial longevity, regeneration, and the importance of children.

Regarding his patrons' permission of Domenico's self-portrait along with that of Davide and others on two occasions, it would seem reasonable to cite both the master's growing importance in the city and what I have referred to as patronal generosity, or recognition on the part of the patron of the artist's status and concerns. The word "permission" is necessary in the case of the Tornabuoni self-portrait according to the contract: Domenico was allowed to paint a scene only after he had presented a drawing to Giovanni for approval.<sup>188</sup> Despite the high degree of control that Giovanni insisted upon in the famous document, it described the artist as "*pittor et magister pitture*" (painter and recognized master), and undoubtedly Giovanni thought highly of the painter chosen to decorate such an important and hard-won space.<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, I find problematic Cadogan's statement that Domenico, in placing his image in Santa Maria Novella, "claimed for himself a role equivalent to that of his patron."<sup>190</sup> I do not dispute that Domenico may have had reason to wish to do so – Cadogan cites the fact that Santa Maria Novella was the artist's family church and the principal Florentine church founded by the Order of the artist's name-saint, St. Dominic. Yet while Domenico and his contingent are displayed prominently in a place of honor that further serves to balance the numerous portraits appearing on the opposite wall, the role of the Tornabuoni within the cycle is visibly more important and extensive, further

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 161. Prior to this period, Tommaso had noted in his own *catasto* report of 1480 that his son Domenico "has no fixed abode" (*non ha luogo fermo*): see Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>188</sup> Examples of the control Giovanni exerted over the commission include his insistence to see preparatory drawings of scenes prior to their depiction and the unusual feature of naming the iconography and position of each scene – though it has long been recognized that the chapel does not follow what was apparently the original outlined scheme.

<sup>189</sup> Discussion of the machinations that led to Giovanni Tornabuoni's possession of the coveted chapel is found in Simons, "Patronage in the Tornaquinci Chapel." Moreover, Domenico was already known to Giovanni, as evidenced by Ghirlandaio's decoration of a tomb in Santa Maria sopra Minerva for Francesca Tornabuoni, Giovanni's wife, who died on September 23, 1477. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 480, mentions it, but misidentifies the patron as Francesco Tornabuoni instead of his son. The tomb was mentioned in contemporary and later sources: see V. Chiaroni, "Il Vasari e il monumento sepolcrale del Verrocchio per Francesca Tornabuoni," in *Studi Vasariani; Atti del convegno internazionale per il centenario della prima edizione delle Vite del Vasari* (Florence: Sansoni, 1952). Another indication of the pair's earlier knowledge of each other is found in the portrait of Giovanni that appears in the group of spectators thought to represent members of the Florentine colony in Rome in the scene of the *Calling of Peter and Andrew*, one of the two scenes Ghirlandaio painted in the Sistine Chapel. Tornabuoni was likely present by virtue of his position as papal treasurer. Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 225.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

signaled by Giovanni's insistence that his own arms be placed where he saw fit within the cycle. Furthermore, while the Domenico's face may be visible, his family arms are not in evidence. Vasari writes of the battle waged by the previous owners, the Ricci, to retain a visible claim through the display of their arms in the *cappella maggiore* – arms which were in the end placed in a prestigious location of little visibility, honoring the letter if not the spirit of the agreement made between the two families.<sup>191</sup> Domenico is honored in the space, but it seems evident that the painter would have been allowed to go only so far in the display of his own interests in Giovanni's chapel. That a primary function of the decorations was to exalt the Tornabuoni family is also in keeping with the conclusions to which Warburg came concerning the votive function of portraits found in religious stories.<sup>192</sup>

Moreover, it seems clear that the language of the contract unmistakably signals Giovanni's desire to be – and be regarded as – a munificent patron. It was doubtless the case that had Tornabuoni perceived that his painter had infringed too heavily he would have curtailed any such activities. Nevertheless, the contract describes Giovanni twice as “noble,” (*generosus*) and “magnificent” (*magnificus*), and stresses in the opening passage that the chapel was to be decorated in a “noble, worthy, exquisite and decorative” (*nobilibus et egregiis et exquisitis et ornatis*) manner for Giovanni's love of, and wish to glorify, God and the saints. This was to be done at Giovanni's own expense not only for the “love of God,” but also for the “exaltation of his house and family and the enhancement of the said church and chapel” (*amore Die ... in exaltationem sue domus ac familie et ornatum et decorem dicte ecclesie et cappelle prefate*). Nor should it be forgotten that considerable generosity had already been a factor in Tornabuoni's courtship of the Dominicans for the rights to the chapel in the first place.<sup>193</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that Giovanni's liberality as a patron of the church extended to the painter who had reason to wish to be present in the frescoes, and with whom the merchant had had prior, felicitous dealings.<sup>194</sup> Nor is it unreasonable to think that privileged viewers of the frescoes – for

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<sup>191</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 480.

<sup>192</sup> Warburg, "The Art of Portraiture," especially pp. 189-190.

<sup>193</sup> Simons, "Patronage in the Tornaquinci Chapel," p. 234, notes that Giovanni Tornabuoni gave generously for wax, vestment and masses, and that his involvement in the confraternity of St. Peter Martyr – he was twice elected a captain and further donated to the confraternity a wool shop – probably had an ulterior motive, in that it was specifically associated with the church's high altar.

<sup>194</sup> Although Domenico possessed the family name “Bigordi” that is first documented in the 1450s – this at a time when family names were markers of social status – it is noticeably absent from the contract with Tornabuoni, which



this was not a chapel to which all had access – who recognized the painter and his workshop representatives would have interpreted their presence in a similar fashion.

In the end, one can only speculate why of Domenico’s copious commissions at home and abroad – the artist has been called an “itinerant painter” – it was in three clustered Florentine examples that the artist was allowed to (and chose to) immortalize himself, twice with his companions. Domenico’s fullest artistic maturity and fame coincided with the 1480s, although this view is almost certainly colored by the artist’s early death from plague; one might have reasonably expected Domenico to have painted much longer than he did. Nevertheless, the notion that Domenico wanted to commemorate the same landmark events in his life that presumably motivated his patrons has merit. That he at last appears alone and more finely dressed in the Innocenti altarpiece than in previous self-portraits likely signals Domenico’s desire to proclaim himself not only the primary talent of his workshop, but a painter whom God had blessed with unusual success in both his personal and professional lives.

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names him only as Domenico di Tommaso Curradi, or as Domenico, the son of Tommaso, the son of Corrado. While Domenico’s professional status is honored, his social status does not appear to be recognized.

## 6.0 SELF-PORTRAITURE IN TRANSITION

Although it may be difficult to call it the first autonomous self-portrait made by an Italian Renaissance artist, the *idea* of autonomous self-portraiture is clearly evident in a work by Pietro Perugino in 1500.<sup>1</sup> In the meeting space of the Collegio del Cambio, a chamber on the ground floor of Perugia's Palazzo dei Priori used as a guild meeting hall, one may find Perugino's own fictively autonomous image, identified and lavishly praised. This chapter examines this important work and the concept it displays in order to address questions that have scarcely even been posed. While Pietro's image is often noted in discussions of the artist's career and the history of self-portraits, few discuss how he came to be there, and what his presentation signified for those who gathered beneath his gaze.<sup>2</sup> Taking into account the prestigious location of the image and the importance of the guild-members in city affairs, even the concurrent rise of status of artists in general and Perugino's late-Quattrocento fame does not account satisfactorily for the artist's presence.

In this chapter, I will pursue the argument that Perugino's image came about due to a particular set of circumstances that helps to explain why similar images were never made. Pintoricchio's similar image made the following year will be discussed also in the context of the particular relationship between the cities of Perugia and Spello and the family of the artist's important patron. While Pintoricchio's image clearly owes its conception to the influence of the other master, rather than being derivative, it was specifically intended to remind the viewer of

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<sup>1</sup> Many regard a panel dated to c. 1505-1506 and attributed to Raphael in the Royal Collection, Hampton Court, as the earliest surviving autonomous Italian Renaissance self-portrait. Giorgione may have concurrently represented himself as David with the head of Goliath in a lost allegorical self-portrait that is known in many engravings. For discussion of both images as early Italian self-portraits, see Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, pp. 111-119.

<sup>2</sup> I have come across a single short discussion of this image in the context of the city that attempts to explain the presence of the artist's portrait. See Laura Teza, "Osservazione sulla decorazione del Collegio del Cambio," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004), pp. 116-117.

the more famous Collegio image, and can be regarded as a means of linking the two places visually. Perugino's self-portrait and that of his pupil/partner Pintoricchio represent a unique situation in the history of Renaissance self-portraiture. Perugia's desire to remain free from overt papal control, the city's particular association with *uomini famosi* imagery of Perugia's own citizens, and other historic factors help to explain how Perugino and then Pintoricchio came to be the first artists figured (quasi) autonomously in the Italian Renaissance tradition.

At the end of the Quattrocento, Pietro Vannucci, more commonly known as Perugino after his adopted city of Perugia, (Città della Pieve c. 1450 – Fontignano 1523) was one of the most sought after painters in Italy. After receiving his earliest training in Umbria, he traveled to Florence to gain further training in a city with which he maintained ties for much of his career. He was listed as a member of the Florentine Company of St. Luke in 1472 and established a workshop in 1486 near the hospital of S. Maria Nuova. There he met some of the best-known artists of the period, completing his workshop training with Andrea del Verrocchio and undoubtedly meeting artists of the caliber of Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli, amongst others. It was in Florence that Perugino married Chiara Fancelli in 1493 and, somewhat tardily, it would seem, entered the city's *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* in 1499. Florence, historians agree, was Perugino's principle residence for many years, although Perugia became another important city for the artist.<sup>3</sup> The artist inspired the model promoted by Vasari in his *Vita* of Perugino: an ambitious young painter perfects his art in Florence and then ventures forth to make his fortune.<sup>4</sup> Of primary interest here is his last self-portrait, created – as were all of his self-images – outside the city that the artist appears to have called home for many of his working years.<sup>5</sup> Perugino

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<sup>3</sup> For a recent discussion of Perugino's early Florentine career, see Lisa Venturini, "Benché si può dire Fiorentino, ch'è allevato qui: il giovane Pietro Perugino a Firenze," in *Pietro Vannucci detto il Perugino, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio 25 - 28 ottobre 2000*, ed. Laura Teza (Perugia: Volumina Editrice, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, pp. 596-597. Also, see Jonathan Nelson, "La disgrazia di Pietro: l'importanza della pala della Santissima Annunziata nella Vita del Perugino del Vasari," in *Pietro Vannucci detto il Perugino, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio 25 - 28 ottobre 2000*, ed. Laura Teza (Perugia: Volumina Editrice, 2004), p. 65. If O'Malley, "Commissioning Bodies," p. 167, is correct in her argument that a Florence-trained painter of the second half of the Quattrocento and early Cinquecento made more money in provincial Tuscan cities than in Florence and Siena, then this model makes financial sense. This is the opposite of the trend of the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>5</sup> Perugino is generally believed to have included his own portrait in a panel of the *Adoration of the Magi* in a traditionally peripheral figure – the figure to the far left whose face and *berretto* are only just visible at the edge of the panel. Today it is in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria in Perugia. This earliest known self-portrait of the artist, then in his 30s, was first suggested by Rumorh, *Italienische Forschungen*. For a summary of the painting's suggested dates, see Pietro Scarpellini, *Perugino* (Milan: Electa, 1984), pp. 74-75. A second self-portrait likely appears in the Sistine Chapel, although in which fresco Perugino appears is a topic of debate. If Meller (see Peter

painted his self-image in Perugia's Collegio del Cambio in 1500, appearing within the fresco cycle in a fictively autonomous panel.<sup>6</sup> Despite the links he maintained with Florence, by the late Quattrocento Perugino had claimed Perugia as his adopted city, an important consideration to which we will return later.<sup>7</sup>

The other painter under consideration in this chapter, although not enjoying Perugino's reputation then or now, is Bernardino di Betto, known more commonly as Pintoricchio (Perugia 1454 – Siena 1513). Perugino's reputation, once amongst the highest, likely suffered somewhat in his later years following the well-known failures of his commission for Isabelle d'Este in 1505 and the SS. Annunziata altarpiece completed in 1507.<sup>8</sup> Pintoricchio's, in comparison, was never quite so grand in the first place, though he worked steadily and to high acclaim throughout Italy. Although a much sought-after artist known for his paintings in the Vatican's Borgia Apartments and Siena's Piccolomini Library, Pintoricchio was generally counted during his lifetime as Perugia's other master, and a pupil of Perugino.<sup>9</sup> Vasari's snubbing biography cemented Pintoricchio's position as an artist of the second – or perhaps, for later writers, even third –

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Meller, "Two Drawings of the Quattrocento in the Uffizi: A Study in Stylistic Change," *Master Drawings* 12 (1974): p. 270.) is correct, then Perugino likely does *not* appear in the *Consignment of the Keys* in the fifth figure from the extreme right as is often assumed, but instead can probably be identified in the last figure to the extreme left whose face is just visible in *Moses' Journey into Egypt*.

<sup>6</sup> The city's *Mercanzia* (Merchant) and *Cambio* (Money-Changers) guilds were closely related, and jointly maintained the *Collegio del Cambio* in the Palazzo dei Priori, Perugia's center of political authority. Regarding these guilds, see Tiziana Biganti and Clara Cutini, "Le arti nel palazzo: i collegi della mercanzia e del cambio," in *Il Palazzo dei priori di perugia*, ed. Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia: Quattroemme Srl, 1997); Cristina Galassi, "La decorazione del collegio del cambio: storia e fortuna di un modello classicista," in *Il Palazzo dei priori di perugia*, ed. Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia: Quattroemme Srl, 1997); Vittoria Garibaldi, "Il Collegio del cambio a Perugia: un Perugino in Collegio," *Art e dossier* 101, no. May (1995); Maria G. Ottaviani and Claudio Regni, "Il Collegio del Cambio e la città," in *Il Collegio del Cambio in Perugia*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini (Perugia: Silvana Editoriale, 1998); Pietro Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione della sala dell'Udienza," in *Il Collegio del Cambio in Perugia*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini (Milan: Silvana, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione della sala dell'Udienza," p. 75, notes that after a certain point, Perugia becomes the artist's favored center of activity. Given the number of commissions Perugino received in the city of Perugia and its environs, this would appear to have been the case, although he by no means abandons Florence entirely.

<sup>8</sup> This commission, accepted following the death of Filippino Lippi, the original artist contracted to paint a new main altarpiece, was savagely criticized upon its completion. For a discussion of this work, the artist's last major Florentine commission and its consequences for his reputation before and after his death, see A. Ladis, "Perugino and the Wages of Fortune," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 131 (1993), and Nelson, "La disgrazia di Pietro." Also see Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione della sala dell'Udienza," for a consideration of Perugino's general reputation throughout the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento.

<sup>9</sup> Pietro Scarpellini, "'Fortuna' del Pintoricchio," in *Pintoricchio*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini and Maria R. Silvestrelli (Milan: Federico Motta Editore S.p.A, 2003), p. 13.

rank.<sup>10</sup> Like Perugino, however, Pintoricchio is believed to have created at least one traditional embedded self-portrait before including his “hung” self-portrait in the Virgin’s bower in the chapel he painted for Troilo Baglioni (d. 1506) in Spello’s collegiate church of S. Maria Maggiore.<sup>11</sup>

The chamber where Perugino’s self-portrait is found is located within Perugia’s most important loci of political and social power, the Palazzo dei Priori, which is situated on a major city artery today known as the Corso Vannucci. The Collegio was the meeting space of the *Cambio* and *Mercanzia*, two of the most important and powerful of the city’s forty-four guilds whose members held the majority of political offices in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Perugia.<sup>12</sup> Constructed between 1429 and 1443, the Collegio served as a focal point of the city and reflected the joint interests of Perugia’s merchants and nobility.<sup>13</sup> During the Quattrocento, a campaign that had

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<sup>10</sup> Vasari and C. de Vere, *Lives*, vol. I, p. 571, commence the life of Pintoricchio with the damning judgment that some “...are helped by fortune, without being much endowed by merit...” [Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 571: (*aiutato dalla fortuna, senza essere di molta virtù dotato*)] Following Vasari’s slighting estimation, Pintoricchio’s reputation suffered further, and even one of the first English studies dedicated to Pintoricchio spent the first page justifying the existence of a biography of an artist who “in some of the greatest essentials will not pass muster.” See Evelyn M. Phillipps, *Pintoricchio* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901), p. 1. For a less biased discussion of Pintoricchio’s art and reputation, see Scarpellini, “Fortuna’ del Pintoricchio.” As Corrado Fratini, “La due Cappelle Baglioni di Spello: dal Maestro di Grifonetto al Pintoricchio,” in *Pintoricchio a Spello: la Capella Baglioni in Santa Maria Maggiore*, ed. Giordana Benazzi (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2000), p. 18, points out, local authors were more likely to favor the artist and the chapel.

<sup>11</sup> Other self-portraits discussed in the literature on Pintoricchio include a figure in the *Sala dei Santi* in the Borgia Apartments of the Vatican. See Maria R. Silvestrelli, “Genealogia di Bernardino di Betto. Perugia tra il 1450 e il 1480,” in *Pintoricchio*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini and Maria R. Silvestrelli (Milan: Federico Motta Editore, 2003), p. 23 (discussed) and p. 24 (illustrated). Pintoricchio included his image along with several other embedded portraits (of which only a few have been identified) in the *Dispute of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, executed around 1493 when the artist would have been about forty years of age. This figure is identified as the third from the left edge of the painting wearing a red cap pushed far back on his head and a black-trimmed red tunic over a white pleated undergarment. The identified figure compares relatively well with the later secure self-image of 1501 in features, although it is possible that the similar positions of the heads may lend more seeming comparability than the figures may possess. For illustration, see Giordana Benazzi, ed., *Pintoricchio a Spello: La Cappella Baglioni in Santa Maria Maggiore* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2000), p. 67.

