MANIFESTING MASCULINITIES IN CENTRAL ITALIAN RENAISSANCE ART: ARTISTIC THEORY AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MALE BODY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the intersection of Central Italian Renaissance art works and texts to understand shifts in representations of the male body from the dawn of the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. I identify three paradigms of masculinity that appeared as a result of changes in the sexual, political, artistic, and religious climates of the Cinquecento: the Machiavellian Hero, the Hermaphroditic Deviant, and the Emasculated Prophet. Analyzing the relationship of images and texts such as Nicolo Machiavalli's *The Prince* (written c. 1512, printed 1532), Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550), among others, demonstrates how each of these paradigms corresponded to art-theoretical precepts — *disegno, grazia,* and *decoro*. The multiple values and expectations implied in the word "masculinity" and transitions in the meanings embodied by the male form necessitated the development of these three ideals.

Acknowledgments

I thank the two men who guided me through this journey:
Richard Mann, who lit the initial flame, and
James M. Saslow, whose patience and guidance
kept the embers from dying out.

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Introduction

> On this account it is always very noticeable that the female is pale, and the blood vessels are not prominent, and there is an obvious deficiency in physique as compared with males.
>
> -Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*[1]

The seemingly countless images of men in Central Italian Renaissance art evidence a preoccupation with the male body based on a sexual hierarchy in which the primacy of masculinity was axiomatic. Numerous depictions of princes and politicians, courtiers and clergymen, biblical and mythological heroes indicate how the male body was exploited to signify a wide range of social and cultural meanings. Because of the centrality of maleness in Renaissance discourses, manifestations of masculinity capably embodied political agendas, artistic preferences, and ecclesiastical beliefs. As shifts within these various ideological categories occurred over time, artistic representations of the male form were also modified. To illuminate this phenomenon, I consider the points at which depictions of three paradigms of masculinity — the Machiavellian Hero, the Hermaphroditic Deviant, and the Emasculated Prophet — intersected with sixteenth-century art-theoretical and literary sources. An understanding of

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[1] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 97.

the male body's function as an expressive vehicle and Renaissance attitudes toward sexual difference will be gained from this analysis.

This study's concentration on masculinity is not meant to perpetuate the Renaissance tradition of female exclusion that was based on classical notions about sexuality. Sixteenth-century perspectives about both sexes are clarified here, from which innovative interpretations of female imagery can also be gleaned. Furthermore, the focus on masculinity is important because, although research about men in antiquity and the Middle Ages has been conducted, there has been no thorough attempt to codify manifestations of Renaissance masculinities — despite their ubiquity in Florentine and Roman art of the period. This line of inquiry has remained relatively unexamined even with advances in research on gender and sexuality because, as Judith Shapiro observes, in gender studies, "the focus is on women; the social and cultural dimensions of maleness are often dealt with implicitly rather than explicitly."[2] Addressing more specifically Renaissance art-historical practices, Patricia Simons comments that most scholars are

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[2] Judith Shapiro, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Sexual Differentiation" in Herant A. Katchadourian, ed., *Human Sexuality: Comparative and Developmental Perspectives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 269.

uncomfortable discussing male beauty.[3]

Indeed, the assumptions and conclusions propounded by writers about men in the Renaissance – from proto-feminist Cinquecento authors such as Veronica Franco (*Lettere familiari a diversi,* 1580) to writings on sex and gender in the last thirty years – have been primarily concerned with resuscitating the histories of women during the sixteenth century. Authors such as Kenneth Clark (*The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form,* 1972) and Marina Warner (*Monuments and Maidens, the Allegory of the Female Form,* 1985) have given us ways of understanding depictions of feminine beauty and the female form. More recent works such as Fredrika Jacobs's *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa* (1997) have helped in reclaiming accounts of women artists. Although these authors challenge the primacy of masculinity to reveal misconceptions and misperceptions about gender and sexuality, in these texts, masculinity serves merely as a foil to support assertions about the female experience. To date, Valeria Finucci's *The Manly Masquerade: Masculinity, Paternity, and Castration in*

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[3] Patricia Simons, "Homosociality and Erotics in Italian Renaissance Portraiture" in Joanna Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 36. See also Valeria Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 171. In her discussion of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso,* Finucci suggests that the discomfort with the concept of male beauty was inherited from Renaissance authors.

the Italian Renaissance (2003) addresses most comprehensively and directly the topic of Renaissance masculinities. She tackles many of the same issues that I consider, but she enters the discourse through a literary portal. This present study of maleness comes from an art-historical perspective and aims to reinterpret Cinquecento images by expanding upon the dialogue initiated by authors such as Margaret Carroll, H.W. Janson, James M. Saslow, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Patricia Simons, and Leo Steinberg, among others.

A Detour

Prior to undertaking my main topic, I examine how the primacy of masculinity was established. This ascendancy was founded, in part, on scientific and religious assumptions about the male form's normativity and perfection. Bodies, whether male or female, signified meaning. However, because of masculinity's primacy, the male physique more capably articulated a broader range of mostly exalted and lofty meanings.

From the scientific perspective, I consider Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* because his views on the disproportionate participation of the sexes in procreation, which assigned to the man the greater role, informed discussions on conception that remained current during the

Renaissance.[4] I then examine Claudius Galen's one-sex model, which was embraced during the Renaissance even after actual dissection demonstrated differences between the male and female anatomies.[5] From the religious viewpoint, I analyze St. Augustine of Hippo's suppositions about sexuality, which accorded with Aristotle's and Galen's views. Speaking, as it were, from the "pulpit," Augustine's comments regarding sexual difference, constructed through an interpretation of Adam and Eve's transgression, resonated throughout the Cinquecento.[6] These authors so

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[4] Fredrika H. Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa: Woman Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 30-31. As the main author of *Generation of Animals,* Aristotle was the primary proponent of the woman's inferior role in procreation. This treatise was the primary text cited in Renaissance debates on embryology.

[5] Galen's and Aristotle's anatomical beliefs persisted through the Renaissance. Leonardo himself was a Galenist. See *Leonardo da Vinci on the Human Body,* biographical introduction by Charles D. O'Malley and J.B. de C.M. Saunders, trans. (New York: Greenwich House, 1982), p. 27. See also Jonathan Sawday, "The Fate of Marsyas: Dissecting the Renaissance Body," in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture,* Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn, eds. (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), p. 114. Vesalius' anatomical assertions, widely criticized during the Renaissance, were tested against Galen's. His findings would not be fully appreciated until the seventeenth century.

[6] E. Ann Matter, "Christ, God and Woman in the Thought of St. Augustine," in *Augustine and His Critics,* eds. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 174-175. Matter contends that St. Augustine contributed greatly to shaping Christian attitudes towards sexuality and sexual difference. Furthermore, Matter

effectively promoted and propagandized the merits of masculinity and the excellence of the male physique that, arguably, the impact of their opinions can still be felt today.

The Scientific Primacy of the Male Form: Aristotle and Galen

Although highly influential, Aristotle's speculations regarding the human anatomy – like many hypotheses about the body during antiquity – were not founded on empirical evidence.[7] Because he did not actually dissect human bodies, his theories about reproduction were based only on what can be observed externally[8] – on semen, menstruation, but most

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declares that Augustine was "the ultimate source of western Christian patriarchal anthropology." Leo Steinberg also asserts that Augustine's views were pervasive throughout the early modern period in Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion,* 2d ed., rev. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 19, n. 17; p. 21, n. 20; and pp. 226-227.

[7] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 70. Laqueur doubts the possibility that any dissection happened at all in antiquity. See also T.V.N. Persaud, *Early History of Human Anatomy: From Antiquity to the Beginning of the Modern Era* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1984), p. 42. Persaud asserts that Aristotle's biological conclusions were based on observations made from examining animals.

[8] Margaret Tallmadge May, commentary on Claudius Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body,* 2 vols., Margaret Tallmadge May, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 17. May remarks that Aristotle had not done actual human dissection but was "careful to report whatever

importantly, the actual act of childbearing.

A woman's role in childbirth, thus, seemed clear because life can be patently witnessed emerging from her body. The function of men in the formation of life, however, was not entirely known or understood. In his attempt to explain a man's role in the reproductive process, Aristotle asserted that

> the male contributes the principle of movement and the female contributes the material. This is why on the one hand the female does not generate on its own: it needs some source or principle to supply the material with movement and to determine its character…[9]

This articulation of the form-male/matter-female dichotomy was essential to the construction of sexual difference that assumed the male body's normativity. In part, Aristotle's goal was to ensure that a man's role in the reproductive process was clarified by insisting upon the woman's inability to "generate on its own." This proposition, however, also reveals a hesitant acknowledgment that the standard body, which was male, was incapable of performing all of its functions alone — a crisis of masculinity[10] triggered by an anxiety that stemmed from a fear that the

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can be seen or inferred from the outside of the living human body."

[9] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* p. 119.

[10] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 49.

prevailing gender hierarchy[11] would be destabilized by the female's obvious and foremost function as life-bearer. As Margaret Miles inquires, "If 'the body' were not assumed to be male, would not the female body's capacity for conceiving, giving birth, and nourishing human life seem the strongest and most obvious candidate for the human body's most dramatic power?"[12]

Aristotle's fabrication of a gender structure whereby "the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled"[13] seems to have been intended to alleviate some of the apprehension over women's life-giving potential by maintaining the sexual

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[11] For an anthropological discussion of the sexual balance of power, see Richard Lee and Richard Daly, "Man's Domination and Woman's Oppression: The Question of Origins," in Michael Kaufman, ed., *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 30-44.

[12] Margaret Miles, "Nudity, Gender, and Religious Meaning in the Italian Renaissance," in Douglas Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, eds., *Art as Religious Studies* (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 1986), pp. 112-16.

[13] Aristotle, *Politics,* in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* Richard McKeon, ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 1132. See also Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* 33. Butler suggests that for Aristotle, female development is rationalized through biology. Because of the nature of the female body, a woman can only "perform certain social functions and not others," if not completely restricted to reproduction. For a discussion of how Aristotle's anxiety manifested in Renaissance literature, see Finucci, *The Manly Masquerade,* chapter 1.

status quo. To support his claim, he insisted on the importance of men, and particularly of the semen, in procreation. Elsewhere in *Generation,* in response to the question of how men contributed to reproduction, and specifically to "how the semen produced by the male is the cause of the offspring," Aristotle wrote,

> [The semen], anyway, is the active and efficient ingredient; whereas the ingredient which gets set and given shape is the remnant of the residue in the female animal…. If we consider the matter on general grounds, we see that when some one thing is formed from the conjunction of an active partner with a passive one, the active partner is not situated within the thing which is being formed… Now of course the female is passive, and the male is active — it is that whence the principle of movement comes.[14]

To stress a man's active participation in reproduction, Aristotle necessarily attenuated the female role; women could not reproduce without men because of their inability to "provide" form. He relegated women to the role of *physis* or the receiving body who functions purely to receive and to take;[15] women are passive receptors and merely the receptacles in which semen developed as offspring.[16] By contrast, Aristotle's insistence on the indispensability of

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[14] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* p. 115.

[15] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* pp. 40-42.

[16] Ibid., p. 119. Without acknowledging a woman's contribution in the reproductive process, Aristotle concedes, "the formation of the young does in fact take place in the female."

semen was meant to promote and justify masculine primacy. Semen[17] is the determining principle in the creation of life. As the synecdoche for manhood and masculinity, semen signified male potency.

To further undermine a woman's reproductive capacity, Aristotle also argued that female matter is *within* the female and yet/therefore not the female herself. This disavowal of matter as a feminine property removed women from the procreative process, effectively establishing a reproductive continuum wherein matter and form are exclusively masculine.[18] Judith Butler refers to this omission as the "phallic Form"[19] that displaces the female so that her body is "specular": reflected upon and observable, yet empty and without meaning. The phallic Form — a construction tied to the idea of humanist self-authorship and masculine self-regeneration discussed in chapter 2 — eliminated the female's role in reproduction to

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[17] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* p. 103. Aristotle went to great lengths to explain that semen is produced by men. If such a thing as female semen existed, it was menstrual fluid, and is not "semen in a pure condition, but needing still to be acted upon."

[18] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* p. 35. Also p. 28, where Luce Irigaray indicates that Plato, too, considered pregnancy as "unchangeably masculine."

[19] Ibid., p. 42.

perpetuate the invariably male self.[20]

Approximately five hundred years later, Claudius Galen, apparently influenced by Aristotle's, cultivated the belief that the standard body was male in his anatomical treatise, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* (165 A.D.). Like Aristotle, Galen, too, explained his views on sexual difference by maintaining the deficiency of the female form. He wrote,

> The female is less perfect than the male for one, principal reason — because she is colder… A second reason is one that appears in dissecting…
>
> All the parts, then, that men have, women have too, the difference between them lying in only one thing… namely, that in women the parts are within [the body], whereas in men they are outside, in the region called the perineum. Consider first whichever ones you please, turn outward the woman's, turn inward, so to speak, and fold double the man's, and you will find them the same in both in every respect. Then think first, please, of the man's turned in and extending inward between the rectum and the bladder. If this should happen, the scrotum would necessarily take the place of the uteri, with the testes lying outside, next to it on either side; the penis of the male would become the neck of the cavity that had been formed; and the skin at the end of the penis, now called the prepuce, would become the female pudendum [the vagina] itself… In fact, you could not find a single male part left over that had not simply changed its position; for the parts that are inside in woman are outside in man.[21]

Galen's one-sex model, which proposes that both male

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[20] William E. Phipps, *The Sexuality of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), p. 35.

[21] Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body,* vol. 2, 628-629. This follows Aristotle, who wrote in *Generation of Animals,* that "the female is as it were a deformed male," p. 175.

and female bodies were constructed from a single design, paralleled Aristotle's notion of the male reproductive continuum and was maintained during the Renaissance[22] despite advances made by the sixteenth-century anatomist Andreas Vesalius in Padua[23] that demonstrated unquestionably that the male and female bodies possessed properties exclusive of one another. Butler explains that the persistence of pseudoscientific propositions such as Galen's was due to "epistemological impositions on bodies" in philosophical discourses that established "social regulatory ideals by which bodies are trained, shaped, and formed."[24] Galen's compelling analysis of how the male genitalia metamorphosed into the female sex, and the implication that this transformation proved the derivation of the vagina from the male organ, remained accepted in the Renaissance because this idea promoted the assumption that the "normal" body was male. In chapter 3, I contend that Mannerist artists

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[22] Laqueur, *Making Sex,* p. 70. See also Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, *Spectacular Bodies* (London: Hayward Gallery Publishing; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) pp. 13, 67. The authors suggest that even the intense curiosity about the female reproductive capacity at this time had more to do with furthering the understanding of the male body — the "measure of all things" — and not necessarily the female's.

[23] See note 7.

[24] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* p. 54.

challenged this concept when they invented the hermaphroditic paradigm of masculinity.

For Galen, the perfection of the male body also had implications beyond outward appearances. A discussion of facial hair becomes a revealing commentary on character:

> Well, then, the hair of the beard not only protects the cheeks but also serves to ornament them; for a man seems more stately, especially as he grows older, if he has everywhere a good covering of hair.[25]

Galen then continues:

> On the other hand, for woman, the rest of whose body is always soft and hairless like a child's, the bareness of the face would not be inappropriate, and besides, this animal does not have an august character as the male has and so does not need an august form… For I have shown many times, indeed throughout the work, that Nature makes for the body a form appropriate to the character of the soul.

Galen's idea of "a form appropriate to the character of the soul," is related to a premise that is omnipresent throughout this study: that outward appearances, i.e. the body, could be laden with significance. The inner beauty of the exquisite male form enabled this body to deliver meanings that the female body could not. This belief informed ideas about beauty and art from antiquity onward.[26]

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[25] Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body,* vol. 2, p. 530.

[26] Galen was undoubtedly influenced here by Aristotle's study of the meanings disclosed by facial forms and expressions in his treatise *De physiognomia.* See Kemp and Wallace, *Spectacular Bodies,* p. 15. During the

The Religious Primacy of the Male Form: Augustine

The sexual imbalance in Aristotle's and Galen's writings was echoed in scripture, starting from the story of Adam and Eve's creation and continuing to the narratives about humanity's redemption. These biblical accounts that were in concert with the scientific denigration of women were intended to reinforce the male body's paradigmatic status.[27] I examine passages from the Bible alongside Augustine's interpretation of these texts, which were highly influential, in part, due to the Aristotelian bias of Augustinian beliefs.

The theological primacy of masculinity was affirmed when Adam was granted the honor of having been formed in God's likeness. In Augustine's elucidation of the first man's creation, he justified the importance and uniqueness of Adam as the "single man" from which all of humanity emerged:

> And therefore God created only one single man, not, certainly, that he might be a solitary bereft of all society, but that by this means the unity of society and the bond of concord might be more effectually commended to him… And indeed He did not even create

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Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci also explored physiognomy. He called the revelation of a person's inner self through the physical form *il concetto dell'anima* or the intentions of the mind. Ibid., pp. 16, 94-96.

[27] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, p. 365.

> the woman that was to be given him as his wife, as he created the man, but created her out of the man, that the whole human race might derive from one man.[28]

The proposition that Adam was the one man who fathered the entire human race recalls the Aristotelian theory of a purely masculine reproductive continuum. Augustine evoked this notion in emphasizing Eve's derivation from Adam — an account that is also curiously suggestive of Galen's one-sex model. The influence of Aristotle and Galen's scientific sexual hierarchy, which considered the female body as an imperfect manifestation of the standard masculine form, is indeed apparent in Augustine's articulation of the difference between Adam's and Eve's conception: Augustine similarly assumed that Eve's derivation from Adam rendered her inferior to her male counterpart. The conclusion follows that because of the manner in which the Almighty had created Eve, her inferiority was divinely sanctioned.

For this reason, it is not surprising that the subjugation of women in scripture is widespread.[29] This

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[28] St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God,* trans. Marcus Dodds (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), p. 406.

[29] Phipps, "Jesus the Philogynist," in *Sexuality of Jesus,* pp. 53-76. In contrast, Phipps discusses how Christ's actual ministry regarded men and women as equal in God's eyes. This indicates that biblical authors who were male may have intended to maintain the lesser status of women in society despite Christ's beliefs.

passage from I Timothy 2:11-15, for example, explicitly demonstrates how religious writers endorsed the inequality of the sexes:

> A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.

Here, not only is female subservience confirmed, but Eve's culpability for humanity's decline was underscored as a way of justifying the oppression of women: because she was "the one deceived," *she* "became a sinner."

In the *City of God* (early 5th century), Augustine, writing about Adam and Eve's temptation, explained this perspective. He starts his exegesis by describing Satan as "that proud and therefore envious angel" who "chose the serpent because, being slippery, and moving in tortuous windings, it was suitable for his purpose." He continued,

> And this animal being subdued to his wicked ends by the presence and superior force of his angelic nature, he abused as his instrument, and first tried his deceit upon the woman, making his assault upon the weaker part of that human alliance that he might gradually gain the whole, and not supposing that the man would readily give ear to him, or be deceived, but that he might yield to the error of the woman. For as Aaron was not induced to agree with the people when they blindly wished him to make an idol, and yet yielded to constraint; and as it is not credible that Solomon was so blind as to suppose that idols should

> be worshipped, but was drawn over to such sacrilege by the blandishments of women; so we cannot believe that Adam was deceived, and supposed the devil's word to be truth, and therefore transgressed God's law, but that he by the drawings of kindred yielded to the woman, the husband to the wife, the one human to the only other human being. For not without significance did the apostle say, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"; but he speaks thus, because the woman accepted as true what the serpent told her, but the man could not bear to be severed from his only companion, even though this involved a partnership in sin.[30]

Although Augustine further wrote that Adam should not be excused from blame because he sinned with his "eyes opened," he was also quick to suggest that Adam, unlike Eve, cannot be faulted for being deceived. Augustine designated to Eve — the "weaker part of the human alliance" — the greater responsibility for the Fall, while Adam committed the lesser fault of simply desiring to remain "with his only companion," acquiescing "to the woman, the husband to the wife, the one human to the only other human being."

This abatement of Adam's sin was necessary to set the stage for the coming of Christ, whom Augustine believed to be the "new" Adam. Christ and Adam occupy the beginning and end of the story of human salvation. According to Augustine:

> Thus it was written, "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit…" plainly referring to Christ, who has risen

[30] St. Augustine, *The City of God,* pp. 458-459.

> from the dead… For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.[31]

The belief that Adam and Christ inhabited the same theological body lessens Adam's responsibility in humanity's decline because, if mankind perished as a result of Adam's participation in the Fall, through the coming of the "new" Adam, all shall "be made alive" once again. Another Adam – another man – will redeem mankind from its fallen state. This releases Adam – and by implication, all men – from his transgression. By contrast, no theological dispensation was granted to Eve. Augustine's Adam-Christ continuum maintains the primacy of masculinity.[32]

This de-accentuation of Adam's disobedience – the Original Sin theologically associated with sex and lust – seems to conflict with Aristotle's vigorous defense of a

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[31] Ibid., pp. 434-435.

[32] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion,* p. 13. The Adam-Christ continuum is an affirmation of masculine supremacy that is related to Leo Steinberg's assertions regarding the accentuation of genitalia in representations of Christ to highlight the significance of Christ's corporeality in humanity's redemption. Here, the common goal of scientific and religious texts to affirm the dominance of masculinity reveals a symbiotic relationship. The persistence of the one-sex model that insists on the normalcy of the male body strengthens Steinberg's assessment of the importance of the penis in depictions of Christ to establish the Savior not only as human, but specifically male. Since the perfect body is male, Christ could be no less. The obvious representation of the penis unambiguously defined Christ's masculinity.

man's role in the reproductive process. While Augustine stressed Adam's *passive* acquiescence to Eve's temptation, Aristotle accentuated a man's *active* contribution to reproduction. Augustine, however, anticipating the Neoplatonic approach of legitimizing Catholic beliefs by imbuing them with a classical pedigree, endeavored to reconcile Aristotelian theory with Christian thought when he wrote,

> For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin by the woman who was made from him before the sin. For not yet was the particular form created and distributed to us, in which we as individuals were to live, but already the seminal nature was there from which we were to be propagated.[33]

Here, the evocation of Aristotle's form-male/matter-female dichotomy is unmistakable.[34]

Just as Aristotle's opinions pervaded Christian thinking, his apprehension over the dilemma of a man's reproductive capacity is also apparent in religious texts. Like Aristotle, religious authors strove to weaken women's procreative potential. They diminished childbearing by associating this generative role with carnality. The last line from the passage in I Timothy cited above, for

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[33] St. Augustine, *The City of God,* p. 423.

[34] Phipps, *Sexuality of Jesus,* p. 35. The church also accepted the Greek understanding that semen contained the formative character, and that women simply provided the nourishing vessel.

example, begins with the phrase, “But women will be saved through childbearing.” Similarly, Augustine propounded that the female body would be “superior to carnal intercourse and childbearing” upon resurrection.[35] In both of these instances, a woman’s life-affirming function is associated with Original Sin; the association of childbearing with a negative value[36] may have helped to assuage the apprehension over a man’s unknown role in procreation.

The theological denigration of women is reflected also in the systematic exclusion of women from eschatological narratives. In Romans 8:29, for example, St. Paul declared that

> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

Although Christ’s suffering was intended to redeem all of humanity, the focus on Christ’s maleness suggests that men only will be saved because they were created in Christ’s image. The nature of Eve — of the female body itself — complicated the matter of women’s resurrection because the absence of a penis, the signifier of Christ’s corporeality

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[35] St. Augustine, *City of God,* p. 839.

[36] Matter, “Christ, God and Woman,” p. 172. Matter discusses how women were denied a public life and were effectively self-enclosed, which to Augustine was the “most insidious form of pride.” This relegated women to an inherently sinful state. Defining childbirth as the only way a woman could achieve salvation serves the same purpose.

that made men Christ-like, actually rendered women irredeemable. This idea is declared explicitly in St. Thomas's Gospel:

> Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."[37]

The exclusion of women from the passages cited above led Augustine to wonder whether women shall be resurrected in the "optimal form of Christ's own masculinity,"[38] or, the alternative and regretful state of femininity. In response to this quandary, Augustine wrote,

> But even if this should be referred to the form in which each one shall rise, what should hinder us from applying to the woman what is expressly said of the man, understanding both sexes to be included under the general term "man"? For certainly in the saying, "Blessed is he who feareth the Lord," women also who

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[37] The Gospel of St. Thomas is part of the Nag Hammadi Library, which includes a large number of Gnostic scriptures. Steinberg quotes from *The Nag Hammadi Library in English,* trans. Thomas O. Lambdin (New York, 1977), p. 130. See Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ,* p. 135.

[38] Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ,* p. 134. For a discussion of women's participation as *imago Dei* in Augustine's views, see Matter, "Christ, God and Woman in the Thought of St. Augustine," p. 170. Matter asserts, "women participate in the *imago Dei* only in their status as human beings, not as women." This general idea was formulated with the understanding of a woman's physical inferiority. Augustine considered women to be equal to men only in the general category of "man," which, in reality, does not consider women on a par with men.

fear the Lord are included.[39]

Although Augustine reached the conclusion that "both sexes shall rise. For there shall be no lust, which is now the confusion,"[40] it seems that Augustine found the biblical exclusion of women in eschatological rhetoric problematic because this passage suggests an attempt at rationalization: Augustine had to work around the Church's deeply ingrained prejudices against women and the female body to explain – and, in fact, refute – the supposition that women were unsalvageable.

Aristotle and Renaissance Art

The invention of artistic paradigms of maleness was profoundly informed by Aristotle's opinions because his ideas coursed deeply through the framework of Renaissance society. To introduce how his suppositions affected the visual arts, I touch on his influence in the creation of a sexualized vocabulary in Cinquecento artistic discourses. A description of Aristotle's creative/reproductive parallel and how it manifested in a poem by Michelangelo and Agnolo

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[39] St. Augustine, *The City of God,* p. 841.

[40] Matter, "Christ, God and Woman," p. 170. According to Matter, there might have been a personal component to this conflict. The problem for Augustine is sexuality and not women because culturally, Augustine's disposition towards women was positive and he considered them as spiritual equals whom he treated with respect.

Bronzino's *Del penello (Of the Paintbrush)* open this discussion.

In explaining his views on the creative capacity of semen, Aristotle evoked metaphors of artistic creativity.[41] In chapter 18 of *Generation,* for example, he wrote:

> We must begin this investigation, and those which are to follow, by discovering first of all what semen is; this will enable us to consider more easily its functions and everything connected with it. Now the aim of semen is to be, in its nature, the sort of stuff from which the things that take their rise in the realm of Nature are originally formed… as a statue is formed from bronze, or bested from wood, and all those cases where we describe things as being formed from some material; here the finished whole has been fashioned into a certain shape from something which was there to begin with.[42]

The association Aristotle makes between an artistic concept and semen suggests that the source or cause of a finished work of art is also masculine.[43] The influence of this

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[41] Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa,* pp. 27-63. Chapter 3 of Jacobs, "(Pro)creativity," is a comprehensive discussion of how the language of birth and art intersected during the Renaissance.