<sup>12</sup> James R. Banker, “The Social History of Perugia in the Time of Perugino,” in *Pietro Perugino: Master of the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Joseph A. Becherer (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> For information on this locale and its role within the city, see Biganti and Cutini, “Le arti nel palazzo: i collegi della mercanzia e del cambio;” Galassi, “La decorazione del collegio del cambio;” Garibaldi, “Il Collegio del cambio a Perugia;” Lidia Mazzerioli, “La documentazione,” in *Il Collegio del Cambio in Perugia*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1998); Teza, “Osservazione sulla decorazione.” Ottaviani and Regni, “Il Collegio del Cambio e la città,” p. 27, note that the Merchants were definitely seated within the palazzo by 1403, part of a gradual process of consolidating their position within the city that had begun in 1384. The Money-Changers, too, since the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, had been pursuing a similar goal. When the ancient nobility began to infiltrate the guilds in order to regain admittance to political offices in the city during the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries – membership in which was required for those who sought offices in the priory – they demonstrated a marked propensity to join these two guilds. For an analysis of the nobility’s presence in Perugia’s guilds, see Alberto Grohmann, “Ricchezza e potere a Perugia (1416-1540),” in *Forme e tecniche del potere nella città (secoli XIV-XVII)* (Perugia: 1980) and

been underway since the 12<sup>th</sup> century to associate the two guilds with the medieval city's prosperity was completed when the guilds were given custody over the metal used by the new Perugian mint.<sup>14</sup> This association can be read from the insertion of the griffon, a primary symbol of the comune, into the emblems and motto (*Urbs est camporum signum Perusina tuorum*) of the two guilds.<sup>15</sup> Only one other guild had ever had a presence in the communal palace; the notaries, however, remained there for only a short period.<sup>16</sup> These two guilds alone remained within the center of the city's communal life: that Perugino's signed self-portrait is found in this context, one whose importance for the city's commercial and political life is difficult to overestimate, is significant.

Documentation, however, is disappointingly scarce and laconic for Perugino's work within the structure.<sup>17</sup> We do know, however, that on January 26, 1496, two of the guild's jurors, Amico dei Graziani and Mario di Benedetto, put forth the day's discussion: the ornamentation of the Collegio's audience hall.<sup>18</sup> Perugino's name is explicitly put forth in the surviving notice of the meeting as a candidate along with another unnamed potential contender, and further, it is known that Perugino was currently in town, having recently begun an altarpiece for the Cassinesi. In fact, beginning around 1494, Perugino was frequently in residence in Perugia, formerly a city in which he had worked sporadically. He spent enough time there to

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Tiziana Biganti, "Elementi di trasformazione sociale e culturale," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Ottaviani and Regni, "Il Collegio del Cambio e la città," p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. The Latin phrase translates as "*The city of Perugia is the symbol of your money-changers (guild)*"

<sup>16</sup> Banker, "The Social History of Perugia," p. 46. Other guilds, however, had offices near the communal palace: the *Arte dei Calzolari* (Cobblers) and that of the *Speziali* were situated on the Piazza Grande, and the *Arte della Lana* (Wool Guild) had a building on the small nearby piazza of Sopramuro. See Biganti, "Elementi di trasformazione," p. 571, n. 530.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, this was not Perugino's only work in the communal palace. Vittoria Garibaldi, "Pietro Perugino of Perugia: from "Pietro, the painter of Città delle Pieve" (M. Pietri pictoris de Castro Plebis) to "Pietro Perugino" (Petrus Perusinus)," in *Pietro Perugino: Master of the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Joseph A. Becherer (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), p. 7, notes documentation from July 21, 1475, that puts Perugino working in the *Grande Sala* (*sala magna*) of the Palazzo dei Priori, though today only traces of the cycle survive. Francesco Federico Mancini, "Considerazioni sulla bottega umbra del Perugino," in *Pietro Vannucci detto il Perugino, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio 25 - 28 ottobre 2000*, ed. Laura Teza (Perugia: Volumnia Editrice, 2004), p. 329, notes the same document, and asserts that this is the first contract between Perugino and the city of Perugia. He also mentions a second contract with city officials: in 1483, the magistrates of the city commissioned Perugino to paint an altarpiece of the communal palace – the master's celebrated altarpiece of the *Decemviri*, today in the Pinacoteca Vaticana.

<sup>18</sup> Other individuals directly involved in the deliberations were Francesco di Niccolò Montemellini, Teseo di Berardo della Corgna, Alberto Baglioni, Monaldo Boncambi and, the only non-noble, Ghiberto di Bartolomeo. See Mazzerioli, "La documentazione."

open a workshop in Perugia in 1501 as he had already done in Florence some years ago.<sup>19</sup> His reputation was on the rise both locally and across Italy.<sup>20</sup> Thus, when the guild's jurors arrived at the point of deciding upon an artist to decorate the small but critically important hall, Perugino was a logical choice, though it was not until somewhat later that he was offered the prestigious commission. There was no more famous an artist to be had in the city and environs at the time. It is likely that Perugino began work on the hall's frescoes around 1498.<sup>21</sup>

The Collegio's program is widely thought to have been worked out by a local Perugian humanist, Francesco Maturanzio. He, along with his friend Amico dei Graziani, a Perugian nobleman and the lay prior of the Ospedale della Misericordia, was responsible for the hall's theme of *uomini illustri*.<sup>22</sup> The Collegio itself is made up of an audience hall and an adjoining chapel dedicated to St. John the Baptist that was decorated in the next century. In the simplest sense, the *sala dell'udienza*, as one would expect of a chamber of its purpose, provided the Collegio's members with a model for their comportment while they carried out guild business. The small room is extensively decorated above the elaborately carved wooden paneling and contains ceremonial seating. On the left wall appear two lunettes of antique men of great repute balanced against Christian counterparts in a single lunette on the right wall.<sup>23</sup> The back wall is divided into two lunettes featuring Christ's *Assumption* on the left and the *Adoration of the Child* on the right.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Pietro Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione," p. 75. This workshop was near the Ospedale della Misericordia.

<sup>20</sup> In Perugino's first contract with city officials of Perugia, in 1475, he is called simply "the painter" (*pictore*), while the later contract of 1483, both documents already noted above, records him as "the famous master" (*magistro insigni*); this is understandable in light of the painter's role in the Sistine Chapel.

<sup>21</sup> See Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione," pp. 78-79, for a discussion regarding the difficulties in dating this initial period of the Collegio's decoration. Part of the trouble dating the commission, beyond the paucity of documentation, is the amount of work Perugino had taken during this time. See Scarpellini, "Pietro Perugino e la decorazione," p. 81, for a discussion of Perugino's many other concurrent commitments.

<sup>22</sup> Also called Matarazzo, Maturanzio (1443-1518) was a humanist of local stature who began his Perugian political career in 1475 as a secretary to Niccolo Perotti (or Perotto), the bishop of Siponto (1474 - 1477) and papal governor of Perugia. Maturanzio later taught at the University of Perugia, from 1486-1492, and returned to the city in 1498 after traveling to take up a post as professor of oratory and poetry. Maturanzio also served as an ambassador for Perugia on diplomatic missions to Rome and Bologna. See Guglielmo Zappacosta, *Francesco Maturanzio, umanista Perugino* (Bergamo: Minerva Italica, 1970) for one of the more complete accounts of his life. For discussion of Amico Graziani, his friendship with Maturanzio and his importance to Perugia's contemporary humanistic culture, see Biganti, "Elementi di trasformazione sociale e culturale," .

<sup>23</sup> For illustration, see Scarpellini, *Perugino*, p. 218, figs. 159 and 160.

<sup>24</sup> For illustration, see *Ibid.*, p. 219, fig. 162.

The program was likely nearing completion when Perugino painted the signed self-portrait that the topic of the present discussion.<sup>25</sup> The cycle is dated 1500 by the inscription – ANNO / SALU / MD – that appears in a trompe l’oeil plaque on the wall opposite the artist’s self-portrait. The artist’s self-image appears as though hung on the left-hand wall on the decorative pilaster that divides the two lunettes, each of which features a pair of personifications who hover above six classical heroes.<sup>26</sup> Prudence and Justice are paired on one side, with Fortitude and Temperance on the other. The four allegories float above the ancient heroes including philosophers, statesmen and warriors who, helpfully identified by inscriptions at their feet, stand in the foreground of a landscape of gently rolling hills. Quadrangles supported by putti are used frequently throughout many of the lunettes – and here appear on either side of each pair of personifications – holding Maturanzio’s elegant epigrams addressing the heroes portrayed below. Perhaps it is the frequency with which these rectangular panels are inserted into these lunettes that serves to integrate into the larger program the fictively “autonomous” self-portrait and the epigram that appears beneath it, which tells us that we are looking upon “Pietro Perugino, celebrated painter. If the art of painting became lost, he would restore it. If it had never been invented, he alone could bring it to this point.”<sup>27</sup>

This signature/identification is in itself a highly unusual detail. With the single exception of Benozzo’s self-portrait, this is the first known signature of its type used to identify an image of an artist, and is the earliest one I know of that praises one with such superlative terminology. Moreover, while Benozzo’s punning signature is most likely of his own devising, the elegant Latin of Perugino’s inscription is undoubtedly the result of Maturanzio’s humanist education. As Pietro Scarpellini has noted, such profound praise would have been impossible without the intervention of the commissioners. It seems likely that Scarpellini’s deduction is correct: even before its completion, the decoration received so much praise that its commissioners requested

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 46, notes that the portion of the fresco that includes Perugino’s self-portrait is contained in a single *giornata* on a new patch of *intonaco*. He interprets this to mean that Perugino’s self-image was added after the decoration had been mostly completed.

<sup>26</sup> For illustration, see Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, p. 221, fig. 116.

<sup>27</sup> “*PETRUS PERUSINUS EGREGIUS/ PICTOR / PERDITA SI FUERAT PINGEDI: / HIC RETTULIT ARTEM / SI NUSQUAM INUENTA EST / HACTENUS IPSE DEDIT*” Translation from Ibid., p. 218. This inscription seems to echo one dedicated to Giotto in 1490 in Florence’s Duomo under Lorenzo de’ Medici; it reads *Ille ego sum, per quem picture extincta revixit* (“I am that person who made extinct painting live again.”) See Michael Rohlmann, “Arte da lontano: pittura fiamminga nella Firenze rinascimentale,” in *The Art Market in Italy, 15th - 17th Centuries / Il Mercato dell’Arte in Italia, secc. XV-XVII*, ed. Marcello Fantoni, Louisa C. Matthew, and Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2003), p. 406, for the citation.



the famous artist to immortalize himself within the meeting space.<sup>28</sup> In a space filled with antique and Christian heroes whose faces and forms are “heroicized” to fit their context and purpose, it is impossible not to be aware that Perugino’s face is the only one of a “living” person, and the only true portrait.

This same level of awareness is not – quite – the effect given by Pintoricchio’s self-portrait within the Baglioni chapel, although his self-portrayal is almost as striking. In 1501, scarcely a year after Perugino added his self-portrait to the Collegio’s program, Pintoricchio painted his own within the so-called Cappella “Bella,” and rather than an afterthought, the image seems to have been part of the space’s original conception. Its position on the right side of the composition, serving to balance it, would lend itself to this interpretation. In a chapel dedicated to the Sacrament and featuring the *Annunciation*, *Nativity with Adoration of the Shepherds* and *Dispute in the Temple* on the walls and Sibyls on the divided vault, we find Pintoricchio prominently self-displayed.<sup>29</sup>

Pintoricchio does not appear follow tradition and include himself in one of those scenes that generally served as venues for the portraits of contemporary individuals. We do not find him, for example, in the *Dispute*, the only other site in the chapel that contains portraits. There, Troilo Baglioni, the newly-elected prior to the Collegiate and Pintoricchio’s patron, with his treasurer, Pietro di Ercolano Ugolini, heir to the rights of the chapel, appear in sober modern dress in the more familiar mode of presentation.<sup>30</sup> Instead, the artist’s “autonomous” self-portrait is displayed as if it were one of the Virgin’s favorite paintings “hung” in her bower beneath a shelf containing several volumes and gracefully framed by a white drapery. Pintoricchio identifies himself below his self-portrait with the simple phrase, “*BERNARDINUS PICTORICIUS PERUSINUS / MCCCCCI*” and lest we confuse him with another contemporary

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<sup>28</sup> Scarpellini, *Perugino*, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> For illustrations of these images, see Benazzi, ed., *Pintoricchio a Spello*, pp. 54-56.

<sup>30</sup> For support of these identifications, see Maria R. Silvestrelli, “Il ritorno a Perugia (1495-1502),” in *Pintoricchio*, ed. Pietro Scarpellini and Maria R. Silvestrelli (Milan: Federico Motta Editore, 2003), p. 201. Other identifications of individuals over the years, cited in Corrado Fratini, “L’arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello: un’indagine sulla cappella di Grifonetto Baglioni,” in *Il Beato Andrea Caccioli da Spello. Atti del Convegno storico per l’VIII centenario della nascita del beato Andrea Caccioli da Spello (1194-1994), Spello, 30 giugno - 1 luglio 1995*, ed. Enrico Menestò (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo, 1997), p. 209, include Giampaolo as the figure to the right of the white horse in the Epiphany. This seems dubious to me. Troilo’s visage is highly individualized while this figure’s face and form are not. Although the figure’s prominently-displayed sword might argue otherwise, this figure seems too typically of Pintoricchio’s standard “type” to have been intended as a portrait, and its peripheral location within the scene also casts doubt on it being a representation of a specific individual. For illustration, see Benazzi, ed., *Pintoricchio a Spello*, p. 104.

painter named Bernardino associated with Perugia, his nickname, “PINTORICHJO” appears in a *cartolino* held by smartly dressed bearded man standing amidst the rabbis in the scene of Christ’s dispute.<sup>31</sup> It is worth noticing that not only is the painter named as such in the inscription, but is featured above paintbrushes tied up in a cord suspended, trophy-style, beneath the *prie-dieu* visible below the portrait.

It is this very dichotomy of presentation – the traditional embedded portraits of the patrons (at least in Troilo’s case) balanced against the astoundingly direct display of Pintoricchio’s and Perugino’s autonomous ones – and its implications that I now wish to explore. After all, if one wished to honor an artist, why not – as had been done before – have Pintoricchio include himself within the context of his patrons? Although Pintoricchio’s self-portrait can be read as a direct response to Perugino’s astonishing self-image from the previous year, there is nonetheless a balance evident in the portraits contained within the Baglioni Chapel made manifest, I would argue, by the placement of these images within the small chamber. The three portraits appear on opposite sides of the chapel directly across from each other on the lateral walls close to the *Nativity*, and although the painted likenesses cannot be said to “look” at each other, they clearly are related to one another.

Writers on the subject of Pintoricchio’s self-portrait in the Cappella Bella, even more than is the case with Perugino’s self-portrait, have neglected to consider any desire beyond Pintoricchio’s ambition to respond to his master’s “autonomous” self-portrait of the previous year.<sup>32</sup> This is at least partially explained by the relative quantities of literature published on the two artists; as one would assume, far more has been written on the more famous painter. It is generally believed that Pintoricchio’s portrait was a part of the original scheme of the chapel; this was not, after all, an added patch of *intonaco* and the image’s placement makes it difficult to imagine it could have been successfully integrated after the fact. In spite of this general acknowledgement, however, no one appears to have considered Troilo Baglioni’s rationale for Pintoricchio’s self-image, much less its unusual mode of presentation. Scarpellini suggested, at

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<sup>31</sup> A roughly-contemporary painter known as Bernardino Mariotto of Perugia lived and maintained a workshop at the old monastery of San Severino. See Phillipps, *Pintoricchio*, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Pietro Scarpellini, "La "Capella Bella," Pintoricchio e un suo moderno seguace," in *Pintoricchio a Spello: la Cappella Baglioni in Santa Maria Maggiore*, ed. Giordana Benazzi (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2000), p. 24, for a brief consideration of Pintoricchio’s motivations for his self-portrait. It must be noted that in spite of the general high quality of Scarpellini’s contributions, no such consideration is given to what Troilo Baglioni might have thought of such a prominent element within the chapel.

least, that Perugino must have added his self-portrait at the request of his commissioners – though he goes no further in this line of inquiry – while it seems that not even this simple acknowledgement has been suggested in the case of Troilo and Pintoricchio. Troilo’s position within his familial and political contexts is an obvious point of departure for understanding his presence within his chapel, as is an exploration of the nature and conception of Pintoricchio’s response to his teacher and rival. These two issues, however – the two types of presentation within the chapel and the inclusion of the self-portrait as a response from both commissioner and artist to the more famous artist’s self-display – are intertwined.

## 6.1 PERUGINO

Perugino’s fame at the turn of the century was alluded to above; following prestigious commissions in the Sistine Chapel and many major centers throughout Italy, he was one of the most famous, well-regarded and sought-after artists of the period. In 1500, Agostino Chigi wrote to his father concerning the procurement of the artist for the family chapel in Siena’s Sant’Agostino that Perugino was “the best master in Italy” (*il meglio maestro d’Italia*).<sup>33</sup> Only a few years earlier, Perugino’s name made the shortlist when Ludovico Sforza had his agent seek out the best painters. His several contributions, already noted, to the Sistine Chapel during the 1480s speak for themselves regarding the level of regard the artist enjoyed.<sup>34</sup> His Perugian commissioners had every reason to be pleased with their procurement of so famous an artist. Given the likelihood that Perugino’s self-portrait was added after the rest of the cycle in the *sala d’udienza* had been completed, however, his image could not easily have been integrated into the chapel in any other fashion than the “autonomous” panel he devised. To have added it within a lunette of the famous men from antiquity, or in the religious narratives in the other room, would have destroyed the balance of the work that had been praised. Nevertheless, faces – true portraiture, facial types and masks – had been commonly integrated into the ornamentation of

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<sup>33</sup> Rowland, "Render Unto Caesar the Things Which Are Caesar's," pp. 673-670, n. 636.

<sup>34</sup> Perugino and his workshop painted five of the sixteen scenes in addition to a series of figures in the gallery of the popes above the fresco cycles and an altarpiece figuring the Assumption. Scarpellini, *Perugino*, pp. 77-79, and Vittoria Garibaldi, *Perugino. Catalogo completo* (Florence: Octavo, 1999), pp. 102-105.

painted pilasters for many years. That Perugino did not present his self-portrait, for example, along the same lines as that of Andrea Mantegna in the Camera Picta of Mantua's Ducal Palace – artfully hidden in the foliage decorating a pilaster – requires further consideration.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, not only did Perugino *not* disguise his self-image, we find him in a space that had forbidden portraits – both inside and outside the Palazzo dei Priori – of their own *podestà* and *capitani* since 1297.<sup>36</sup> What sort of situation forbade the portrayal of important local nobles, but allowed the self-portrait of a craftsman, however illustrious?

At this point, a consideration of the general state of late 15<sup>th</sup>-century autonomous portraiture with regards to display and typology is helpful. What class of individuals was generally portrayed in what type of place? Unfortunately, although we have some occasional remarks regarding late Quattrocento portraits, we have relatively little knowledge of how these objects were displayed and where. Nevertheless, there is sufficient documentation to reconstruct a partial picture of what types of images were known in domestic and public settings in order to place portraiture within private and public life. Examining portraits in this light helps to demonstrate the unusual nature of Perugino's self-image within the Collegio.

Florentine fresco painting within the domestic sphere can be generally divided into four categories: geometric decoration, free-hand decoration, isolated figures and scenes of history or stories including many figures.<sup>37</sup> Leon Battista Alberti wrote in *De re aedificatoria* (1450) of the appropriateness of including “scenes of bravery by the citizens, portraits and events worthy of recollection” in the portico or dining hall of private dwellings. Nevertheless, displays of portraiture had a private side, too, and Alberti tells us portraits, specifically of “men of dignity

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<sup>35</sup> Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, p. 232.

<sup>36</sup> A. Mariotto, *Saggio di memorie storiche ed ecclesiastiche della città di Perugia e suo contado*, vol. 1 (Perugia: 1806), p. 229, cited in Jonathan B. Riess, *Political Ideals in Medieval Italian Art: the Frescoes in the Palazzo dei Priori, Perugia (1297)* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 92: Mariotto paraphrases a document regarding the *Sala dei Notari* saying “*Il di 25 Giugno del 1297 fu ordinate dal General Consiglio, che si scancellarase tutte le armi, e tutti i ritratti de' Podeste, e Capitani dipinti nel Palazzo del Commune o dentro, or fuori, e che per l'avvenire non vi si dipingeresso mai pier.*” [(On June 25, 1297, the General Council ordered the cancellation of all heraldic devices and all portraits of *podeste* and *capitani* painted in the Palazzo del Comune, inside and outside, and that these should not be painted any more (in this space).] This was likely in response to the numerous devices that decorated the *Sala* – and it seems no more were added to the space after this date, though none but that of the Rolandino were ordered removed – and even it remained. See Pietro Scarpellini, “Osservazioni sulla decorazione pittorica della Sala dei Notari,” in *Il Palazzo dei Priori di Perugia*, ed. Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia: Quattroemme, 1997), pp. 220-222. Nevertheless, this ancient edict might have prohibited the portrayal of famous local *capitani* in the newer hall.

<sup>37</sup> Attilio Schiaparelli, *La casa fiorentini e i suoi arredi nei secoli XIV e XV*, ed. Maria Sframeli and Laura Pagnotta (Florence: Casa Editrice le Lettere, 1983), p. 141.

and handsome appearance,” were particularly beneficial in those locations “wherever man and wife come together.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, at least within the Florentine domestic sphere, evidence suggests that familial portrait collections – portraits of family members and other individuals – were generally placed in small areas identified as *camere*, antechambers and studies.<sup>39</sup> Not always hung on walls, some portraits were designed to be held or placed upright on tables, or were kept in protective sacks or cases.<sup>40</sup> For the nobility and gentry, a *camera*, in Renaissance parlance, was not simply a chamber or room, but specifically a room that contained one or more beds and was “the real focus of private life during the earlier Renaissance and the place where a Florentine was likely to place whatever works of art he or she may have owned.”<sup>41</sup> No evidence suggests that this pattern changes noticeably in other Italian cities. The majority of the rooms in which a Renaissance individual would have displayed portraits – a *camera* or those rooms adjacent to one – were those of a personal nature, as opposed to the more impersonal or public setting of the *sala* or halls of a palazzo. The character of the decorations found in the corridors changed throughout the course of the Renaissance, when halls were usually decorated with paintings and other works of art. Nevertheless, a clear differentiation continued to exist between chamber and hall.<sup>42</sup> An exception to the general rule regarding placement of important cycles, however, is that of Famous Men (*uomini illustri* or *famosi*) series that are sometimes found in domestic as well as public contexts. One such series was painted for Giovanni di Bicci de’ Medici by Lorenzo di Bicci, and was situated, according to Vasari, in a hall of the older Medici house, presumably where it could be admired by visitors.<sup>43</sup>

Of public displays of autonomous portraiture, we have even less information. Moreover, the situation regarding its display is complicated by the fact that one must first determine the private or public nature of the space involved. How private – or public – was a Renaissance camera or courtyard garden, for example? It is not a subject that scholars have investigated to any great degree, but preliminary evidence suggests that true autonomous portrait panels had

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<sup>38</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, ed. Joseph Rykwert (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 299.

<sup>39</sup> During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the nobility would follow the example of royal patrons by commissioning series of ancestor portraits, although Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 43, notes that this had probably begun during the previous century. Paolo Giovio’s collection at Como became one of the most famous examples from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ecclesiastic series also existed, the Sistine Chapel’s series of popes being the most obvious instance.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218. For discussion of portraits kept in protective containers, see Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting*, p. 70.

<sup>41</sup> Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting*, p. 26.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>43</sup> Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo II, pp. 315-316.

little permanent “public” context during the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento, though they were displayed for special events. Nevertheless, the model of ancient Roman portrait busts kept in family altars was known to many Renaissance individuals.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Pliny, whose importance to Renaissance patrons has already been discussed, reports that ancient portraiture appeared frequently in public and semi-public venues. In his chapter on painting, he tells us of a 120 foot portrait that Nero had made of himself on canvas that, displayed in the gardens of Maius, was soon struck by lightning – the implication being that the emperor’s hubris brought about the inclement weather.<sup>45</sup> He also mentions Gaius Terentius Lucanus, described as one of Nero’s freedmen, who in Antium gave a gladiatorial show whose “public colonnades were adorned by a picture of all the gladiators and attendants, portrayed from the life.”<sup>46</sup> Paintings of kings and heroes were evidently occasionally placed in forums.<sup>47</sup>

Evidence suggests that throughout Quattrocento Italy portraiture was displayed in a similar mode. Images of public events containing embedded portraiture were displayed publicly for a period of time although some examples of autonomous portrait monuments dedicated to important individuals – monarchs and military heroes – appeared permanently in public settings.<sup>48</sup> We know that Renaissance portrait busts were placed above doorways and mantles, on large beds, and in the moldings in rooms in public and semi-public domestic spaces.<sup>49</sup> Portrait medals, too, were given to patrons and friends and political allies to be displayed and admired, although in private. Churches contain painted and sculpted portraits, but these are generally funerary sculptures incorporated into tombs or monuments, or embedded portraits featuring individuals as donor portraits or as witnesses to or participants in miracles.<sup>50</sup> It is harder to

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<sup>44</sup> Pliny wrote of the ancient practice of creating wax models of faces so that at a funeral of a member of a lineage, “always when some member of it passed away the entire company of his house that had ever existed was present.” Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV, II. 6: Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, p. 265. [*quae comitarentur gentilicia funeral, semperque defuncto aliquo totus aderat familiae eius qui umquam fuerat populus.*]

<sup>45</sup> Pliny, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98: (*publicas porticus occupavit picture, ut constat, gladiatorum ministrorumque omnium veris imaginibus reditis*). This example cannot be presented as an example of autonomous portraiture display, but nevertheless does point the public aspect of ancient portraiture.

<sup>47</sup> Apelles, according to *Ibid.*, p. 131, made two pictures of Alexander in his chariot that were later “placed in the most crowded parts of his forum,” by the emperor Augustus.

<sup>48</sup> Examples of the latter type of military hero include the equestrian fresco monuments portraying famous mercenaries Nicolò da Tolentino and Sir John Hawkwood, painted respectively by Andrea del Castagno and Paolo Uccello along the left nave wall of Florence’s Duomo.

<sup>49</sup> Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 280 and p. 272, no. 123, notes that some independent portraits were painted for churches but cites only French examples.

speculate about other public spaces such as communal or official buildings and guild meeting spaces, as the portraits that survive from these contexts are embedded examples. A tradition of the public display of criminals' portraits existed, often shown hung in effigy, but given their general context of infamy and shame, this practice would seem to have little bearing in the present discussion.<sup>51</sup> It is likely that portraiture was involved in the more ephemeral types of Quattrocento public displays – street processions and public ceremonies that included mounted panels and painted banners, shields and flags – after the documented practice of the next century, but none of the surviving objects used during these events contain portraits.<sup>52</sup>

However, the iconography of the cycle Perugino painted in the Collegio del Cambio had its own links to portraiture. Certainly, cycles of Famous Men had been common for some time, and Perugino would have probably seen some of them.<sup>53</sup> Perugino had worked for a short time in an adjoining chamber while Domenico Ghirlandaio painted such a cycle in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio only a few years earlier.<sup>54</sup> Even more important from a local point of view, Perugia's leading citizen for much of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Braccio "il Magnifico" Baglioni had commissioned a well-known cycle of *uomini illustri* – famous local warriors and mercenaries of the recent past

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<sup>51</sup> For example, portraits of well-known Medici opponents were shown hanging by their heels were painted by Andrea del Castagno – who thereby gained the epitaph, *Andrea degl' Impiccati* or "Andrea of the Hanged Men" – on the facade of the Bargello in 1440. See Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage: the Rise of the Professional Artist in the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Beverley Jackson (London: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 201, for a brief discussion of the phenomenon. For similar practices elsewhere in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, see Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>52</sup> From the 16<sup>th</sup> century we have, for example, Vasari's description of the festivities of 1565 surrounding the wedding of Prince Don Francesco of Tuscany to Johanna of Austria, daughter of Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor (*Descrizione dell'apparato fatto in Firenze per le nozze dell'illustrissimo ed eccellentissimo Don Francesco de' Medici principe di Firenze e di Siena e della serenissima regina Giovanna d'Austria*), in which he tells of dozens of portraits in the various scenes decorating the Porta al Prato, Princess Johanna's means of entry into the city. Portraits are likewise mentioned in several other parts of the extravagantly decorated city. See Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, pp. 521-622, for an account of the festivities surrounding the illustrious nuptials.

<sup>53</sup> There are over a dozen cycles of *Uomini Famosi* from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries that survive or are known from the period, although no monograph dedicated to the phenomena currently exists. The best sources for general information regarding these cycles are an article published by Christiane Joost-Gaugier, "The Early Beginnings of the Notion of "Uomini Famosi" and the "De Viris Illustribus" in the Greco-Roman Literary Tradition," *Artibus et Historiae* 3, no. 6 (1982), and a dissertation written by Robert L. Mode, *The Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle of Cardinal Giordano Orsini and the Uomini Famosi Tradition in Fifteenth-Century Italian Art* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1970), but clearly this is an important phenomenon in need of further study.

<sup>54</sup> Domenico along with four other masters – including Perugino whose commission was later revoked and given to Filippino Lippi – was commissioned in 1482 to paint the four walls of the *Sala dei Gigli* in Florence's Palazzo Vecchio. This space, Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, p. 227, asserts, was one of two large rooms used by the Signoria on the second floor and was used as the primary meeting space when the Signoria summoned leading citizens before its body. Domenico and his workshop was responsible for figures of *St. Zenobius Enthroned with SS. Eugenius and Crescentius*; *Brutus, Mucius Scaevola, Camillus; Decius, Scipio, and Cicero*. See Cadogan, *Domenico Ghirlandaio*, pp. 226-230, for discussion of these frescoes. Although Perugino's commission was eventually given to another, it would seem unlikely that he did not see Domenico's cycle at some point.

in addition to local doctors of civil law – in the atrium of his residence on the *Collo Landone* in the heart of the Baglioni's ancient quarter of the city, to be discussed shortly.

There would have been some basis for the features of famous ancient Romans as well as heroes from the more recent past for the artists who created cycles of Famous Men. Ancient coins and medals were enthusiastically collected by many Renaissance patrons whose interest in these recovered objects would lead them to resume the practice of creating portrait medals themselves.<sup>55</sup> For the features of heroes from the recent past, an artist might turn to written descriptions of a hero's appearance or an earlier portrait for assistance. The typical Quattrocento cycle of *uomini illustri* was found frescoed within the more public spaces of a private palazzo, as was the case for the Medici and Baglioni cycles mentioned above, or within public palaces such as Taddeo di Bartolo's 14<sup>th</sup>-century cycle in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico. One example from 15<sup>th</sup>-century Pistoia was featured as part of an outdoor civic structure known as the Loggia del Giuramento, a site comparable to Florence's Loggia dei Lanzi.<sup>56</sup>

Next, we might consider the question of what kinds of individuals were represented in autonomous or semi-autonomous Italian portraits. As the name suggests, *Uomini illustri* cycles portrayed famous men and occasionally women from antiquity or the medieval tradition generally in groups of three – generally nine figures total were painted – who were thought to embody various Christian virtues. These figures could be secular or religious in nature, classical or contemporary – and were often mixtures; on occasion secular mythological heroes were balanced against biblical or more recent religious counterparts. More specifically, autonomous portrait panels, growing ever more popular in Italy from the middle of the century, were more fundamentally memorializing – as opposed to moralizing – and appear to have represented people of high rank or means. Following the example of royal commissioners who frequently had portrait series created for dynastic purposes, portraits of family members were relatively common amongst the possessions of the noble and wealthy who wanted portraits of ancestors and relatives who lived far away.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For discussion of the Renaissance portrait medal, their commissioning and collection see for example Scher, *The Currency of Fame*.

<sup>56</sup> Mode, *Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle*, p. 161. It could also be argued that the painted equestrian monuments, mentioned above, within Florence's Duomo draw from the traditions of the *Uomini Famosi*, as well as from the tradition of sculptural tomb monuments and the bronze or stone antique equestrian monuments they mimic.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriele Paleotti, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century theologian, wrote that it was acceptable for a person to ask for the portrait of a friend or relative from whom one was separated "in order to be able, by this means of keeping a picture, to alleviate



In addition to the more common ancestor portrait series and the autonomous group portrait, the latter a genre generally associated with Northern Europe, portraits of young men and young women were also popular genres. Many portraits of expensively dressed, bejeweled young women, in half-length, bust-length and miniature formats, presented in profile or full-face, were likely created in association with marriage negotiations and other dynastic concerns. Portraits of young men were also popular during the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, likely for similar reasons. Other portraits, often occasioned by some other momentous change in the sitter's life, seem also to be expressions of the sitter's desire to display aspects of his or her self-perceived personality or identity. All of these and other portrait types were often requested and/or given as tokens of esteem or friendship. Portraits of duke Galeazzo Sforza by Piero Pollaiuolo and another of the duke of Urbino, for example, were displayed in Lorenzo de' Medici's *camera* in the Palazzo Medici along with Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano* and other paintings.<sup>58</sup> Some frequently-portrayed individuals appeared to have wanted their reputations to precede them, hence Pietro Aretino's boast in letters from 1544 and 1545 that his portraits had traveled the breadth of Italy. Isabella d'Este's coy lament that Italy would soon weary of her portraits may ring insincere, but is likely indicative of the number made and sent forth.<sup>59</sup> For the purposes of the present discussion, one portrait type that should be recognized as *not* existing, to our present knowledge, is that of the autonomous Quattrocento self-portrait.

This discussion of the state of contemporary autonomous portraiture was intended to focus attention on the extraordinary nature of the inclusions of the two artists in their respective locations. I think, however, that Perugino's is the more remarkable. It was the first executed and remains unique as a portrait of a contemporary individual within the Collegio – which itself must be remembered as being part of the city's seat of government – in its greater context within the

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the hurts brought about by his absence." Cited in Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 193. The practice of portrait-painting amongst the non-nobility is also discussed – see *Ibid.*, pp. 210-11.

<sup>58</sup> For discussion of the paintings in Lorenzo's chamber, see Schiaparelli, *La casa fiorentini*, p. 179, n. 173-175.

<sup>59</sup> Both of these episodes are cited in Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 194. Pietro wrote Francesco Cusano in January, 1544, saying his image might not have been done in bronze, silver, or gold, but was depicted broadly in panel, paper and wall. To Iunio Petreo in May of 1545, he spoke of his images being scattered as those of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. See Ettore Camesasca, *Lettere sull'arte di Pietro Aretino*, 3 vols. (Milan: Editore del Milione, 1957-1960), vol. II, p. 14 and pp. 73-74. The letter of Isabella d'Este to Ludovico Sforza dated March 13, 1499, includes the line "*Dubito venire in fastidio non solum a la S. V. ma ad tuta Italia cum mandare questi mei retracti in volta...*" (I fear to disturb not only you, my lord, but also all of Italy sending my portraits to be seen). See A. Luzio and R. Renier, "Delle relazioni di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga con Ludovico e Beatrice Sforza," *Archivio storico lombardo* XVII (2nd series, VII of 1980) (1890): p. 665.

company of ancient worthies and adjacent Christian iconography. Nevertheless, beyond Pintoricchio's self-portrait in Spello, the practice of including an "autonomous" panel within a fresco cycle is not repeated either within the respective careers of either artist nor, to my knowledge, within any other example of Italian Renaissance art.

At this juncture, although we have already briefly considered the topic of fame in the context of Perugino's career above, a discussion focused on the traditions of fame and authority within the localized history of the region will shed light on the two artists' images and help to explain the desirability of their presence within their commissioners' frame of reference. I argue that it is in large part due to this particularized local history, marked by the city's struggles against the papacy and continuing internal strife among rival families, that accounts for the artists' presence.