[42] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* pp. 71-73. Also p. 121:

> Nature, acting in the male of semen-emitting animals uses the semen as a tool, as something that has movement in actuality; just as when objects are being produced by any art the tools are in movement, because the movement which belongs to the art is, in a way, situated in them. Males, then, that emit semen contribute to generation in the manner described.

[43] Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa,* p. 27. As Jacobs surmises, this metaphor made the woman artist an oxymoron.

Aristotelian perspective is apparent in a sonnet by Michelangelo from ca. 1538-44:

> Not even the best of artists has any conception
> that a single marble block does not contain
> within its excess, and that is only attained
> by the hand that obeys the intellect.[44]

The sculptor's belief in a "preexisting form-idea"[45] within the raw material from which a statue emerged reflects Aristotle's male-form/female-matter equation, where "the male is active" and "is that whence the principle of movement comes."[46] When Michelangelo was writing of "the hand that obeys the intellect," he was, most likely, writing under the premise that the artistic hand and intellect were male.

Similarly, Bronzino's "Of the Paintbrush" evinces Aristotle's influence and demonstrates how the relationship between art and birth operated in the intellectual culture of the Renaissance. In her analysis of this poem, Deborah Parker discusses how Bronzino charges the ordinary paintbrush with erotic meaning to suggest various sexual

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[44] James M. Saslow, trans., *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 302.

[45] Ibid., p. 303.

[46] Aristotle, *Generation of Animals,* p. 115.

positions wherein the penis/paintbrush is focal:[47]

> Enough – to do it from behind, from in front, diagonally, foreshortened, or in perspective the paintbrush is needed for them all.[48]

Although Parker warns against overlooking the irreverent and humorous aspects of burlesque poetry, Bronzino obviously understood that metaphors of sex and birth could be applied to artistic language. Certainly, the humor of this poem works under the assumption that the reader could make this association.

If the poem is a metaphor for sexual intercourse and the paintbrush represents the penis, Bronzino's poem, in which the centrality of the paintbrush is underscored, also echoes, by extension, the Aristotelian insistence on a man's vital contribution to the procreative process. Moreover, like Aristotle, Bronzino also overlooked a woman's participation in generation. This elision is related to Aristotle's destabilization of women's procreative faculty to uphold the theory of masculine autogenesis – a phenomenon that occurs also in Central Italian Renaissance art, where the "standard of the human

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[47] Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 25.

[48] Ibid.

body and its representations is the male body."[49]

Like Butler's phallic Form, which reproduces "only and always further versions of itself,"[50] the process of artistic autogenesis — of male artists constantly producing images of men — removed the significance of women, women artists, and the female form, in the same way that women were omitted in procreation. The relative lack of female nudes compared to the omnipresence of the nude male body in Central Italian art supports this observation. Orgiastic celebrations of the male body such as Michelangelo's Sistine *Last Judgment* (Sistine Chapel, Rome, 1541, fig. I.1) or Bronzino's *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* (San Lorenzo, Florence, 1545-50, fig. I.2) do not have female equivalents.

The lesser value of women in art is also asserted when their identities are disregarded. This is especially true in the case of female nudes, which are usually allegorical — as Venus, or as Michelangelo's Medici Chapel *Dawn* and *Night* (Florence, 1525, fig. I.3). Male nudes, on the other hand, even when allegorical, were often identified: *Cosimo de Medici as Orpheus* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1538, fig. I.4) and *Andrea Doria as Neptune* (Milan, Brera, 1532,

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[49] Laqueur, *Making Sex,* p. 22.

[50] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* p. 42.

fig. I.5), both painted by Bronzino, are examples. The identity of a nude woman is subsumed into the work of art because she is an object of beauty: a painting of a nude woman was understood simply as a beautiful painting.[51]

Most depictions of identifiable women are clothed — the Virgin, female saints, female patrons. Their bodies were concealed because exposing them would not only be indecorous, but would also betray pseudo-scientific propositions that denigrated the female sex: the indisputable nobility of God's mother, for example, presents a clear challenge to Galen's opinion that the smooth bodies of women made them undignified.[52] The artistic convention of suppressing female physicality also reflects religious texts that declared the perpetual sinfulness of women, whose bodies relegated them to a shameful post-lapsarian eternity, irredeemable even by Christ's death.[53]

The dearth of female representation in Cinquecento art

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[51] Elizabeth Cropper, "The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe,* eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 175-191. Cropper asserts that many Renaissance portraits of women were categorized under the rubric of "feminine beauty," while a man's identity was necessarily known.

[52] See note 27.

[53] See note 41.

could also be related to the understanding that a work of art has a genetic relationship with its maker: the artist – who was almost always male – had a personal stake in what he produced because a work of art, which for the most part was an image that resembled the artist himself, was also a reflection of his inner character. If the male body represented the virtuous attributes that ancient authors such as Aristotle and Galen believed the male form possessed, the artist would, himself, be understood to hold these qualities because of the inherent relationship between maker and work of art. Leonardo da Vinci reached this conclusion when he wrote, "every painter paints himself."[54]

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[54] This phrase has been attributed primarily to Leonardo. See for example Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa,* p. 47. However, Wayne V. Andersen, in his review of *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* in *Common Knowledge* 8/2 (Spring 2002), p. 417, credits Cosimo de' Medici for coining the phrase. Robert Hughes refers to it simply as a "Renaissance maxim," in *Nothing if not Critical: Selected Essays on Art and Artists* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 235.

It is most likely Leonardo's invention, however. The artist also wrote that it was "a common vice of painters to take delight in making things similar to themselves." He continued, "when [the artist] has to reproduce with the hands a human body, it willingly reproduces the body of which it was the original inventor…." See *Leonardo on Painting,* ed. Martin Kemp, selected and translated by Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 120.

Chapter Outlines

The belief in the perfection of the male body is further elucidated in the following chapters, in which I discuss the emergence and significance of Cinquecento paradigms of masculinity.

Chapter 1, "Toward Michelangelo's *David:* Perfecting the Male Body," is a survey of Renaissance depictions of men before the Cinquecento. This chapter begins with a discussion of Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistry *Fortitude* (fig. 1.1), which is arguably the earliest manifestation of masculinity that influenced Michelangelo's conception of the *David* (fig. 1.5). I then consider Giotto and his contributions to the development of the human form's expressive potential. According to Vasari, Giotto stood apart from his contemporaries because of his innovative handling of the human form. Scholars have argued that it is precisely in an analysis of Giotto's approach to the body that works with uncertain attribution can be convincingly assigned to the artist.[55] Giotto's innovation, however, did not become fully realized until the Quattrocento. I will examine how early constructions of the "new," more secular, and more corporeal man by artists such as Masaccio and

[55] For example, Hayden Maginnis, *Painting in the Age of Giotto* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), passim.

Donatello diverged from medieval artistic traditions and provided formal models for later artists. This analysis is supported by a discussion of theoretical works by Lorenzo Ghiberti, Cennino Cennini, and Leon Battista Alberti.

I will then explore the development of the first Cinquecento paradigm, the Heroic Male Ideal, in chapter 2, "Machiavellian Masculinity: Artistic Virtuosity and The Heroic Male Ideal." I named this paradigm after Niccolò Machiavelli because the author's political propositions greatly inspired the formation of this archetype. I discuss Machiavellian Masculinity in the context of the author's *The Prince* (written c. 1512, printed 1532), as well as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1483). Pico's articulation of mankind's relevance in the grand scheme of Renaissance cosmology bolstered Machiavelli's ideas and coincided with Neoplatonic philosophies that saw in the male physique the exalted principles of antiquity: fortitude, strength, moral rectitude, and courage. These are the same attributes possessed by the Machiavellian Hero. In this chapter, I will maintain that Michelangelo's *David* and other representations of Machiavellian Masculinity represented notions about maleness that epitomized the Christian and civic values highly esteemed by Florentine society.

I will also examine why the representation of the heroic

male was an imperative for Florentine artists. I believe this concept is related to the importance of *disegno* in Central Italian art. Variously understood as drawing or design, *disegno* was also a demonstration of the artist's intellectual labor. I explain how an artist's command of *disegno* was best exemplified in the virtuoso representation of the heroic male form.

Virtuosity in art was also related to the *paragone* or the comparison of the relative merits of the arts. Francesco Bocchi, in designating sculpture as masculine and painting as feminine, cited Donatello's *St. George* (Florence, Orsanmichele, 1417, fig. 1.17) as an example of artistic excellence in both medium and subject matter. I will illustrate how depictions of the heroic male ideal became a locus for this debate.

Machiavellian Masculinity, as a signifier of the male form's perfection, was a point of divergence from which evolved the second ideal, the Hermaphroditic Deviant. In chapter 3, "The Hermaphrodite Effect: Sexual Ambiguity, Spirituality, and the Feminized Male Body," I explore how early Mannerist painters most effectively employed this type to realize their artistic objectives. Jacopo Pontormo's *San Quentin* (Pinacoteca, San Sepolcro, 1517, fig. 3.3) and Rosso Fiorentino's *Dead Christ* (Museum of

Fine Arts, Boston, 1526, fig. 3.1) are examples of this paradigm — a product of the Mannerist predilection for flouting artistic tradition and challenging the ideals of the High Renaissance.

Baldassare Castiglione's discussion of *grazia* in the *Libro del Cortegiano* (written 1508-1516, published 1528) helps in understanding the development of this second ideal. As a component of sixteenth-century art notionally linked with femininity, *grazia* became a quality fashionable and even desirable in depictions of the beautiful male body — as an expression of spirituality through sexual ambiguity. I will discuss how Florentine artists imbued the male figure with *grazia* to heighten the spiritual aspect of their works.

A grasp of the changes in religious art during the Counter-Reformation is essential to a discussion of the final masculine paradigm that I will examine — the Emasculated Prophet. In chapter 4, "The 'New' Decorum, the Counter-Reformation, and the Emasculated Prophet," I evaluate how representations of the male body were regulated, especially in sacred art, by comparing the pre- and post-Counter-Reformation works of artists such as Sebastiano del Piombo and Michelangelo, and by assessing Santi di Tito's Counter-Reformation style.

The era of religious reform spawned numerous treatises

on art such as Giovanni Andrea Gilio's *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istorie* (1564) and Francesco Bocchi's *Discorso sopra l'eccelenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto, pittore fiorentino* (unpublished, written in 1567) that criticized the excesses of religious art and offered guidance for artists who were required to follow the new rules of decorum. I illustrate how the sacred male body was "de-sensualized" to inhibit its corporeality and, in effect, emasculated to conform to the demands of Tridentine reform.

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Since changes in taste or style occurred within the course of the chosen timeframe of this study, a sequential framework helped in organizing it. However, although the structure of this study suggests that the three paradigms of masculinity appeared chronologically, these archetypes frequently co-existed. While one paradigm was derived or diverged from the other, it did not necessarily replace the one it preceded even if changes to this body signaled some sort of transition, either motivated by stylistic evolution or triggered by a historical moment. Furthermore, the male body's capacity to communicate meaning never truly ceased. Particularly in the period covered by the last chapter, where it seemed that the emasculation of the male form

forever stripped it of its power and its artistic and expressive potential, this lapse was temporary and occurred mainly in religious commissions. Despite more dominant trends, paradigms were employed as a matter of necessity: as late as the first part of the 1580s, for example, Giambologna was working on finishing the *Rape of the Sabine* (Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence, 1574-82, fig. 2.2) — a work that embodied concepts related to Machiavellian Masculinity — many years after Tridentine decrees had been promulgated and long after artists reacted to the challenge to Catholic authority by inventing the Emasculated Prophet. Similarly, Salviati completed his hermaphroditic *Christ Carrying the Cross* (Uffizi, Florence, c. 1545, fig. 4.) seven years after Sebastiano del Piombo painted his Counter-Reformation version (Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, Budapest, c. 1538, fig. 4.6).

Images of heroic masculinity, in particular, were omnipresent throughout the Cinquecento because, as the measure of physical perfection from which other manifestations of masculinity were derived, representations of the Machiavellian ideal accorded with scientific and religious notions about masculine primacy and were critical measures of artistic excellence, particularly as an indication of an artist's command of *disegno.* In part, the

heroic paradigm continued to exist because Aristotle's assumptions – indeed his confusion – about conception and anatomy, which undermined a woman's principal role in reproduction to afford men the higher rank in the sexual and social hierarchies, effectively persisted until the mid-eighteenth century: it was not until 1759, for instance, that the first detailed female skeleton was illustrated to demonstrate its differences from the standard male anatomy.[56] Moreover, facts that scientifically verified distinctions between men and women were not widely disseminated until the 1800s, and even then, this information was exploited to further promote the ascendancy of masculinity.[57]

[56] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 10.

[57] Ibid., pp. 5-13.

Chapter 1

Toward Michelangelo's *David:* Perfecting the Male Body from the Dugento to the Quattrocento

Manifestations of the Central Italian artistic preoccupation with the male body emerged most vigorously during the Quattrocento, although precursors can be traced even as far back as the thirteenth century. Proto- and Early Renaissance explorations into the male body's creative potential portended the artistic fixation with the male form that persisted throughout the Central Italian Renaissance and profoundly shaped the development of Cinquecento paradigms of masculinity. To understand how the fascination with the expressive capacity of the male body evolved into an artistic preoccupation, I examine representations of masculinity from the dawn of the Renaissance in conjunction with contemporaneous textual sources.

In "The Image of Man in Renaissance Art: From Donatello to Michelangelo," H.W Janson contends that Donatello was the "actual creator of the new image of man."[1] However, although

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[1] H.W. Janson, "The Image of Man in Renaissance Art: From Donatello to Michelangelo" in *Sixteen Studies: A Collection of Essays Published in Periodicals between 1937 and 1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1974), p. 123. See also Luisa Becherucci, "Donatello e la pittura," in *Donatello e il suo tempo* (Florence: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1968), p. 42. Becherucci writes, "Ma la considerazione di Donatello è stata totalmente rinnovata,

Donatello's contribution to expanding the male body's expressive potential was considerable, Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistry *Fortitude* (1260, fig. 1.1) is possibly the earliest formative influence on the Renaissance conception of the Heroic Male Ideal. It is the first work I consider in this chapter because Nicola's employment of the nude male form as an expressive vehicle was a marked divergence from medieval representations of masculinity, exemplifying a distinctly Renaissance attitude toward art and the body. Indeed, Nicola's thirteenth-century statue is evidence of how sculpture — and not painting — heralded the "new masculinity."[2]

Although the role of sculpture in the advent of the new image of man was extensive — particularly because artistic developments during the Quattrocento were first experienced through this medium — painters also played an important role. In particular, Giotto's awareness of the human form's expressive significance contributed greatly toward the

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intorno al 1930 dagli studi di Jenö Lanyi. Poiché da lui si pose, di nuovo, al centro di tutta la sua espressione una rinnovata concezione dell'uomo, così profonda e coerente da necessitare, per rendersi evidente, il rinnovarsi di tutto il linguaggio dell'arte."

[2] Janson, "The Image of Man," p. 123. It was not until the 1430s that painters made advances toward a Renaissance style already realized by sculptors. Painters in Florence did not completely overcome a Late Gothic tendency until the mid-1400s.

visual construction of masculinity that was in concert with Renaissance artistic standards. Giotto's innovations were exploited by painters *and* sculptors, specifically Masaccio, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Antonio Pollaiuolo, and Donatello, to arrive at a distinctly Quattrocento approach to the body that was characterized chiefly by a departure from medieval modes of visualizing corporeality.

Fifteenth-century artists such as Masaccio would not have arrived at their conception of a new, more corporeal masculinity without Giotto; and Michelangelo, who studied Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel (Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, 1427) in earnest,[3] was indeed building upon Giotto's advances. Giotto, in effect, helped to ignite Michelangelo's awareness of the body's artistic capacity. I refer often to Michelangelo's works in this chapter to establish a stylistic trajectory that demonstrates how artistic predecessors influenced Michelangelo's conception of the male body.

The link between Michelangelo, Cinquecento paradigms of

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[3] Howard Hibbard, *Michelangelo* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 18-19. See also Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (Florence, 1568), trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, 2 vols. (1912; reprint New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), vol. 1, p. 323.

masculinity, and Quattrocento precedents[4] will be assessed in a discussion of fifteenth-century manifestations of masculinity and contemporaneous theoretical works by various authors including Ghiberti, Cennino Cennini, and, most importantly, Leon Battista Alberti. Albertian precepts are omnipresent throughout this chapter because his ideas crossed chronological boundaries, linking Giotto's innovations with early and High Renaissance artistic practices. His theories regarding the relationship of painting and sculpture will be particularly helpful in understanding how his preference for sculptural effect in painting stimulated the development of the Central Italian preoccupation with masculine imagery.

I introduce the concept of artistic individualism in this chapter because the earliest articulation of artistic individuality can be traced back to Nicola Pisano. I believe that this burgeoning sense of self encouraged and heightened the Central Italian fixation with representations of masculinity, activated the impulse toward the recognition of excellence, and is related to the humanist concept of self-

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[4] For a discussion of typologies of male representation in the Quattrocento, see L.M. Sleptzoff, *Men or Supermen: The Italian Portrait in the Fifteenth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1978). Sleptzoff proposes four categories: the *condottiere*, the citizen, the philosopher, and the artist.

authorship as the mostly male artists of the Central Italian Renaissance primarily produced images of men. These interrelated notions course throughout this chapter, culminating in chapter 2 in a discussion of Giorgio Vasari's deification of Michelangelo.

A discussion of Donatello's works is the culmination of this chapter because the artist's influence on changes in religious art, first experienced in sculpture and architecture and eventually in painting,[5] was immense. This conclusion simultaneously underscores Donatello's substantial role in the development of Cinquecento archetypes of masculinity.

Nicola Pisano and early manifestations of the male body

Nicola Pisano's Pisa Baptistry pulpit (fig. 1.2) was an important step toward the "modernization" of sculpture[6]

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[5] Luciano Bellosi, *Masaccio e le origini del Rinascimento* (Milan: Skira, 2002), p. 34. See also Becherucci, "Donatello e la pittura," pp. 41-58. The works of Donatello and Masaccio were also instrumental in the formulation of Albertian artistic theory. See Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De pittura and De statua [by] Leon Battista Alberti,* ed., trans., with introduction and notes, Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), pp. 8-9.

[6] G.H. and E.R. Crichton, *Nicola Pisano and the Revival of Sculpture in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938) p. v. See also Roberta J. M. Olson, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 13-15.

because the manner in which he individuated figures evocative of antique models anticipated a particularly High Renaissance tendency. The modernization of the medium induced new approaches in representations of the male body and triggered a change in the status of artists. At least partly, the motivation behind Nicola's pioneering approach to sculpture was a desire to be recognized for his artistry — a foreshadowing of the elevated position that artists of the Renaissance would enjoy fully. Indeed, the ascendancy of sculpture as a medium distinct from architecture paralleled the shifting social rank of artists.

As architectonic sculpture,[7] Nicola's thirteenth-century pulpit kindled the possibilities that were hitherto latent in the medium. The freestanding pulpit seems to raise the medium from its subordinate status to architecture; the figures, in particular, seem to anticipate the emergence of statues in the round, signaling sculpture's apparent independence from architecture. While most sculptural works during the Middle Ages were considered ornamental, and statues detached from an architectonic setting were extraneous to the period, their recurrence during the Early Renaissance demonstrated a

[7] Olson, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture,* p. 11.

growing awareness of antique sources.[8] This predilection toward classical models contributed to the largely Tuscan focus on the body's artistic possibilities,[9] and the multiple figures within Nicola's pulpit denote this consciousness. The implied movement of Nicola's *Fortitude,* as if intent on detaching himself from his setting, illustrates further Nicola's anticipation of the reemergence of freestanding statues.[10]

In their 1938 monograph on Nicola Pisano, G.H. and E.R. Crichton assert that the artist's considerable knowledge of antiquity informed his innovative approach to sculpture.[11] Giorgio Vasari confirmed this when he wrote:

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[8] H.W. Janson, "The Revival of Antiquity in Early Renaissance Sculpture," in *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture,* ed. Sarah Blake McHam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 40-59. Freestanding sculpture had not been produced since the end of the Roman Empire because these works were considered "idols," and therefore inconsistent with the religious beliefs prevalent during the Middle Ages.

[9] John Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture: An Introduction to Italian Sculpture* (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 117.

[10] As the forefather of High Renaissance sculpture, Donatello realized this objective, and more than any other statue by the artist, his bronze *David* (Bargello, Florence, c. 1430, fig. 1.3), was the ultimate fulfillment of Nicola's goals. As the first large-scale bronze since antiquity, the bronze *David* is a testament to artistic *invenzione* and a demonstration of the Central Italian fascination with the male form.

[11] Crichton and Crichton, *Nicola Pisano,* pp. 13-20. See also Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, p. 3.

> Nicola Pisano, then, chancing to be under certain Greek sculptors who were working the figures and other carved ornaments of the Duomo of Pisa and of the church of S. Giovanni, and there being, among many marble spoils brought by the fleet of the Pisans, certain ancient sarcophagi that are today in the Campo Santo of the city, there was one of them, most beautiful among them all, whereon there was carved the *Chase of Meleager after the Calydonian Boar,* in very beautiful manner, seeing that both the nude figures and the draped were wrought with much mastery and with most perfect design. This sarcophagus was placed by the Pisans, by reason of its beauty, in the side of the Duomo opposite S. Rocco….
>
> Nicola, pondering over the beauty of this work and being greatly pleased therewith, put so much study and diligence into imitating this manner and some other good sculptures that were in these other ancient sarcophagi, that he was judged, after no long time, the best sculptor of his day….[12]

The work to which Vasari referred is the Hippolytus Sarcophagus in the Campo Santo at Pisa (c. 2nd century A.D., fig. 1.4). The Pisa Pulpit's panels seem to have been inspired by this classical source, and as Vasari alluded, Nicola was particularly influenced by the manner in which the bodies are depicted in the coffin's reliefs. Nicola's understanding of weight, volume, and mass is evident in his construction of figures clothed in remarkably classicized drapery.

This commitment to emulating classical sources presaged

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[12] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, pp. 70-71.

Michelangelo's relationship with antiquity[13] as both artists, instead of merely quoting from these sources, absorbed the characteristics of antique art to arrive at a new way of imagining the human form.[14]

A comparison of Nicola's *Fortitude* with its descendant, Michelangelo's *David* (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, 1504, fig. 1.5), clarifies the similarities between Nicola's and Michelangelo's approach to physicality and masculinity.[15] *Fortitude's* "intense physiognomy, heightened by a disquieting glimpse of a smile and a revelation of life's truths"[16] is suggestive of the *Giant's terribilità.* Indeed, the *David* and *Fortitude* share an iconographic device: in both statues, the "turn of the head, the thick, strained neck, furrowed brow, and leonine hair"[17] convey a defiance mitigated by vulnerability.

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[13] The influence of antiquity on Nicola is noteworthy because antique models of masculinity would influence the works of later artists who will be discussed in this study. In Florence in particular, the absorption of antique example and classical thinking allowed for the classical conception of man as virtuous and heroic to flourish artistically. See Janson, "The Image of Man," p. 120.

[14] Crichton, *Nicola Pisano,* p. 1. The Crichton's consider Michelangelo to be Nicola's artistic heir.

[15] Olson, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture,* p. 13.

[16] Maria Laura Testi Cristiani, *Nicola Pisano architetto scultore* (Pisa: Pacini, 1987), p. 269, my translation.

[17] Hibbard, *Michelangelo,* p. 57.

Nicola's choice to depict a decidedly masculine *Fortitude*, instead of adhering to the tradition of representing this virtue as female, indicates an understanding of the male figure's expressive capacity and of its superiority as declared in religious and classical texts.[18] As a man, *Fortitude* appropriately embodies two essential qualities of the Heroic Male Ideal: strength and courage.

Roberta Olsen suggests that Nicola could have based the figure of *Fortitude* — a proto-Renaissance depiction of a heroic male nude in the classical tradition — on a Hercules from a Roman sarcophagus.[19] However, Nicola's source seems to me more obvious; Nicola's *Fortitude* bears a remarkable resemblance to the figure of Hippolytus at the center left of the Campo Santo sarcophagus that Vasari cited. Although Nicola's figure leans on his right leg and Hippolytus on his left, the comparable *contrapposto* lends the figures a certain monumentality, despite both being part of a larger project.

As Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten contends, Hercules and

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[18] See the introduction, pp. 4-22.

[19] Olson, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture,* p. 13. Pope-Hennessy offers other possible sources, *Italian Gothic Sculpture,* p. 3.

David are combined in Nicola's *Fortitude.*[20] Although the fully nude hero is without a club, the presence of a lion perched upon the figure's shoulder evokes Herculean mythology.[21] Nicola, according to Kosegarten, imagined his *Fortitude* as a pastoral David[22] in the guise of Hercules to demonstrate his awareness of antique models. It is noteworthy that in Florentine political ideology, David and Hercules are commonly conflated heroic exempla.[23]

Nicola's choice to base his *Fortitude* on an obviously classical source anticipated the flourishing of Neoplatonism nearly two centuries later. Nicola also looked forward to Michelangelo in this regard because the latter was master of the Neoplatonic approach to sacred art. Although the figures

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[20] Antje Middeldorf Kosegarten, "'Davide Come Ercole': Un messaggio filo-imperiale dal pulpito del battistero pisano," in *Arte d'Occidente: studi in onore di Angiola Maria Romanini,* ed. Antonio Cadei (Roma: Edizioni Sintesi Informazione, 1999), pp. 879-889. Kosegarten discusses the parallel between David and Goliath and Hercules and Antaeus. See also Adrian W.B. Randolph, *Engaging Symbols: Gender, Politics, and Public Art in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 154-155, and p. 315, n. 39. Randolph asserts that Dante provided the basis for the analogy between David and Hercules.

[21] Kosegarten, "'Davide Come Ercole'", p. 879.

[22] Ibid., p. 880.

[23] Maria Monica Donato, "Hercules and David in the Early Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio: Manuscript Evidence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991), p. 97.

that occupy the other corners of the baptistry's hexagonal structure are more conventionally treated, Nicola's insertion of a fully nude male figure obviously recalls the antique in a commission that has an exclusively religious function. The use of classical imagery to express and bolster Catholic doctrine was a strategy employed by Neoplatonists, which Michelangelo fully exploited, to legitimize and more convincingly visualize religious doctrine.