In 1500, Perugia was enjoying the last year of a sixty-year period of relative peace, political stability, and artistic flowering within a history frequently marked by warfare and notoriously-violent family feuds.<sup>60</sup> During the late medieval and early Renaissance periods – from 1300 to the mid 1500s when papal authority, previously incapable of subduing the town's belligerent clans, finally conquered them – several families held sway over the hilltop city in a political oligarchy.<sup>61</sup> Important local families included the Degli Oddi, the Ranieri, the Della Corgna, the Arcipreti (or Della Penna), and the Armani (or Della Staffa); but, from the second quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Baglioni, notable for several generation's worth of eminently-

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<sup>60</sup> Peace appears to have always been a relative commodity in Medieval and Renaissance Perugia, and even during the "peaceful" period of the last three quarters of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the city saw a great deal of bloodshed. In 1500 for example, internal Baglioni family strife led to the deaths of several Baglioni at the notorious event known to history as the *Nozze Rosso*, or Red Wedding, part of the celebration of Astorre Baglioni's marriage to Lavinia Colonna of Rome. Grifonetto and Filippo di Braccio – respectively the legitimate and illegitimate sons of Grifone di Braccio Baglioni – led the band that killed Guido and Astorre, the pair's great uncle and uncle. Filippo is said to have cut out and symbolically bitten the heart of the latter. Some 200 people died during this conspiracy attempt before Giampaolo Baglioni – who was later targeted by three more assassination attempts from Baglioni relatives – was able to regain control. Grifonetto died at Giampaolo's hands following the attack. Jacob Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Modern Library, 1995), pp. 23-27, remarks "what bloodthirstiness is found . . . above all among the Baglioni of Perugia." See also Christopher F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: a Social History*, ed. Richard Evans, *A Social History of Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> Ostensibly, at least, the town was under papal authority; nevertheless, the town declared itself an autonomous republic during the 12<sup>th</sup> century and only occasionally recognized papal authority until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For discussion of the city's circumstances during the time of Perugino, see Banker, "The Social History of Perugia."

capable *capitani* and *condottieri*, ruled them all, creating what has been often referred to as *Lo Stato Baglionisco*.<sup>62</sup>

The Baglioni's star rose to ascendancy following the grant of the *signory* or dominion of Spello to Malatesta Baglioni in 1425, given by Pope Martin V as a reward for his services in convincing his fellow citizens to submit to papal authority.<sup>63</sup> Submission to the Pope, as contended as it came to be, was nonetheless a decisive blow in the ongoing battle between the papacy and the Perugian citizenry, who had fought against papal authority since the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>64</sup> The Baglioni role in this event cannot be underestimated, nor their rewards: the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Perugian chronicler Pompeo Pellini asserted, reasonably enough, that this grant was the primary factor leading to the family's domination.<sup>65</sup> The next few years witnessed their lordship over the nearby cities of Bastia and Cannara. Eugenius IV confirmed the possession of all the Baglioni holdings to the third generation in 1433, effectively cementing the family's power until the end of the century. During the last quarter of the Quattrocento, a body known as the *Dieci dell'arbitrio* was formed of ten Perugian citizens who acted in an advisory capacity to the city's Priors, themselves drawn from the forty-four guilds.<sup>66</sup> The reality of the situation appears to have been the reverse; the Priors acted the will of the *Dieci* instead of the other way around. Originally founded with two Baglioni members, the remainder of the first *Dieci* was Baglioni supporters and a few years later the family enjoyed a frank majority.<sup>67</sup> It should be noted, however, that exactly *who* within this large, many-branched family would wield power over

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<sup>62</sup> For general discussions of the history of Perugia and its numerous clans, see C. F. Black, "La grande politica e le politiche locali: il problema di una signoria in Umbria," in *Umbria tra Medioevo e Rinascimento: l'esperienza dei Trinci* (1986), pp. 91-110; Clara Cutini, "Perugia tra XV e XVI secolo: potere della Chiesa e istanze signorili," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004); Ariodante Fabretti, "Cronica della città di Perugia dal 1492 al 1503 di Francesco Matarazzo detto Maturanzio," *Archivio Storico Italiano* XVI, no. I, Part 2 (1851); William Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, ed. R. Langston Douglas, The States of Italy (London: Methuen & Co., 1910); Rosanna Valigi, "La nobiltà," in *Perugia nel Rinascimento: una cultura oltre i confini. Il secolo di Benedetto Bonfigli attraverso i documenti della Biblioteca Augusta*, ed. Maria P. Fop (Perugia: Comune di Perugia, 1997). For the history of the Baglioni family in particular, see Maria Colangeli, "I Baglioni: l'immagine del potere," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004).

<sup>63</sup> Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, pp. 299-300.

<sup>64</sup> Banker, "The Social History of Perugia," p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>66</sup> Regarding the history of the Perugian guilds, see Antonio Briganti, *Le Corporazioni delle Arti nel Comune di Perugia (sec. XIII - XIV)* (Perugia: Tipografia Guerriero Guerra, 1910).

<sup>67</sup> These members were Guido and Ridolfo Baglioni, probably the two younger brothers of Braccio. See Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, p. 305, n. 304.

Perugia and the Baglioni-dominated *Stato*, made up of several central Umbria localities, was a bone of murderous contention leading to the deaths of several family members.<sup>68</sup>

The history of the Baglioni family within the city, as I hope to show, plays an important role regarding the choice of the *uomini famosi* imagery in the Collegio, and by extension, Perugino's presence there. Upon Malatesta's death in 1437, his eldest son Braccio (1419-1479) was quickly proclaimed his natural successor by retainers of the former. Braccio was a powerful figure not only in Perugia, but also throughout Italy, something only underscored by his marriage to Anastasia Sforza, a niece of Francesco Sforza, the duke of Milan, who was provided with a six thousand *fiorini* dowry by her powerful uncle.<sup>69</sup> Braccio, called "il Magnifico" later in his life in imitation of his more famous friend and political ally Lorenzo "il Magnifico" de' Medici, was known for his patronage of the arts.<sup>70</sup> By all accounts, Braccio collected and maintained a humanist court centered at his palazzo on Perugia's *Collo Landone*, the Baglioni's ancient quarter of the city, the site of sumptuous parties and tournaments, and cultivated his reputation in the region as a man interested in courtly life and humanistic culture.<sup>71</sup> He was, for example, a founding member of the first short-lived, *Società Tipografica Perugina* (April 26, 1471 – October 20, 1472) and his financial backing was responsible for importing two German

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<sup>68</sup> *Lo stato Baglionisco* was partially made up of holdings that included Torgiano, Deruta, Bettona, Collemancio, Limigiano, Castelbuono, Bevagna and Collazzone, as well as Spello, Bastia and Cannara. Black, *Early Modern Italy*, pp. 126-127, notes that the Baglioni clan illustrates the results of the breakdown of extended family relations. This family was Perugia's most numerous in terms of households – twenty-eight registered as separately taxable in 1511 – though some of these lived in more remote locations, and intermittent cooperation between households helped lead to their virtual oligarchy.

<sup>69</sup> Roberto Abbondanza, "Baglioni, Braccio," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Alberto Ghisalberti (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 1963), p. 209.

<sup>70</sup> Good relations with Perugia were likely considered vital to Florentine safety during this period. From 1400 onward, Perugia's location and military resources made it a prize ally. See Claudio Regni, "Da Braccio da Montone ai Baglioni," in *Perugia. Storia illustrata delle città dell'Umbria*, ed. Raffaele Rossi (Milan: Elio Sellino Editore, 1993), p. 273. Vasari commemorated the friendship by including Braccio in a company of armed captains carrying flags in the *Sala di Lorenzo* in a scene of Lorenzo de' Medici surrounded by his friends. Braccio is described as a captain of one of Lorenzo's armies who holds a banner with a gold band against a blue ground. See Draper and Vasari, *The Ragionamenti*, p. 241, and Astur Baleoneus, *I Baglioni* (Prato: La Tipografica Pratese, 1964), p. 63. At the beginning of his description of the painting in which Braccio is found, Vasari reports that he obtained the portraits from a painting by Botticelli (Draper and Vasari, *The Ragionamenti*, p. 240), though I have not uncovered any information regarding which work this might have been.

<sup>71</sup> Valigi, "La nobiltà," p. 32, and Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 68. See Francesco Federico Mancini, "Società e cultura figurativa nella Perugia di Braccio Baglioni," in *Perugia. Storia illustrata delle città dell'Umbria*, ed. Raffaele Rossi (Milan: Elio Sellino Editore, 1993), p. 328 for a description of one such festive occasion. Abbondanza, "Baglioni, Braccio," p. 212, cites festivities held in March 1471, a celebration held for Borso d'Este, and another, honoring Pius II, as being notable.

typographers, Petrus Petri of Köln and Johann Nicolai of Bamberg, to the city.<sup>72</sup> Although the second *società* did not include Braccio's name, the third, initiated in 1473, did.<sup>73</sup> His interest in the written word also included a more poetic side, as a surviving short verse dedicated to Margherita Montesperelli, a celebrated Perugian beauty, attests.<sup>74</sup>

Braccio was also interested in the pictorial arts, evidenced by both public and private patronage. Public acts of art patronage included donations and the maintenance of a chapel in S. Girolamo near Spello and another in S. Maria degli Angeli in Assisi. He is recorded as having given Perugia's Servite church his special protection. According to Maturanzio, he also was responsible around 1430 for one of the enlargements of Santa Maria dei Servi, a short-lived but important church situated on the *Colle Landone*, and maintained a Baglioni family chapel dedicated to the Crucifix.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, church records indicate that in 1471, likely in gratitude for recovery from battle wounds, Braccio donated to the Servites 120 large ducats and ten *fiorini* for the construction of a small octagonal *tempietto* known as the "Madonna di Braccio."<sup>76</sup> The structure, since destroyed, was built outside the Porta S. Pietro near his palazzo and gardens.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to his public acts of religious patronage, his palazzo near the Servite church was reputed to contain many paintings and other works of art.<sup>78</sup> Francesco Maturanzio, who also later wrote a eulogy to the leader, noted in his chronicle of the city that in the Baglioni palazzo

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<sup>72</sup> Maud Tampellini, "Una novità rivoluzionaria: l'arte della stampa," in *Perugia nel Rinascimento: una cultura oltre i confini. Il secolo di Benedetto Bonfigli attraverso i documenti della Biblioteca Augusta*, ed. Maria P. Fop (Perugia: Comune di Perugia, 1997), p. 37. The first *società* was composed of Braccio Baglioni, Matteo Baldeschi (the son of Baldo degli Ubaldi), merchant Baccio Fumagioli, Costantino di messer Antonio, and the two foreign typographers. Included among the first publications published by the group are the Codex of Baldo degli Ubaldi and the funeral oration of "Grifonis Balionii," Braccio's eldest son, written by Francesco Maturanzio in 1477. For discussion, see Andrea Capaccioni, "Le origini della tipografia in Umbria," *Grifo Banca. Periodico della Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia* 14/15 (2000), p. 25-30.

<sup>73</sup> Capaccioni, "Le origini della tipografia in Umbria," p. 29.

<sup>74</sup> Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, p. 303, and Abbondanza, "Baglioni, Braccio," p. 212, both mention Braccio's regard for the lady. After the late medieval tradition, epitomized in Italy by Dante and Petrarch, of worshipping a lady from a chaste distance, Braccio's object of praise was the wife of Francesco della Bottarda di Porta Eburnea. He was not Margherita's only admirer.

<sup>75</sup> Braccio's Chapel of the Crucifix was the first chapel to the right of the entrance and included an historiated window. See Fabio Palombaro, "Ricostruire Santa Maria dei Servi," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Laura Teza and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004), p. 544, for a diagram of the church. The author also notes that several Baglioni residences would have been near the church.

<sup>76</sup> Marina Regni, "Apporti documentari per la ricostruzione delle vicende di Santa Maria dei Servi," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Laura Teza and Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia: Silvana Editoriale, 2004), p. 549. The author also notes Braccio's influence in the decoration of the "Cappella Guadagnoli" of the same church.

<sup>77</sup> Abbondanza, "Baglioni, Braccio," p. 212.

<sup>78</sup> Regarding the proximity of the church, Braccio's palazzo complete with tower and clock, the Piazza dei Servi, and the *Sapienza Nuova*, part of the Perugian University, see Marina Regni, "Apporti documentari," p. 547.

“was a room in which were portraits of all the Captains that ever ruled Perugia from the beginning till that day, and also of its famous intellectuals, each one painted in his likeness. The whole house was painted within and without from room to foundation and it had two towers.”<sup>79</sup> This unusual emphasis seems to indicate that the house was not painted with simple patterned decorations, but likely included historiated scenes or cycles.

Maturanzio probably had a great deal of firsthand knowledge of these painted portraits; these images likely formed the cycle of famous men or *uomini famosi* for which the humanist was known to have composed his first series of epigraphs before his journey to Greece in 1472.<sup>80</sup> This fresco cycle displayed the likenesses of contemporary, local, military heroes (*condottieri*) executed sometime between 1450 and 1475; unfortunately, however, these paintings along with the palace was destroyed by Pope Paul II during his subjugation of the bellicose city in the next century.<sup>81</sup> The images covered one or more walls of an atrium in Braccio’s palazzo, and displayed a personification of the city hovering over the figures of the most prominent local generals of central Italy associated with the Baglioni cause as well as several celebrated *dottori* in the field of civil law.<sup>82</sup> Among the *dottori* was likely Baldo degli Ubaldi (1327? -1400), a famous legal scholar whom the first *Società Tipografica* had published as part of its first printing.<sup>83</sup> Duly described by inscriptions below each figure, this cycle, displayed in the home

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<sup>79</sup> The eulogy is cited in Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 69; English translation from Banker, "The Social History of Perugia," p. 43. Although lacking information regarding other subject matter, the general paucity of descriptions concerning domestic wall decorations makes Maturanzio’s remark that the whole house was painted inside and out significant. The decoration was clearly meant to display Braccio as a man of means and culture.

<sup>80</sup> Information regarding this trip can be found in Zappacosta, *Francesco Maturanzio, umanista Perugino*, p. 12. He wrote of his encounters with Greek masters in *Metrophanem graecum Archiepiscopum, virum sanctum et haud mediocriter doctum* (c. 82r, sg., V).

<sup>81</sup> According to Mode, *Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle*, pp. 215-216, more than likely the artist was not Domenico Veneziano as Milanese contended, based on Vasari. Domenico died in 1461 when Maturanzio was eighteen years old. Mode argues that 18 would seem an unlikely age to have been entrusted with this task. Nevertheless, documentation exists that puts Domenico in Perugia at least in 1438, as already noted, and it is possible he spent undocumented time in the city.

<sup>82</sup> The principal sources for ascertaining the original location and appearance of the cycle are two 16<sup>th</sup>-century descriptions found in manuscripts at the Biblioteca Comunale in Perugia. See Ariodante Fabretti, *Vite de' capitani venturieri dell'Umbria* (Montepulciano: 1843), vol. III, pp. 20-21 and Mode, *Monte Giordano Famous Men Cycle*, pp. 214-217 and n. 272, for discussions of the cycle and the fourteen inscriptions that accompanied it.

<sup>83</sup> Perugia’s University, founded in 1308 by a papal bull of Clement V, brought the city fame throughout the Quattrocento through its legal studies. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Perugia’s law faculty outstripped that of arts and medicine in number and reputation, and included more legal scholars than Padua during the same period. I think it is possible to equate the Bartolo Alfani and Baldo Baldeschi mentioned in a manuscript held in Perugia’s Biblioteca Comunale (Cod. 562, Fl. 47, c. 143f-145) that gives the text of the inscriptions penned by Maturanzio, with the scholars Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1313-57) and his pupil Baldo degli Ubaldi. As already noted (see n. 72), Matteo Baldeschi, the son of Baldo degli Ubaldi, along with Braccio was a founding member of Perugia’s first *Società*

of the city's foremost political and cultural family, presented a reminder – meant to intimidate some and impress all – of the clan's power and perhaps, one is tempted to speculate, its legal basis.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, this was not the palazzo's only cycle reflecting a theme of fame and sagacity: a cycle of *Nova Sapientia* or Nine Philosophers was painted in one of the palazzo's two towers for which Maturanzio also wrote the inscriptions.<sup>85</sup>

An interest in the lives of famous local men was neither only pictorial in early Renaissance Perugia, nor only an interest maintained by Braccio and the Baglioni family. Throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, war and figures embodying military virtues had assumed a lasting hold over local imagery, and the deeds of local warriors came to be honored (and likely exaggerated) by famous and not-so-famous humanists in several poems and short biographical tracts. During the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, humanists such as Francesco Maturanzio, Giovanni Antonio Campano and Pacifico Massimi brought this impulse to its highest point.<sup>86</sup> Many verses and short volumes were dedicated to several of Umbria's mercenaries and captains of fortune, among which were Braccio Fortebraccio and Nicolò Piccinino. In its promotion of famous local figures, Quattrocento Perugia's lively, burgeoning humanist culture appears to have reflected a traditional interest.

This discussion once again leads us back to Perugino's appearance within the cycle of Famous Men. These figures from the ancient past nevertheless appear to reflect a local type of imagery quite well known to its commissioners. Throughout the period of Perugino's painting of the Collegio del Cambio, the political situation was entering a state of flux. Braccio "il Magnifico" had died in 1479 during a period of political turmoil. This date was a good two decades before the Collegio was decorated, and his son, Grifone, had predeceased him in 1477,

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*tipografica*, which published one of his father's work in its first printing. If I am correct, Braccio's painted cycle would have included two of the most important and influential Italian legal scholars of the Trecento, both of whom had studied and taught at Perugia. Their methods and works dominated Italian legal education for the next two centuries. See Paul F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 64-69, for a discussion of the University of Perugia during the Renaissance. It is worth noting that the University commonly recruited its professors – including these two – locally.

<sup>84</sup> As Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 65 notes, this cycle would have been seen by famous visitors such as Lorenzo de' Medici, members of the Varano family, Alessandro Sforza and Giovanni della Rovere, and Venetian ambassadors amongst others.

<sup>85</sup> A letter from Jacopo Antiquari mentions figures "in philosophia" for which Maturanzio wrote epitaphs, and the Perugian humanist himself refers to "la Sapientia Nova" in a tower chamber at the Baglioni residence. See Fabretti, "Cronica della citta di Perugia," p. 104.

<sup>86</sup> See Valigi, "La nobilita," pp. 30-34, for discussion.

betrayed at the battle of Pontericcioli.<sup>87</sup> Following Braccio's death, a rival line of the Baglioni family seized and maintained its hold on the city. Guido Baglioni, the eldest of the family following Braccio's death, held power for a time, and later Giovanpaolo Baglioni, son of Braccio's brother, Ridolfo, seized political control of the city following a particularly bloody day in July of 1500 that led to the destruction of Braccio's line following the retaliatory fratricide of his grandson, Grifonetto.<sup>88</sup>

Political shifts aside, however, the city's continued interest in the celebration of local famous men and their pictorial homage was likely reflected in the choice of the *Collegio's* iconography in a locale that had increasingly throughout the Quattrocento had become a locus of the mutual interests of Perugia's noble families and the *popolo minuto* of the city's guilds in keeping power in local rather than papal hands.<sup>89</sup> It is true that a rival branch of the Baglioni family – one not known for a particular interest in the arts – controlled the city during the period of the *Collegio's* decoration. While no Baglioni in Braccio's line or supporter was part of the *arti* that determined the *Collegio's* program, memory of the prominent imagery and the fame associated with this branch of the family lineage – linked through friendship to the ruling families of Florence, Milan and Gubbio – would likely have remained in the memories of the commissioners. The program was, after all, devised by Francesco Maturanzio, who in addition to planning two pictorial schemes of Famous Men, also wrote about them.