Nicola also anticipated Michelangelo in the way that he asserted his artistic individuality and authority, which, in turn, may have also informed his pioneering depiction of masculinity. The suggestion of *Fortitude's* intention to be emancipated from the pulpit through his elegant *contrapposto* can be understood as a declaration of a sense of self,[24] but inscribed behind the pulpit's *Last Judgment* relief (fig. 1.6) is a more explicit expression of artistic individuality — the Dugento sculptor's apparent desire to be recognized for artistic achievement:

> In the year 1260 Nicola Pisano carved this noble work. May so greatly gifted a hand be praised as it

[24] This suggestion is based on the notion of individuality introduced by Jacob Burckhardt in his foundational work *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958), pp. 142-162. See also *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence,* ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

deserves.[25]

Nicola's self-aggrandizement heralded a markedly sixteenth-century attitude upon which I will elaborate in chapter 2: the elevated status of the artist in the Renaissance. Whereas during antiquity painting and sculpture were considered crafts – manual instead of liberal arts – the assertion of individuality signifies the progression of the visual arts into the intellectual realm. The ascendance of the artist was, in fact, a Renaissance construction,[26] and hence, Nicola's declaration of his value as an artist further demonstrates his divergence from medieval tradition.

Other depictions of male nudes in the Pisa Baptistry pulpit also bear remarkable similarities to Renaissance archetypes of masculinity. The corporeality of Christ in the Crucifixion relief (fig. 1.7), for example, has more in common with Quattrocento representations of masculinity than thirteenth-century models. Even more prophetic was the pulpit's *Last Judgment* panel. The overlapping male figures in hell at the lower half of this relief anticipate Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel *Last Judgment* (1536-1541). Nicola's exploitation of the male body's expressive capacity is evident in these works and was unparalleled during the

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[25] Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Gothic Sculpture*, p. 170.

[26] H.W. Janson, "The Revival of Antiquity," p. 43.

artist's time. No longer proto-Renaissance, these manifestations of masculinity, in all their power and glory, stylistically adhere to Renaissance aesthetics of the body.

Giotto and the "modernization" of the body in painting

Half a century later, Giotto expanded upon Nicola Pisano's pioneering handling of the human form in the medium of painting. The painter relied heavily on sculptural models[27] in his quest to depict realistic, three-dimensional figures situated in convincing spatial settings and found inspiration from the stylistic innovations set forth by Nicola.[28] Giotto's considerable contribution to the progressive Renaissance attitude toward corporeality was clear even to his contemporaries; he influenced tremendously the sixteenth-century approach to the body and inspired even

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[27] Richard Offner, "Giotto, Non-Giotto," *Burlington Magazine* 74 (June 1939), pp. 260. Offner observes that plasticity in Giotto's works is more akin to relief. On the other hand, according to Charles Harrison, sculpture in the round influenced Giotto's representation of physical presence and animation. In Charles Harrison, "Giotto and the 'Rise of Painting'" in *Siena, Florence, and Padua: Art, Society, and Religion 1280-1400,* ed. Diana Norman (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 73-95. Either way, the influence of sculpture on Giotto is certain.

[28] Francesca d'Arcais, "Osservazioni sul rapporto tra Giotto e Giovanni Pisano," in *Gedenkschrift für Richard Harprath: herausgegeben von Wolfgang Liebenwein und Anchise Tempestini im Auftrag der Vereinigung der Freunde der Staatlichen Graphischen Sammlung München* (Munich; Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1998), p. 87. See also Harrison, "Giotto and the 'Rise of Painting,'" p. 86.

the Renaissance master of the male physique, Michelangelo.

Like Nicola, Giotto's role in the advancement of the visual arts was marked by a departure from medieval modes of representation. In the *Purgatorio* (Canto IX, verses 94-96), Dante declared Giotto's artistic emergence by distinguishing him from the thirteenth-century painter, Cimabue:

> In painting Cimabue thought he held
> the field, and now it's Giotto they acclaim —
> the former only keeps a shadowed fame.[29]

Dante's observation of the artistic rift that set Giotto apart from Cimabue may have been due to Giotto's ability to depict a full range of human emotions through physiognomic variations and an extensive vocabulary of gestures (for example, the *Lamentation* panel, Arena Chapel, Padua, ca. 1306, fig. 1.8). Giotto emphatically evoked the materiality of the human body through volume by emphasizing the sculptural property of the painted figure.

According to Richard Offner, in works that can be safely assigned to Giotto, the painter established "the dignity of human fate through the material significance of

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[29] Dante, *Purgatorio,* trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 98-99. Benedetto Varchi later reiterated Dante's opinion by quoting him in his *Due Lezzioni* (Florence: 1549), in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento: fra manierismo e controriforma,* ed. Paola Barrochi, 3 vols. (Bari: G. Laterza, 1962), vol. 1, p. 15.

the human figure."[30] More than simply an illustration of three-dimensionality, the plasticity and naturalism of Giotto's figures were meant to convey intangible qualities of otherworldliness and spirituality.[31] Charles Harrison concurs that the gain in naturalism was a gain in expressive potential induced by changes in religious and philosophical thought that altered how people saw themselves and each other.[32] Sculpturality in painting, therefore, enabled the expression of psychological complexities in Giotto's depictions of human beings.

Giotto, thus, may have warranted special mention in Leon Battista Alberti's *De pittura* (1435) because of his groundbreaking approach to the human form; he is the only artist that the author mentions by name in his manual for painters.[33] Giotto's figural inventions illustrate, in fact, a very important Albertian tenet: that the body plays a crucial role in a painting's *istoria* or narrative

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[30] Offner, "Giotto, Non-Giotto," p. 260.

[31] Ibid. pp. 260-261. Offner concludes that Giotto did not express emotion but was intent instead on revealing spiritual truth. Thus, Giotto idealized and manipulated the human body to express an immaterial and intangible spirituality.

[32] Harrison, "Giotto and the 'Rise of Painting,'" pp. 73-95.

[33] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture,* p. 9.

function.[34] Indeed, Giotto's achievements anticipated Alberti's advice to painters:

> Just as the incidence of light and shade makes it apparent where surfaces become convex or concave, or how much any part slopes and turns this way or that, so the combination of white and black achieves what the Athenian painter Nicias was praised for, and what the artist must above all desire: that the things he paints should appear in maximum relief. They say that Zeuxis, the most eminent ancient painter, was like a prince among the rest in understanding this principle of light and shade. Such praise was not given to others at all. I would consider of little or no virtue the painter who did not properly understand the effect every kind of light and shade has on all surfaces. In painting, I would praise — and learned and unlearned alike would agree with me — those faces which seem to stand out from the pictures as if they were sculpted, and I would condemn those in which no artistry is evident other than perhaps in the drawing.[35]

That painters should strive to endow their works with relief-like effect further bolsters Janson's assertion that the new image of man was announced through sculpture and not painting.[36] However, Alberti's position seems to be also an affirmation of the inextricable relationship of the two media — an early symptom of the *paragone* between painting

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[34] Ibid., p. 71.

[35] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture,* p. 89.

[36] See also Charles Seymour, *Sculpture in Italy 1400-1500* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 4. This also coincides with Francesco Bocchi's discussion of Donatello's St. George wherein the paragone is gendered so that sculpture is masculine — therefore more meritorious — and painting, feminine. Bocchi's *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

and sculpture. Cecil Grayson opines that Alberti thought painting to be the superior art,[37] but, from Alberti's viewpoint, it would appear the author believed painting and sculpture to be interdependent art forms: he insisted on the achievement of sculptural effect in painting to arrive at naturalistic figures through volume – in the manner that Giotto had accomplished.

Ghiberti and the male body

Nicola Pisano's revolutionary approach to the human form reverberated into the fifteenth century, as Giotto, in turn, inspired the works of the eminent Quattrocento sculptor and author Lorenzo Ghiberti. The fifteenth-century sculptor praised Giotto highly – as laudable in all the arts, including sculpture[38] – to acknowledge the painter's foundational role in Quattrocento advances in the visual arts. Ghiberti's contribution to the continuing dialogue between sculpture and painting, however, is more directly related to Nicola's case since Ghiberti's visual and

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[37] Ibid., p. 19-20. This contradicts H.W. Janson's opinion that according to Alberti, sculpture maintained its priority over the other arts. Janson thus dates *De statua* at 1430, prior to *De pittura,* which he dates at 1435. In "The New Image of Man," p. 122.

[38] Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I Commentarii* (c. 1450), ed. Ottavio Morisani (Naples: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1947), p. 34. "Giotto meritò grandissima lode. Fu dignissimo in tutta l'arte, ancora nell' arte statuaria."

textual assertions more specifically focused on sculptural manifestations of the masculine body.

Ghiberti's works exemplify how the male form was physically and concretely the central theme of sculpture during the period in which he worked.[39] This assessment is bolstered by the emergence of thirty-two life-size male figures in the center of Florence, eighteen at the Duomo and fourteen at Orsanmichele.[40] Standing as political talismans to protect against threats to Florentine liberty and/or as religious declarations of the Republic's divine affinity, these statues embody *virtus* — the exclusively masculine attribute "that makes a man a man, which flashes from the eyes of these statues of marble and bronze."[41]

This notion of masculine *virtù* associated with the male form[42] may have instigated Ghiberti's use of the phrase *statua virile,* which is etymologically derived from the same root as *virtù.* Instead of using *statua masculina,* which refers mainly to the male gender and male sexuality, *statua virile* contains connotations of the heroic. Throughout Ghiberti's treatise, the *Commentarii* (c. 1450), he

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[39] Janson, "The Image of Man," p. 123.

[40] Ibid., p. 119.

[41] Ibid., p. 122.

[42] Seymour, *Sculpture in Italy,* p. 5.

delineated the proper depiction of *statua virile*,[43] insisting upon the correct representation of the male body by learning its anatomy thoroughly.[44] The term *statua virile* was probably related to the perceived perfection of the male form – the normative or "natural" male body, in contrast to the problematic female form.[45]

His awareness of the equation of the male body with *virtus* is evident when comparing his 1401 competition panel (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, 1401, fig. 1.9) for the Florentine Baptistry doors to Filippo Brunelleschi's depiction of the same subject, the *Sacrifice of Isaac* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, 1401, fig. 1.10). Specifically, in the depiction of *Isaac,* Ghiberti made a conscious effort to display conspicuously the musculature of the boy's torso. Compared to Brunelleschi's *Isaac*, Ghiberti more successfully exploited the Renaissance belief in the male body's dignified and

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[43] Ghiberti-Morisani, *Commentarii,* passim.

[44] Ibid., p. 4. "Ancora bisogno avere conosciuta la disciplina della medicina, ed avere veduto notomia accio che lo sculptore sappi quante ossa sono nel corpo umano, volendo comporre la statua virile, e sapere i muscoli che sono nel corpo dell'uomo e così tutti i nervi e le legature che sono in esso."

[45] Seymour, *Sculpture in Italy,* p. 2. This assessment is in line with artistic ideals during the Early Renaissance that valued the imitation of nature.

elevated status.[46] The body of Ghiberti's *Isaac* may have been instrumental in his triumphant bid to create the *Porta del Paradiso*.[47] This attentive articulation of Isaac's body and his consistent promotion of the masculine form's significance throughout his *Commentarii* were, thus far, the clearest signal of the onset of the Central Italian preoccupation with masculinity.

Masaccio realizes Giotto's innovations in painting

Giotto's legacy of depicting psychologically complex figures within well-defined spatial settings influenced not only sculptors such as Ghiberti; Giotto's innovations also deeply inspired painters of the Quattrocento.[48] Plasticity in figural representations, nascent in the works of Giotto, was developed more fully by Masaccio and is evident in the painter's Brancacci Chapel frescoes (1420s). The paintings

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[46] Philipp P. Fehl, "On the Representation of Character in Renaissance Sculpture," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (fall 1972), p. 295-297. Fehl asserts that Ghiberti's success was due to an understanding of conventional notions of beauty. "Both Abraham and Isaac are beautiful, and the whole action is performed in a sweet rhythm."

[47] Patricia Simons, "*Tutta Divisa:* Multivalence and the Competition Reliefs by Brunelleschi and Ghiberti" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the College Art Association, Boston, MA, February 2006). Simons describes Ghiberti's *Isaac* as a "homo-ideal boy" meant to "seduce the amorous hearts of some judges."

[48] Harrison, "Giotto and the 'rise of painting,'" p. 95.

in this chapel are outstanding examples of the characteristically Florentine practice in which painters self-consciously worked in a sculptural mode, which was in line with Alberti's advice that by combining light and color, the painter might arrive at figures that looked as if they were sculpted. The focus on the male physique may have been related, at least in part, to the desired appearance of sculptural effect in painting; the angularity and hardness of the male body's musculature are advantageous toward achieving this end.

Vasari, building on Alberti's proclivity for plasticity in painting, praised the sculptural solidity of Masaccio's figures.[49] Modern scholars agree with Vasari's observation, and some have even suggested that Masaccio might also have been a sculptor.[50] Certain aspects of Masaccio's methods support this proposition, including the painter's widely acknowledged debt to classical sources, which continues the tradition of borrowing from antiquity that commenced with the Nicola Pisano.[51] For example, Eve in the *Expulsion from*

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[49] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, pp. 322-323.

[50] See, for example, Paul Joannides, "Masaccio, Masolino and 'Minor' Sculpture," *Paragone* 34 (September 1987), p. 3.

[51] Law Bradley Watkins, *The Brancacci Chapel Frescoes: Meaning and Use* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982), p. 48, where the author discusses

the Garden of Eden (Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, 1427, fig. 1.11) was derived from the *Venus pudica,* which Masaccio probably also knew through Giovanni Pisano's *Prudence* (Cathedral, Pisa, 1311, fig. 1.12).[52] Dita Amory also cites a possible antique prototype for Masaccio's Adam in the Pisa Campo Santo, a relief figure from a Roman sarcophagus depicting a hunter.[53]

Although Masaccio, like Nicola and Giotto, was inspired by examples from antiquity, Masaccio took his predecessors' developments further. Nicola and Giotto imbued their figures with psychological and physical presence but did not probe into the idiosyncrasies of gender and sexuality. Masaccio, on the other hand, displayed an acute awareness of the religious and scientific discourses on sexual difference that propounded the primacy of masculinity. Masaccio depicted Adam with dignity — even after the Fall — so that the beauty of his body remains unsullied and is still reminiscent of classical archetypes. By contrast, although Masaccio based his depiction of Eve on the *Venus pudica,* I

Masaccio's sources. See also Dita Amory, "Masaccio's Expulsion from Paradise: A Recollection of Antiquity," *Marsyas* 20 (1979-1980), pp. 7-10.

[52] Watkins, *The Brancacci Chapel Frescoes,* p. 49. Also, James Clifton, "Gender and Shame in Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden," Art History* 22 (December 1999), p. 642.

[53] Amory, "Masaccio's Expulsion from Paradise," p.49.

agree with Ornella Casazza that only the gesture of Eve recalls her classical source.[54] The *Venus pudica's* pose functions solely as a structural guide for Masaccio because Eve's body, unidealized, departs deliberately from the antique statue's expression of modesty. Instead, Masaccio used the *Venus pudica's* pose to signify Eve's grief, misfortune, and loneliness.[55] By implication, therefore, Masaccio, to signify masculine preeminence, depicted the contrary female body as an indicator of the absence of dignity. James Clifton asserts that Masaccio expressed this contrariety not only in the gestures of the figures, but also in their opposing *contrapposto*: Adam strides beginning with his left leg, while Eve steps forward with her right.[56]

Although both figures signify shame, the differences in their movement and gestures represent "persistent,

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[54] Umberto Baldini and Ornella Casazza, *The Brancacci Chapel* (New York: Abrams, 1992), p. 50.

> L'uomo, pur peccatore, in Masaccio no ha perduto la sua dignità, non è degradato o abbruitito, la bellezza del suo corpo oltre a espressioni innovative rimanda ad archetipi di ideale bellezza classica.
>
> Per Eva si è pensato alla *Venere pudica* greco-romana. Ma l'Eva di Masaccio ha solo il gesto di una Venera pudica, ha il corpo greve e sformato e tutto il dolore del mondo nel voto e nel gesto drammatico.

[55] Joannides, "Masaccio, Masolino and Minor Sculpture," p. 9.

[56] Clifton, "Shame in Masaccio's *Expulsion,*" p. 640.

gender-specific notions about shame."[57] Whereas Adam experienced shame intellectually or spiritually because he is a rational being, Eve, because of her carnality, felt sexual shame. Masaccio makes this distinction clear by appropriating the pose of the *Venus pudica* so that Eve's genitalia are concealed, while Adam's penis is blatantly displayed, as he strides with his left leg to facilitate this exposure. The suppression of Eve's sexuality conveys visually the Augustinian belief that Eve was largely culpable for committing Original Sin.[58]

Clifton states that religious commentators did not differentiate between Adam and Eve's association of shame and sexuality.[59] However, Masaccio's depiction of the *Expulsion* is related to a tradition wherein only Eve's sexuality is blamed for the Fall of Man.[60] As a prefiguration of Christ, Adam's masculinity is necessarily emphasized by the patent display of his penis to mitigate his contribution to the Fall. These observations on the differences between Masaccio's Adam and Eve correspond

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[57] Ibid., p. 642.

[58] See Introduction, pp. 19-20.

[59] Clifton, "Shame in Masaccio's *Expulsion*," p. 644.

[60] See Clifton's discussion of this tradition, ibid., p. 645-646.

precisely to Renaissance notions regarding gender and sexuality that stressed the superiority of the male body from the scientific and religious viewpoints.[61]

The pervasiveness of this bias can be understood when considering how artistic theory was shaped by these attitudes toward sexuality. For example, in chapter 70 of Cennino Cennini's *Il libro del'arte*, "The Proportions which a Perfectly Formed Man's Body Should Possess," he wrote:

> Take note that, before going any farther, I will give you the exact proportions of a man. Those of a woman I will disregard, for she does not have any set proportion … A man has one breast rib less than a woman, on the left side.[62]

It is unclear whether or not Masaccio was aware of Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*, but Cennini, as a student of Agnolo Gaddi, knew the works of Giotto, who taught Agnolo's father, Taddeo. Cennini's *Libro* establishes a sort of connection between the stylistic themes introduced by Giotto with the actualizations of these themes in Masaccio's frescoes. But even if Masaccio did not know Cennini's handbook, the passage above nevertheless shows how gender biases affected Ceninni's instruction as well as Masaccio's design.

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[61] See Introduction, passim.

[62] Cennino D'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook,* trans. Daniel v. Thompson, Jr. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1954), p. 48-49.

In the passage from Cennini's *Libro*, the conflation of artistic instruction with religious text (the depiction of man as having "one breast rib less" was biblically derived) and the blatant rejection of the female body's validity reflect the privileging of the male over the female form promulgated in ancient textual sources and corroborated in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Later artistic theorists would maintain Cennini's assertion of the male figure's artistic primacy. Alberti, for example, when discussing measurements and proportions, considered the male body to be the "scale of all things."[63] Vasari, too, as we shall see in the next chapters, consistently promoted the male body's significance, particularly as a measure of artistic excellence.

The objectives laid out by proto- and Early Renaissance artists and the propositions offered by contemporary art theorists concerning representations of the male body reached a climax later in the Quattrocento, in works of art that are, in a sense, transitional, as they not only realized the goals of their ancestors, but inspired also the invention of Cinquecento ideals of masculinity. Through representations of the male body, a stylistic continuum between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was affected

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[63] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture,* p. 53.

by artists of the late fifteenth century, two of whom I discuss here: Antonio Pollaiuolo and Donatello.

Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes*

As sculptor and painter, Antonio Pollaiuolo, like Michelangelo, was committed to upholding the male form's artistic primacy.[64] As Maud Cruttwell writes in her monograph of Pollaiuolo:

> By his profound science, his realistic and forcible representations of the nude, Antonio changed the entire character of Florentine art, setting it on a basis of truth and realism, which ultimately resulted in the supreme achievements of Michelangelo.[65]

Cruttwell observes correctly the artistic continuity from Pollaiuolo to Michelangelo. However, the connection between the two artists could be made more explicit by recognizing that Pollaiuolo's nudes are exclusively male. Such an

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[64] Laurie Smith Fusco observes that there are more works with male nudes in Pollaiuolo's oeuvre in comparison to any other contemporary or earlier Central Italian artist, in *The Nude As Protagonist: Pollaiuolo's Figural Style Explicated By Leonardo's Study Of Static Anatomy, Movement, And Functional Anatomy* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), p. 26.

[65] Maud Crutwell, *Antonio Pollaiuolo* (London: Duckworth, 1907), p. 26, quoted in Fusco, *The Nude as Protagonist*, p. 4. See also Shelley R. Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes: Pollaiuolo's Renaissance Masterpiece* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 2002) for a discussion of Pollaiuolo's predilection for depicting male nudes. Also Alison Wright, "Antonio Pollaiuolo, 'Maestro di Disegno,'" in *Florentine Drawing at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent: Papers from a Colloquium held at the Villa Spelman, Florence, 1992* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1994), p. 137.

acknowledgment would mean that the representation of the male nude body "changed the entire character of Florentine art" and that it was this body that served as the "basis of truth and realism." Indeed, this amendment to Crutwell's opinion more accurately describes Central Italian art, since "the supreme achievements of Michelangelo" that influenced and defined the character of Florentine and Roman art resulted from his overwhelming obsession with the male form's expressive potential.

Pollaiuolo's 1465 *Battle of The Nudes* (Cleveland Museum of Art, fig. 1.13) is central to this analysis. His training as sculptor and painter is evident in this composition of figures engraved to mimic antique relief. Although Patricia Emison argues that an unknown textual reference may have been the basis of Pollaiuolo's engraving, which, she suggests, is less about heroic masculinity than about the bestial,[66] the evident delight in the representation of the male nude suggests that the artist may have created this work as an elaborate formal exercise.[67] If Pollaiuolo

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[66] Patricia Emison, "The Word Made Naked in Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes," Art History* 13 (September 1990), p. 265. For other possible thematic sources, see Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes,* notes 14-16.

[67] Langsdale proposes that Pollaiuolo's male nudes, inspired by classical sources, were meant to "address contemporary artistic challenges." In Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes,* p. 36.

intended to represent moral turpitude and heroism gone awry through the expressions and violent gestures of the figures, it is also unequivocal that Pollaiuolo remained true to his Central Italian roots by maintaining the artistic value of the idealized male body.

Even in the following century, Pollaiuolo's command of the male anatomy was acknowledged by Vasari, who praised Pollaiuolo for his

> more modern grasp of the nude than the masters before his day, and he dissected many bodies in order to study their anatomy. He was the first to demonstrate the method of searching out the muscles, in order that they might have their due form and place in his figures, and he engraved on copper a battle of nude figures all girt round with a chain; and after this one he made other engravings, with much better workmanship than had been shown by the other masters who had lived before him.[68]

Pollaiuolo's anatomical expertise, which Vasari lauded, allowed for the more plastic and sculptural rendition of figures, and critical recognition, such as the one Vasari conferred upon Pollaiuolo, implies that the *Battle of the Nudes* was an exposition of artistic prowess. As a demonstration of dexterity, Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes* necessarily engaged in prevailing discourses on art,

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[68] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, p. 533.

primarily the *paragone* and *disegno*.[69]

Pollaiuolo tackled the debate on the relative merits of painting and sculpture through an ingenious representational strategy in which the artist used the same model[70] to design the two figures. However, the viewer sees the front of one figure, while simultaneously viewing the other's back; it is as if the two were pivoting on a single axis. This representational strategy directly addressed the *paragone* between the two art forms by challenging the sculptors' claim that various facets of the body could not be depicted simultaneously within the same painting.[71] This same method is apparent in the London *St. Sebastian* (National Gallery, 1475, fig. 1.14), where four archers in the foreground are pivoted to display a different aspect of the same body. The result of this pivoting is three-dimensionality within the two-dimensional surface.[72] The viewer, thus, experiences the

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[69] See Langsdale's discussion of Pollaiuolo's engraving technique and its relationship to disegno, *Battle of the Nudes,* pp. 25-35.

[70] Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes,* pp. 40-41.

[71] Masaccio, however, prefigured this practice in Pollaiuolo's work. Paul Joannides observes this in the Brancacci Chapel *Tribute Money* where the figures of St. Peter and the tax collector are symmetrical, in "Masaccio, Masolino and Minor Sculpture," p. 11-12.

[72] Laurie Smith Fusco, "The Use of Sculptural Models by Painters in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Art Bulletin* 64/2 (June 1982), pp. 171-181, 192.

figure as if it were sculpture in the round.

Issues around *disegno* also informed Pollaiuolo's battle scene as the engraving's linear quality accorded with Alberti's principally Florentine definition of *disegno* as circumscription.[73] Yet, more than linearity, Pollaiuolo's *Nudes* was also an assertion of the precept that equated the virtuoso rendition of the nude male form with an artist's command of *disegno.* I elaborate upon this understanding of *disegno* in the next chapter, but I introduce it here because Pollaiuolo's engraving is one of the earliest manifestations of this uniquely Central Italian concept. In this definition, *disegno* was understood as the display of intellectual labor through art. In the case of the *Battle of the Nudes*, Pollaiuolo's intellectual engagement is evident in his compliance with contemporary artistic theory. He took advantage of the angularity of the male physique to realize Alberti's instruction that "the thing [an artist] paints should appear in maximum relief."[74] Moreover, Alberti also propounded that

> there will be no *istoria* so rich in variety of things that nine or ten men cannot worthily perform it.[75]

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[73] Alison Wright, "Dimensional Tension in the Work of Antonio Pollaiulo," in *The Sculpted Object,* ed. Stuart Currie and Peta Motture (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 69-70.

[74] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture,* p. 89.

[75] Ibid., p. 101.

Pollaiuolo composed his *Battle of the Nudes* in conformity to Alberti's directive,[76] down to numerical precision: ten men are depicted in a complex battle scene, splendidly envisioned through various permutations of the masterfully rendered male form.

In the tradition of Central Italian artists who have declared their artistic excellence within and through their works, Pollaiuolo also intended to broadcast his talents as draughtsman through this engraving.[77] The skillful depiction of the nude male figure in action was a pronouncement of his mastery of *disegno* and therefore a revelation of intellectuality. Not unlike Nicola Pisano, who announced his merits as an artist behind the *Last Judgment* panel of the Pisa Baptistry pulpit, the large scale of Pollaiuolo's print, the prominent display of his name on the plaque, and his declaration of his Florentine origin reveal a yearning for public and critical recognition.[78]

Pollaiuolo expressed this desire more explicitly on a drawing of a warrior at the Louvre (Paris, 1458, fig. 1.15).

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[76] Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes,* p. 40.

[77] Alison Wright, "Mantegna and Pollaiuolo: Artistic Personality and the Marketing of Invention," in *Drawings 1400-1600: Invention and Innovation,* ed. Stuart Currie (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), p. 76.

[78] Langsdale, *Battle of the Nudes,* p. 35.

Like the pivoted figures in the abovementioned works, in this drawing, the same model is pivoted so that the figure can be viewed from three different angles to evoke three-dimensionality. On this sheet, Pollaiuolo inscribed for posterity his comprehension of the male body's primacy while simultaneously declaring his authority as painter *and* sculptor:

> This is the work of the excellent and famous Florentine painter and outstanding sculptor Antonio di Jacopo. When he depicts man, look how marvelously he renders the limbs.[79]

This inscription speaks most immediately to the veneration of the male body in Florentine art. However, Pollaiuolo's aspiration toward greatness attained through popular and critical validation brings to light a specifically Florentine artistic preoccupation: the desire for public recognition of artistic excellence, demonstrated through the artist's proficiency in *disegno,* revealed through manifestations of masculinity. The culmination of this Central Italian preoccupation will be made explicit in a discussion of Vasari's appraisal of Michelangelo's works in the next chapter.

Donatello and Cinquecento paradigms of masculinity

I end this chapter with Donatello because a brief

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[79] Wright, "Antonio Pollaiuolo, 'Maestro di Disegno,'" p. 143.

discussion of his works helps to facilitate a transition into the sixteenth century. Donatello's inventions of specifically Renaissance standards of masculinity demonstrate a stylistic leap from the Middle Ages into the Early Renaissance and were, in large part, the bases on which Cinquecento ideals were formed.[80] Like the artists discussed above, Donatello's innovations were distinguished by a consciousness of the body's volumetric properties. The Orsanmichele *St. Mark* (Florence, 1411-1413, fig. 1.16), carved for the Guild of Linen Merchants, is an example of the sculptor's attentive treatment of the human body. St. Mark's drapery functions to convey – and not merely to cover – his body underneath. A self-sustaining *contrapposto* implies the functionality of the body's mechanisms.[81]

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[80] Marek Komorowski, "Donatello's *St. George* in a Sixteenth-Century Commentary by Francesco Bocchi: Some Problems of the Renaissance Theory of Expression in Art," in *Ars Auro Prior* (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981), pp. 61-66. Komorowski explains how Donatello's aura remained in sixteenth-century art historiography and Cinquecento texts, p. 61.

[81] See Janson, "The Image of Man," p. 126. See also Mary Bergstein, "Nanni di Banco, Donatello, and Realism in the Testa Virile," *Source* 5/3 (spring 1986), pp. 8-11. Nanni di Banco's interest in conveying a greater naturalism and individuality spurred Donatello's own explorations into this aspect of his sculptures. Frederick Hartt also agrees that St. Mark is the "earliest fully Renaissance work of art." See Hartt, "Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence," in *Writings about Art,* ed. Carole Gold Calo (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), p. 118.

Furthermore, Donatello's oeuvre illustrates the range of the male form's artistic possibilities, encompassing all three ideals of masculinity proposed in the following chapters.

Donatello's *St. George* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, ca. 1416, fig. 1.17),[82] sculpted for the Armorer's Guild, is an outstanding example of Heroic Masculinity. Even during the Renaissance, Donatello's statue was recognized for its martial significance. Francesco Bocchi, for example, in his *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1571, 1584), wrote that the statue "expresses the magnanimity and force by which [the figure] is elevated."[83] Charles de Tolnay expands on Bocchi's comment, observing that Donatello's *St. George* was the first representation of the type of *cittadino*

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[82] From an art-theoretical point of view, through the *rilievo schiacciato* beneath the figure of *St. George,* Donatello engaged the contemporary discourse between sculpture and painting as the shallow, "painterly" relief acknowledged the appreciation for a sculptural style in painting. Michael Godby, "A Note on *Schiacciato,*" *Art Bulletin* 62 (December 1980), p. 635. Godby points to an inconsistency in the use of the term *rilievo schiacciato* by Vasari and by modern historians. Despite the problem, however, Donatello's relief indicates an awareness of the exchange between three-dimensional sculptural modes and two-dimensional representation. See also Luisa Becherucci, "Donatello e la pittura," pp. 41-58 and and M.J. Liebmann, "Giorgio Vasari on Relief," *Acta Historiae Artium Budapest,* 27 (1981), pp. 281-286. Liebmann argues that Donatello was the inventor of *schiacciato rilievo.*

[83] Quoted in Mosche Barasch, "Character and Physiognomy: Bocchi on Donatello's St. George. A Renaissance Text on Expression in Art," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 3 (1975), p. 145.

guerriero described in the writings of Leonardo Bruni.[84] As Nicola Pisano did with *Fortitude,* Donatello imbued his *St. George* with a psychological alertness that prefigured the *terribilità* of Michelangelo's *David.* As a personification of this iconography of heroism shared by the *St. George* with the early *Fortitude* and the *gigante*, Donatello's statue served to symbolically defend the Florentine Republic from the threat of attack by the Visconti.[85]

Turning now to the second masculine paradigm, Donatello's bronze *David* (fig. 1.3) was a paradigmatic manifestation of the Hermaphroditic Deviant. Variously dated

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[84] Charles de Tolnay, "Donatello e Michelangelo" in *Donatello e il suo tempo* (Florence: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1968), p. 266. On the relationship of Bruni and Davidian iconography, see also Roger J. Crum, "Donatello's Bronze David," *Renaissance Studies* 10 (December 1996), pp. 446-447. According to Bruni, "the men of Florence especially enjoy perfect freedom and are the greatest enemies of tyrants." See also Patricia Leach, "Donatello's Marble David: Leonardo Bruni's Contribution," *Source* 12 (Spring 1993), pp. 8-11.

[85] For a discussion of the Visconti threat to Florence, see Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance; Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966). According to Baron, "[those] who recall Donatello's *St. George* of 1416 — the first book of Bruni's *Historiae Florentini Populi* had been written the year before — will be certain that even the arts did not remain entirely untouched by the political climate of the time of the Florentine-Milanese Struggle." Quoted in Hartt, "Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence," p. 121.

between 1430 and the 1460s,[86] the statue aligned with precepts in Alberti's *De statua,* particularly as an embodiment of Alberti's conception of the structural formulation and proportions of the male body.[87] It is possible that the statue may have been a demonstration of the artist's knowledge of contemporary art-theoretical precepts. This compliance to theory helps to add an elevated dimension to the statue's meaning, perhaps in an effort to legitimize its obvious eroticism.[88]

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[86] In John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), pp. 229-230, the authors state, "dates from the late 1420s to the late 1450s have been proposed" for the bronze *David.* They suggest that the work was probably commissioned by Piero de' Medici and lean toward dating the statue in the 1460s since the *David* was "first recorded in 1469 in a description of the wedding festivities of Piero's son, Lorenzo, and Clarice Orsini."

[87] Janson, "The Image of Man," p. 130. Charles Seymour dates Alberti's *De statua* c. 1430 as well. In "Some Aspects of Donatello's Methods of Figure and Space Construction: Relationships with Alberti's *De statua* and *Della pittura,"* in *Donatello e il Suo Tempo,* p. 195-206. Seymour also discusses the relationship of Alberti's proportional system and Donatello's bronze *David.*

[88] The problem of *David's* nudity is heightened by the wide variety of ways in which scholars have attempted to understand Donatello's statue. See Randolph, *Engaging Symbols,* pp. 139-192. According to Randolph, the expressive value of the *David* corresponded to the dramatic potential of the adolescent male body recognized in the performance of *sacra rappresentazione* or sacred drama, pp. 178-183. See also John W. Dixon, "The Drama of Donatello's *David:* Re-examination of an 'Enigma,'" *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 93 (January 1979), p. 6. Dixon suggests that, in fact, the David is not nude in the classical sense, but naked, since

More problematic, however, is the *David's* apparent "lack" of masculinity. *David's* smooth, adolescent muscularity, his delicate features, flowing locks, elongated limbs, and graceful *contrapposto* heighten the ambiguity of the statue's sexuality. The artist's alleged homosexuality has been offered as the rationale behind this design.[89]

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he still sports his greaves. In Dixon's analysis, the greaves remain as a reminder that David understood that he needed only the Lord's protection and nothing else. This interpretation is based on a passage in I Samuel (17:39):

> Then said David to the Philistine: Thou comest to me with a sword and a spear, and a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast taunted. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel; and that all the assembly may know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hand.

Quoted in Fehl, "On the Representation of Character in Renaissance Sculpture," p. 302. See also Cristelle Baskins, "Donatello's Bronze *David:* Grillanda, Goliath, Groom?," *Studies in Iconography* 15 (1993), pp. 113-134. Baskins discusses the *David* from a feminist perspective, stating that the statue's nudity can be associated with the nude figures on the undersides of cassoni panels, proposing that the *David* was possibly a bridal offering in celebration of Lorenzo de Medici's marriage to Clarice Orsini in 1469.

[89] For an in-depth discussion of the *David's* homoeroticism and its consequent effect on Donatello and Cosimo de Medici, see Randolph, *Engaging Symbols,* p. 165-173.

The suggestion of the *David's* homoerotic appeal is opposed by John Pope-Hennessy, who, in his homophobic view, explains that in its original position, five or six feet from the ground, *David* would have appeared more masculine.

The statue's palpable sensuality certainly supports this claim; however, a spiritual reason has also been proposed to explain *David's* effeminate qualities. Although Terrance Walsh does not agree with a purely spiritual explanation, he believes that the bronze *David* is an allegory of the shepherd boy's "vulnerability and trust in God."[90] Walsh proposes that the feminine aspects of the *David* delineate a transformation happening within the heroic figure from "a male-dominated ethos of power to a religious ethos marked by lowliness and meekness."[91]

This interpretation aligns with Renaissance

In John Pope-Hennessy,"Donatello's Bronze *David*" in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Federico Zeri* (Milan: Electa, 1984), pp. 122-127. According to Pope-Hennessy, seen from below, the proportions of the body would have been less effeminate. David's androgynous face, from this viewpoint, would have also been more an expression of confident nobility. Even the obvious sensuality suggested by the wing reaching out from Goliath's helmet, rubbing against the *David's* leg, is explained away by Pope-Hennessy as structural support for the statue. Pope-Hennessy writes that associating the statue with homosexuality "leaves a trail of slime on a great work of art," in "Donatello's Bronze *David,"* p. 125. See also Dixon, "The Drama of Donatello's David." Dixon explains that the angularity of the figure represents the body of an adolescent boy and is not at all girlish. For a summary of the literature engaged in this debate, see Andrew Butterfield, "New Evidence for the Iconography of David in Quattrocento Florence," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 6 (1995), p. 117, n.14.

[90] Walsh, "Donatello's *David,* or, Flesh Made Spirit," p. 18.

[91] Ibid., p. 20. Also Dixon, "The Drama of Donatello's *David,"* p. 8. Dixon explains that eroticism is part of David's transition into manhood.

hierarchical notions about the male and female bodies. Since the male body was the paragon of physicality, the articulation of interiority through the male form would have been ineffective. Thus, the female "other" was appropriated to enable the expression of spirituality through the male body. In chapter 3, I will examine how the artists of the first Maniera exploited this cooptation of the female form.

Finally, as a model of the Emasculated Prophet, an example of a religious commission from the sculptor's oeuvre instead of a civic one is appropriate: Donatello's full-length *St. John the Baptist* in wood at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (Venice, 1438, fig. 1.18), carved for the chapel of Florentine expatriates in Venice. The material itself is less associable with a political work.

Vasari gave the *Baptist* a later date of 1453, leading modern scholars to associate this work with Donatello's own spiritual anxiety at that time in his life.[92] This has been disproved by the discovery of an inscribed date of 1436 at the base of the statue. However, Vasari may have assigned this later date because of Donatello's innovative use of wood, which distinguishes the work from medieval examples of polychrome statuary. The artist exploited the medium to

[92] Deborah Strom, "A New Chronology for Donatello's Wooden Sculpture," *Pantheon* 38 (July-September 1980), p. 239.

explore how the male form could embody ideals[93] different from the heroic or feminized male, resulting in a third paradigm of masculinity: the tortured body of *St. John* was a precursor to the Counter-Reformation prototype of masculinity, the Emasculated Prophet.[94]

Conclusion

Artists of the Renaissance learned some lessons from Donatello through direct observation of his works,[95] but his

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[93] Ibid., p. 241.

[94] Other examples of the Emasculated Prophet in Donatello's work include the Bronze *St. John the Baptist* for Capella di San Giovanni (Siena, Pinacoteca, 1457) and the Crucifix at the Convent of Bosco ai Fratri (Florence, 1430s-1440s). Strom considers the latter the culmination of the spiritual mood conveyed by the wooden *Baptist* in Venice. She describes the crucifix as "a body expertly rendered to communicate pain and suffering to stimulate devotion," pp. 246-247.

[95] Donatello's influence on the conception of masculine archetypes by artists of the later Renaissance, including the manner in which Donatello's works inspired *invenzione* among early Mannerist artists, is one specific case that further illustrates the magnitude of Donatello's influence. Donatello's artistic approach provided a strategy from which Mannerist artists modeled their reevaluation of High Renaissance artistic principles. See Christopher Fulton, "Present at the Inception: Donatello and the Origins of Sixteenth-Century Mannerism," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 60, no. 2 (1997), p. 166. More than merely a reformulation of the sculptor's style, Mannerist practices assimilated Donatello's artistic ideology. Donatello's flouting of Albertian *istoria,* for example, anticipated the Mannerist defiance of High Renaissance ideals. The confusion in interpretations of the less-than-heroic and highly sexualized *David* indicates Donatello's refusal of representational tradition and artistic decorum, which resulted in narrative incoherence and scholarly

influence was undoubtedly also filtered through Michelangelo. Vincenzo Borghini encapsulated the artistic association between Donatello and Michelangelo best when he wrote, "Either the spirit of Donato works in Buonarotto, or that of Buonarroto began by working in Donato."[96]

Both artists shared the belief in the male body's ability to carry meaning, whether for political purpose or religious intent. The parallel critical fortunes of Michelangelo's *David* and Donatello's marble *David* attest to this artistic affinity.[97] Originally intended for the Duomo, both statues were relocated to the Palazzo Vecchio to

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disagreement. This same criticism is often leveled at many Mannerist works. Effectively, Donatello's departure from convention particularly influenced early Mannerist conceptions of the human figure. Antonio Pinelli supports this assessment by pointing out the relationship between Donatello's bronze *David* and Jacopo Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier* (The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 1529, fig. 3.5). Pontormo's studies for this portrait illustrate how the bronze *David* inspired the mannerist artist's composition. See Antonio Pinelli, *La bellezza impura: Arte e politica nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Rome: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 2004), pp. 146-151.

[96] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, pp. 377-378.

[97] For a discussion of the formal similarities of Donatello's Bronze *David* and Michelangelo's *David,* see John T. Paoletti, "The Bargello *David* and Public Sculpture in Fifteenth-Century Florence," in *Collaboration in Italian Renaissance Art,* eds. Wendy Stedman Sheard and John T. Paoletti (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 101.

symbolically safeguard Florentine liberty.[98] Heroism defined by a firm belief in man's inner strength,[99] made visible through the revelation of psychological presence, was an iconographic ideal shared by both statues, so that a biblical figure known for unwavering courage could be made to assume a political stance.

Not unlike Nicola Pisano and Antonio Pollaiuolo, Donatello, and eventually Michelangelo, understood that the virtuoso portrayal of the male figure brought critical acclaim and public recognition. This clamor for acknowledgment of artistic innovation is related to the Central Italian trope of Artist as Creator, first introduced by Alberti in *De pittura,*[100] and later evolved into the deification of artists by Vasari. The inherent authority of antique sources, which were for the most part sculptural works, provided the footing on which these innovations were based, and the influence of antiquity on the artists of Central Italy — from Nicola Pisano onwards — helped to advance developments in Renaissance sculpture and to cultivate the taste for the appearance of sculptural relief

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[98] Hartt, "Art and Freedom in Quattrocento Florence," p. 125.

[99] de Tolnay, "Donatello e Michelangelo," p. 273.

[100] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture,* p. 16.

in painting.[101] The Florentine artistic tradition that prized sculpturesque painting was spurred by the quest for naturalism and by the stylistic transition from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance. Because the masculine physique visually achieved this desired effect, the male body, its primacy established in religious and scientific discourses, became embedded in the artistic psyche of Renaissance Florence — a creative convention that would be fully exploited by the artists of the Cinquecento.

[101] Ibid., pp. 10-11. Grayson writes, “Whereas classical sculpture envisaged and realized in the free-standing figure a representation corresponding closely to nature, ancient painting did not arrive at that rational solution of space relationship between figures.”

Chapter 2

Machiavellian Masculinity: Political and Artistic *Virtù* and The Heroic Male Ideal

The male form was exploited during the Renaissance to communicate political meaning because, as the standard of physical perfection, this body effectively conveyed preeminence and potency. Machiavellian Masculinity, the Cinquecento iteration of the Heroic Male Ideal,[1] embodied authority and, thus, suited the needs of governments and leaders. In this chapter, I examine not only the political significance of sixteenth-century manifestations of heroic masculinity, but also their bearing on artistic theory of the period.

Various scientific and religious texts propounded the ascendancy of men and declared masculinity's exalted state in the grand scheme of Renaissance cosmology. Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (written c. 1512, printed 1532) serves as a fundamental guide. Machiavelli's influence on the politics of his time was considerable and, thus, the

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[1] Representations of the Heroic Male Ideal manifested in other periods as well. See, for example, Abigail Solomon-Godeau's discussion of binary masculinities in nineteenth-century art in *Male Trouble: A Crisis In Representation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997). Describing this ideal of masculinity as Machiavellian makes this a more specifically sixteenth-century iteration of the heroic archetype.

impact of his manual for rulers on works of art commissioned for political and propagandistic purposes was substantial. The phrase "Machiavellian Masculinity" articulates the specifically Florentine Renaissance incarnation of heroic maleness; it sets the premise from which this chapter will unfold.[2]

As the resurgence of antiquity pervaded all aspects of Renaissance society, the ideological foundation of Renaissance government, as well, was founded on classical political concepts. The influence of these precepts on Machiavelli's thought was significant, particularly on his formulation of *virtù*, and the author's political beliefs provided the foundation on which representations of Machiavellian Masculinity was based.

Among such representations is Michelangelo's *David* (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, 1504, fig. 1.5), the archetypal depiction of the Heroic Male Ideal. The statue epitomized the political and artistic significance of the heroic canon of masculinity, and, as such, may have

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[2] For a discussion on Machiavelli's political influence see Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli (Founders of Modern Political Thought)*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and Michael A. Leeden, *Machiavelli on Modern Leadership: Why Machiavelli's Iron Rules Are As Timely and Important Today As Five Centuries Ago* (New York: Truman Talley Books, 2007). For a recent biography see Ross King, *Machiavelli: Philosopher of Power* (New York: Eminent Lives, 2007).

influenced aspects of Machiavellian political thinking.

A comprehensive discussion of Machiavelli's gendered political system then informs my reading of the two most esteemed sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi. Central to the author's sexualized political hierarchy is *virtù,* which can be understood broadly as excellence, and more specifically, as an attribute of a competent politician. This essential aspect of Machiavelli's political deliberation is vividly embodied by Benvenuto Cellini's *Perseus and Medusa* (1545-54, fig. 2.1) and Giovanni Bologna's (called Giambologna) *Rape of the Sabine* (fig. 2.2). This analysis illuminates how Cosimo de' Medici's (Duke of Tuscany, 1537-1574) government and political legacy was shaped by representations of Machiavellian Masculinity, as expressions of *virtù.*

Indeed, the chief purpose of public displays of Machiavellian Masculinity was the cultivation of the perception of authority and power, where the *appearance* of omnipotence was key to successful governance and, at times, more credible than real politics. This outward articulation of power and authority was the essence of Machiavelli's political theater, and Duke Cosimo, a personification of Machiavelli's Prince, exploited fully and deliberately political theatricality through the

visual arts, a political strategy that becomes apparent in an analysis of ducal portraiture.

Machiavellian politics was, in turn, related to the visual arts as Cinquecento notions about the Heroic Male inextricably meshed with Florentine art-theoretical tenets, particularly with *disegno* and the *paragone*. Giorgio Vasari, in his introduction to the *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550), suggested that an artist's command of *disegno* could be measured in terms of his mastery of the male body. God himself, according to Vasari, devised *disegno* when he created the flawless body of the first man.[3] A rereading of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel *God Creating Adam* (Rome, 1508-1512, fig. 2.3) sheds light on Vasari's propositions.

Another Sistine ceiling fresco, *God Separating Light from Darkness* (Rome, 1508-12, fig. 2.4), serves as the basis for understanding Vasari's interpretation of *disegno* as related to the concept of artistic individualism, which I introduced in the previous chapter. The individuality of male artists was a Central Italian preoccupation that was founded on the notion of self-authorship advanced by humanists such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (written 1476, published

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[3] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, p. 27.

1496). This proposition accorded with the Aristotelian belief in a singular, masculine paternity and at the heart of the idea of humanist self-fashioning is the equation of artist as creator/God: in creating Adam in his own image, God effectively recreated himself. The implications of Michelangelo's possible self-portrait as God in this fresco will be explored to understand the significance of self-authorship as it related to an artist's grasp of *disegno* and the revelation of artistic *virtù*.

I close this chapter with an analysis of Francesco Bocchi's gendering of the *paragone* in his *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1571, 1584) because the Heroic Male Ideal was key to Bocchi's defense of the merits of sculpture over painting. Bocchi glorified heroic masculinity and, as the title indicates, Donatello's *St. George* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence, ca. 1416, fig. 1.18) was the author's artistic centerpiece. Bocchi's treatise was profoundly influenced by contemporary Renaissance attitudes toward gender, but, more importantly, an assessment of the *Eccelenza* as it relates to Machiavellian Masculinity is important because the author's commentary on gender was framed within a treatise on the visual arts: the preeminence of heroic masculinity in Bocchi's text speaks most convincingly to the

centrality of the heroic paradigm, and thus, of the male body in Cinquecento art-theoretical discourses.

Classical Influences and Machiavellian *Virtù*

Depictions of Machiavellian Masculinity stood at the nexus of Aristotle's political tenets and his scientific propositions. The philosopher's understanding of the male form's primacy, which was based on his scientific propositions, informed the classical belief in the inherent interrelatedness of masculinity and politics. As the standard of physical perfection, the male physique, exclusively, communicated political prowess. Effectively, classical politics, from which the Central Italian Renaissance system of government was derived, was predicated upon a tradition of female exclusion.[4] Indeed, scarcity of female representation in art commissioned for political purpose was directly related to the notable absence of women in Cinquecento government.

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[4] Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988), pp. ix, 3-4, and passim. See also Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolo Machiavelli* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 9: "But the law that men should be seeking to apply — that good men do seek to apply — is eternal, universal, absolute, and ultimately of divine origin. Law is not made, but found, by men."

The perceived perfection of the male body[5] helped to perpetuate the idea of a ruler's infinite leadership, his capacity to escape even death. The male body's flawless physicality as described by Aristotle was, in effect, an iconography of eternal rulership. This body, thus, cannot be anything but male since the female body was considered imperfect, enslaved and rendered defective by her reproductive function.[6] Indeed, the female body itself made women ineligible for leadership. The perfection of the male form, on the contrary, was linked to the propagandistic purpose of representations of the Heroic Male Ideal; the flawless corporeality of men effectively personified *arête* — the epitome of order, strength, and the capacity to succeed in battle. Roughly translated as excellence, *arête* in classical Greece was understood as manly virtue achieved through victory in battle. Machiavellian *virtù* was the Renaissance incarnation of the Greek *arête*.

Virtù combined "discipline, patience, foresight, cunning, and strength to achieve one's end."[7] It was a marker of accomplishment and excellence. *Virtù* encompassed a set of values that collectively conveyed a grandness of

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[5] See chapter 1, pp. 53-54.

[6] See the introduction, p. 4.

[7] Brown, *Manhood and Politics*, p. 83.

vision and an exceptional level of political acumen that demonstrated, most importantly, outstanding determination when faced with adversity. This aspect of *virtù* – the ability to overcome difficulty – "is of course central to Machiavelli's delineation of the ideal prince,"[8] and according to Machiavelli, it is through the use of force that rulers can best triumph over obstacles.

Machiavelli's notion of *virtù,* like his politics in general, was based on the Aristotelian form-and-matter formula, which celebrated the male species as form-giver to female matter.[9] Political form-giving based on Aristotle's sexual hierarchy was an integral part of political success and was "the highest expression of *virtù."*[10] On the basis of this gendered political perspective, statecraft, like Aristotelian reproduction, assumed a purely masculine birth, a singular paternity,[11] while the female matter upon

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[8] Margaret Carroll, "The Erotics of Absolutism: Rubens and the Mystification of Sexual Violence," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History,* Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1992), p. 143.

[9] This is based on Aristotle's writings regarding procreation. See the introduction, pp. 7-11.

[10] Brown, *Manhood and Politics,* p. 88.

[11] Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* p. 54. See also the introduction, pp. 10-11, 26. This is the same formulation proposed by Judith Butler.

which a ruler imposed form was his constituency. As an act of form-making, statecraft was a demonstration of male dominance defined implicitly by the subject population. The male head of state imposes his power upon the female body politic[12] to effectively "produce" the *virtù* not only of the state's leadership, but of his constituency as well.[13]

As in ancient Greece, sixteenth-century politics in Florence was very much a politics of warfare — a fertile setting in which *virtù* could be attained and exhibited. Francesco Guicciardini, a follower of Machiavelli, documented the tumultuous state in which Florence found itself at the turn of the Cinquecento in his *Storia d'Italia,* characterizing the year 1494 as "a year most unhappy for Italy and, indeed, the year, which headed all the following years of misery because it opened the door to

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[12] For a discussion of the tradition of constructing political language in terms of the body and its parts, see John M. Najemy, "The Republic's Two Bodies: Body Metaphors in Italian Renaissance Political Thought," in *Languages and Images of Renaissance Italy,* ed. Alison Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 238-262. Najemy fails to address the fact that the works he cites in his essay are by male authors — Aristotle, Alberti, Matteo Palmieri. Therefore, when referring to bodies as honorable or "well-managed" and "decorous and proportioned," authors are most likely referring to the male form. Likewise, when Najemy speaks of anxieties regarding the body expressed by these authors, these doubts are founded on the experiences of men.

[13] Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* p. 49.

an endless number of terrible calamities."[14] Political conflict was, no doubt, among the "calamities" to which Guicciardini referred, and oftentimes, such discords led to battle.

The Machiavellian Man was therefore not only a politician, but he was, unavoidably, also a warrior. To declare a ruler's and his government's ability to safeguard and to defend its people and its interests, representations of Machiavellian Masculinity were necessarily characterized by physical perfection. Supremely successful in battle and an outstanding specimen of corporeality, Michelangelo's *David* is an impeccable embodiment of Machiavellian *virtù.*

Michelangelo's *David*: Actualizing Machiavellian Masculinity

Originally intended for placement on one of the high buttresses of the Duomo, the *David* was instead assigned a post within the city's civic center, the piazza of the Signoria, in 1504. This move pointed to a "shift in symbolic accent"[15] that was made even more emphatic by the

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[14] Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia,* bk. 1, ch. 6 (Florence: First edition published in 1561), quoted in Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman,* p. 15. Among other "calamities," Guicciardini was most certainly referring to the French King Charles VIII's descent into Florence, spreading not only fear but syphilis as well.