While additional explanations should still be sought, it is clear that in many respects the political and social milieu in which Perugino painted the fresco cycle can help us to understand Perugino's unexpected presence within the *Collegio's* program. Perugia and its foremost

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<sup>87</sup> Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 62. During the last years of Braccio's life, not only was Perugia plagued by pestilence, but also by Carlo Fortebracci, a son of the celebrated *condottiero* Braccio Fortebracci and relative of Braccio Baglioni's through his mother's side, who wanted to gain control of the city that had been held by his father. Also, see Colangeli, "I Baglioni," p. 534. The Baglioni family remained internally contentious throughout its history, as evidenced by Braccio's own earlier removal of his cousins – Galeotto, Pandolfo and Pandolfo's son, Nicolò di Baglioni – in 1460. See Black, *Early Modern Italy*, p. 126; Mario Sensi, "I Baglioni a Spello tra Quattro e Cinquecento," in *Pintoricchio a Spello: la Capella Baglioni in Santa Maria Maggiore*, ed. Giordana Benazzi (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2000), p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> The retaliatory fratricide in question was Giovanpaolo's answer to his cousin Grifonetto's murderous attempt to seize the power the latter would have inherited had not his father and grandfather died before he reached his majority. Guido was likely a better candidate than his brother Ridolfo, for example, who according to Maturanzio and cited by Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, p. 308, was then dying of the "*male francioso*" – syphilis – caused by his "debaucheries."

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the *collegi del cambio* and *del mercanzia* as the center of efforts on the part of Perugians to maintain local political and civic power, see Erminia Irace, "Le matricole delle arti come "mostra" della nobiltà cittadina," in *Il Palazzo dei priori di Perugia*, ed. Francesco Federico Mancini (Perugia: Quattroemme Srl, 1997), p. 390.



political families had long demonstrated an interest in promoting the memory of famous local figures. This was not, of course, an interest held only by Perugians; nevertheless, citizens of Perugia seemed particularly ready to honor local heroes. Perugino, as one of the most famous painters in the Italian peninsula at the time and known for highly-praised works of art in such powerful and often-glorified cities as Florence and Rome, was sought by many. Also important, by this time he was likely considered “local” in the minds of the *Collegio’s* commissioners. He had, in fact, allied himself with Perugia in his signature in the Sistine Chapel over ten years before – a point when he was most associated with Florence – when he proclaimed himself both Perugian and a citizen of his birth city of Città di Pieve.<sup>90</sup> The purposeful nature of Perugino’s association of himself with Perugia in this instance is highlighted by the existence of a later work signed “Petrus” that makes no mention of Perugia.<sup>91</sup> Further, although the Perugian self-image was likely a late addition to the cycle, the portrait of the famous painter makes sense when regarded in the light of the city’s fascination with famous contemporaries – who were notably their own citizens. Perugino’s forthright, homely countenance provides a counterbalance to the graceful, heroicized figures of the ancients, the unknown faces of legendary men contrasting with the artist’s obviously life-like image. By his presence there, Perugino is presented as another famous hero, but one whose living status makes him unique within the program. Moreover, his face cannot have been overlooked by the most important guild members whose elevated ceremonial seats would have put them at the best vantage point from which to see the lunette of *Prudence and Justice* and Perugino’s portrait.

I do not think, however, that the story ends here. Even Perugino’s fame at the time does not fully account for his image – an ordinary, if famous, contemporary citizen – in a cycle of

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<sup>90</sup> Perugino’s signature appears in the scene of the *Baptism of Christ*. Damaged probably when Michelangelo was throwing down bricks during the course of the wall preparation for the *Last Judgment*, the signature was rediscovered during the last restoration. In the frieze of a cornice is written in golden Roman capitals “INSTITUTIO . NOVAE . REGENERATIONIS . A . CHRISTO . IN . BAPTISMO.” Just below this appears “OPUS . PETRI . PERUSINI . CASTRO . PLEBIS .” *Work of Pietro Perugino of Città della Pieve*. (My thanks go to Marianna Cerno for the translation.) It is true that the phrase could be alternatively translated as “Pietro Perugino did this work for the city,” since it is also possible to translate the phrase “*castro plebis*” from medieval and late-medieval Latin as a walled city, which could have been intended to describe Perugia – or just about any other Italian city. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that it refers to the painter’s birthplace. While Perugino claims his birth city in this important location, he nevertheless also uses Perugia as his surname. Piero was the only one of the artists who worked in the Sistine chapel during the 1480s to have signed a fresco there with his own inscription. For discussion, see Arnold Nesselrath, “Perugino nella Cappella Sistina,” in *Pietro Vannucci detto il Perugino, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studio 25 - 28 ottobre 2000*, ed. Laura Teza (Perugia: Volumnia Editrice, 2004), p. 105.

<sup>91</sup> In 1521, Perugino signed a *Pietà* frescoed in Santa Maria Maggiore in Spello with “PETRUS DE CHASTRO PLEB(is) / PINSIT AD MDXXI,” or “Peter of Città della Pieve painted this in 1521.”

antique statesmen, especially in the company of Cicero, Maturanzio's particular hero.<sup>92</sup> It has been suggested with good reason that in the years following his return to Perugia in 1489, Maturanzio experienced grave disillusionment at the destruction of the city's republican ideals at the hands of its contentious clans, at the head of which were his old patrons, the Baglioni.<sup>93</sup> As a result of the internal tumult of the "Magnificent [Baglioni] House...everything was undone which had been fairly ordered, on such wise that the city could no longer be spoken of as *Perusia augusta* but *Perusia angusta*, and *quod peius esset, Perusia combusta*."<sup>94</sup> In addition to being illegal to create portraits of *capitani* in the palace, given the traditional conflicts among the old nobility and the *popoli grasso e minuto*, it would have been ill-advised to place a conventional hero in the hall that had increasingly become a locus of republican sentiments. After all, many of the famous *condottieri* for which Perugia was famous, like the Baglioni – who had also been particularly instrumental to the Papacy's control over the city – were members of the ancient nobility and had been the authors of many internal battles. In fact, one might read the artistic flowering of the years of the Baglioni supremacy as a reflection of a separation between the much-vaunted humanistic promotion of a culture of beauty and the political realities of the city.<sup>95</sup>

Instead, it is possible that the *Collegio* guild-members and Maturanzio, even though probably to some degree an after-thought, might have seen Perugino's image as a means of proving the sentiment that Maturanzio later wrote regarding the city and its citizens – "...there were born in our city the most dignified and virtuous men, as in other faculties and virtues...."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> A discussion regarding Maturanzio's attachment to the writings of Cicero is found beginning at Zappacosta, *Francesco Maturanzio*, p. 49.

<sup>93</sup> See Alberto Sartore, "La cultura umanistica al tempo di Perugino: il programma di Amico Graziani e Francesco Maturanzio," in *Perugino il divin pittore*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi and Francesco Federico Mancini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2004), p. 590. In support of this argument, Sartore cites a poem that Maturanzio wrote following the *Nozze Rosse* eulogizing Simonetto Baglioni (third son of Ridolfo, one of Braccio's brothers, and brother to Gian Paolo and Troilo, who soon seized power) and representing "a moment of no return in the history of the city and of [Maturanzio's] personal story." While this event occurs after the decoration of the *Collegio's* meeting space, it is likely that the poem only marks the culmination of these disappointments, rather than their initiation, and that the notorious skirmishes dismayed the republican humanist prior to the creation of the poem. According to Sartore, who cites the rich resource of Maturanzio's *zibaldone*, the humanist also experienced political difficulties in the period 1501-1506 – years of the banishment and re-admittance of the Baglioni – which likely led to some of his disillusionment. For a summary of Maturanzio's plight during this period, see especially Sartore, "La cultura umanistica al tempo di Perugino," p. 593, n. 521 and n. 522.

<sup>94</sup> Francesco Maturanzio and E. Strachan Morgan, *Chronicles of the City of Perugia* (London: Dent, 1905), p. 152, cited and quoted in Heywood, *A History of Perugia*, p. 308.

<sup>95</sup> Biganti, "Elementi di trasformazione," p. 568.

<sup>96</sup> Fabretti, "Cronica della città di Perugia," p. 7: "...erano nella città nostra nate homine dignissime e virtuose, commo nelle altre facultà e virtù...." Although, of course, Perugino had not been born in Perugia, he seems to be

As Laura Teza put it, “Maturanzio presents Perugino as the celebrated example of intellectual and effective virtue of Perugia, a possible *exemplum* for the calmed talents of the city.... Perugino is for Maturanzio a model of patriotic virtue, the personification of art re-found....”<sup>97</sup> Better than a military hero – perhaps even better than the type of legal jurist for which Perugia had also become famous – Perugino represented a new “heroic” model that, importantly, had not become stained by the political strife that had marked the city’s dealings with the other groups.

I think that it is the combination of these intertwined factors that led to Perugino’s inclusion on the walls celebrating renowned men. Imagery promoting famous local figures had already become prominently associated with one of the most eminent and contentious families of a notoriously violent city. Yet, instead of famous contemporary warriors or even legal giants, the hall celebrates antique heroes known popularly for their wisdom, prudence and justice. Pietro Perugino, in their company, would seem to represent a kind of hero different from that for which the Perugians were best known, but one whose virtues in the field of art, visibly celebrated by his fellow citizens, had made him one of the city’s more famous citizens. Maturanzio and the *Collegio* guild-members may have effected a re-appropriation of the iconography of the *uomini famosi* using their antique heroes which they then cemented, at the end, with Perugino’s image.

## 6.2 PINTORICCHIO

Pintoricchio’s self-portrait in the Baglioni chapel in Spello’s S. Maria Maggiore likely emerges from a similar situation, one rooted in local history and politics and tied tightly to the ambitions and desires of his patron, Troilo Baglioni. As already noted, the Baglioni family had possessed ties to the small, adjacent town for many years. These links had been forged as early as 1386, when the Spellani invited Pandolfo Baglioni (d. 1393) to be their *conservator*, and named him *Podestà* in 1389. With the grant of Spello’s dominion by Boniface IX to Pandolfo Baglioni in 1389, and the same grant made to Malatesta di Pandolfo Baglioni in 1425 by Martin V, an

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claimed for Perugia’s own. Certainly nothing in the Collegio’s inscription or how the artist is named there lets on otherwise.

<sup>97</sup> Teza, "Osservazione sulla decorazione," p. 117: “Maturanzio presenta Perugino come celebrimo esempio delle virtù intellettuali e fattive della patria perugina, possibile exemplum per I sopiti ignegni della città.... Perugino è per Maturanzio un modello di virtù patria, la personificazione di un’arte ritrovata....”

already well established relationship was reconfirmed, and it did not end until 1583 with the death of Guido d'Astorre.<sup>98</sup> Following Braccio's death in 1479, Guido and Ridolfo Baglioni, Troilo's uncle and father, held the town. Moreover, if Perugia was the Baglioni's city of origin, Spello was the capital of their historical possessions, and its central location made its control a matter of strategic importance – leading to increasing internal factionalism.<sup>99</sup>

Troilo Baglioni enjoyed a brilliant ecclesiastical career. He was invested as prior of the collegiate church of Santa Maria Maggiore in his family's ancestral holding of Spello in September of 1499, and held the new position from April of 1500 to August of the following year, a date which establishes an *ante quem* for the *Cappella bella*.<sup>100</sup> Although problems exist with the exact dating of the chapel's construction and the commencement of its decoration, it is generally accepted that Troilo financed and chose the depicted scenes.<sup>101</sup> While I have found no birth date for Troilo, the portrait of him in *Christ's Dispute with the Doctors* shows a sober-looking man in his middle years with a lined face who grasps a fold of his black *lucco* in his right hand, and a white sash or cloth in the left. It is harder to see what one author described as the "characteristic figure of a warrior-bishop better represented with a sword than a bishop's pastoral" who was accused by later authors of avarice, simony and adultery.<sup>102</sup> Several documents, however, attest to his military skill, and given his general family history, the description of his character – although not necessarily visible in the portrait – would seem

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<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of the city during the Baglioni family's political hegemony, see Sensi, "I Baglioni a Spello." The town was held by others between 1394 and 1425. See Maria Biviglia and Federica Romani, *Historia in carta pecudina. Le pergamene della collegiata di S. Maria Maggiore di Spello (1187-1844)* (Volumnia Editrice, 1995), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>99</sup> Fratini, "La due Cappelle Baglioni," p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> For information regarding Troilo's investiture and period as the church's prior, see *Antiche Costituzioni prerogative ed alter cose notabili nell'antico tempio di Santa Maria Maggiore, collegiate insigne e suo capitolo di Spello, diocesi di Spoleto, compilata nell'anno del Signore MDCCXLIX. Nella più parte trascritte da pergamene in gotico e bollatico che si conservano nell'Archivio capitolare di essa insige collegiata*, (Assisi: 1749), p. 35, cited in Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 200.

<sup>101</sup> Fratini, "La due Cappelle Baglioni," p. 20. This was one of Troilo's two major acts of patronage within the church. For discussion of Troilo's concurrent commission to the wood-master Pollione di Gaspare da Foligno for a large cabinet for the church's sacristy that bears the names of both patron and artist, dated 1500, see Sensi, "I Baglioni a Spello," pp. 12-13.

<sup>102</sup> "...una caratteristica figura di vescovo-guerriero, che ci rappresentiamo meglio con la spada che sol pastorale." Troilo's reputation was smeared by the accusation that he "kept a beautiful woman" (*teneva una bella femina*) and had illegitimate issue from this relationship. Cardinal Giovanni Borgia's accusation is cited in Francesco Maturanzio's chronicle of Perugia, pp. 96-97. Also see Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, pp. 74-75; Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 201.

credible.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, he became Perugia's bishop following his brief priorship in Spello, and is said to have refused a cardinalship offered him by Cesare Borgia.<sup>104</sup>

It is especially important to the understanding of the creation and imagery of the chapel Troilo had decorated, and I would also to argue the inclusion of Pintoricchio's self-portrait there, to consider it in light of a chapel decorated at the behest of another member of a Baglioni family member only a few years before. This explanation will depend initially on evidence presented by Corrado Fratini, who discussed Troilo's chapel as a response to Grifonetto Baglioni's chapel in the Spellani church of Sant' Andrea.<sup>105</sup> I will introduce pertinent aspects of his argument, and use them as a springboard for a discussion of Pintoricchio's presence as regards Troilo's requirements and choice of artist.

Federico di Grifone di Braccio Baglioni (c. 1478 – 1500) – although more commonly known as Grifone or Grifonetto in official documents after 1489 – was born after his father's death in 1477 and grew up as part of what could be termed the *nouveau* cadet branch of the family after his great-uncles Guido and Ridolfo had seized power over the Baglioni holdings upon Braccio's death.<sup>106</sup> Even as a youth, Grifonetto tried hard to recover the ground his branch of the family tree had lost – something his grandfather had been unable to prevent despite the marriage of his son to Atalante Baglioni, an attempt to create a double-claim to the succession. One of the biggest losses was that of Spello, the hereditary center of the *Stato Baglionesco*. Grifonetto began the expected military career as early as 1486: documents record him as a captain of the city's Guelf faction, the party's *conservatore del moneta*, and captain of the *contado* in 1499 – and dead the next year at age twenty-three.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 201, n. 216, for documentation of Troilo's vigorous participation in several battles, as well as at least one chronicled episode of diplomacy – his attendance at Lorenzo de' Medici's funeral in 1492.

<sup>104</sup> Giovanni Mittarelli and Anselmo Costadoni, *Annales camaldulenses Ordinis Sancti Benedicti* (Venice: 1762), vol. VII, p. 162, and Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 172, n. 189.

<sup>105</sup> Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello."

<sup>106</sup> Federico was named as Grifone di Grifone del Magnifico Braccio di Malatesta in a Perugian *catasto* of 1489. See *Ibid.*, p. 196. Those familiar with Raphael's early patrons will recognize Atalante Baglioni as the commissioner of a painting of the *Entombment* completed in 1507 and held in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. For discussion, see Catherine King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy c. 1300 - c. 1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 107-110.

<sup>107</sup> The majority of Grifonetto's duties must have been ceremonial, as he would have only been around nine years of age in 1486. For information regarding the 1498 Perugian *catasto* in the parish of San Paolo di Porta San Pietro, see Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 196.

Involvement in the “*Nozze Rosso*” conspiracy that led to his death, however, was only Grifonetto’s most explicit attempt to regain his patrimony, if one may regard prominent artistic patronage as political action. A few years before, he had followed in his illustrious grandfather’s footsteps by commissioning the decoration of the *cappella della Salvatore*, a rectangular apsidal space on the left side of Spello’s Franciscan church of Sant’Andrea, which is assumed was intended as a funerary chapel.<sup>108</sup> The identity of his artist, called the Master of Spello or Master of the Montefalco Coronation, is yet unknown, but he was undoubtedly a local artisan.<sup>109</sup> However, despite the heavy damage the centuries and water seepage – and, very possibly, deliberate defacement – have dealt the chapel, its commissioner is known despite the near ruination of his portrait, which shows an armored Grifonetto kneeling before the *Crucifixion*.<sup>110</sup> Part of a lengthy, partially destroyed Gothic inscriptions tells us that “...QUEST OPERA A FACTA FARE GRIFONE FIGLIOLU DE L[A] D[ON]NA BAGLONI A[TALA]NNTA [...]”<sup>111</sup> The Baglioni *stemma* also appears in the chapel, to erase any doubts about its author and origination. The date of the frescoes are unknown, but stylistically they almost undoubtedly come from the last decade of the Quattrocento and more importantly, would have been commissioned only a few years before Troilo’s far more famous Baglioni chapel.