[15] Charles Seymour, Jr., *Michelangelo's David: A Search for Identity* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), p. 57.

Giant's most obvious feature, its size. As the *David* is a prime example of Machiavellian Masculinity, a personification of the various attributes that comprise the Renaissance ideal of heroism, I focus here on the political significance of Michelangelo's *Giant.*

When it was part of the Quattrocento Prophet-program the *David,* along with twelve other monumental statues, was intended for placement "high around the east end of the Duomo."[16] These statues were meant to be colossal in scale not only to maximize their visual impact;[17] their monumental size also evoked a long tradition in Central Italian art whereby size was equated with virtue and power.[18] It is for this reason, for example, that images of God or Christ in medieval art are usually depicted larger in comparison to other figures within the same composition. Thus, the 1464 contract for a statue of *David* required from Agostino di Duccio a "figure of marble to be quarried at Carrara, nine braccia in height, at the scale of a giant."[19]

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[16] Ibid., p. 27.

[17] Ibid., p. 28.

[18] James Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005), p. 40.

[19] Document 441 of Giovanni Poggi's edition of the minutes of the Opera del Duomo, Florence. Published in *Il Duomo di Firenze* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1909), quoted in Seymour, *Michelangelo's David*, pp. 126-129.

When the statue was given its new secular designation, however, the *David,* with its monumental proportions, took on a meaning different from its original practical purpose — one more in line with the medieval strategy of articulating potency through size. It is very likely that the *David's* size mattered to the committee assigned to determine the fate of the statue when making its decision regarding the *Giant's* placement in 1504. The 1501 revival of the Prophet-program initiated by the chief patrons of the Duomo, the Arte della Lana, coincided with a rekindling of Florentine patriotism precipitated, in part, by the political crisis caused by Cesare Borgia,[20] whom Machiavelli esteemed as an exemplification of princely rule. The *David's* political significance was sealed upon the committee's decision to place the statue within the city's civic core: the sculpture was an assertion of the virtues of the Florentine Republic and its defensive capacity. In effect, the Piazza provided the stage on which the *David,* like numerous other depictions of Machiavellian Masculinity, performed its political meaning.

Michelangelo's depiction of an omnipotent *David* was clearly appropriate to the political and martial motivation behind the revitalization of the commission and was,

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[20] Seymour, *Michelangelo's David*, p. 38.

perhaps, an outgrowth of a Florentine practice in which visual talismans were produced to protect the city as a defensive mechanism: the Visconti threat of the Quattrocento, not unlike the peril presented in sixteenth-century Tuscany by the Borgia,[21] occasioned the commissioning of both Donatello's *St. George* (Bargello, Florence, c. 1416, fig. 1.18) and marble *David* (Uffizi, Florence, n.d., fig. 2.5).[22]

Michelangelo, probably aware of this precedent and of the perception that Donatello's statues were instrumental in maintaining Florentine liberty, drew heavily from Donatello's examples in designing his *Giant*. The Quattrocentesque characteristics of the figure, such as the long arm that ends with the strong right hand, are comparable to Donatello's campanile prophets. Moreover, the *David's* stance is similar to that of Donatello's marble *David* and the Orsanmichele *St. George*.[23]

Michelangelo was also inspired by the fifteenth-

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[21] Martha Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria* as Emblem of the Florentine Republic" (Ph.D. diss, University of Michigan, 1977), pp. 207-208. See also Seymour, *Michelangelo's David,* for a historical account of the commissioning of Michelangelo's *David*.

[22] See chapter 1, p. 72.

[23] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" pp. 200-202.

century humanist fascination with antique colossi.[24] In creating the *David,* Michelangelo was inspired by antique fragments, such as the Capitoline Museum's over-life-sized head of Constantine that was discovered toward the end of the fifteenth century. Michelangelo's *David* was, in fact, the first freestanding colossal statue of a nude figure to be made since antiquity.[25] Like colossi from antiquity, the gigantic *David*, as an expensive and prominent work of art, brought honor to its patron as a demonstration of good taste and magnificence.[26] The *Giant* was clearly intended to excite the spectator's awe.[27] Furthermore, like antique colossi, the *Giant's* political significance, given its placement at the Piazza, was amplified by its overwhelming physical stature.[28] The *David's* size lent the statue a certain grandness and superiority that accorded with

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[24] See Seymour's discussion of colossi in *Michelangelo's David,* pp. 33-35.

[25] Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body,* pp. 37-38.

[26] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 230.

[27] Sarah Blake McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," in *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture,* ed. Sarah Blake McHam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 165. The David was also placed on a low socle that did not compete with the statue to increase its impact on the viewer.

[28] Ibid., p. 164. See also Virginia Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1976).

Aristotle's belief that "it is not possible [for a ruler] to do fine deeds unless he has a degree of pre-eminence over [those he rules]."[29] From this point of view, it is likely that the 1504 committee placed the *David* prominently in the Piazza della Signoria to exploit Michelangelo's colossus and its outstanding physicality as an affirmation of Florentine hegemony.[30]

To further enhance the expression of strength, Michelangelo, perhaps inspired by Nicola Pisano's *Fortitude* (fig. 1.1), imbued the *David* with Herculean features. During the Renaissance, the myths of Hercules that stressed his valor and strength lent authority to the civic virtue associated with representations of David.[31]

Michelangelo also devised an expression of tension and potential force — David's *terribilità*[32] — to illustrate

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[29] Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. E. Barker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 259. See also Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body,* p. 54. Hall asserts that the size of the *David* articulated the "positive, righteous thinking that has given him superhuman powers."

[30] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria*," pp. 202-203. See also Seymour, *Michelangelo's David,* p. 57-58.

[31] For a different opinion, see Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 213. Fader opposes the view that Hercules is conflated in Michelangelo's *David.* Instead, she writes that this *David* "is maintained as an emblem of the Republic into the early sixteenth century."

[32] de Tolnay, "Donatello e Michelangelo," p. 266.

courage. In its secular location, the *David,* with this posture of power, represented the bravery needed in battle in defense of Florentine liberty.[33]

The political intent of protecting Florentine autonomy that the *David* personified paralleled Machiavelli's priority of safeguarding Florentine liberty while he served as the secretary of the second Cancelleria and adviser to Piero Soderini, the life-long *gonfaloniere* of Florence. During his tenure as civil servant from 1498-1512, Machiavelli created a new *milizia cittadina* in preparation for defense against the possible return of the Medici. *David* represented this type of *cittadino guerriero,* first exemplified by Donatello's *St. George,* but greatly idealized by Michelangelo.[34]

The blatant nudity of Michelangelo's colossus, in particular, is a key distinction from Donatello's models, especially when compared to Donatello's nude bronze *David* (Bargello, Florence, c. 1430, fig. 1.3). The sheer physicality of Michelangelo's *Giant* conveys a masculine superiority clearly absent from the adolescent body of

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[33] Ibid., p. 265.

[34] de Tolnay, "Donatello e Michelangelo," p.275. Michelangelo's study of the *Laocoön* and the *Torso Belvedere* informed his invention of a perfect and more potent race of humans. See also McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 156.

Donatello's bronze. The *gigante's* adult physicality reflected Aristotle's contention that masculine perfection was tantamount to excellence – a visual portrayal of good government and its rewards.[35]

Michelangelo's depiction of a nude *David* may have indeed inspired Machiavelli's notion regarding the importance of military autonomy. Machiavelli called attention to David's example when the shepherd boy set out to battle with Goliath:[36]

> I yet want to commit to memory one scene from the Old Testament for this purpose. When David offered himself to Saul to go fight with the Philistine Challenger Goliath, Saul, to give him spirit, armed him with his arms: which David, as soon as he had put them on, refused, saying that with them he could not make use of himself well, and therefore that he wanted to meet the enemy with his sling and his knife.[37]

The nudity of *David* alludes to the same biblical passage to which Machiavelli referred. Stripped of Saul's arms and equipped only with his sling, *David's* nudity and his stance of vigilance proclaimed unambiguously the Florentine government's preparedness against attack from its enemies.

Well into the Cinquecento, the statue's political

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[35] Butterfield, "New Evidence for the Iconography of David in Quattrocento Florence," p. 130.

[36] For Machiavelli's opinion on mercenary and auxiliary armies, see Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1532), trans. Daniel Donno (New York: Bantam Classic, 1984), pp. 50-53.

[37] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

significance had solidified. Vasari, discounting the original placement of the *David* at the Duomo, exploited the statue for its political relevance to promote the government of Duke Cosimo, to whom he dedicated the *Lives*. In his *vita* of Michelangelo, Vasari wrote:

> Whereupon Michelangelo made a model of wax, fashioning in it, as a device for the Palace, a young David with a sling in his hand, to the end that with justice, so those governing the city might defend her valiantly and govern her justly.[38]

Since the statue was not originally intended for placement at "the Palace," Vasari's appropriation of the *David's* political meaning was a ploy to obtain Medicean sympathy; explicit in Vasari's statement was how the *David* stood as a symbol for Cosimo's good government.

Machiavellian Political Theater & the Loggia dei Lanzi

Vasari's self-promotional reading of the *David* was an "act," a conscious performance that exemplified the

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[38] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, p. 654. Fader does not agree with Vasari's interpretation of the David since it was not initially intended for the Piazza and the absence of a sword "does not clearly suggest connections with governmental justice." Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 204. Although her discussion on the "swordlessness" of the *Gigante* is compelling, even without the sword, the *David's* ability to defend and govern is accentuated by his powerful physique and his size. Fader herself observes, "Although the David is poised to avert danger, his confidence and athletic portrayal suggest that he has already been victorious."

theatricality essential to Machiavelli's politics. This Machiavellian theater was intended to conceal a legacy of anxieties about masculinity bequeathed by Aristotle and revealed in Machiavelli's constant need to prove the primacy of being a man.[39]

Both authors' apprehensive assertions regarding maleness stemmed from the ultimate unattainability of the ideals of Machiavellian Masculinity. For Machiavelli, the realities of Florentine politics exacerbated these uncertainties. In chapter 24 of the *Prince,* he wrote:

> Let them not accuse fortune of having lost them, but rather their own indolence: because, never having thought in calm times that times might change (which is the common defect of men, discounting the storm during the calm), then when adverse times came, they thought to flee rather than to defend themselves; and they hoped that the peoples, bothered by the insolence of the victors, might call them back.[40]

In Machiavelli's estimation, politicians, marred by "indolence" and "the common defect of men," could no longer achieve true manliness in the public, political arena because trust in government had been devalued and violated.

Art commissioned to fill the abyss between the public's expectations and the realities of its leadership was a compromise solution for man's inability to conduct

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[39] Introduction, p. 8.

[40] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 90.

himself based on a high standard of manliness that, in Machiavelli's opinion, was best exemplified by the ancients, particularly the Romans. This was a standard that Machiavelli understood well and aspired to in his writings. He was, however, constantly disappointed by the shortcomings of Florentine powerholders.[41] Bridging the gap between the political reality of Florence and the political idealism to which Machiavelli aspired are the sometimes absurdly over-muscularized depictions of the Machiavellian Hero, i.e., the exaggerated musculature of Michelangelo's male bodies. Likewise, the abundance of representations of Machiavellian Masculinity in Central Italy was intended to create the appearance of political competence.

Machiavellian politics was therefore a politics of appearances[42] intended to project an idealized reality to conceal the human frailties of rulers. Public monuments, as embodiments of civic and dynastic values, helped to collectively mold citizens' perceptions of their city and

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[41] For a discussion of Machiavelli's position on Italy's leadership, see Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* pp. 46, 67. According to Pitkin, in the *Art of War* (1519-1520), Machiavelli "blames Italy's weakness on its leaders' lack of *virtù,* their unwillingness to take the trouble to act, and their ignorance of what to do."

[42] Brown, *Manhood and Politics,* p. 103.

their government.[43] Public scrutiny required the impression of political success, necessitating outward demonstrations of power and authority. In this political theater, visual expressions of the Heroic Male Ideal publicly declared a patron's/ politician's *virtù*.

Machiavelli's political theater played out with astonishing candor in the Piazza della Signoria's Loggia dei Lanzi, where the expression of *virtù* was couched in terms of sexual warfare. The statues in the Loggia were explicit allegorical expressions of authority that typified the archetypal battle of the sexes in Machiavelli's gendered political system. He wrote,

> Fortune is a woman; and if one wants to keep her under, it is necessary to beat her and knock her.[44]

Machiavelli's assertion very well could have been the guiding principle behind the sculptural theme of the Loggia. Man's conquest and domination of women was fundamental to Machiavelli's political structure and was at the core of his advice to the exemplary Prince. This premise, in fact, affected the configuration of statues

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[43] McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," pp. 149-150.

[44] Machiavelli, *The Prince,* p. 93. See also Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* pp. 109-115. Pitkin discusses Machiavelli's gendered construction of the opposition between *virtù* and *fortuna.*

that changed repeatedly throughout the Loggia's history.[45]

The seemingly ever-changing sculptural arrangement of the loggia signals a disturbing misogyny,[46] evident in the multiple displacements of Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* (Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, c. 1446-50, fig. 2.6). Francesco di Lorenzo Filarete, a representative of the *signoria,* objected to the inclusion of Donatello's *Judith* in this outdoor gallery, campaigning instead for her replacement by Michelangelo's *David.* In 1582, she was forever banished from the Loggia when Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine* took her place.

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[45] Pio Fedi's *Rape of Polyxena,* 1866, continues the depiction of misogyny well into the nineteenth century. Perhaps to mitigate this unsettling effect, Giambologna's *Hercules and the Centaur,* 1599, was moved here in 1842, as well as a copy of a Greek original *Menelaus and Patroclus*, a gift to Cosimo I from Pope Pius V, placed here in 1841.

[46] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" pp. 128-130. Fader notes the insufficient admiration given Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* in modern scholarship despite the lavish praise from Renaissance critics. She observes that comparable analytical attention given to Donatello's male statues, such as H.W. Janson's elaboration on the marble *David,* does not exist for the *Judith.* Inadequate study of the *Judith* may have resulted from Vasari's poor record of the statue's history. Despite praise for the *Judith*, the biographer may have suspected that the statue carried negative connotations because he omitted information about the *Judith's* origins. The transfer of the Judith from the Medici garden to the *Piazza* symbolized the expulsion of the Medici. Therefore, Vasari may have deliberately excluded a detailed discussion to avoid invoking anti-Medicean sentiments that might appear as disloyalty to his patrons, and thus undermine his personal interests.

Based on the biblical tale of a woman who slew an Assyrian general to free the Jewish nation, the narrative of *Judith and Holofernes* represented virtue's victory over vice, liberty's triumph over tyranny. Yet, Donatello's statue also delivered an incongruent message given the eventual program of the Loggia: *fortuna's* triumph over *virtù.*

From this point of view, the subject of a woman killing a man conflicted with the programmatic purpose of the Loggia, thus justifying *Judith's* removal from this political forum.[47] Not surprisingly, any possible objections to the portrayal of a man killing a woman, defiantly portrayed in Cellini's *Perseus,* or of a man raping a woman, as in Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine,* have been successfully squelched; these statues remain where they were originally placed. As the "Sculpture of Princes," the *Perseus* and the *Rape of the Sabine* were commissioned by the Medici to express dynastic continuity, magnanimity,[48] and

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[47] Yael Even, "The Loggia dei Lanzi: A Showcase of Female Subjugation," *Woman's Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (1991), p. 10. See also Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 182. Filarete's three objections were that Judith is "segno mortifero," that it is not good for a woman to kill a man, and that since the installation of the sculpture under bad stars, things have gotten worse starting with the loss of Pisa.

[48] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 14.

Duke Cosimo I's personal triumph over *fortuna*.

Perseus and Medusa **and the** ***Rape of the Sabine Women***

Both the *Perseus* and the *Rape of the Sabine*, according to Yael Even, present "mythical feats as sexualized conquests wherein male protagonists subdue women," thus fulfilling man's "longed for control over women."[49] These statues act out the struggle between *virtù* and *fortuna* where *virtù* is everything manly, while its unequivocal opposite is female fortune.

Virtù — already etymologically predisposed to exclude women because of its derivation from the Latin *vir,* meaning man — was a masculine entitlement attainable only by men. *Fortuna,* its "most contemptible and dangerous" enemy, was Machiavellian Masculinity's effeminate "other."[50] For Machiavelli, anything effeminate was commensurate with everything unheroic, and thus a threat to masculinity. He defined *Fortuna* as a woman who

> turns states and kingdoms upside down as she pleases; she deprives the just of the good that she freely gives to the unjust. This unstable goddess and fickle deity often sets the undeserving on a throne to which

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[49] Even, "The Loggia dei Lanzi: A Showcase of Female Subjugation," p. 18.

[50] Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* pp. 25, 109-110. Although effeminacy does not necessarily equate with femininity, Machiavelli repeatedly stated his contempt for women as personifications of everything he condemned in effeminacy.

> the deserving never attains. She times events as suits her; she raises up, she puts us down without pity, without law or right…. And this aged witch has two faces, one of them fierce, the other mild; and as she turns, now she does not see you, now she beseeches you, now she menaces you.[51]

The conquest of *fortuna,* metaphorically framed in terms of sexual conflict, featured predominantly in Machiavellian political writing and seems to have informed Cellini's conception of the *Perseus* and Francesco de' Medici's thinking behind his christening of Giambologna's statue as a *Rape of a Sabine*. The basis for this metaphor was a Roman tradition that imagined *fortuna* struggling against *virtus* as the super-masculine Hercules – a figure from antiquity revived during the Renaissance: Nicola Pisano's *Fortitude* and Michelangelo's *David* are examples. The Herculean bodies of the Loggia's male protagonists – Cellini's Perseus and the Roman rapist of a Sabine woman – articulated political strength in Machiavellian terms. These unabashed displays of male sexually superiority are further highlighted by the imperfection of the female forms. The viewer only sees "a fractional part"[52] of the Medusa and the Sabine woman; lacking integrity, the female

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[51] Nicolo Machiavelli, *Tercets on Fortune*, in *The Chief Works and Others,* trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1965), vol. 2, p. 746.

[52] Carroll, "The Erotics of Absolutism," p. 143.

bodies in both statues have become "fetishlike."[53]

In his autobiography, Cellini's high praise for the *Perseus and Medusa* is brazenly self-promotional:

> Your Most Illustrious Excellency has made it possible for me to produce, in the midst of the greatest artists in the world, an important and very elaborate work: it has been praised more than any other work ever displayed to the marvelous Florentine school.[54]

This act of self-aggrandizement also indicated the statue's significance to his patron, Cosimo I, who commissioned the work in 1545. The narrative moment portrayed by Cellini, depicting Perseus' unequivocal victory, portrayed Cosimo's advocacy of strict justice — a warning against those who might harbor anti-Medicean sentiment spurred by the end of another Republican era.[55] In this context, the *Perseus* was a symbol of Cosimo I's absolute power.[56] Specifically, the *Perseus* proclaimed Cosimo's ascension to dukedom. The statue appropriately recalled the decapitation of prisoners — captured during the 1537 battle of Montemurlo — that took place at the Piazza. This victory at Montemurlo effectively

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini,* trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 378.

[55] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 272.

[56] Even, "The *Loggia dei Lanzi:* A Showcase of Female Subjugation," p. 10.

catapulted Cosimo into power, securing his political position in Florence.

The duke's choice to commission a work representing a subject from Greek mythology was a deliberate departure from the Old Testament themes exemplified by republican patronage.[57] Unlike *David,* the *Perseus* was not associated with Florence. Perhaps in an effort to distinguish ducal Florence from the city's republican past, the *Perseus* became part of an artistic program in the Piazza della Signoria of allegorical allusions to the duchy.

In part, the *Perseus* may have been commissioned to downplay the effect of Donatello's disturbing depiction of a female hero beheading a man.[58] The differences between the two works support this proposal. Whereas the *Judith* is fully dressed, apparently horrified by the murder she is committing, *Perseus* is emphatically nude, his physical perfection a declaration of Cosimo's masculinity and possession of Machiavellian *virtù.* Cellini's *Perseus* revels in his triumph, while the very human qualities of Cellini's Medusa heighten the expression of sexual dominance: in this version, a sensual woman instead of a female monster was

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[57] McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 168.

[58] Even, "The Loggia dei Lanzi: A Showcase of Female Subjugation," p. 11.

the object of Perseus' conquest. The placement of Medusa's body at the foot of Cosimo/Perseus differs from early depictions of the mythological hero, and the presence of the Gorgon's dismembered body stresses man's domination over woman, *virtù's* victory over *fortuna.*

Like the *Perseus* and other works in the Piazza della Signoria, Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine* also bore political and dynastic significance. With the third figure at the base, this sculptural group mirrored compositionally the "formal structure of both the *Judith* and the *Perseus.*"[59] Unfortunately, the actual circumstances of Giambologna's commission are unclear. Although he did not originally intend the work to be a *Rape of the Sabine,* Giambologna may have been aware of its intended placement beneath the loggia. The topic of female subjugation obviously suited the loggia's general theme, but it was Duke Francesco de' Medici who named the work upon the statue's completion.

By choosing a subject that elevated an abduction scenario into a heroic enterprise,[60] Francesco, in effect, chose a topic that dignified sexual violence to distinguish

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[59] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 270.

[60] Carroll, "The Erotics of Absolutism," p. 144. Carroll writes, "[the *Rape of a Sabine*] at once thematizes the grand duke's dominion over his subjects and rivals, and at the same time… the dominion those male subjects may have hoped to enjoy over women in their own homes."

his leadership. This choice validated Machiavelli's belief that princely rulers occupied a privileged position above the law.[61] The duke's appropriation of this work for political purposes and its placement in the loggia imbued the statue with a deep layer of Machiavellian meaning – that political power, courageously earned, was justifiable at any cost. The statue affirmed "patriarchal notions" that paralleled artistic depictions of rape with heroism.[62]

Cosimo de' Medici: Epitomizing Machiavellian Masculinity

The abovementioned works for the Medici demonstrate the duke's patent awareness of the significance and the effects of portrayals of heroic masculinity. Cosimo, fully engaged in the Machiavellian political masquerade, also endeavored to convey this same message of political power and military might in ducal portraits – ones that actually bear his likeness, instead of the allegorical portrayals of ducal authority discussed above.

In these portraits of Duke Cosimo, great emphasis is placed on the values of Machiavellian Masculinity – Cosimo's capacity to govern and to defend: in Cellini's

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[61] McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 168.

[62] Even, "The *Loggia dei Lanzi*: A Showcase of Female Subjugation, p. 12.

bronze bust from 1545-47(Museo Nazionale, Florence, fig. 2.7), the duke personified Roman imperialism and in Agnolo Bronzino's *Portrait of Cosimo I* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 1545, fig. 2.8) he is fully garbed in armor. However, although both images were meant to articulate political capacity, the painting was more in line with the duke's objectives. Cosimo disliked portraits that came close to revealing his personality.[63] The veracity of Cellini's bust of Cosimo — the wart on the cheek, the thin beard, and an overall lack of authority — was objectionable to the duke, so that in 1557, the bust was banished to Elba.[64] In contrast, Bronzino's Uffizi portrait was received well[65] because it sufficiently masked any suggestion of Cosimo's personality, celebrating instead his achievements

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[63] Charles McQorquodale, "'Most Liberal Prince': Portraits of Cosimo I de' Medici," *Connoisseur London* 199, no. 799 (1978), p. 27.

[64] Paul William Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de Medici, Duke of Florence* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), p. 4. See also Kurt Forster, "Metaphors of Rule: Political Ideology and History in the Portraits of Cosimo I de' Medici," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institutes in Florenz* 15 (1971), p. 79. Forster, in summing up Cosimo's problem with the portrait, describes the bronze bust of Cosimo as "the most vivid and telling likeness of the duke." He also suggests that the leonine representation of the duke was intended to identify Cosimo with Florence and the early Medici since it recalls the Marzocco, an emblem of the Florentine republic.

[65] McCorquodale, "'Most Liberal Prince'," p. 30.

as military man and ruler.[66] The differences in the critical fortunes of Cellini's bronze and Bronzino's painting reveal how Cosimo consciously based his aesthetic considerations on an art object's effectiveness to convey political credibility. This sensibility will be further explored in later ducal portraits: Vasari's *Apotheosis of Cosimo* (Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1560s, fig. 2.9), Vincenzo Danti's *Cosimo as Augustus/Hercules* (Museo Nazionale, Florence, 1568-72, fig. 2.10), and Giambologna's posthumous *Equestrian Monument of Duke Cosimo* (Piazza della Signoria, Florence, 1594, fig. 2.11).

In Bronzino's painting, the calculated portrayal of the duke as "armored yet not bellicose, defensive yet non-combative" served its dual political and diplomatic

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[66] Robert Simon, "Bronzino's Portrait of Cosimo I in Armour," *Burlington Magazine* 125/966 (September 1983), p. 527. This portrait, well-liked by the duke, was replicated numerous times. The success of the portrait may also have been due to its message of dynastic continuity. The *broncone,* a Medici *impresa* of a laurel plant that signifies the regeneration of the Medici clan and rule, is painted next to Cosimo to link him to the primary branch of the family. The same *impresa* can be seen in Jacopo Pontormo's posthumous portrait of Cosimo il Vecchio. See also Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de' Medici,* p. 6; and Robert Simon, *Bronzino's Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1982), p. 119-126. Simon writes that as part of a program designed by Paolo Giovio, early versions of this portrait included the broncone to alleviate dynastic insecurity. As the Duke's power became increasingly secure, the *impresa* was no longer necessary.

purposes.[67] Cosimo's success at Montemurlo, his confirmation as duke, and his 1539 marriage to Eleonora, daughter of the viceroy of Naples, prompted this portrayal as commander-in-arms[68] — even though the duke ably dodged direct participation in warfare.[69] Bronzino's adept fabrication of the appearance of Cosimo's military prowess, however, insured the portrait's unequivocal success.

"It is better to be feared than loved,"[70] according to Machiavelli, and Bronzino's portrait imparted this message because Cosimo "wanted others to be afraid of him, because he himself was afraid of them."[71] Cosimo feared his rivals and foreign immigrants, and he had nothing but distrust for his subjects.[72] The round spiked plates on Cosimo's armor increase the "physical and psychological distance of the

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[67] Simon, *Bronzino's Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici*, p. 147.

[68] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," p. 75.

[69] McCorquodale, "'Most Liberal Prince'," p. 31; and Simon, *Bronzino's Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici*, pp. 143-144.

[70] Machiavelli, *The Prince,* p. 61.

[71] Eveline Schlumberger, "Cosimo I de' Medici or the Celebration of Art," *Connaissance des arts* 340 (June 1980), p. 37.

[72] Ibid.

duke: they preclude intimacy."[73] Moreover, the jewel-like polish and flawless quality of the paint surface of Bronzino's picture provided an additional barrier that helped to elevate the duke into iconic status. The painting emits a feeling of apprehension that heightens its inaccessibility, distancing Cosimo considerably from the viewer.[74]

More than fifteen years after Bronzino's portrait was completed, the staging of Cosimo's political power had amplified as the duke's political confidence matured. Art in the service of politics had become habitual, apparent in Vasari's inventive representation of the duke in the ceiling of the Palazzo Vecchio's Salone dei Cinquecento (1560s) — a showcase of Cosimo's expertise in historical manipulation and political myth-making. Specifically, in the *Apotheosis of Cosimo I* (fig. 2.9), Vasari's strikingly theatrical composition dramatized the duke's iconic position. In this effective staging of Cosimo's political conceit,[75] the duke, as the painting's main attraction,

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[73] Simon, *Bronzino's Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici*, p. 140.

[74] Michael Levy, "A Prince of Court Painters: Bronzino," *Apollo* 76 (May 1962), p. 165.

[75] Paola Tinagli, "The Identity of the Prince: Cosimo de' Medici, Giorgio Vasari and the Ragionamenti," in *Fashioning Identities in Renaissance Art,* ed. Mary Rogers (Aldershot,

receives the civic crown from *Florenzia* in gratitude for his preservation of the Florentine Republic.[76] The *Apotheosis* represented the height of "the cult of Cosimo's person and *virtù.*"[77]

The expression of ducal preeminence continues in Vincenzo Danti's *Cosimo as Augustus/Hercules*[78] (Museo Nazionale, Florence, 1568-72, fig. 2.10). Perhaps the most provocative of all the ducal portraits, this sculpture was the only statue of Cosimo erected in Florence during the duke's lifetime. Unlike Cellini's *Perseus,* Danti's statue is neither cloaked in allegory nor is it a metaphorical

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UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2000), pp. 189-196. Tinagli discusses how Vasari's *Ragionamenti sopra le invenzioni delle storie dipinte ne le stanze nuove del Palazzo Ducale* describes and explains the fresco cycles in the ducal apartments, and how both the *Ragionamenti* and the paintings themselves created "Cosimo's identity as a ruler" and were especially significant in shaping "his image as the ideal Cinquecento prince."

[76] Henk Th. van Veen, "Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda of Cosimo I de Medici," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992), pp. 200-203.

[77] Janet Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty And Destiny In Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, And The Two Cosimos* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 251.

[78] Roger J. Crum, "Cosmos, the World of Cosimo: The Iconography of the Uffizi Façade," *The Art Bulletin* 62/2 (June 1989), p. 246. Crum's identification of Danti's statue as Augustus/Hercules facilitates assertions made in this study regarding this portrait. Cosimo's identifications with Augustus and Hercules also associated him with Emperor Charles V, whose support of Cosimo's rule was critical to the Duke's political aspirations.

representation of the duke. Instead, Cosimo, dressed *all'antica*, *assumed* the part of Augustus/Hercules. Cosimo's Augustan appearance, as a blatant evocation of imperial rule, exemplified the act of role-playing characteristic of Machiavellian political theater. To strengthen Cosimo's association to Augustan imperialism, Danti's statue was originally placed on one of the cross-arms of the Uffizi, which, with colonnades inspired by the Roman Forum, recalls not only antique architecture, but also a system of government based on classical principles.[79] In concert with Vincenzo Borghini's program for the Salone dei Cinquecento, *Cosimo as Augustus*[80] asserted the duke's role as the founder of Florence and inheritor of Cosimo il Vecchio's legacy.[81]

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[79] McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 176; Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de Medici,* p. 44; and Stefania Iacopozzi, "Il ciclo scultoreo degli Uffizi: genesi e sviluppo di un progetto non solo celebrativo," in *Gli uomini illustri del Loggiato degli Uffizi: Storia e restauro,* ed. Magnolia Scudieri (Firenze: Edifir Edizioni Firenze, 2001), p. 17.

[80] For a discussion of Cosimo's cosmological identification as a new Augustus, see Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," pp. 85-86. Forster labels this statue the "sculptural summation" of the myth of Cosimo as Augustus. See also Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny,* pp. 269 ff. She discusses the further appropriation of Augustan imagery in Cosimo's *imprese.*

[81] Benedetto Betti, *Orazione funerale di Benedetto Betti* (Florence: Giunti, 1574), p. 12. "Imperoche il Gran Cosimo secondo di tal nome Padre della Patria à imitazione di quell Cosimo di cui meritissimamenti egli haveva il Nome…," quoted in Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of*

In Danti's statue, the establishment of dynastic continuity with a well-loved Medici ancestor helped to shape popular attitudes toward the duke's rule. However, great differences marked the patronage of Cosimo il Vecchio and Cosimo I. Whereas the former appreciated art for its aesthetic worth and employed art for diplomatic and propagandistic purposes, for the younger Cosimo, art only had value when it served to promote his political ideology.[82] Duke Cosimo exploited art simply as an instrument of statecraft.[83]

To solidify the duke's Florentine ties, Danti also invoked Hercules.[84] This association affirmed Cosimo's allegiance to Florence because Renaissance Florentines also viewed Hercules, featured in Florence's official seal, as the city's mythical founder.[85] As Augustus and Hercules, the statue evoked the duke's Medicean ancestry to glorify

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Cosimo I de' Medici, p. 24. See also Paola Corrias, "Don Vincenzio Borghini e l'iconologia del potere alla corte di Cosimo I e di Francesco I de' Medici," *Storia dell'Arte* 81 (1994), pp. 169-181.

[82] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," p. 103.

[83] Ibid., p. 65, note 1.

[84] Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny,* pp. 143-152.

[85] Crum, "Cosmos, the World of Cosimo," p. 245. Also Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de' Medici,* p. 79.

Cosimo as the founder of a new Tuscan state.[86]

After Cosimo's death, his son, the third duke of Florence, Ferdinando I, perpetuated the perception of his father's military acumen when he commissioned the equestrian portrait of Cosimo (fig. 2.11). It is significant that there were no bronze equestrian monuments in Florence until Giambologna's statue. Previous representations of leaders on horseback — Paolo Uccello's *John Hawkwood* (1436) and Andrea Castagno's *Niccolò Tolentino* (1456) — were produced in the cheaper medium of fresco,[87] which required that they be housed inside the comparatively less-visible Duomo. On the other hand, the statue of Cosimo was placed conspicuously in the center of the Piazza della Signoria.

Cosimo had already fashioned the piazza as the Florentine equivalent of the Roman Capitoline Hill, realizing the latter's significance as a symbol of good government. The evocation of the civic myth of Florence as a New Rome was an important message of the sculptures at the piazza,[88] and hence, the *Equestrian Monument of Duke*

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[86] Van Veen, "Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda of Cosimo I de' Medici," p. 200.

[87] McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 177.

[88] Ibid., p. 161.

Cosimo resembled the *Marcus Aurelius* in Rome. The location of this equestrian monument was also intended to recall the Roman statue. Removed from the papal palace at St. John Lateran in 1537, the *Marcus Aurelius* was placed squarely in the middle of the Roman Campidoglio.[89] The genre's recollection of antiquity was not lost on the Medici as the statue of Cosimo was positioned in the middle of the Florentine Piazza to emulate this Roman precedent.

This image of Cosimo as a *condottiere* — a warrior in the service of the state — recalls classical notions of courage, loyalty, and virtue associated with depictions of horsemen.[90] The representation of the duke as a man of war, like Bronzino's Uffizi portrait, was meant to convey the illusion of Cosimo's military success.

In these various portraits, the representation of Cosimo as himself, free of allegory, emphasized the absolutist politics of the duke's rule. As a result of the transformation of Florence into a duchy, and as time afforded the duke increased political security, allegorical allusion no longer suited the goals of the new structure of

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[89] Fader, "Sculpture in the *Piazza della Signoria,*" p. 276.

[90] Laurie Schneider Adams, *Italian Renaissance Art* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), p. 125.

government.[91] This new mode of ducal representation was an effort to obstruct any reminiscences of the Republic.[92]

Although Cosimo's strategic transfer of residence to the Palazzo Vecchio created the appearance of Republican leadership, the Piazza and the Palazzo della Signoria effectively became Piazza and Palazzo Ducale – affirming the demise of the Republic and the establishment and insurance of dynastic ducal rule in Florence. Cosimo's visual propaganda actually aimed to prove that the ducal government was the fulfillment of the promise of the Florentine Republic.[93] Feigning a Republican aura helped to conceal the imperialistic reality of Cosimo's government.[94]

Cosimo, in fact, rejected republicanism. The citizenry, as a potential embodiment of unpredictable *fortuna,* was not served well by republican rule designed to

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[91] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," p. 65; McHam, "Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence," p. 176.

[92] Although much has been said about the Duke's hesitation to represent himself in public in a political context, the visual evidence seems contradictory. See van Veen, "Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda of Cosimo I de' Medici," p. 297, note 45, for a summary of the scholarship. See also pp. 207-208, where Van Veen suggests that the reproduction of the Duke's likeness in the Salone dei Cinquecento or the Uffizi façade clearly contradicts this characterization of Cosimo's patronage.

[93] Crum, "Cosmos, the World of Cosimo," p. 237.

[94] Schlumberger, "Cosimo I de' Medici or the Celebration of Art," p. 37.

"enervate and weaken all other bodies in order to augment its own."[95] In Machiavelli's estimation, the constituency, waiting to be given form by her leader, was "untamed, aggressive, and predatory."[96] By implication, therefore, the body politic was served best by the iron hand of an almighty duke.

The expression of omnipotence in ducal portraiture was of paramount importance so that theater prevailed over reality to conceal and contain the truth that Cosimo was a fallible human instead of the immortal leader these portraits endeavored to project; the "image" of Cosimo mattered more than the real Cosimo.[97] These depictions of Cosimo were visualizations of Machiavellian Masculinity, where political theater played to maximum effect to ensure political immortality. The roles Cosimo assumed dramatized a political agenda of creating the impression of effective leadership and dynastic continuity. *Virtù* exuded from these portraits that depict Cosimo's political and military expertise. They are outright displays of political *sprezzatura* that projected an image of "codified behavior,

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[95] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere,* ed. M. Martelli (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), p. 150, quoted in Najemy, "The Republic's Two Bodies," p. 259.

[96] Najemy, "The Republic's Two Bodies," p. 258.

[97] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," p. 89.

cool control, and a certain blasé attitude."[98]

The Male Body and Artistic Theory

I now turn to a discussion of how the artistic command of *disegno* was demonstrated through representations of the Heroic Male Ideal. I examine this Cinquecento concept by assessing Giorgio Vasari's assertions regarding *disegno* and how his contentions may have been anticipated in Michelangelo's *God Creating Adam*.

The art-theoretical formulation that considered the depiction of the perfect male body as a revelation of artistic competence was unmistakably tied to contemporary beliefs about gender that esteemed the male form.[99] Also a recollection of Aristotle's sexual hierarchy, this construction undoubtedly inspired this passage from Vasari's *proemio* to the *Lives*:

> But I will surely say that of both one and the other of these arts the design, which is their foundation, nay rather, the very soul that conceives and nourishes within itself all the parts of man's intellect, was already most perfect before the creation of all other things, when the Almighty God, having made the great body of the world and having adorned the heavens with their exceeding bright lights, descended lower with His intellect into the clearness of the air and the solidity of the earth, and, shaping man, discovered, together

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[98] Ibid., p. 103.

[99] Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa*, p. 37. *Disegno* itself was considered masculine. Art theorists including Vasari referred to *disegno* as "il padre."

> with the lovely creation of all things, the first form of sculpture; from which man afterwards, step by step (and this may not be denied), as from a true pattern, there were taken statues, sculptures, and the science of pose and of outline; and for the first pictures (whatsoever they were), softness, harmony, and the concord in discord that comes from light and shade. Thus, then, the first model whence there issued the first image of man was a lump of clay, and not without reason, seeing that the Divine Architect of time and of nature, being Himself most perfect, wished to show in the imperfection of the material the way to add and to take away; in the same manner wherein the good sculptors and painters are wont to work, who, adding and taking away in their models, bring their imperfect sketches to that final perfection which they desire. He gave to man that most vivid color of flesh, whence afterwards there were drawn for painting, from the mines of the earth, the colors themselves for the counterfeiting of all those things that are required for pictures.[100]

In his characterization of God's creation of Adam, Vasari implied that *disegno* manifested first and foremost through sculpture — a proposition tied to the Central Italian predilection for the medium.[101] Even in two-dimensional works of art, sculptural plasticity, delineated through contour and variations in linear density, was highly desirable. In other words *disegno,* understood here as outline or circumscription, was essential to highlighting structural and plastic values, especially in depictions of the human form. The authoritative depiction of the human figure, thus, was a demonstration of an artist's command of

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[100] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, p. 27.

[101] See chapter 1, passim.

disegno.[102] Specifically, the idealized and perfected male body was conducive to achieving this desired sculpturality through outlines because of its pronounced muscularity.

Considering Vasari's perspective, the Sistine Chapel *God Creating Adam* (fig. 2.3) is a compelling illustration of how an artist's mastery of the male form was tantamount to his grasp of *disegno.* The creation of Adam was a prodigious display of God's comprehension of *disegno*, and, like God, an artist, in order to excel in *disegno,* must master the representation of the male figure.

This link between *disegno* and the male form seems to underlie Giambologna's conception of a statue that was given the label "Rape of the Sabine" after its completion. Rafaello Borghini wrote in *Il riposo* (1584) that the original purpose of the statue was indeed not political. Instead, the statue was

> made solely to show his [Giambologna's] excellence in art, and without having any subject in mind, a bold youth who snatches a most beautiful girl from an old

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[102] Maurice Poirier, "The Role of the Concept of Disegno in Mid-Sixteenth Century Florence," in *The Age of Vasari: A Loan Exhibition Under the High Patronage of His Excellency, Egidio Ortana the Ambassador of Italy to the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), pp. 64-65. See also Poirier, "Studies on the Concepts of Disegno, Invenzione, and Colore in 16th and 17th Century Italian Art and Theory" (PhD. diss., New York University, 1976), pp. 29-34.

man.[103]

The artist, therefore, intended the *Rape of the Sabine* as a display of talent; the beauty of Giambologna's male figure is accentuated in this depiction of brute strength, powerfully portrayed through the manhandling of a Sabine woman. Beyond the political implications suggested by the perfection of body possessed by Giambologna's rapist —the triumph of masculine *virtù* over feminine *fortuna* — the male form in this work was also a demonstration of artistic *virtù,* the sculptor's mastery of *disegno.*

More than simply a demonstration of the Cinquecento understanding of the Heroic Male Body's capacity to signify artistic virtuosity, Michelangelo's *God Creating Adam* also communicated theological meaning. Particularly, his portrayal of a completely formed Adam suggests that this is more than simply a narration of the first man's conception.[104] Michelangelo may have also endeavored to illustrate the mystery of the first man as Christ in this fresco.

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[103] Rafaello Borghini, *Il riposo* (1584), p. 72, quoted in John Shearman, *Mannerism* (London: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 162.

[104] Paul Barolsky, *Michelangelo and the Finger of God* (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, 2003), pp. 41-53. See also Patricia Emison, "Michelangelo's Adam, Before and After Creation," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 112, no. 1437 (1988), pp. 115-116. The author discusses other interpretations of the Sistine *Creation of Adam.*

Leo Steinberg observes that among all the anthropomorphic figures surrounding God in the fresco, the clarity with which Michelangelo rendered the perfection of Adam's body is mirrored only in one other instance: the child upon whom God's left hand rests was painted with the same legibility as Adam (fig. 2.12).[105] In creating this visual parallel, Michelangelo asserted the theological correspondence of Adam and Christ. The thumb and forefinger of God are impressed upon the child's shoulder in the same way that a priest would hold the Host.[106] The child is, thus, Christ in eucharistic form – an allusion to the doctrine of transubstantiation or the moment in the celebration of mass when bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. This representational parallel – legibility unique to Adam and the child-as-eucharistic host – establishes the theological equivalence of Adam's and Christ's bodies because the child is, in effect, Christ himself.

The concept of Adam as the prefiguration of Christ is also expressed through Michelangelo's rendition of a

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[105] Leo Steinberg, "Who's Who in Michelangelo's Creation of Adam," *Art Bulletin* 74 (December 1992), p. 559.

[106] This suggestion was first made by Michael Stolbach in an unpublished undergraduate paper entitled "Two-Finger Exercise" (1974). See Steinberg's discussion in "Who's Who in Michelangelo's Creation of Adam," p. 557-558.

patently flawless Adam;[107] his penis is in full view to assert his maleness, and hence, the perfection of his/Christ's body. The depiction of Adam's faultless corporeality with a graceful yet bold muscularity declared, as well, God's – and Michelangelo's – grasp of *disegno.* The artist's depiction of Adam's perfect body visually supported Vasari's assessment that God had mastered *disegno* when he created Adam.

This Vasarian conception of *disegno* effectively established the human figure as the "central subject of painting."[108] For Vasari, excellence in painting was equivalent to overcoming the challenges of representing the nude figure.[109] Similarly, for Michelangelo, depicting the nude body was "the only possible area of absolute perfection in art."[110] Ludovico Dolce concurred that Michelangelo was unsurpassed in representations of muscular

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[107] See the introduction, pp. 15-16.

[108] Poirier, "The Role of the Concept of Disegno," p. 64.

[109] Maurice Poirier, "*Disegno* In Titian: Dolce's Critical Challenge to Michelangelo," in *Tiziano e Venezia, convegno internazionale di studi, Venezia, 1976* (Vicenza: N. Pozza, 1980), p. 250.

[110] Svetlana Alpers, "Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's Lives," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960), p. 208.

nudes in complex foreshortenings and movements.[111] Indeed, the figural proportions devised by Michelangelo *were* the proportions from which the measure of an artist's mastery of *disegno* was gauged,[112] and unfailingly, Michelangelo applied these proportions to depictions of the male form.

Self-Authorship, Artistic Autonomy, and Humanism

In creating Adam in his own image, God effectively recreated himself. When painting images of men, male artists, created to resemble their maker, were therefore like God because they, too, perpetuated the reproduction of

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[111] Mark Roskill, *"Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 170 ff. See also Claudia Hattendorf, "Franceso Bocchi on *Disegno," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 55 (1992), p. 272. Hattendorf states that Bocchi also defined *disegno* in relation to the proportions and anatomy of the human body.

[112] Poirier, "*Disegno* In Titian," p. 250. See also Hattendorf, "Francesco Bocchi on *Disegno,*" p. 274. Dolce and Bocchi defended Titian and Andrea del Sarto, respectively, by attacking the definition of *disegno* advanced by Michelangelo artistically and by Vasari theoretically. Because *disegno* was such an important artistic criterion, it had to be redefined to suit a specific artist's strength. For Dolce and Bocchi, *disegno* had to do with form not related to the outlines; both these authors considered *disegno* and *colorito* overlapping artistic properties. The prevailing Central Italian significance of *disegno* in the Cinquecento, however, was based on Michelangelo's representations of the proportions and anatomy of the idealized male body. Only by ignoring this standard of human proportions were Dolce and Bocchi able to promote Titian's and Andrea's works successfully over Michelangelo's.

their own bodies. This analogy between artist and God is an expansion of the Tuscan aphorism, *ogni dipintore dipinge se:* every painter paints the self. More than merely reproducing themselves artistically, however, male artists actually self-identified as God.

Michelangelo's *God Separating Light from Darkness* can be understood in terms of this notion of self-deification because the figure of God in this fresco is possibly a self-portrait: Michelangelo painted the Creator with certain anatomical idiosyncrasies that the artist believed he himself possessed:[113]

> I've already grown a goiter at this drudgery —
> as the water gives the cats in Lombardy,
> or else it may be in some other country —
> which sticks my stomach by force beneath my chin.
>
> With my beard toward heaven, I feel my memory-box
> atop my hump; I'm getting a harpy's breast;
> and the brush that is always above my face,
> by dribbling down, makes it an ornate pavement.[114]

The goiter and feminine breasts about which Michelangelo complained are peculiarities that also seem to have afflicted the figure of God in this painting. Moreover, the position of God, His beard pointing heavenwards, mimicked

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[113] Lennart Bondeson and Anne-Greth Bondeson, "The Creator Separating Light from Darkness: A "New" Self-Portrait of Michelangelo?" *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 70, no. 3 (2001), pp. 189-92.

[114] Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo,* poem no. 5, p. 70.

Michelangelo's position while painting the ceiling – a position about which the artist vehemently complained. While the similarity of God to Michelangelo's satiric sketch of himself at work in the chapel[115] may be mere coincidence, the parallel is striking.

Michelangelo's self-identification with the Creator corresponded with various art-theoretical suppositions. Vasari alluded to the notion of artist as God in the introduction to the *Lives,* when he characterized the creation of Adam in God's image as a display of God's mastery of *disegno.* This proposition, however, is not new to Vasari. Alberti also declared in *Della pittura* that the artist was an exceptional man, who, "like God among mortals, recreates and interprets man as nature."[116] Many years later, Dolce's advice to painters continued along the same lines: man was best qualified to make a judgment about that with which he is most familiar – his own body.[117] Vasari went a step further, however, when he venerated Michelangelo in his enthusiastic praise of the Sistine Ceiling *Adam*:

He then went on, beyond that scene, to the Creation of

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[115] For a reproduction of the sketch, see Ibid., p. 71.

[116] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, p. 16.

[117] Roskill, *"Aretino,"* p.110.

> Adam, wherein he figured God as borne by a group of nude Angels of tender age, which appear to be supporting not one figure only, but the whole weight of the world; this effect being produced by the venerable majesty of His form and by the manner of the movement with which He embraces some of the little Angels with one arm, as if to support Himself, and with the other extends the right hand towards Adam, a figure of such a kind in its beauty, in the attitude, and in the outlines, that it appears as if newly fashioned by the first and supreme Creator rather than by the brush and design of a mortal man.[118]

Vasari's conception of Adam's creation as the birth of *disegno*, Michelangelo's self-deification on the Sistine ceiling, and the idea of artistic self-generation came from a humanistic proposition that situates man on a par with God because of his self-authorial faculty. Marsilio Ficino, for example, contended that "[m]an possesses as it were almost the same genius as the Author of the heavens."[119] Pico della Mirandola's proposition regarding man's facility for self-fashioning was more explicit:

> We have given you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may

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[118] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 670.

[119] Quoted in Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* p. 12.

> with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your own power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life, you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.[120]

Pico, by singling Adam out, implied that the continuum of self-fashioning was a privilege of masculinity.

The consistent (re)production of male images by male artists fostered a creative agenda that afforded men an artistic monopoly: simultaneously, men were creators, patrons/viewers of art, and the objects of artistic consumption. Pico maintained the tradition of female exclusion already prevalent in Renaissance scientific treatises and religious propaganda, upholding the primacy of Adam by devaluing and excluding Eve[121] to support the humanist belief that man's capacity to invent himself, in any way that he chooses, set him apart from all other creatures. Indeed, the male capacity for self-invention distinguished man even from his designated counterpart –

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[120] Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1476), trans. A. Robert Caponigri (South Bend, IN: Regnery/Gateway, Inc., 1956), pp. 7-8.

[121] Najemy, "The Republic's Two Bodies," p. 260. The author contends that humanist musings regarding the body are products of an anxious ignorance regarding the true nature of this body, which were effectively deflected through myths regarding the body's harmony, order, and dignity.

women.

The trope of male artist-as-God pointed to the increasing value placed upon artistic achievement and individuality during the Renaissance. This clamoring for personal glory and recognition as an assertion of artistic individualism was an aspect of Machiavellian Masculinity — a display of artistic, instead of political, *virtù*. The sense of autonomy that suffused Florentine society also influenced its artistic ideology and by the Cinquecento, the demand for the acknowledgment of artistic *virtù* had become a chief preoccupation. In part, the belief that a work of art reflected the intellectual and moral capacities of the artist and therefore constituted a revelation of an artist's *virtù* inspired artistic excellence:

> In paintings and buildings the wisdom and skill of the artist shines forth. Moreover we can see in them the attitude and the image, as it were, of his mind; for in these works the mind expresses and reflects itself not otherwise than a mirror reflects the face of a man who looks into it.[122]

The competitive artistic atmosphere in Florence, as experienced in the contest for the Baptistry doors in 1401 for example, fostered the appreciation for creative achievement and the promotion of artistic *virtù*. This

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[122] Marsilio Ficino, *Opera omnia* (Basle, 1576), p. 944, quoted in Leatrice Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's* Due Lezzioni *and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), pp. 50-51.

environment cultivated a Machiavellian climate among artists. Like political power, the opportunity for artistic one-upmanship must be seized. Consider the following examples: when Cellini created the Perseus, he hoped that the statue would surpass Donatello's and Michelangelo's contributions at the Piazza della Signoria, artificially constructing a competition with renowned artists;[123] Cellini's bust of Cosimo may have been a competitive reaction to Bandinelli's marble portrait (Florence, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1543-44);[124] and Giambologna, to assert his individuality, diligently avoided working in marble to escape having to work in the shadow of Michelangelo.[125]

The Primacy of Sculpture and Bocchi's Gendered *Paragone*

Francesco Bocchi's treatise on Donatello's *St. George* further affirmed the significance of masculinity in sixteenth-century artistic theory. In this gendered *paragone,* the author reasserted the preeminence of

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[123] John Shearman, *Only Connect: Art And The Spectator In The Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 53.

[124] Forster, "Metaphors of Rule," p. 76.

[125] Charles Avery, "Giambologna, Sculptor to the Medici, 1529-1608: His Style and its Sources," *Apollo* 108, no. 199 (1978), p. 179.

sculpture and masculinity in Florentine art – a concept first explored by Quattrocento artists and art theorists[126] that remained viable during the sixteenth century. It is indeed notable that most of the examples that I cite in this chapter are sculptural and not painted. Since it was through this medium that the Renaissance was first heralded, sculpture seems to have retained its preferential position – especially in representations of Machiavellian Masculinity. Even the paintings that I use as examples are by Michelangelo, Bronzino, and Vasari – artists who, in their works and writings, characteristically emphasized sculptural effect in painting.

Bocchi's approach to the *paragone* echoed Vasari's method of defining *disegno* in his preface to the *Lives.* In implying that the male form, when depicted well, articulated good *disegno,* Vasari associated masculinity with artistic virtuosity. Similarly, by proposing that Donatello's *St. George* – a precursor to Cinquecento images of Machiavellian Masculinity – was the best display of visual excellence, Bocchi upheld the primacy of maleness.