Fratini argues convincingly that in the aftermath of the conspiracy, Troilo and his brother, Giampaolo, would have had in mind a cancellation of sorts of the recently completed chapel of Grifonetto by means of the creation of a new Cappella Baglioni. Although I doubt that anyone other than Troilo and Pietro can be identified within the cycle, the historian Fausto Donnola, writing in 1620, asserted that the conspiracy victor/survivors were immortalized in the Cappella Bella’s frescoes. Moreover, though he accurately listed other artistic treasures in the region from the same period, he neglected any mention of a cycle commissioned by the unlucky Grifonetto.<sup>112</sup> Fratini argues that the omission of any mention within the chronicle written by a

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<sup>108</sup> The chapel’s decorations are in a semi ruinous state. Left wall: *SS. Peter and Paul*. Back wall: *Ecce homo*, the *Annunciation*, the *Trinity with SS. Caterina, Francis, John the Baptist, Andrew, and Nicholas*. Right wall: *Madonna and Child, Penitent St. Jerome*. Vault: the *Mystic Lamb*.

<sup>109</sup> Fratini, “La due Cappelle Baglioni,” p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> For illustration, see *Ibid.*, p. 19, fig. 11.

<sup>111</sup> The entirety of the inscription is yet undecipherable – perhaps on purpose. See Fratini, “L’arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello,” p. 195.

<sup>112</sup> See Baleoneus, *I Baglioni*, p. 133. For the citation to *Historia di Spello del dottor Fausto Gentile Donnola da detta terra*, see pp. 123-127.

near-contemporary expert on the Baglioni family indicates the success of the attempt to erase Grifonetto's earlier Baglioni chapel from local memory and history.

Moreover, another way of lessening the earlier chapel's memory might have been to create a new "*Cappella Baglioni*" whose richness of decoration would have overshadowed the fame of the former. Whereas Grifonetto, whether due to modest funds or a desire to follow tradition, had commissioned a local artist, Troilo procured one of the most famous painters in the region, perhaps also in answer to the more lavish expenditure made by his uncle Braccio Baglioni in the nearby ancient church of San Girolamo of Spello and the famous *condottieri's* other choices of such prominent artists as Domenico Veneziano and Piero della Francesca.<sup>113</sup> Fratini interprets the commission as one of several early 16<sup>th</sup>-century attempts on the part of Troilo's branch to create a new tradition of artistic excellence in the ancient holding of the family. These acts of patronage likely reflected an attempt to cement the oddly advantageous situation in which the newly decimated family found itself following the unexpected "consolidation" of power and family heads, an unforeseen side benefit of the *Nozze Rosso*. Moreover, she sees the new commissions of the early Cinquecento as the Baglioni's means of reducing some of the "cultural distance" between Perugia and its feudal city of Spello; between 1500 and 1503, no other Umbrian city saw the creation of so many works by "modern" masters than Spello, with the exception of Assisi.

If Fratini's explanation can be accepted – that the second chapel was a response to the first and an attempt to overshadow and erase the former, in addition to confirming and strengthening the links between the Baglioni of Perugia with their traditional feudal city – I think one can construct a basis for Pintoricchio's self-portrait within the new Baglioni Chapel. Troilo Baglioni, backing his brother's claim to power and his own fast-rising star, required a well-

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<sup>113</sup> Braccio Baglioni is known to have contributed financially to the construction of the church's convent. Moreover, in a testament dated July 13, 1478, he indicated that the convent would be the beneficiary of part of his patrimony in the event that his wife and heir, Anastasia Sforza, remarried. See Francesco Federico Mancini, "'Depingi ac fabricari fecerunt quamdam tabulam.' Un punto fermo per la cronologia del polittico di Perugia," in *Piero della Francesca il Polittico di Sant'Antonio*, ed. Vittoria Garibaldi (Perugia: Electa Editori Umbri Associati, 1993), p. 71, n. 33. Regarding Domenico Veneziano's presence in Perugia, see Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti*, p. 138, and Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo III, p. 358. For the suggestion that Piero della Francesca was commissioned by the Baglioni for the Sant'Antonio Polyptych, see Eugenio Battisti, *Piero della Francesca*, vol. II (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1971), p. 74 and Vittoria Garibaldi, *Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria* (Milan: Electa, 2002), pp. 174-179. At a conference held in Perugia on March 24, 1992, Laura Teza (see Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 216) discussed the possibility that Pietro Perugino's *Adoration of the Magi*, made for Perugia's Servite church and today in the National Gallery of Umbria, was a Baglioni commission.

known artist for his chapel who could further his family's political aims, and Pintoricchio was an ideal choice. In Pintoricchio, already famous for his papal commissions and local success, Troilo gained an artist who inspired a thirst in the Spellani for more beautiful and sophisticated art than the city had ever known, and indelibly linked him to the Baglioni name – Troilo's rather than Grifonetto's, in this case.<sup>114</sup>

I think that Pintoricchio's portrait can thus be interpreted as accomplishing two primary goals for Troilo Baglioni. On one hand, it highlighted an artist whose fame would have been especially attractive to Troilo in light of the perilous new political circumstances as well as the traditional Baglioni interests. While Pintoricchio did not enjoy Perugino's contemporary level of fame, one should remember that few artists did at this point in the history of Italian art.<sup>115</sup> Pintoricchio's was a name of some currency – like Perugino, he was a known favorite of popes – and thus undoubtedly attractive to a career ecclesiast. The fact that he was Perugian by origin and is proclaimed as such – the simplicity of his signature might be said to highlight this detail – serves to foster the ties Troilo wanted to display.

On the other hand, I suspect that the portrait also served to connect the chapel and its imagery to Perugino's paintings in Perugia; in a sense, perhaps, making claim to them. The *Collegio del Cambio* was, as documents demonstrate, an immediate and highly acclaimed success; Troilo had every reason to want to associate his chapel with so famous and much-admired a space, especially if one accepts Fratini's arguments. We know that the Baglioni had been an influential part of the *Collegio's* creation (1452-1457) and that Alberto Baglioni had been on the committee to approve the decorative scheme and Perugino's self-portrait.<sup>116</sup> I do not think it is far-fetched to suggest that Troilo desired his chapel to remind the viewer of earlier ties between the cities and his family, and that he found his artist's portrait to be the means by which he could achieve this aim. In this light, Pintoricchio's self-portrait should not be viewed as merely derivative of Perugino's, but rather a means for his patron deliberately to link visually the two spaces, despite their disparate contexts and uses. The iconography of the *uomini illustri*

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<sup>114</sup> See Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," p. 231-233, for discussion of the ramifications of the choice of Pintoricchio for the Baglioni and the Spellani in the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>115</sup> In fact, Perugino himself did not enjoy it for much longer. His reputation took a downward turn during the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. For discussions, see Nelson, "La disgrazia di Pietro," and Ladis, "Perugino and the Wages of Fortune." Additionally, Pintoricchio's work in the church inspired many artists in the area for years to come. For discussion, see Fratini, "L'arte nella chiesa di S. Andrea a Spello," pp. 226-227, and p. 229, n. 247.

<sup>116</sup> Scarpellini, "La 'Capella Bella,'" p. 24.



used so effectively in the *Collegio* has no real place in the chapel of a newly elected Prior, but so unusual a detail as Pintoricchio's self-image might have served to connect the images – and spaces – together in the eyes of a viewer.

### 6.3 PERUGINO AND PINTORICCHIO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EARLY 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

I have argued that it was more than simply the desires of the respective artists that drove the creation of self-portraits by Perugino and Pintoricchio. Members of Perugia's *Collegio del Cambio* and Troilo Baglioni had reasons of their own for having the self-image of their highly respected artist included within the respective space. It seems clear that such reasons existed more or less independent of an artist's desire for self-glorification or memorialization, although one suspects that each artist was happy to honor his patrons' wishes. At this juncture, however, having discussed these portraits within the localized circumstances of their creations, it is time now to attempt to situate them, albeit briefly and incompletely, within the history of portraiture, both embedded and autonomous, of the self and of others. How do these images fit within this history – or do they fit at all?

Autonomous portrait panels had, as was outlined above, been popular within a domestic context for many years prior to the painting of the two embedded images under discussion. Such images during the Quattrocento were, however, primarily portraits of the noble and upper classes, and thus were chiefly a form of communication and exchange amongst themselves. The autonomous image of an artist was, however, a non-existent genre at the time in Renaissance Italy, as we must surmise from the lack of self-identified examples.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, as Joanna Woods-Marsden noted, self-portraits of artists would not refer to themselves as artists – that is, directly revealing themselves by the display of the tools of their trade around them, or by identifying themselves with the name of any known artist – until well into the 16<sup>th</sup> century, after

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<sup>117</sup> Northern Europe was considerably more precocious as regards autonomous self-portraiture. Many, for example, believe that Jan van Eyck's *Man in a Red Turban* of 1433, the frame of which is inscribed with the artist's motto, is a self-portrait, and Albrecht Dürer created several autonomous self-images during the last years of the same century.

the status of the profession had risen considerably.<sup>118</sup> This means, of course, that although autonomous portraits of artists could have existed prior to the Cinquecento, none were made manifestly identifiable to later generations. Only once the intellectual and social status of the visual arts had escalated sufficiently that its practitioners could claim some level of gentility did artists commonly portray themselves unequivocally as practitioners and creators of self-portraits, embracing their brushes and palettes.

Thus, we see in the works of Perugino and Pintoricchio something that appears to be entirely new. Both paintings represent the concept of the autonomous panel portraying the artist who, by the nature of the depiction and its context, is patently identified not only as *an* artist, but also as *the* artist of the work in which his image appears. Moreover, Pintoricchio goes so far as to put his paintbrushes fully, if decoratively, on display. Whether one assumes that this was done primarily at the behest of each painter's patron or not, the inclusions might tend to suggest the heights to which the status of the artist was already rising.

Equally interesting is the fact that Perugino's portrait suggests a manner in which portraits were displayed – and would be displayed in the future – within a public context. It would seem doubtful that Perugino's portrait, however famous an artist he was, would have been exhibited in this manner without some sort of precedent. I think, rather, the location of Perugino's self-image must reflect something of the contemporary means for the display of portraits in rooms – public or private – that had already been frescoed.<sup>119</sup> Inventories tell us that by the end of the Trecento, it was common that many domestic rooms of a public nature were frescoed with historiated scenes. It was just these types of rooms that later would be documented as containing portraits.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, although it dates from the next century and is itself unmatched in the Italian Renaissance, historian Paolo Giovio's (1483-1552) famous collection of portraits housed in his Lake Como villa was known to have been associated with frescoes of inscriptions and *imprese* celebrating Giovio and his illustrious patrons.<sup>121</sup> Additionally, one room

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<sup>118</sup> Woods-Marsden, *Renaissance Self-Portraiture*, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Information on the manner in which homes were frescoed is largely lacking. Inventories, our primary source for knowledge of the contents of domestic settings, do not ordinarily list fresco cycles or fixed ornamentation, and only the occasional extraordinary cycle, a few examples of which have already been mentioned, were noted by contemporaries.

<sup>120</sup> See Schiaparelli, *La casa fiorentini*, pp. 176-194, especially p. 176, for discussion of the decoration and contents of rooms used for display within Florentine Renaissance palazzi.

<sup>121</sup> Klinger, *Paolo Giovio's Portrait Collection*, pp. 68-69. Details regarding the mode of display in Giovio's villa (destroyed c. 1614) are relatively scarce, but some descriptions of it were given by Paolo's brother Benedetto and by

was frescoed with depictions of Apollo and the Muses, and another, called the *loggietta della Grazie*, was painted with a cycle of *uomini famosi*.<sup>122</sup> Seventeenth-century depictions of the villa indicate that a portrait of Alfonso d'Avalos del Vasto, the Marquis of Pescara and a primary contributor to Giovio's *Museo*, was depicted in fresco on an exterior wall.<sup>123</sup> Thus, it would appear at least possible that the *Collegio's* request of Perugino's portrait within the context of a cycle of Famous Men may have had some basis in early and contemporary practice.

Nevertheless, one must wonder what, if any, effect the self-images by Perugino and Pintoricchio – details within their environments – had on the course of autonomous self-portraiture. It does not appear that this type of embedded “autonomous” image is repeated in the history of Italian Renaissance painting, in spite of the remarkable fame and wealth that some artists acquired through the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>124</sup> This is not to say that artists do not continue to appear occasionally in their commissioned paintings.<sup>125</sup> Rather, their portraits continue to be embedded within the general imagery they create or, just prior to the end of the Cinquecento, artists portray themselves as gentlemen in autonomous panels that make no claims regarding their creation of another specific work of art, unlike the intrinsic claim to authorship suggested by embedded self-portraits.<sup>126</sup>

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Antonfrancesco Doni, both writing in the early 1540s, and Paolo himself wrote *Musaei ioviani descriptio* published in *Elogia veris clarorum virorum imaginibus supposita* (Venice, 1546).

<sup>122</sup> I am interpreting the phrase a “room wherein are painted *uomini famosi*” to indicate a room decorated with a fresco cycle rather than a room in which portraits of famous men were hung. See *Ibid.*, p. 69. The phrase appears in a letter written by Antonfrancesco Doni in 1543.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>124</sup> It is not even repeated when works were copied, as happened when the *Annunciation* from the Cappella Bella was recreated between 1923 and 1924 by Guistino Cristofani for the apse of the parochial church of Santa Maria di Colombella located on the main road between Perugia and Gubbio. Cristofani left out the detail of Pintoricchio's self-portrait and did not provide his own. In its place, one finds Cristofani's inscription naming himself Pintoricchio's disciple. See Scarpellini, "La 'Capella Bella,'" p. 25 and figure 21.

<sup>125</sup> The list of suggested 16<sup>th</sup>-century embedded self-portraits is too long to be detailed here. Some of the best known include Michelangelo's self-portrait in the *Last Judgment* of the Sistine Chapel, Raphael's from the *School of Athens* in the Stanza della Signature, Pontormo's in the S. Felicità *Deposition*, Titian in at least two panels, Baccio Bandinelli in the face of Joseph of Arimathea in a sculptural group of the *Lamentation* intended for his own tomb, Veronese in his 1563 *Marriage at Cana*, as well as examples by other famous and lesser-known artists. No systematic study exists of embedded self-images of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or beyond, however, forcing the reader to rely on haphazard mentions in monographs on the artists and some articles devoted to their individual subjects. Many of these artists are treated by Woods-Marsden, but the nature of her thesis precludes her study of their embedded self-images with the necessary attention to their complex contexts and functions.

<sup>126</sup> Autonomous panels of artists from the 16<sup>th</sup> century are relatively numerous, and include those by female artist Sofonisba Anguissola, as well known as examples by Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Giorgio Vasari, Parmigianino, and others. Regarding the authorship of embedded self-portraits, the situation is oddly complex in that while such an image may seem to claim, in a sense, that the entire work had been painted by the artist who portrayed him (or her) self there, we know this was not always the case. Often a self-portrait appears in a scene in which several hands have

Thus, it would seem clear that the specificity of the historical contexts leading to Perugino's and Pintoricchio's self-portraits helps to account for the lack of imitators of, and even responses to, the two images. Their uniqueness, moreover, places them in a sense outside the history of embedded self-portraiture, while also denying them full entry into the genre of autonomous self-portrayals. Instead, I would contend that the two images taken together represent a singular experiment in self-portraiture. In these images, some of the general claims and purposes made by earlier embedded self-portraits are now, at the end of the Quattrocento, being made with far greater assurance and lack of equivocation. Other claims evident in embedded self-images are without a context in the mode of presentation employed by Perugino and Pintoricchio, and were, therefore, no longer relevant.

It is in this sense that I want now to touch upon how these images might be viewed as transitional. While lacking direct influence in practice, these self-images might instead reflect the actuality of changing practices for the context and functions of the artist's depiction. Although to address them fully at this juncture is impossible, some issues to be raised at this point are what function(s) did embedded self-portraits serve in the minds of the patrons who allowed their existence by the end of the Quattrocento? Also important, I suggest, is a consideration of a distinction of these portrait types: are they "embedded" autonomous or embedded "autonomous" self-images? Towards which tradition do these objects lean?

The previous chapters were primarily concerned with discussing embedded self-portraiture largely from the patron's rationale through the years of the Tre- and Quattrocento. We have seen how a painter's embedded self-image could focus the viewer's attention on the appropriate areas of a work of art, and even serve, in a sense, as a "place holder" for the viewer, enjoining an emotional response. During the Florentine Quattrocento, when embedded self-portraits become relatively common within the context of portraits, it seems possible that an embedded self-image might have also served to confirm a patron's presence at a holy event, in a specialized metaphorical sense. Moreover, as the talents of artists became the subject of literary exercises, an artist's reputation and personal fame was often displayed by means of signatures and embedded self-portraits; the inclusion of a self-portrait may have served to attach some of

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been identified, or were otherwise workshop paintings. An autonomous self-portrait, a single work, was much more likely to have been the work of a single artist, but in its autonomy, makes no claims regarding the authorship of any other work.

that fame to the reputation of the patron. The idea of patronal generosity seems to have come into play. The numerous occasions in which an artist was allowed to add his self-portrait to an altarpiece or painting associated with the Madonna – especially the Assumption during the earliest years of known self-portrayals – can be seen as an indication of the artist’s desire for salvation, and I have argued that the reasons an artist was allowed to include himself in such august company were various. Some self-portraits have been interpreted as rewards for virtue – the artist’s privilege for his worthy work of art.<sup>127</sup> On the reverse side of the coin, however, the signature or self-image of a well-respected artist might have enhanced the reputation of a commissioner as that of a virtuous patron, and recommended the work of art to others – both viewers and perhaps the very divinities being honored – as being especially worthy of praise. On the other hand, the presence of the artist in signature or pictorial format might also have served more or less as the patron’s general acknowledgement of the artist’s skill and recognition of the very role of *artist*.

One might argue that many of the functions attributed to embedded self-portraits shown in the midst of a holy event discussed above still have meaning even considering the new context in which Perugino and Pintoricchio placed themselves during the initial years of the Cinquecento. No longer portrayed within an event as a witness, neither artist presents himself as a guide to the viewer, nor do they draw the viewer into the scene by appearing to make eye contact.<sup>128</sup> At the same time, however, I would argue that Pintoricchio’s image calls attention to the *Annunciation* and draws the eyes of the viewer simply by means of the highly unusual nature of his inclusion. Pintoricchio’s *Annunciation* is set in an uncluttered architectural space in which the self-portrait carries out an important compositional function. The framed self-image, countered against the doorway on the opposite side, serves to balance visually the two extremes of the covered *loggietta* where the holy event takes place. Perugino’s self-portrait “hanging” on the wall between two lunettes stops the eye at that point, causing it to rest on allegories of Prudence and Strength and their representative heroes figured below, obviously central images

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<sup>127</sup> See King, "Italian Self-Portraits," for discussion of the concept of the self-portrait as a reward for fame and virtue.

<sup>128</sup> Although this role was traditionally associated with the artist, it had been assumed only occasionally, and could even, as in the case of Andrea del Sarto’s fresco of the *Procession of the Magi* (1511) in the atrium of Santissima Annunziata, be given to a friend to perform, instead. Vasari and Barocchi, *Le vite*, Testo IV, p. 353, report that Andrea del Sarto appears with fellow artist and friend Jacopo Sansovino – the portrait figure who looks out to the viewer – and the musician Francesco dell’Ajolle in the badly damaged fresco.

within the hall given that they appear to best advantage from the vantage point of the finest seats in the house.

The artists themselves might, in fact, be the beneficiaries of blessings granted by the very fact of “witnessing” a miracle, should one accept a votive motivation for a self-portrait in such a context. Certainly, it would seem significant that, following the tradition of embedded portraiture and self-portraits within scenes of religious history, these artists at the cusp of the Seicento continue to appear in the context of just such a story. Although neither artist appears *embedded* as a bystander within the portrayed scene, both appear in close conjunction with two of the most significant religious events of the Christian tradition. Lest we forget, while antique heroes are given visual priority, Perugino’s image is nevertheless forever located within the same space in which is also figured a scene of the *Adoration*, while Pintoricchio’s image is witness to the annunciation of the birth of Christ.

Nevertheless, it appears that many of the religious underpinnings linked to the type of highly experiential *exempla* expounded in contemporary sermons discussed in the previous chapters would no longer be in effect now that the artist in these two examples cannot be said to participate within the scene. Instead, those motivations that concern the reputation and fame of the artist, whether believed to have been solely for the benefit of the artist, or – as I have argued – also his patron, seem to have come to the forefront. Both Perugino’s spectacular fame and his highly esteemed skills as a painter at the end of the Quattrocento were the subjects of his epigram, and were harnessed to the service of his patrons, whose choice of so superlative and costly an artist might be something that would have elicited praise from viewers.<sup>129</sup> There appears little else to explain his presence and remarkably laudatory epigram in a program of *Uomini Famosi* in a space whose decorations served to remind its members of their duties and goals as the administrators of Perugia’s most influential and politically important *arte*. In the context in which he appears, Perugino’s image reminds the town officials that the attainment of

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<sup>129</sup> There is evidence that the cost of a work of art was part of its inherent virtue – that is, the amount of money spent might correlate to the amount of honor shown to God and how much the commission(s) might receive in return. See Trexler, *Public Life*, p. 92, and Blume, “Botticelli and the Cost,” for discussion. Perugino’s supposed fear of poverty and desire for wealth is documented by Vasari (*Le vite*, Testo III, p. 595), but if the price the artist quoted to *Fabbriche* of the Cathedral of Orvieto for the completion of the Cappella Nova is any indication, Perugino did price himself highly. In 1489, the artist originally estimated the cost for the completion of six vaults and six walls at 1,500 ducats. In the end, the chapel was painted over a lengthy expanse of time (Fra Angelico was hired in 1447, but only painted two vault segments; the chapel was only completed in 1499 by Luca Signorelli) for 780 ducats, or as O’Malley, “Commissioning Bodies,” pp. 164-165, points out, just over half of Perugino’s estimate.

glory and fame while in service to one's city is not only the provenance of antique statesmen, but was within their reach after the example of one of their own craftsmen. Further, they have the proof before them that their own guild-members had had the judgment and the means to procure for their meeting space one of Italy's best late Quattrocento masters.

Recognition of Perugino's fame itself and the merit that had helped create it was very much on the minds of the commissioners of the Collegio as Maturanzio's inscription, worth re-quoting, indicates: "Pietro Perugino, celebrated painter. If the art of painting became lost, he would restore it. If it had never been invented, he alone could bring it to this point." Fame and the elevation of the individual's reputation amongst members of his (or her) society had long been recognized as worthwhile goals in themselves, bringing honor not only to an individual, but extending glory to one's family, city, and at an anachronistic extreme, country, nation or ethnic heritage. Today and likely in the past, the sum of a people's famous figures – statesmen, soldiers, philosophers and artists amongst others – characterizes and forms the reputation of a larger and more diverse group of individuals, especially for those examining a society from the outside. By the end of the Quattrocento, it was common for cities to claim a share in the reflected glory of fame garnered by its more prominent citizens in order to highlight and promote themselves as important centers of power and culture, and progenitors themselves of the arts. That the works of the most important artists served to beautify a city and lend it fame is a clear theme in several Quattrocento treatises on the arts. By impressing upon the viewer Perugino's status as the most celebrated of artists, the guild-members and the city they represented were sharing in the artist's glory.

Moreover, many Renaissance patrons promoted their own personal reputations as collectors and important patrons of the arts. During the early Quattrocento, Palla Strozzi financed several projects that were, in part, intended to assure him a well-established reputation as a patron of the arts.<sup>130</sup> A desire to be known for their perspicacity and good taste in choosing the best artists in their periods also marked many of the best-known Quattrocento art patrons and patronesses. Giovanni Rucellai claimed the creation of S. Maria Novella's façade, but recognized artists in another fashion; rather than commemorating merely the subjects, he kept in his

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<sup>130</sup> Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage*, p. 191 and p. 355, n. 195. Palla Strozzi's circle of acquaintances included humanists, and according to his biography (Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le vite*, ed. A. Greco, 2 vols. (Florence: 1970-76), vol. II, pp. 139-165 and pp. 146-147), he intended to donate his collection of manuscripts to a public library being built for S. Trinità.

*Zibaldone* a list of the artists from whom he had commissioned paintings.<sup>131</sup> Correspondence between artists and patrons and patrons and their agents from the late Quattrocento/early Cinquecento suggests that artistic reputation was a factor in both the choice of artist and the amount of freedom given an artist regarding a commission. The letter written c. 1490 by Ludovico Sforza's anonymous agent regarding the best artists available in Florence, discussed above, is a telling example. These and other examples indicate that an artist's reputation and style of painting became an increasingly important part of the decision-making process. Francesco Gonzaga, for example, requested a painting from Giovanni Bellini in 1497 a painting of his own devising after the artist pointed out that he was unable to paint the scene Gonzaga initially required, a view of Paris, which was a city the artist had never seen.<sup>132</sup> The choice of artist, it appears, was sometimes more important than the choice of the subject he was to paint. The famously acquisitive nature of Isabella d'Este is another case in point; the duchess' desire to have a painting by Giovanni Bellini is well-known, even if she was incapable of leaving the subject to the artist, as her Venetian agent, Michele Vianello, had advised her to do in 1501.<sup>133</sup> Thus, it appears that the desire to acquire works by famous artists went hand in hand with a growing recognition that some artists required special handling in order to gain from them the works commissioned – or to have those commissions accepted in the first place.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> A. Perosa, ed., *Giovanni Rucellai e il suo Zibaldone*, 2 vols. (Florence: 1980), vol. I, pp. 23-24, and Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, p. 276.

<sup>132</sup> Creighton Gilbert, *Italian Art 1400-1500. Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 141.

<sup>133</sup> Chambers, *Patrons and Artists*, p. 127. Vianello advised the avaricious patroness "...So if it should seem better to you to allow him to do what he likes, I am most certain that Your Ladyship will be very much better served...."

<sup>134</sup> Giovanni Bellini was not the only famous painter from whom Isabella besought paintings. She also solicited works from, amongst others, Leonardo da Vinci in 1501 and 1504 and Perugino. Leonardo was never forthcoming with a completed painting (a cartoon exists of a never-finished portrait of Isabella in profile, held today in the Louvre), while her heavy-handed directions – followed to a 'T' – produced an unsatisfying painting (namely, the *Combat of Love and Chastity* from 1504 also in the Louvre) from Perugino. See Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life*, pp. 185-186, for discussion.



## 7.0 CONCLUSION

The present dissertation has offered a broad examination of the embedded self-portrait in the context primarily, but not exclusively, of the Florentine Renaissance. Rather than acting as a definitive study of the phenomenon, this thesis has explored specific examples grounded in the fact that Renaissance artists filled commissions that had to satisfy patrons. On a fundamental level, this study was meant to expand the examination of embedded self-images to consider more than the interests and intentions of the artists with regard to their creation and function, which hitherto have been the primary concerns of scholars. The choice to explore the development of these pictorial details through individual case studies was important because it allowed me to focus on specific images within the intertwining contexts of the artists' careers and the individual needs of specific patrons. Attention to the circumstances that surrounded each instance of self-portrayal permitted an expanded discourse concerning both the shared and the individual characteristic of these images. It also allowed each patron's interests regarding an artist's embedded self-portrait to emerge, revealing that those who commissioned the panels and frescoes that contain them possessed comprehensible reasons for allowing a craftsman's self-commemoration, from which they benefited.

The interests of the patrons can be reconstructed, for example, regarding embedded self-portraits as disparate as those by Pietro da Pavia and Benozzo Gozzoli, one presented alone in an illuminated letter and the other frescoed as part of a group on a chapel wall. Although created almost one hundred years apart from each other, embedded self-images by these artists enhanced commissions from patrons as illustrious as the bibliophile Pasquino Capelli, Giangaleazzo Visconti's important chancellor, and the Medici. Pietro signed other manuscripts, but the singular self-image of his career appropriately appears in the context of Pliny's chapter discussing illustrious ancient painters. The small self-image creates a parallel between Pietro and his ancient predecessors who, Pliny writes, had been allowed to add luster to their creations with

their signatures or even, as in the case of Phidias, a self-image. Yet another parallel is perhaps implied between Pasquino Capelli and famous ancient *patrons* who, like Alexander the Great, recognized and honored the worth of their favored court artisans by allowing them special privileges. Inscribing his self-portrait with “fecit,” Pietro proclaims his work finished. While “fecit” occurred commonly in Trecento signatures, the word’s appearance within the context of Pliny’s discussion of its implications of artistic hubris seems to suggest that Pietro felt a higher level of confidence in his creation than most ancient artists dared to exhibit. Furthermore, the burgeoning humanist culture associated with the Visconti court – part of the context in which the manuscript was commissioned and created – likely played a significant role. Petrarch’s influential presence there, combined with the poet’s interests in promoting ancient courtly customs such as that of the poet laureate, were concurrently helping to create a cultural sympathy for the arts that made the commemoration of a favored artist desirable.

Benozzo Gozzoli’s clever incorporation of two self-portraits within the circle of Medici supporters and allies portrayed as the biblical travelers who journeyed to honor the newborn Christ creates for a viewer associations similar to those made by Pietro’s self-image. Benozzo’s self-portraits proclaim the artist’s links through patronage and fealty to the powerful family, and does so in a manner that evidently satisfied his exacting patron, Piero de’ Medici. Painted in the family chapel at the heart of the most prominent residence in Republican Florence, the cycle’s lavish depiction of the Magi’s retinue seems to associate a court function with the Medici family and their newly-constructed palazzo. When pointed out by members of the household, the artist’s self-images in company with numerous other recognizable portraits of important Florentines may well have fostered associations between the Medici and ancient courts for erudite viewers. Moreover, Benozzo’s participation seems to elevate the painter’s status to that of a court-artist, a level to which a few notable Italian artists had already aspired. Benozzo’s heightened position honored him as an artist whose skills made him worthy of the accolade, but perhaps more importantly, it could draw attention to the Medici as a “noble” family of the type whose households were often enhanced by such court ornaments.

Although I think it is clear that Piero de’ Medici and Pasquino Capelli had self-interested reasons for permitting their artists to include self-portraits, this argument is not found between the covers of Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite*. Vasari’s name has appeared throughout this dissertation due to his importance for the history and study of the Western self-image. It is true, however, that the

careful reader has likely noticed that his name appears infrequently in the second half of this dissertation, and hardly at all in the chapter discussions of Pietro da Pavia and Benozzo Gozzoli. Vasari was probably unaware of the former, and although he identifies a self-image by Benozzo, it is not one that scholars agree upon today. Likewise, his identifications of a self-portrait by Masaccio in the *Tribute Money* and a portrait of Sandro Botticelli by his pupil, Filippino, both within the Brancacci Chapel, are not supported by modern art historians. Rather, most recognize Masaccio's self-image in the *Chairing of St. Peter* and Botticelli's in one of his own altarpieces. Moreover, Vasari considered these images only as an artist's rightful self-tribute and was not concerned with reconstructing a viewer's response to these details beyond his or her recognition of a worthy artisan.

Regarding the first of the two, I believe that before the gesture was removed, both Masaccio's face and his hand, stretched out to touch St. Peter, provided a worshipper with a recognizable individual whose figure accomplished several things from the audience's viewpoint. Masaccio's original motion indicated the episode's focus – St. Peter seated in the ceremonial chair made for him by converted Antiochians – while calling attention to the attending Carmelite monks whose presence there indicated their chapter's antiquity, which was disputed during the Quattrocento. The cycle's several portraits mark the first occasion of a "portrait gallery" of Florentines who would have been recognizable to their peers, an important component that adds to the heightened sense of realism that characterizes the chapel's decorations. Portraiture here is used to enhance biblical scenes by emphasizing the translocation of events from the Holy Lands to Tuscany. When seen in combination with the familiar landscapes and Masaccio's pioneering use of a scientifically-organized perspective system, these portraits could have been intended to create for a viewer a form of spiritual "memory." I believe it is possible that scenes of this type became common in Quattrocento Florence in part because they aided worshippers in remembering and visualizing the holy stories for private devotions. In the midst of other portraits, Masaccio's face and self-aware glance capture the attention of viewers and confirm the painter's skill as a portraitist. If, as Alberti states, an embedded portrait could honor an individual who had served his profession well, then Masaccio's self-image might be regarded as the painter's own assertion of high accomplishment. Equally importantly, visitors to the chapel might have read the portraits of Masaccio and his peers in the same light.

Vasari's identification of Botticelli's portrait in *The Dispute with Simon Magus* by Filippino has gained little support over the years, in marked contrast with Ulmann's suggestion that the artist's self-image appears in the *Adoration of the Magi*, an altarpiece Botticelli painted c. 1475 for Guasparre dal Lama. An examination of Guasparre's commission reveals that the ambitious money-broker likely had more than simple piety in mind when he commissioned the panel for the costly altar he had constructed on the retro-façade of Santa Maria Novella. It is probable that a Quattrocento viewer would have found Botticelli's self-portrait – and even Guasparre's embedded portrait – of less interest than the better-known images of deceased and living Medici in the guises of the Magi and members of their retinue. Although Paolucci has argued that Guasparre commissioned Botticelli because of the young painter's favored status with the Medici, the family whose patronage he craved, close attention to the artist's career prior to the panel reveals instead the likelihood of a slightly different situation. Botticelli's paintings with a Medici provenance came later in his career; rather than choosing the Medici's favorite painter, it seems more likely that Guasparre selected one who was favored by prominent Medici partisans whose ranks he wished to join. With their own images in prominent association with Medici portraits, it appears that both patron and artist were attempting to attract the family's good will. Botticelli especially makes an unmistakable bid for attention, portraying himself as the full-length figure, closest to the viewer and dressed in flaming yellow, who looks out to the audience in an almost challenging fashion. His prominence stands in striking contrast to Guasparre's comparatively reserved presentation. Prestigiously positioned in greater proximity to the scene's focus, Guasparre gazes towards the church's roodscreen and high altar beyond in what may have been regarded as an appropriately modest and pious fashion. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that the notice Botticelli's figure helps to elicit would have been a desirable commodity, as passers-by whose attention was captured would likely have offered a prayer for the soul whose family arms were displayed.

Nevertheless, several of Vasari's other identifications have not only been regarded as plausible, but are widely accepted. Few if any scholars counter the suggestion that Andrea Orcagna included himself in the *Death of the Virgin* on the back of Orsanmichele's Tabernacle. Clearly described by Vasari as the last man at the relief's right edge, recognition of Orcagna is aided by the artist's visible division from the group of grieving apostles by virtue of space, scale and clothing style. Moreover, in one sense we find the artist twice, creating an intriguing

problem. Orcagna prominently signed his work – to inform the viewer of both his profession as a painter and the role he performed at the Orsanmichele – just below his self-portrait on a portion of the tabernacle that was visible from one of Florence’s busiest streets. Visible to passers-by until 1367, when the framing arch was filled-in, the figure identified as Orcagna wears clothes that mark him as a man of the Trecento. While this fact, added to the figure’s clear, spatial distinction from the holy actors might otherwise only signal that Orcagna is a simple spectator, this does not seem to be the case. Instead, the artist’s physical connection to St. James, whose shoulder he touches in commiseration, seems to recall the direct, spiritual interaction that numerous popular sermons and widespread meditational tracts encouraged among the faithful. For passing viewers, the sympathy elicited by Orcagna’s self-image could have represented the attainment of contact with the divine that worshippers sought through prayers and meditations in their private devotions.

Vasari’s identification of Domenico, too, is undisputed. Although Vasari is the first to have identified the artist’s self-portrait in a chapel decorated for Giovanni Tornabuoni, the resemblance of the designated figure to two other portrait details painted during the last fifteen years before Domenico’s early death helps to confirm that all three were self-images of the same individual. An investigation into the circumstances surrounding Domenico’s professional and private lives reveals that the painter had good reasons for wishing to promote himself in such a visible fashion. The painter was the leader of a prestigious, successful workshop and moreover, he had been recently emancipated from his father’s control, an act that made Domenico the head of his own growing household. These factors help explain Domenico’s desire to commemorate his accomplishments. The artist’s self-memorialization in the *Adoration of the Magi* painted for the Ospedale dei Innocenti was his last self-portrait before his death. It is true that no known ties connect Domenico to the foundling hospital. Nevertheless, the fact that the painter was the father of several young children should be considered in light of the hospital’s charge to minister to orphaned and abandoned children. Renaissance Italy experienced outbreaks of plague every few years and the orphaning of children was an eventuality every family feared. This concern may help to explain why Domenico chose the altarpiece for his self-image. It is also likely significant that the work was painted almost entirely by Domenico’s hand, an infrequent occurrence during a period when workshop masters rarely gave a work their prolonged personal attention. In this light, we may be able to interpret Domenico’s self-portrait within the role of a donor who

attempts to associate himself with a gift given in response to an answered prayer – his family’s good health. It appears to be an indication of the period’s changing attitude towards artists and artistic achievement that sympathy with Domenico’s desire to commemorate his personal and professional success was recognized by the patrons who allowed him to include his self-portrait.