Initially dedicated to Cosimo I in 1571, Bocchi's treatise reflected the establishment of artistic taste imposed by ducal patronage. Certainly, the duke's desire

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[126] See chapter 1, passim.

to align himself with Counter-Reformation goals,[127] which precipitated artistic reform in Florence, was partly Bocchi's incentive. His choice of St. George the warrior as the visual standard of artistic and moral merit indicates that the *Eccellenza* was written as both political and religious propaganda.

From an art-theoretical perspective, Bocchi promoted sculpture by designating the medium as masculine and declaring painting as its feminine counterpart. He structured this *paragone* by propounding his preference for the *durezza* (hardness) of sculpted images over the *morbidezza* (softness) and *dolcezza* (sweetness) of painted works of art. For Bocchi, masculine beauty, like stone or bronze, was stable while painting's transitory beauty, like female beauty, was negatively impacted by the effects of time.[128] For depictions of the Machiavellian male paradigm, the durability of marble or bronze lent itself to promoting the necessary perception of political permanence. In accord with Machiavelli's advice that a politician's control be

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[127] Erin Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone* in Late Sixteenth-Century Art Theory: Francesco Bocchi and Jacopo Pontormo's San Lorenzo Frescoes," *Word & Image* 16(July-September 2000), p. 228.

[128] Ibid., p. 231. See also Philip Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (winter 1995), p. 767.

upheld "even after he dies,"[129] many Cinquecento statues in public spaces have outlived the rulers whose leadership they were meant to glorify. In *Il riposo,* published the same year as Bocchi's *Eccelenza,* Rafaello Borghini also promoted the efficacy of sculpture:

> Sculpture and painting are both used for adornment, but only through sculpture are statues and public colossi erected, the honor of famous heroes perpetuated, and (this done) with the grandest embellishment to the city.[130]

Yet the sturdiness of the sculptural medium is only partly the impetus behind Bocchi's *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello.* Bocchi's gendered *paragone*[131] was a comparative structure that imposed a moral value on artistic media by relying on contemporary attitudes toward gender.[132] In Bocchi's construction, painting, typified by Pontormo's San Lorenzo frescoes, was categorized as feminine to ascertain its decadence. Sculpture, exemplified by Donatello's St. George, represented "the

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[129] Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius,* in *The Chief Works and Others,* vol. 1, p. 226, quoted in Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman,* p. 52.

[130] Borghini, *Il riposo*, quoted in Fader, *Sculpture in the Piazza della Signoria,* pp. 14-15.

[131] Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone*," pp. 227-238.

[132] Introduction, pp. 14-15.

moral force of virtuous character."[133] This affirmed the Florentine bias toward sculpture apparent in the theories of Alberti and Ghiberti discussed in chapter 1.[134]

Another objective of Bocchi's treatise was to describe how Donatello's representation of the Heroic Male Ideal stimulated morality and moral action in the viewer:[135]

> But what can we say about the great force this figure has within itself, which creates its own *costume* [character] in those who behold it? Very well are those wise ones, that are discrete and in these matters learned, and know what Donatello has achieved in this noble respect; because there is no-one who will not confirm that the magnanimous *costume* of San Giorgio removes and drives away from the mind base and vile thoughts, and imbues and refills the mind with magnificent and high thoughts.[136]

Bocchi implied that representations of the heroic male can inspire, or are intended to inspire, upstanding behavior from the spectator by appealing to the viewer's *virtù.* Sculpture's artistic value thus elicited moral value.

Like Machiavelli, Bocchi too based his gendered thesis

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[133] Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone,"* p. 227. See also Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia," pp. 759-808. Sohm writes that a gendered style in art criticism was a common strategy to code "good" and "bad" art.

[134] See chapter 1, pp. 51-52.

[135] Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone*," p. 227.

[136] Francesco Bocchi, *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1571, 1584), in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*, vol. 3, p. 185. Translation by Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone*," p. 228.

on Aristotle's sexual/anatomical hierarchy. Particularly, Bocchi's evocation of nature when he declared sculpture to be *natura* and not *arte*[137] recalls Aristotelian suppositions about gender. Masculine sculpture stood for sensible and rational portrayals of the human figure. Paintings, in contrast, flaunted female deformity. Masculinity for Bocchi represented "visible signs" of character,[138] and, to strengthen this point, Bocchi, like Machiavelli, denigrated femininity as masculinity's undesirable opposite. Both authors employed the familiar contrariety of male and female to argue their propositions, so that Bocchi's comparison of Pontormo's San Lorenzo frescoes with Donatello's *St. George* contrasted feminine with masculine, decadence and virtue, and, ultimately, fickle *fortuna* against unwavering *virtù.*

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[137] Bocchi-Barrochi, *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello,* p. 164.

[138] Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone,*" p. 228.

Chapter 3

The Hermaphrodite Effect: Spirituality, *Grazia,* and the Feminized Male Body

Machiavellian Masculinity, the seemingly invincible archetype of Renaissance maleness discussed in the preceding chapter, was a point of departure from which emerged an aberrant masculine ideal. The Hermaphroditic Deviant, the second paradigm of masculinity I discuss in this study, was a dramatic divergence in both form and function from Cinquecento representations of the Heroic Male Ideal. Most exploited during a period of artistic expansion when new standards of beauty surfaced vigorously c. 1510-1520, this archetype was an artistic transgression that resulted from alternative and experimental modes of representation. The creative shift toward Mannerism, the "art of permanent ambiguity"[1] that challenged the standards of High Renaissance art, facilitated the development of Hermaphroditic Masculinity because the ambiguous sexuality personified by this deviation from the Heroic Male Ideal was in line with the stylistic goals of Mannerist artists.

I first discuss the Hermaphrodite Effect, or how the Hermaphrodite – as a concept, a mythical figure, and the

[1] Denys Sutton, "Mannerism: The Art of Permanent Ambiguity," *Apollo* 81 (March 1965), pp. 222-227.

antique statue — affected Renaissance art and artistic discourse to provide a rationale behind the phrase "Hermaphroditic Deviant." As the name indicates, this archetype was imbued with characteristics more feminine than those associated with Machiavellian Masculinity. Hermaphroditic Deviance, as a reformation and reinvention of the canonical male body, transmitted a quality diametrically opposed to the political nature of the Heroic Male Ideal: spirituality. The male body, in order to manifest sanctity, was feminized because women were believed to be holier than men.

To expand on this notion, I analyze medieval devotional texts that celebrated women's spirituality and biblical references equating Christ's eucharistic and redemptive roles with maternity. I examine how these writings may have inspired Giovanni Battista di Jacopo's (called Rosso) design for the Boston *Dead Christ with Angels* (Museum of Fine Arts, c. 1524-27, fig. 3.1) to understand how devotional writings informed the development of the feminized male body in sacred art.

The Hermaphroditic Deviant, it seems, expressed grace, primarily, and Mario Equicola's assertion in his 1525 *Libro di natura d'amore* that "the effeminate male and the manly

female are graceful in every aspect,"[2] sets the theme for my theoretical inquiry. Like Equicola, other Cinquecento authors agreed that *grazia* was an attribute of androgynous sexuality. Baldassare Castiglione, for example, declared that in order to exhibit grace, a courtier must skillfully and cautiously embody both male and female traits while remaining within the bounds of moderation.

Grazia, as propounded in Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano*, played a crucial role in sixteenth-century courtly culture, particularly as a criterion of comportment that radiated from the learned courtier. His notion of courtly *grazia* profoundly influenced Central Italian artistic practices. Specifically, the relationship of *grazia* to *sprezzatura* (the skillful concealment of effort that effectuated grace) provided the ideological basis from which developed the conception of artistic *grazia*.[3] In this

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[2] Mario Equicola, *Libro di natura d'amore,* in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma,* vol. 2, p. 1617: "quasi per ciascun luogo femmina masculo e masculo femmina hanno grazia." Translation by Fredrika Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian: *Femmina, Masculo, Grazia," Art Bulletin* 82 (March 2000), p. 56.

[3] Gianni Carlo Sciolla, "*Grazia, prestezza, terribilità.* Definizione e ricezione della pittura in Paolo Pino e Lodovico Dolce," *Arte|Documento* 13 (1999), p. 93. The author suggests that Pino adopted the term *grazia* from various Tuscan writers such as Alberti, Ghiberti, and Leonardo.

regard, both Agnolo Firenzuola and Giorgio Vasari were indebted to Castiglione.

According to these authors, successful manifestations of *grazia* in art were based not on measurable proportions but on *il giudizio dell'occhio* — the estimation of the expert artistic eye that facilitated the effective concealment of creative labor. An analysis of these authors' assertions reveals how grace resulted from artistic *sprezzatura,* replacing naturalism and realism as a benchmark of artistic virtuosity.

The contributions made by Cinquecento writers to the artistic development of Hermaphroditic Masculinity will be explored in relation to Leonardo's *St. John the Baptist* (Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1512, fig. 3.2) and Jacopo di Carrucci's (called Pontormo) *St. Quentin* (San Sepolcro, 1517, fig. 3.3). In terms of non-religious art, I specifically refer to Castiglione's *Libro del cortegiano* to guide my discussion of Raphael's *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, c. 1515, fig. 3.4) and Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier* (Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1529, fig 3.5).

Pontormo's works are omnipresent throughout this chapter. Although the language of Mannerism was defined by

the generation prior to the 1520s,[4] the Hermaphroditic Deviant was an archetype of masculinity most consistently present in the oeuvre of this Florentine painter. In his *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello*, Francesco Bocchi deemed the artist's San Lorenzo frescoes the paradigmatic representation of the feminine medium of painting. This assessment of Pontormo's frescoes may have been based on the artist's depictions of men that deviated from the heroic norm. In the previous chapter, I discussed Bocchi's designation of sculpture as a masculine medium and his choice of Donatello's *St. George* (fig. 1.17) as a veneration of Machiavellian Masculinity. I conclude this chapter with a reevaluation of Bocchi's treatise from the perspective of Pontormo's San Lorenzo paintings and

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[4] John Shearman, "The Dead Christ by Rosso Fiorentino,"," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 64, no. 338 (1966), p. 161. The germ of the Hermaphroditic Deviant was already contained in the works of the High Renaissance triumvirate, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. An even earlier prototype discussed in chapter 1 was Donatello's androgynous bronze *David* (fig. 1.3). See also Rocío de la Villa, "La presencia de la *Grazia* en la estética del Renacimiento," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* 1 (1989), p. 118. De la Villa writes, "aunque hará de Rafael su prototipo, modelo en las tipologías de artistas de la teoria del arte del manierismo." See also Kenneth Clark, *A Failure of Nerve: Italian Painting 1520-1535* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 3. Clark contends that the anxiety that may have plagued the works of Pontormo and his contemporaries was already present in the art of the previous generation, particularly Michelangelo and Leonardo.

Hermaphroditic Masculinity.

Why Hermaphrodite?

My use of the term "hermaphroditic" is meant to suggest a conflation of conflicting gender characteristics instead of actual, physical hermaphroditism. As Ruth Gilbert writes, "Hermaphroditism incorporated a range of physical, social and sexual possibilities and it is only by showing sensitivity to the plurality of meanings attached to the word, the concept, and the diverse images of the hermaphrodite that we can really begin to tell its story."[5] Her study of hermaphroditism in early modern England addresses the sexual and social significance of the hermaphroditic body, and her assertion that the word "hermaphrodite" conceptually suggests interpretative possibilities is the spirit in which the label Hermaphroditic Deviant is to be understood.

Clearly, the men portrayed in the Renaissance paintings I cite are not literally hermaphroditic; rather, these images are enactments of the coalescing of male and female characteristics. As a demonstration of artifice, androgynous masculinity was a transgressive destabilization of gender conventions in line with the Mannerist agenda of

[5] Ruth Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites: Sex and Other Stories* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 10.

testing the boundaries of the Renaissance artistic canon.

The name of this male paradigm comes from the myth of Hermaphroditus. In the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid explained that the hermaphrodite was an answer to a naiad's plea to the gods. Hermaphroditus, the handsome son of Hermes and Aphrodite, had ignited the passions of the naiad Salmacis, who was unfortunately rejected by the young object of her affection. Spurned yet persistent in her pursuit, Salmacis saw her chance when one day, Hermaphroditus had unintentionally gone to bathe in her spring. She swam to the unsuspecting youth, embracing him tightly so that their bodies intertwined, and prayed to the gods that they never be separated. In answer to her wishes, the gods united them forever as one, creating a hermaphrodite.[6]

Ovid's myth was a warning against female aggression, which, in this case, was punished with physical extinction.[7] Although the two were supposedly united as one, Salmacis' body was actually absorbed into Hermaphroditus' form. Hermaphroditus' name hinted at a transgendered metamorphosis — a conjoining of Hermes and Aphrodite. However, the result of the sexual convergence, a

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[6] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.285-388, Frank Justus Miller, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 198-99.

[7] Gilbert, *Early Modern Hermaphrodites,* p. 71.

hermaphrodite, cancelled Salmacis out both in name and in body. Physically, the hermaphrodite was still a man; his penis remained intact despite the residual essence of femininity.

Several copies of a Hellenistic original (for example, fig. 3.6)[8] show the product of Salmacis' wish: a figure with female breasts and proportions but with male genitals. The statue was excavated in Rome c. 1450, and Lorenzo Ghiberti's ekphrasis of the ancient sculpture suggests how this discovery may have shaken Renaissance sensibilities:

> It is impossible to express in words the perfection of this statue, of its doctrine, artifice, and mastery. [The figure] was on turned-over soil, upon which a linen cloth was spread, and the statue lays on top of the cloth turned in a way to show both the male and the female characteristics. Its arms rested on the ground and the hands were crossed at the wrists one over the other…, one of the legs was stretched out and the big toe had caught the cloth, and where the cloth was pulled an admirable skill was displayed…. In this statue there were many subtleties, and the eye perceived nothing [of them] if the hand had not found

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[8] Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian," p. 65, n. 46. Although several copies are known, the Louvre *Hermaphrodite Sleeping* is the most renowned, having been restored by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in 1620, at which time he added the buttoned mattress. See also Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1986), p. 130. One copy of the statue, formerly part of Scipione Borghese's collection in Rome, is the one that is now at the Louvre; another is at the Villa Borghese; and one is in the Terme Museum in Rome. Ghiberti himself had owned a replica.

them by touch.[9]

In itself, Ghiberti's resolute testimony is surprising. Despite the anomalous sexuality of the *Hermaphrodite,* Ghiberti reacted with transcendent praise instead of horror, demonstrating a modern attitude toward the body free from the restraints of medieval piety. The Hermaphrodite Effect that prompted Ghiberti's reaction speaks most immediately to the profound influence of antiquity on the artists of Central Italy. However, at a deeper level, Ghiberti's reaction indicates a departure from established sexual ideologies so that the conflation of sexual characteristics could be valued as a demonstration of artistic virtuosity.

This assessment is substantiated visually many years later during the Cinquecento, as the effect of the Hermaphrodite — the statue and the mythical figure — seems to have remained unabated.[10] Since its excavation during

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[9] Ghiberti-Morisani, *I Commentari*. Translation by Elizabeth Holt, ed., in *A Documentary History of Art* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957), vol. 1, pp. 163-164.

[10] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture,* p. 130. There seems to be a gap in the literature regarding the historical reception of the *Hermaphrodite Sleeping.* Bober and Rubinstein write, "No direct influence of the statue has been noted so far in Renaissance art or drawings but the type was influential in the seventeenth century." However, there seems to be continuity as far as the statue's physical presence in Rome

Ghiberti's time, copies of the statue have existed and are still in Rome. It is likely that many artists saw the statue, although this is impossible to ascertain. Many artists, however, would have been familiar with the Ovidian myth, and it is also very likely that they would have known of Ghiberti's account of the figure's discovery. Ghiberti's reaction to the statue exhibited a sophistication that characterized the artistic response to antiquity — a worldliness that would become increasingly apparent as the sixteenth century progressed.

Visually, the influence of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* can be easily discerned. For example, Fredrika Jacobs points to the bearing the statue itself had on the female figures in Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan* (fig. 3.7, after Michelangelo, London, The National Gallery, 1529-31) and *Venus Reclining with Cupid* (fig. 3.8, Pontormo after Michelangelo, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia, 1532-33).[11]

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from its discovery during Ghiberti's time to a copy in Scipio Borghese's villa.

[11] Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian," p. 57. See also Mary Pardo, "Artifice as Seduction in Titian," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images,* James Grantham Turner, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 68-69. According to these authors, the influence of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* extended beyond Central Italy. Jacobs asserts the significance of the *Hermaphrodite* on the construction of Titian's figures, particularly the body of his *Danäe* (fig. 3.9, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 1553-54) and the body

I suggest that the visual evidence continues in the works of mannerist artists, since the statue's departure from sexual convention would have been in line with the mannerist practice of deviating from established expectations, artistic or otherwise.

Jacobs further argues that the statue was engaged in issues of "gender and aesthetics,"[12] which is a *paragone* of sorts given the oftentimes vacillating attitudes toward gender and sexuality: on one side of the gender discourse was the insistence upon the proper (re)presentation of gender — Castiglione's resolve, for example, "that a woman should in no way resemble a man;"[13] on the other side was Equicola's comment that effeminate men and masculine women exuded grace. The disparity in these attitudes reflects the ambiguity that the statue itself embodied.

For mannerist artists, the indeterminacy of hermaphroditic sexuality aligned with their agenda of

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of Venus in *Venus and Adonis* (fig. 3.10, Madrid, Museo del Prado, 1553-54), which he modelled after Michelangelo's *Leda.* Similarly, Mary Pardo compares Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (fig. 3.11, Dresden, Alte Meister Galerie, c. 1508) to the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* and considers Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (fig. 3.12, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, 1538) a "descendant of the carved *Hermaphrodite* admired by Ghiberti."

[12] Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian," p. 57.

[13] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), George Bull, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 211.

challenging conventions, in this case, the sexual structures that were believed to be the norm during the High Renaissance. Although Michelangelo and Titian seem to have drawn inspiration from the *Hermaphrodite's* form, Mannerists, as we shall see, went beyond form to explore and employ the meanings embodied by the sexually anomalous conflation of genders personified by the Ovidian mythological character and the ancient sculpture.

The Feminine Divine

Although the primacy of masculinity was justified because, created before Eve's, Adam's body was formed in the likeness of Christ and God, women were believed to be holier. A medieval manuscript reasons that:

> Woman is to be preferred to man, to wit in material: rationalized because Eve was created from Adam's rib; in place: Adam made outside paradise and Eve w'in; in conception: a woman conceived God which a man did not do; in apparition: Christ appeared to a woman after the Resurrection, to wit the Magdalene; in exaltation: a woman is exalted above the choirs of angels, to wit the Blessed Mary.[14]

Humbert of Romans (d.1277), the Master-General of the Dominicans, similarly concluded that:

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[14] Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 1999), p. 34. Podles quoted this passage from C.G. Crump and E.F. Jacobs, eds., *The Legacy of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 402. Neither source specifies from which manuscript this passage was quoted. Crum and Jacobs, however, mention that the manuscript is at the University of Cambridge.

> God gave women many prerogatives, not only over other living things, but even over man himself, and this (i) by nature; (ii) by grace; and (iii) by glory.
>
> (i) In the world of nature she excelled man by her origin, for man He made of the vile earth, but woman He made in Paradise. Man he formed of the slime, but woman of man's rib. She was not made of a lower limb of man — as for example of his foot — lest man should esteem her his servant, but from his midmost part, that he should hold her to be his fellow, as Adam himself said: "The woman whom Thou gavest me as my helpmate."
>
> (ii) In the world she excelled man…. We do not read of any man trying to prevent the Passion of Our Lord, but we do read of a woman who tried — namely, Pilate's wife, who sought to dissuade him from so great a crime…. Again at His Resurrection, it was to a woman that He first appeared — namely, to Mary Magdalene.
>
> (iii) In the world of glory, for the king in that country is no mere man but a mere woman is its queen; nor is anyone who is merely man as powerful there as a mere woman. Thus is woman's nature in Our Lady ranked. It is not a mere man who is set above the angels and all the rest of the heavenly country in worth, and dignity, and power; and this should lead woman to love God and hate evil.[15]

These passages were written at a time when the church increasingly valued female spiritual potency. A newly found agency was afforded to women by an ecclesiastical existence, and this modicum of empowerment compelled droves of female devotees to a life of spiritual service.[16]

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[15] Humbert of Romans, "Ad Omnes mulieres" (c. 1250), quoted in Podles, *The Church Impotent,* p. 34.

[16] Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 14-15. For example, in Italy, Pope Innocent III noted that women had assumed monastic duties including preaching, hearing confessions, and giving blessings. Furthermore, women

These proto-feminist notions subverted the Augustinian and Aristotelian precepts on which the Renaissance sexual hierarchy was based. In the introduction, we noted that Augustine, in *The City of God* (early 5th century), ranked men higher than women because Adam was made in the likeness of Christ. Moreover, according to Augustine, Adam was superior to Eve because of his lesser role in the commission of original sin.[17] Medieval texts that cite biblical women as proof of women's superiority over men challenged Augustine's opinions by undermining his arguments:[18] woman surpassed man *because* she was not made from "the vile earth" like Adam. Having been made from Adam's rib, woman was at least equal to man in stature. This defense of women paralleled the Christian-Aristotelian

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mystics, and their ecstatic experiences, outnumbered men after 1200.

[17] See the introduction, pp. 18-19.

[18] Even though these texts countered Augustine's opinions, in defense of women, medieval authors could only name women from scripture. That these writers could only draw from a limited pool of biblical examples emphasizes the belief that women were better than men only in the spiritual sphere because, although a mere woman is queen of heaven, mere men still ruled the earth. This distinction also parallels the claim I make in the introduction that compared to representations of men, non-religious portraits of identified and identifiable women in Central Italian art are relatively rare. On the other hand, images of female saints, particularly the Virgin, were plentiful. See the introduction, pp. 26-28.

belief that women outclassed men in the spiritual realm precisely because of their inferiority:[19] the passivity of woman, which caused her to be weak, made her more easily receptive to the word of God and therefore more connected to Him. This notion is a philosophical inversion of the classic Aristotelian dichotomy of passive female and active male.

Feminine passivity signified the requisite receptivity of Christians as brides of Christ – regardless of gender.[20] Catholic men, expected to yield to Christ in the same way that a woman surrendered to her husband in marriage, found Christianity inherently incongruent with masculinity,[21] creating a conflict between being masculine and being Christian. The Hermaphroditic Deviant, therefore, was a representational compromise that accommodated the opposition between sanctity and masculinity.

It is notable that both Machiavellian Masculinity and the Hermaphroditic Deviant were artistic responses to the male anxiety over women's procreative power.[22] However, if

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[19] Podles, *The Church Impotent,* pp. 111-112.

[20] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 18. Although men originated the concept of nuptial mysticism, more women elaborated on this in twelfth-century religious writing.

[21] Podles, *The Church Impotent,* p. 35.

[22] See the introduction, p. 5.

the Machiavellian Man was hypermasculinized to overcome this anxiety, the Hermaphroditic Deviant acknowledged and embraced feminine virtue and morality. Artists, aware of this connection between women and divinity, feminized the male form so that images of men could convey a greater spiritual presence since "only if men become like women can they become Christian."[23]

During the Renaissance, images of Christ in art that emphasized the Savior's masculinity by accentuating his penis could have been intended to counteract this growing tendency toward feminization in the Catholic Church.[24] Artistic restrictions imposed during the Counter-Reformation may have been also partly a reaction to this phenomenon. I will examine a third paradigm of masculinity invented to "correct" the bias toward an increasingly feminized piety in the next chapter, "The 'New' Decorum, The Counter-Reformation, and the Emasculated Prophet." While the Hermaphroditic Deviant was a product of Mannerist experimentation, the Emasculated Prophet was a result of the rigid religiosity in which Florence was immersed during this period of ecclesiastical renewal. Rosso's *Dead Christ with*

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[23] Podles, *The Church Impotent,* p. 36.

[24] Ibid., pp. 142-143. Podles's comment is based on Leo Steinberg's assertions in *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Angels (fig. 3.1) is discussed in the following chapter as an artistic response to the call for religious reform. However, the feminine features of Rosso's Christ suggest that the painting communicated multifarious meanings. This chapter continues with a discussion of Rosso's invention as an example of Hermaphroditic Masculinity.

Rosso's *Dead Christ* and the Femininity of Jesus

The medieval belief in women's greater religiosity is theologically in concordance with explicit biblical references to a maternal Lord that emphasize the feminine roles of God and Christ as nurturers and life-givers. In assuming a female role, Christ also assumed female weakness and unworldliness to eloquently convey humility and dependence on God the Father.[25] The following citations exemplify the duality of Christ's sexuality.

In response to Zion's claim that "The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me" God responded, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isaiah 49:14-15). He adds, "As one whom his mother comforted, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isaiah 66:13) And

[25] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 128.

in comparing himself to a hen, Christ accepted his motherly charge:

> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (Matthew 23:37)

Based on this passage from Matthew's gospel, the eleventh-century Benedictine monk, Saint Anselm of Canterbury, wrote:

> But you, Jesus, good lord, are you not also a mother? Are you not that mother who, like a hen, collects her chickens under her wings? Truly, master, you are a mother. For what others have conceived and given birth to, they have received from you…. You are the author, others are the ministers. It is then you, above all, Lord God, who are mother.[26]

The sexual inversion apparent in these scriptural and medieval texts that underscore Christ's maternity seems to have informed Rosso's unusual representation of a *Dead Christ with Angels* (fig. 3.1). Originally commissioned for private devotion,[27] the *Dead Christ with Angels* is most immediately interpretable as an *imago pietatis.*

Rosso's painting, however, is not simply a depiction of Christ as the Man of Sorrows. Nor is it a traditional dead Christ supported by angels common in the works of

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[26] Anselm, prayer 10 to St. Paul, quoted in Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* p. 114.

[27] Shearman, "The Dead Christ by Rosso," p. 148.

Venetian artists such as Giovanni Bellini (*Dead Christ Supported by Angels,* Venice, Civico Museo Correr, 1460, fig. 3.13).[28] Indeed, the Central Italian influence is apparent; the feminine body of Rosso's Christ seems formally related to Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling *ignudi.*[29] The bottom half of Christ may have been modeled after the nude above the Persian Sybil (fig. 3.14), particularly the manner in which the figure's legs are crossed. The torso of the *Dead Christ* may have been fashioned after the stretching figure above the Libyan Sybil (fig. 3.15); the notion of "reawakening" conveyed by this nude is appropriate as a suggestion of the *Dead Christ's* imminent resurrection.

The suggestion that Rosso intended to depict a hermaphroditic Christ is supported by this apparent appropriation of Michelangelo's *ignudi*. Michelangelo, in designing a wide range of nude bodies as an exhibition of *varietà,* painted a procession of nudes ranging from feminized adolescents to more gender-defined, less epicene

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[28] Ibid., p. 152.