A similar sort of recognition might explain why Filippino Lippi, too, was allowed to commemorate his links to the Carmelite church with the self-portrait he included within the famously portrait-dense Brancacci Chapel. Filippino – whose presence there has been accepted after Vasari’s early identification – likely seemed a good choice to the anonymous commissioners. It seems plausible that the younger painter, whose style was so well-concealed that his contribution to the chapel went unmentioned for several centuries, was nonetheless eager to celebrate his involvement in a space to which he possessed significant professional and personal ties. The chapel originally decorated by Masaccio and Masolino was already iconic for the Florentine painters who studied its famous images; thus, any Florentine painter might have felt a sense of pride in including his own self-image in the space where Masaccio’s self-image resided. That Filippino’s father, too, had taken his vows at the church must have been on the young artist’s mind. Without knowing more of the details of the commission speculation is difficult. Nevertheless, it seems logical that given the painter’s ties to the chapel his patrons would have been content to allow the self-commemoration in order to highlight, perhaps, their own magnanimity – and perhaps just as possible, their own portraits, which had also been recently added.

Although several of Vasari’s suggested identifications of embedded portraits and self-portraits are accepted, others require neither argument nor further support. A case in point in Perugino’s self-portrait in Perugia’s Collegio del Cambio, painted in 1500. The laudatory inscription beneath the artist’s portrait within the cycle of ancient heroes makes it clear who is being extravagantly praised and the basis of his merit. The accolade – which insists that Perugino alone could revive the art of painting were it ever lost – is itself a clue that helps to explain the artist’s presence in one of the city’s most important political and mercantile venues. Other clues emerge from considerations of the Collegio’s iconography and its relationship to the city’s often bloody history. Contentious families like the famous Baglioni clan had made Perugia as famous for its mercenaries as for its notoriously violent family feuds. Citizens had honored many of the city’s most successful local military heroes in various fashions, including a *uomini famosi* cycle

painted during the mid-Quattrocento in the city's most prestigious residence. Nevertheless, by the time the Collegio decorations were devised, the citizenry's tolerance for the high level of bloodshed that had been endured for over two centuries seems to have waned. The officials in charge of the hall's program may well have sought to reclaim the *uomini famosi* imagery for the city as a whole through their selection of ancient heroes such as Horace and Socrates, who embody the qualities of temperance, justice, prudence and strength. Although added after the frescoes had largely been completed, Perugino's self-portrait follows a similar logic of reclamation. The famous painter's portrait in its illustrious context offered guild officials the model of a very different type of hero who could be emulated in order to bring fame to themselves and their city.

Nevertheless, although Vasari maintained a clear interest in the portraiture of his peers throughout the *Vite* – and most especially throughout its second edition of 1568 – it was not one he exercised in a consistent fashion. Although most biographies contained within Vasari's volumes commence with a portrait, several were published with only empty frames. Another situation, however, is exemplified by Pintoricchio's *vita*. The biography begins with the typical portrait, but *not* one modeled after that the one the artist painted in the *Cappella Bella*, arguably the most obvious and secure example of Pintoricchio's career. Instead, Vasari is silent regarding the image's source which is still unknown and discusses no other portrait of or self-portrait by the artist. Yet, although Vasari was undoubtedly unaware of its existence, the obvious visual connection of Pintoricchio's self-portrait of 1501 to that of his teacher, Perugino, painted the previous year only a few miles away is unmistakable, if hitherto largely unexplored. Moreover, what might be seen as the derivative nature of Pintoricchio's self-image was instead, I would assert, intended to demonstrate the links between the cities of Perugia and Spello. In fact, Pintoricchio's self-portrait appears to have accomplished several things for Troilo. A survivor of a bloody coup-attempt initiated by Grifonetto Baglioni in 1499, Troilo had clear reasons for wanting to trump the fame of the chapel that Grifonetto had recently constructed in the church of Sant'Andrea in Spello. Troilo himself had been newly named the prior of the nearby collegiate church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The *Cappella Bella* he had constructed there has been interpreted by Corrado Fratini as part of Troilo's attempt to obscure his murderous nephew's name in Spello, a city that the Baglioni had long considered to be part of their patrimony. In commissioning Pintoricchio, Troilo gave Spello a fresco cycle by the most famous artist the city

had to that point ever hosted. Furthermore, the artist's self-portrait was the means by which Troilo could visually link Spello, his chapel, and the Baglioni name with Perugia – and one of Perugia's most important political spaces, the Collegio.

These brief recapitulations demonstrate that Vasari's authority in the analysis and interpretation of embedded self-portraits is not due to the unfailing accuracy of his identifications. It comes instead from his demonstrated conviction that such images existed, a belief based on the writings of earlier authors, his own experience as a painter of embedded and autonomous self-images within the same tradition, and his laborious and steady search for artists' portraits of all types throughout much of his career. Vasari was *the* art historian of his era and his influence on later scholars is unquestionable. The attitudes and beliefs regarding self-portraiture and its functions that run clearly throughout *Vite* are part of the inheritance of those later art historians who have either allied themselves with Vasari's conclusions or pitted themselves against them. Generations of artists, too, have felt his influence, inserting their own images into a variety of subjects to highlight their creative activities and personal connections to their art. Some of the interest in self-portraiture on the part of artists and historians that continues to the present day is likely due to the exposure Vasari and later writers gave to the genre. A more unfortunate legacy that might be laid at Vasari's door comes in the form of the many dubious identifications made over the years by those who, seeing a focused outward glance and self-indicating gesture, have been too eager to report the discovery of another embedded self-portrait. The fact that Vasari did not distinguish between embedded and autonomous self-portraiture, instead discussing both types as emerging from a central desire on the parts of artists to increase their social status and to commemorate their achievements, has had an unmistakable impact on their later study.

Consideration of the images discussed in this dissertation suggests that the progression of the Renaissance embedded self-portrait can be most usefully traced in the context of portraiture as a whole, although those expecting a neat, linear trajectory will be disappointed. Prior to the mid Quattrocento, little if any autonomous portraiture existed in Italy, although commissioners and, less frequently, artists were portrayed within other subjects. Patrons who wanted portraits had themselves portrayed as donors in numerous panels created across Europe. Donor portraits appear in Italy from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward; early examples display the patron in profile on a much smaller scale than the religious object or figure adored. This presentation style tends to



suggest that piety – rather than portraiture – was the primary initial motivation for their creation as patrons sought to associate their gifts with the holy figures who had answered prayers. A notable example of a donor portrait is the famous altarpiece Simone Martini painted in 1317 for King Robert of Sicily. In this case, the work's political undercurrents explain the unusually large size of Robert the Wise, who is shown kneeling in profile before St. Louis of Toulouse, his brother. This type of presentation contrasts remarkably to the ways in which artists were concurrently portraying themselves.

Embedded self-images, too, were made during the Due- and Trecento, but appear in fewer numbers than donor portraits and are not presented in the same fashion. Some of these details appear as signature-colophons in manuscripts such as the example by Pietro da Pavia, discussed above. Although we know of fewer Italian examples, it is improbable that Pietro was the only Italian illuminator to have included his self-image. Certainly, his contemporaries north of the Alps used them to proclaim their relationship to manuscripts they had illuminated or copied, and to recommend themselves to God and their patrons. Appearing often at the beginning or end of a manuscript, such colophons are set apart and isolate the artist and his identity from the illuminations he or she created. The artist is clearly identified and notably does not appear as part of a story. Although colophons often remark on an artist's piety, self-portraits of illuminators at work suggest that professional concerns were part of the impetus for their creation. Other Trecento artists included themselves in paintings or in works of sculpture as a witnesses or in disguise as holy characters. Although exceptions likely exist, these self-portrayals do not generally appear in the company of other portraits, but instead isolate the artist from the iconographical focus, as we find in the case of Andrea Orcagna. Often they too seem to be a distinction honoring a worthy artist – something which I have argued in turn honors the patron and enhances the commission. This conclusion appears to be supported by the fact that both of the examples discussed here appear in conjunction with the artist's signature.

Shifts in the practice of embedded portraiture emerge during the Quattrocento; the current analysis supports the conclusion that embedded self-portraits from this period share at least two important characteristics that separate them from examples of the previous centuries. In obvious contrast to the contexts of earlier self-images, it seems to have been most common in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to find self-images as part of a group of portraits that included a patron and his peers. In fact, none of the Florentine Quattrocento examples of embedded self-portraits that can be

discussed with any certainty following their introduction in the Brancacci Chapel appear without other portraits, and are instead part of “portrait galleries.” Although traces of such assemblages are discernable in cities such as Padua under the Carrara and in a few early *uomini famosi* cycles, the notion of embedding portraits in the figures of witnesses to religious scenes first became widespread in Florence and was soon exported by the city’s artists. Soon after the mid-century, embedded portraits appear in cycles across Italy – in cities including Rome, Arezzo, Pisa, Prato, and Venice – as the trickle becomes a flood and scenes are inundated with portraits of witnesses wearing Quattrocento clothing.

Such a change in the practice of embedded self-portraiture appears to indicate a shift in their meaning – or possibly their function – as we move from the Trecento to the Quattrocento. The unattended self-portrait of the artist was no longer desirable as patrons realized the possibilities such displays could afford them and they therefore assumed more prominent, visual roles within their commissions. Popular theology – especially the Franciscan emphasis on experiential meditation – and the importance of the visual in the practice of memory appears to have aided commissioners, although admittedly many appear to have pursued both pious and secular interests with their cycles. Some patrons appear to have used portrait-assemblies as a way of exhibiting particular social networks. In such cases, portraits of various individuals representing the social fabric of a patron’s political and familial obligations flank religious events in sometimes absurd numbers or with seemingly little interest in a miracle taking place. An artist’s self-image may occasionally appear in these groups, but it is one that most often appears to support – by means which are subtle or obvious – the patron’s interests.

This hypothesis appears to be supported by the observation that the images of artists in these galleries are generally portrayed in positions of lesser prestige than those of their patrons, although like them, artists sometimes added portraits of their friends, partners and teachers in addition to themselves. In the midst of what are sometimes numerous portraits, the identification of the artist’s self-image is aided by accounts from early writers. Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of embedded self-portraits is the artist’s focused gaze. Often directed out to the audience, this glance generally seems more intense than those of surrounding individuals. The intensity of this gaze is presumably a result of how the image was created with the artist using a mirror to capture his own features.

Other unifying characteristics of embedded self-portraits are difficult to find, as placement, posture, size and visibility can vary greatly from image to image. Most self-portraits, however, while not always peripheral, tend to follow a visual hierarchy that foregrounds the patron by placing him closer to the painting's religious focus. It would seem likely that this factor parallels the hierarchy of space visible in the organization of many church chapels.<sup>1</sup> The artist may in fact enjoy a more visually prominent location, as can be observed in Botticelli's presentation of himself in the *Adoration*. Nonetheless, the patron's salient presentation and greater proximity to the holy actors can easily relegate the artist to a more peripheral location, as is the case for Benozzo in the *Journey of the Magi*.

The variety of possible combinations leads me to argue that, with regard to the embedded self-image, a better understanding of a particular image is approached through a case-by case analysis. While some characteristics might be assumed, few clear rules for their presentation emerge. The variables of patron and painter, the subject matter and organization of the scene(s), the location of the work, and the goals of both patron and painter as regards the painting would appear to render a great deal of general discussion ultimately problematic. Instead, I think what we have seen is the need to examine the individual factors that surround instances of self-portraiture in order to unpack their meanings for patron and creator.

No known contract associated with a Quattrocento chapel specifies the identities of any portraits contained therein. Thus, artists never had the right by contract to portray themselves – and in fact, we have no indication that they were ever contractually obligated to include any specific portrait of a living individual. This consideration may seem to mean little given the perfunctory nature of many contracts and the fact that relatively few survive. Nevertheless, portraiture was obviously a highly visible part of many Quattrocento commissions and several of the artists who included them in fresco cycles also painted many of the surviving autonomous portrait panels. Although portraiture and other specific elements are not mentioned in contracts, consideration of an artist's ability to capture a likeness clearly must have factored into the decision to patronize him. It seems reasonable to suggest that a self-portrait might have acted as

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<sup>1</sup>Many of the earliest chapels to be associated with lay families in the mendicant churches of Florence were those in the transepts, most likely indicating a desire to be as close as possible to the main altar. Further, at both S. Croce and Santa Maria Novella, it appears that the friars relinquished their rights to the high main altar unwillingly and slowly, and simultaneously restricted the amount of control to which any one family could claim. The pattern appears to have been repeated at other Florentine churches. See Giurescu, *Trecento Family Chapels*, p. 77.

a good litmus test for a patron wanting to make sure his artist could deliver a satisfying commission.

Only towards the mid-century do autonomous portraits become common in Italy in the form of portrait busts, medals and numerous painted portraits. Although portraits abound from the 1450s onward, the first autonomous self-image scarcely emerges in Italy before the end of the century. This late date obviously contrasts with the precocious beginnings of the genre in Northern cities such as Bruges, where autonomous self-images have been identified as early as the 1430s. It was in the Cinquecento that autonomous self-portraiture became more common in Italy, if not yet commonplace. Some of the earliest true autonomous self-images of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are of “gentlemen” (and some gentlewomen) painters who appear without their tools. Later artists reclaim their profession with a display of their brushes and paints while wearing elegant clothes. Nonetheless, one must recognize that the practice of the embedded self-portrait does not disappear even as the first autonomous self-portraits are being created. Looking beyond Tuscany, Titian, for example, is known to have both painted his own autonomous image and to have embedded his self-portrait in several altarpieces.<sup>2</sup> This situation alone indicates that the artist’s presentation of himself as an embedded self-portrait had different meanings from those intended by autonomous images.

At this juncture, it would seem fitting to conclude with a brief discussion of what this dissertation has accomplished and where further research could lead. On a fundamental level, this thesis has examined the well-known genre of the Renaissance embedded self-portrait to suggest that it is perhaps not as well-understood as previously thought. Instead, it has highlighted the fact that although Vasari put embedded self-images on the art historical map, he did so in such a way that has made it difficult to recognize to what extent his arguments – rather like a Mercator projection –magnified some elements at the expense of others. This dissertation was also a response to several studies that have picked up where the first art historian left off, which examined embedded self-images in isolation from the cycles in which they appear on the pretext that they only effected and *reflected* the person portrayed. Instead, using carefully-selected case studies, this thesis has attempted to trace the progression of the genre in Italy through the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries within a broader context. This study has examined various factors, physical,

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<sup>2</sup> Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 226-229, eloquently discusses Titian’s embedded and autonomous self-portraits.

theological, historical and cultural, that contributed to the way in which contemporary audiences viewed and quite likely manipulated these details by their understanding of them. In doing so, it has demonstrated that substantial differences exist between self-images created during these two centuries, and has attempted to isolate what these differences are and explain what they meant. Lastly, in examining the genre at the end of the Quattrocento, this dissertation has examined what many might regard as the end of the road for the embedded self-portrait at the point just prior to the autonomous genre's emergence in Italy. The analysis of the ways that the Perugians manipulated the identities, faces, and fame of Perugino and Pintoricchio to serve their own ends – while allowing the artists to serve their own – provided a fitting denouement to this thesis.

Further research is required in several areas. For example, some readers will perhaps be frustrated by the constrained nature of any dissertation that allowed it to examine so few examples in depth. Many embedded self-portraits by Quattrocento artists have been mentioned in passing in order to support other discussions but have not themselves been explored in depth. Undoubtedly, a larger study would be enhanced by a consideration of some of the embedded self-portraits made by Florentine and Florence-trained artists both in the city and abroad that were not discussed in detail in these pages. While a variety of reasons exist for the choice made to leave some artists aside – the most important being the amount of evidence and the published sources pertaining to a self-image – some readers might wish early Trecento self-portraits by artists such as Giotto and his pupils had been considered. Moreover, a study that, for example, examined Fra Filippo Lippi's embedded self-portraits in Prato and Spoleto or one by Piero della Francesca in Arezzo would make a worthy contribution.

Investigation focused on some of the other Italian centers where embedded portraits were prevalent is another area that would benefit from further study. It is well known that Rome and Venice, to cite the most well-known examples, possessed their own traditions of embedding portraits – and self-portraits – within fresco cycles and panels, and an analysis of the origins of the practice and its particular development within these cities would be worthwhile. While it might be reasonably assumed that the practice was imported to these cities by Florentine artists and writers, this supposition should be analyzed in greater detail. Moreover, focused consideration of artists who created self-portraits, both embedded and autonomous, in Italian court centers – Mantua and Urbino come to mind – is another area that should see greater study. In a similar vein, although we know that Northern European artists created autonomous – and

likely embedded – self-portraits before Italian ones, the relationship between embedded self-images by Netherlandish and Italian artists remains largely unexplored.

It has been noted here that self-portraits within Italian manuscripts have seen relatively little study as compared, for example, to the research done on French and English manuscripts in general. While I cannot believe that Pietro da Pavia was alone in creating his small self-portrait in a Lombardian Trecento manuscript, it is difficult to cite many other Italian examples. Further research into this area is important, however, if scholars are to discern to what extent and how these details might have affected the makers of larger-format embedded self-portraits. Additionally, it would be wise to look at the opposite end of the chronological spectrum. A focused investigation into the circumstances within which Cinquecento artists such as Titian and Raphael –painters of both embedded and autonomous self-portraits – painted their self-commemorations and how these occasions compared with earlier examples would fill a noticeable gap in the study of portraiture.

Even these brief discussions make it evident that there is much more research that could be done on the current subject and further, that there are many directions in which such research could lead as, the present thesis notwithstanding, several paths remain relatively unexplored. Although self-portraiture has received much needed attention in recent years, the genre in all its various facets intrigues viewers as much today as it did centuries ago. The presentation of the self to others remains at the heart of all social interaction, and a greater understanding of what artists and commissioners wanted to accomplish with the presentation of the artist's self within commissioned works of art will contribute to our greater comprehension of Renaissance relationships.

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