[29] Ibid., p. 156. See also Regina Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion: Rosso's *Dead Christ with Angels," Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1992), p. 700; Patricia Emison, "Grazia," *Renaissance Studies* 5, no. 4 (1990), p. 444. Emison also considers Michelangelo's *ignudi* as the "most soft and languorous, even graceful, of Michelangelo's figures."

men. The distinction between the more masculine *ignudi* and the more feminine ones helps to underscore the greater capacity of the feminized *ignudi* to express godliness.[30]

Jerome Oremland proposes that as the ceiling progresses from altar to chapel entrance,[31] the *ignudi* closer to the chapel's spiritual core are more feminine because they are primal, gender-indeterminate figures, who, as occupants of heaven, are creatures more divine, less terrestrial. Conversely, nearer the doors of the chapel and to the world outside, the more masculine and sexually-defined nudes are evocations of the physical world, and, thus, humanity and earthliness. He further suggests that the corporeal transition of *ignudi* is also thematically coordinated so that the more androgynous and heavenly nudes flank the ceiling narratives that take place in the realm of the sacred: the nudes that flank the *God Separating*

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[30] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 669. Vasari praised the celestial bodies from the Sistine ceiling, marveling at the "excellence of the figures, the perfection of the foreshortenings, and the extraordinary roundness of the contours, which have in them slenderness and grace, being drawn with the beauty of proportion that is seen in beautiful nudes." This evocation of the *ignudi's* grace is pertinent because as we shall see later in this chapter, artistic and theological grace — like spirituality itself — was more readily realized in depictions of the female form.

[31] Jerome Oremland, "Michelangelo's *Ignudi,* Hermaphroditism, and Creativity," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 40 (1985), p. 416.

Light from Darkness fresco (fig. 2.4) are more hermaphroditic than the fittingly masculine *ignudi* that border the profane *Sacrifice of Noah* (fig. 3.16). To compositionally distinguish between the sacred and the secular, Oremland concludes that Michelangelo attributed female qualities to some of the *ignudi* because the male body could suggest divinity more successfully when feminized.

It is impossible to determine if Michelangelo actually designed a programmatic transition of *ignudi* from feminine to masculine, but some sort of transition does occur from the nude forms at the Chapel's altar to those nearer its entrance. The figures closer to the altar are not completely formed, some with eyes still tightly shut as if just recently born or awakened from slumber (see fig. 2.4). They are "female" in the Aristotelian sense that they are yet to be fully realized and therefore "imperfect." This notion accords with the Aristotelian and Augustinian proposition that the bodies of women are flawed. Derived from the male form[32] and lacking a penis, the female body remains only partially formed. In contrast, the nudes surrounding the later scenes after Adam's creation seem less amorphous. Indeed, in the last scene depicting Noah's

[32] See the introduction, pp. 6-16.

drunkenness (fig. 3.17), the *ignudi* are highly idealized, their Apollonian curls crowning their beautifully painted faces.[33]

Rosso may then have designed the body of his *Dead Christ* after these lesser-defined *ignudi* to accentuate the femininity of Christ. Visually quoting the body of these more otherworldly and "feminine" *ignudi* suggests that Rosso recognized that the Renaissance viewer would have understood the androgynous Christ as an expression of spirituality. In the case of the *Dead Christ,* Rosso depicted a feminine Jesus to communicate Christ's maternal role. The wound on Christ's side, the palpable prominence

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[33] Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body*, p. 134. Hall observes a different sort of transition that occurs. To further distinguish between the celestial and terrestrial nudes, the *ignudi* around the panels that take place within the heavenly sphere cross freely from their stations into the scenes that take place in God's stratum. For example, the *ignudi* around the panels depicting the *Fall of Man and the Expulsion of Adam and Eve* (fig. 3.19) and the fresco of *God Separating Light from Darkness* (fig. 2.4) cross into the panels that they frame to visually participate in the scenes they enclose. This compositional expedient suggests the ethereality of these figures. In contrast, Michelangelo was careful to make discrete entities of the narrative scene and the *ignudi* that surround the frescoes painted before these panels that take place in the secular sphere (figs. 3.16, 3.18).

It is also important to remember that the shift from the early to the later *ignudi* was formal and mainly out or necessity. Michelangelo had to paint the later *ignudi* larger and simpler because the earlier, smaller, and more static figures were not very legible when seen from the floor.

of Christ's body, and the ambiguous sexuality of the *Dead Christ,* which is stressed by a "radical masculine absence,"[34] are three features of Rosso's painting that illustrate this point.

The absence or invisibility of the other wounds of the passion is a perplexing feature of Rosso's work that accentuates the only blemish on the otherwise unmarred body of the *Dead Christ:* the wound on the Redeemer's side. An angel's hand that probes the slashed flesh on Christ's ribcage — as if to open wider the gash — highlights the singular presence of this wound.

This emphasis on Christ's lateral wound draws attention to the feminine aspect of Christ's death because metaphorically, this wound was the birth passage from which humanity was reborn.[35] As St. Augustine explained in *The City of God:*

> For that sleep of the man was the death of Christ whose side, as he hung lifeless upon the cross, was pierced with a spear, and there flowed from it blood and water, and those we know to be sacraments by which the church is built up. But built her up into a woman.[36]

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[34] Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion," p. 711.

[35] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* p. 18. It is for this reason that women initially developed the thirteenth-century devotion to the sacred heart and the wounds of Jesus.

[36] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 840.

Like Rosso, Augustine called attention to Christ's wound[37] from which the sacramental foundations of the Church — like a child being born — gushed with blood and water.[38] Augustine used language related to parturition to explain that Christ's sacrifice for humankind was tantamount to a mother's sacrifice of her body during childbirth.[39] This equation effectively rendered the Savior feminine, demonstrating that even for Christ himself, only by becoming more like a woman could he become more Christian.

Christ's body is offered for humanity's redemption, and Rosso's compositional concentration on the body of Christ further evokes Christ's maternal capacity. By prominently projecting Jesus into the foreground of his painting, Rosso made the body of Christ nearly tangible and available for Christian consumption. The visual strategy of conspicuously displaying Christ's physicality effectively (re)converted the Savior's body into bread and wine: a

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[37] Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion," p. 711. The parallel drawn by Augustine between the wound on Christ's side and female genitalia was made pertinent in Rosso's time by the Renaissance equation of male with weapon and female with woundedness.

[38] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ,* p. 373. The author discusses the metaphorical and allegorical birth of *Ecclesia* from Christ's side.

[39] Podles, *The Church Impotent,* p. 80 and Bynum, *Jesus as Mother,* p. 113.

visual inversion in defense of the doctrine of transubstantiation.[40]

The Catholic faithful are Christ's children who, like offspring, depend on their mother for sustenance. Rosso designed Christ's body so that it is literally the host that provides nourishment like a mother's body. He underscored the Eucharistic significance of the body of Christ as food for Christian souls to affirm Christ's maternal duty as sustainer of the spiritual lives of Catholic devotees.[41]

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[40] Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion," pp. 679-682. Rosso's unusual representation of an otherwise commonplace subject matter of a dead Christ was intended to confront Northern Reformers who questioned the actual presence of Christ's body when bread and wine transformed into the body and blood of Christ during mass. See also S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500-1600,* 3rd ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 201. Freedberg writes that Rosso's *Dead Christ* "is a demonstration of the Eucharistic miracle of Christ's real presence"; and Simona Lecchini Giovannoni, "Il Corpus Christi e la mensa d'altare in alcuni dipinti fiorentini del Cinquecento," in *Altari e committenza: episodi a Firenze nell'età della Controriforma,* ed. Cristina De Benedictis (Florence: Pontecorboli, 1996), p. 30.

[41] Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body,* p. 149. A similar idea is proposed by Hall in his discussion of the Medici Chapel statue of Giuliano de' Medici. Hall contends that the new sacristy Giuliano is a *Medici Lactans* because of its "strikingly swollen" torso, tumescent breasts and distended nipples; "the torso goes beyond being simply virile. It is also maternal and vulnerable…. Giuliano's torso is not just 'confessional'; it is charitable too." He goes on to discuss the role of God as mother and how this trope, and specifically the

The clearest evidence that Rosso intentionally feminized the body of Christ, however, is also the most disturbing. The discomfort of the *Dead Christ's* "mutilated" body is heightened by the depiction of His tightly crossed legs. Rosso learned to depict this pose from observing Michelangelo's *ignudi*[42] as discussed above. This pose was traditionally reserved for representations of women,[43] in accordance with Leonardo's advice:

> In women and girls there must be no actions where the legs are raised or too far apart, because that would indicate boldness and a general lack of shame, while legs closed together indicate the fear of disgrace.[44]

The crossing of Christ's legs is another means by which the *Dead Christ* articulates feminine grace as the position of the legs suggests a "reversal" of hermaphroditism. Instead of a penis attached to a feminine

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ideas of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, informed Michelangelo's invention of Giuliano's body.

[42] Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion," p. 711.

[43] Ibid., p. 707. See also Steinberg, *Sexuality of Christ,* p. 246, where the author discusses how antique examples boldly display male nakedness. Masaccio articulated sexual difference through the positions of Adam's and Eve's legs in the Brancacci Chapel *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (fig. 1.12). The artist painted Adam with his legs opened to fully display his manhood, while Eve's are crossed to convey sexual shame. This depiction of Adam and Eve was based on a medieval tradition. See chapter 1, pp. 55-57.

[44] Kemp, *Leonardo on Painting,* p. 152.

body, Rosso's *Dead Christ* is masculine even though the manner in which Christ's legs are positioned makes his inguinal area appear vaginal. This visual approach is disconcerting particularly when bearing in mind the many images of Christ defined unequivocally by a strong phallic presence.[45]

The manner in which Rosso depicted Christ's genitalia and the emphasis on the Redeemer's lateral wound cause the *Dead Christ's* body to be flawed, and in accord with the Aristotelian belief that a woman's body was an "imperfect" man, the body of Rosso's Christ is feminine due to its "disfigurement." The artist painted a Hermaphroditic Deviant to convey visually Christ's redemptive and Eucharistic purpose. A phallic presence would have undermined this effort.

The practice in medieval art of excluding "the flesh of sin" from depictions of Christ had become unacceptable in the Renaissance,[46] but was revived in Rosso's composition, perhaps partly due to concerns excited by Northern Reformers. Although the artistic reformation that was precipitated by the demands of a more rigid spirituality will be addressed more fully in the next

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[45] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ,* passim.

[46] Ibid., pp. 239, 323.

chapter, Rosso seems to have demonstrated a sensitivity to religious reform: in both his Sansepolcro *Deposition* (San Lorenzo, 1528, fig 3.18) and the Louvre *Pietà* (Paris, 1537-40, fig. 3.19), the position of the Savior's body seems to have been designed to conceal Christ's genitalia as well. Rosso's depictions of an asexualized Christ, as much as they are hermaphroditic, could also easily embody the Counter-Reformation significance of the Emasculated Prophet — the last paradigm of masculinity I consider in chapter 4. Meanwhile, this chapter continues with a discussion of Hermaphroditic Masculinity's art-theoretical significance.

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Feminine *Grazia* in theory: Equicola, Castiglione, Firenzuola, and Vasari

In an examination of works by four Central Italian authors, one common current is revealed: Mario Equicola, Baldassare Castiglione, Agnolo Firenzuola, and Giorgio Vasari all agreed that grace was a characteristically feminine attribute. These theoreticians conceptually located femininity and masculinity in an "acculturated set of values,"[47] and since *grazia* was mostly associated with images of women and, therefore, short of political meaning,

[47] Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism," p. 760.

grazia in art was linked to divine instead of terrestrial power.[48] In the artistic search for fresh challenges, *grazia* was a new way of articulating heroism – a heroism of the soul instead of the body. In order to express grace in images of men, artists necessarily transcended the physical realities of the male and female bodies, and hence, the transgressive Hermaphroditic Deviant convincingly embodied this elusive quality.

Mario Equicola's observation, "[t]he effeminate male and the manly female are graceful in almost every aspect"[49] underscored the contradictions associated with *grazia.* Moreover, the phrase is a succinct articulation of the primary possibility by which grace could be made visible. In both religious and secular art, grace manifested in depictions of the *femmina masculo e masculo femmina* (the effeminate male and the manly female). This sexual reversibility confuses being and seeming,[50] and is the

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[48] Emison, "Grazia," pp. 428, 454. Earlier in this chapter, I explained how feminine pliancy was tantamount to Christian weakness and dependence on God. These two requisite traits of the compliant Catholic were unconditionally associated with theological grace.

[49] Equicola, *Libro di natura d'amore,* p. 1617: "quasi per ciascun luogo femmina masculo e masculo femmina hanno grazia." Translation by Jacobs, "Aretino and Michelangelo, Dolce and Titian," p. 56.

[50] Eduardo Saccone, "*Grazia, Sprezzatura, Affettazione* in the *Courtier,"* in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in*

contradiction operative in representations of the feminized male: the Hermaphroditic Deviant, caught in the interstice between man and woman, effectively illustrated the convoluted concept of grace through its paradoxical body.

Echoing Equicola, Castiglione, too, recognized the dissonance between masculinity and *grazia.* Wondering about the standard of physical beauty a courtier must possess, Bernardo Bibbiena, one of Castiglione's interlocutors, was certain about his possession of grace, but doubted "the beauty of my person."[51] In response, another of Castiglione's characters, Count Lodovico Canossa, assured Bibbiena of the grace of his countenance:

> For undoubtedly we can see that your appearance is very agreeable and pleasing to all, even if your features are not very delicate, though then again you manage to appear both manly and graceful.[52]

The slight and very subtle distinction Canossa made between masculinity and grace demonstrates that courtly grace was a quality unequivocally feminine. As the passage above continues, Canossa's — and Castiglione's — protestations

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Renaissance Culture, eds. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 59.

[51] Castiglione-Bull, *Courtier*, p. 60.

[52] Ibid., pp. 60-61. Charles S. Singleton's translation (Garden City, 1959) reads, "has something manly about it, and yet full of grace," quoted in Saccone, "*Grazia, Sprezzatura, Affettazione*," p. 52.

against appearing overly feminine make even clearer that grace was a feature more immediately attributable to women than to men:

> This is a quality found in many different kinds of faces. And I would like our courtier to have the same aspect. I don't want him to appear soft and feminine as so many try to do, when they not only curl their hair and pluck their eyebrows but also preen themselves like the most wanton and dissolute creatures imaginable. Indeed, they appear so effeminate and languid in the way they walk, or stand, or do anything at all, that their limbs look as if they are about to fall apart; and they pronounce their words in such a drawling way that it seems as if they are about to expire on the spot. And the more they find themselves in the company of men of rank, the more they carry on like that. Since Nature has not in fact made them ladies they want to seem and be, they should be treated not as honest women but as common whores and be driven out from all gentlemanly society, let alone the Courts of great lords.[53]

This acerbic advice cautioned against going beyond an all-important middleground to which every courtier must adhere: Castiglione's courtier, like Machiavelli's prince, must shun effeminacy. However, like Ovid's Hermaphrodite, with whom the residue of Salmacis remained, the courtier was physically a man, who, in order to transmit *grazia* — despite Canossa's tirade — must hold in his person something of the feminine.[54]

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[53] Castiglione-Bull, *Courtier,* p. 61.

[54] The conflict inherent in a man's acquisition of feminine grace encumbered Cinquecento attempts at defining *grazia*. Indeed, despite Castiglione's protestations against effeminacy in men, and at times, the misogynistic tone of

Like Equicola and Castiglione, Agnolo Firenzuola also came to the conclusion that *grazia* was a feminine property. In his *Dialogo della bellezza delle donne, intitolato Celso* (written in 1542, published in 1548), Firenzuola wrote:

> Grace and charm are nothing other than… an observation

The Courtier, later in his book Castiglione vindicated women's existence:

> It is certainly true that Nature always intends to produce the most perfect things, and therefore always intends to produce the species man, though not male rather than female; and indeed, if Nature always produced males this would be imperfection: for just as there results from body and soul a composite nobler than its parts, namely man himself, so from the union of male and female there results a composite that preserves the human species, and without which its parts would perish. Thus male and female always go naturally together, and one cannot call anything male unless it has its female counterpart, or anything female if it has no male counterpart. And since one sex alone shows imperfection, the ancient theologians attribute both sexes to God. For this reason, Orpheus said that Jove was both male and female, and we read in Holy Scripture that God made male and female in His own likeness; and very often when the poets speak of the gods they confuse the sex. (Castiglione-Bull, *The Courtier,* p. 220.)

In this excerpt, Castiglione, albeit cautiously, seemed to have reconsidered both Aristotle and St. Augustine. Although Castiglione maintained the belief in masculine perfection, he contradicted Aristotle's belief in a man's singularly vital role in procreation by conceding that women were essential in the preservation of the human species. Moreover, Castiglione rejected Augustine's claim that men alone were created in the likeness of God. Intellectually, this is a significant rethinking of Renaissance sexualities. By proclaiming that "male and female always go naturally together," women were now at least categorically under the same rubric as men — as human beings.

> of a silent law, as others have said and according to the intent of the word itself, given and promulgated by nature to you women in your movement, comportment, and use of the body as a whole and its particular members, moving with grace, modesty, nobility, measure, and good manners so that no movement and no action would be without rule, mode, measure, or design.[55]

A gift to women from nature, no less, *grazia* was an "occult way to make a certain union of various body parts, which we know not how to describe."[56] With emphasis on its elusive nature, for Firenzuola, *grazia* was

> This splendor born from a hidden proportion and from a measure that cannot be found in our books and what we do not know and cannot even imagine. And so it has, as with things that we cannot explain, an "I don't know what" [non so che].[57]

Giorgio Vasari's reflection on grace mirrored Firenzuola's rather frustrated attempt at defining this ineffable quality. In the preface to the third part of the *Lives,* Vasari's criticism of the artists of the second age of Renaissance art became an excursus on grace:

> In proportion there was wanting a certain correctness of judgment, by means of which their figures, without having been measured, might have, in due relation to their dimensions, a grace exceeding measurement. In their drawing there was not the perfection of finish, because, although they made an arm round and a leg

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[55] Agnolo Firenzuola, *Prose* (Florence: 1548), in *Opere,* ed. D. Maestri (Turin: 1977), pp. 753-754; quoted in Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia," p. 760.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

> straight, the muscles in these were not revealed with that sweet and facile grace which hovers midway between the seen and the unseen, as is the case with the flesh of living figures; nay, they were crude and excoriated, which made them displeasing to the eye and gave hardness to the manner. This last was wanting in the delicacy that comes from making all figures light and graceful, particularly those of women and children, with the limbs true to nature, as in the case of men, but veiled with a plumpness and fleshiness that should not be awkward, as they are in nature, but refined by draughtsmanship and judgment.[58]

Manifestations of *grazia,* in Vasari's opinion, pointed to a breakthrough that freed the artists of the third age from *quattrocentismo.* The contradictions in Vasari's definition of *grazia,* however, hint at the difficulty of articulating or explaining this artistic precept that "hovers midway between the seen and the unseen." Demonstrable grace was made evident when artists crossed the limits of nature into the supranatural.

Castiglione's assertions regarding grace influenced Vasari profoundly.[59] Vasari's criticism that the art of the Quattrocento was overly "measured," and therefore inferior to the idealized art of the 1500s, recalls Castiglione's belief that "in painting, a single line which is not

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[58] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 618.

[59] Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy 1450-1600* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962, reprint 1973), p. 97. Blunt asserts, "the account of grace in its social sense in the *Cortegiano* is so close to Vasari's view of it applied to the arts, that we may conclude that he derived the idea directly from this source."

laboured, a single brush stroke made with ease, in such a way that it seems that the hand is completing the line by itself without any effort or guidance, clearly reveals the excellence of the artist, about whose competence everyone will then make his own judgment."[60]

Furthermore, Vasari's definition of *grazia* perpetuated the Aristotelian construction that differentiated between the perfect male body and the imperfect female form. By making a distinction between "limbs true to nature, as in the case of men" and "figures light and graceful, particularly those of women and children," Vasari implied that although "sweet and facile grace" was an attribute desirable in all figures, *grazia* was a trait inherent in the unnatural and non-canonical female body.[61]

Grazia, thus, could not be measured on the basis of nature's standards, that is, the canonical proportions of the male body. Instead, *grazia* was a product of sound artistic judgment. Both Vasari and Firenzuola proposed that *grazia* should be understood as an alternative unit of measurement, and without describing *grazia* in quantifiable terms, they nevertheless indicated that it was a desirable *non so che* in a work of art. To render visible this

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[60] Castiglione-Bull, *Courtier*, p. 70.

[61] Likewise for Firenzuola, grace was incontrovertibly nature's gift to women.

feminine attribute, artists had to set aside nature as a standard of measurement since *grazia* was expressed through proportions "refined by draughtsmanship and judgment," as Vasari claimed. *Grazia* was attained through the good judgment of the artist's eye.

Il giudizio dell'occhio

Inscribed within a perfect circle and square, Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* (Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia, 1492, fig. 3.20) illustrates best the canonical anatomical proportions prized in High Renaissance works of art. These were the proportions that had to be transcended by adapting and appropriating non-canonical feminine characteristics to produce the grace that had been virtually absent in images of men. Relying on "measurable proportions" characterized by *regola* (rule), *ordine* (order), and *symmetria* (symmetry) — terms that Vasari used to describe the art of the Quattrocento[62] — was no longer sufficient. Instead, the incomprehensible and nearly unspeakable proportions, the vexing *non so che* to which Vasari and Firenzuola referred, were necessarily conceived to effectively convey *grazia.*[63]

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[62] Sohm, *Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism,* p. 763.

[63] Emison, *Grazia,* p. 427. Emison writes that in order to make *grazia* visible, the very notion of norm needed to be abandoned.

To arrive at these "new" proportions, artists needed to trust the judgment of their virtuosic eye.[64] A tool and precept most closely associated with Michelangelo, *il giudizio dell'occhio* was exercised to attain proportions instinctively instead of numerically; it differentiated "between measure and grace… between rational and intuitive artistic method."[65]

The idea of *il giudizio dell'occhio* was inspired by Castiglione's definition of grace, particularly as it related to *sprezzatura.* Castiglione's notion of effortless labor was presented as a piece of advice from the illustrious Count Lodovico Canossa of Verona, who assured the courtier of success in the acquisition of a sought-after yet inexplicable grace by steering "away from affectation at all costs, as if it were a rough and dangerous reef, and (to use a novel word for it) to practise in all things a certain nonchalance which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem

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[64] De la Villa, "La presencia de la *Grazia* en la estética del Renacimiento," p. 120. The author writes, "Para Vasari esta *grazia* era indispensable para el ben *giudizio* del ojo en una creacíon artistica que debía necesariamente sobrepasar los límites del canon."

[65] David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 368-369. Summers provides a complex account of the evolution of *giudizio dell'occhio* as a theoretical premise during the Cinquecento.

uncontrived and effortless."[66]

If the employment of *il giudizio dell'occhio* resulted in artistic *grazia*, in accord with Vasari's opinion, the feminine and immeasurable qualities of *dolcezza* (sweetness), *delicata* (delicacy), and *leggerezza* (lightness) were the visible manifestations of good artistic judgment. If excellence in *disegno* was revealed in the virtuous representation of Machiavellian Masculinity, *grazia* defined the sublime and transcendent art of Vasari's and Firenzuola's imaginings. The quality of *grazia* that these authors deemed desirable in works of art had forced a breach in High Renaissance representational standards, a departure from the ideal proportions of the male form. This deliberate reconfiguration of the male body resulted in unexpected yet desirable meanings and the invention of the deviant "other."

Leonardo's *Baptist*

Leonardo's hermaphroditic *St. John the Baptist* is a "textbook illustration" of *grazia*.[67] In designing the *Baptist,* Leonardo's deliberate avoidance of a precise visual narrative, as well as his feminization of *St. John's* demeanor, increase the viewer's struggle to understand the

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[66] Castiglione-Bull, *Courtier*, p. 60.

[67] Emizon, "*Grazia*," p. 449.

painting.

Castiglione contended that *grazia* was discernible through ideal behavior,[68] and Leonardo made visible the quality of grace — in this case God's grace — through the perceptible movements of the Baptist's body: the finger pointing heavenwards, the slight smile of the partially raised lip, and the soft yet very direct gaze combine with a very deliberate delineation of light[69] through *chiaroscuro* and *sfumato* to illustrate spiritual grace. Indeed, Leonardo conceived of a way in which divine light could be made manifest in accord with the Gospel of St. John, in which light metaphorically symbolized the coming of Christ and humanity's redemption:

> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:3-5)

The light in Leonardo's painting comes through an

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[68] Castiglione-Bull, *The Courtier,* p. 55. "So in addition to noble birth, I would have the courtier favoured in this respect, too, and receive from Nature not only talent and beauty of countenance and person but also that certain air and grace that makes him immediately pleasing and attractive to all who meet him; and this grace would be an adornment informing and accompanying all his actions, so that he appears clearly worthy of the companionship and favour of the great."

[69] Emizon, "*Grazia*," p. 449. *Grazia,* for Leonardo, best manifested itself in dim lighting.

unfathomable blackness in the way that John's gospel described. Sweeping subtly across the Baptist's face, the light, masterfully executed by Leonardo, heightens the painting's sense of anticipation, hinting at the Baptist's role as attestor to the Savior's arrival:[70]

> There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:6-9)

To forge even more convincingly the Saint's connection to the divine, Leonardo endowed his Baptist with feminine qualities in acknowledgment of the religious references to the greater sanctity of women. Indeed, the effeminacy of the *Baptist* heightened the painting's incomprehensibility, causing critical uproar among nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians who objected vehemently to Leonardo's apparent violation of the male form. In the *Guide to the Louvre for the Amateur*, Theophile Gautier rejected the *Saint John,* writing:

> but his mask, effeminate, enough to make one doubt his sex, is so sardonic, so deceiving, so full of reticence and mysteries, that he upsets and inspires in you vague suspicions about his orthodoxy…. [He] believes not at all in the Christ that he announces; nonetheless for the benefit of the vulgar he makes the conventional gesture, and puts the religious in the

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[70] Paul Barolsky, "The Mysterious Meaning of Leonardo's *St. John the Baptist," Source* 8 (spring 1989), p. 13.

confidence of his diabolical smile.[71]

Hippolyte Taine's 1889 comment was similarly disparaging. "Is it even a man?" he asked. "It is a woman, the body of a woman, or the body of a beautiful ambiguous adolescent similar to the hermaphrodites of the imperial epoch, and which, like them, seems to announce an art more advanced, less healthy, and almost sickly."[72] In Bernard Berenson's 1916 *Study and Criticism of Italian Art,* the author described the *St. John* as a "fleshy female, leering out of the darkness."[73]

These comments point to the enduring influence of Aristotelian gender distinctions. Taine's allusion to a "less healthy" and "sickly" art form was provoked by the feminine body of Leonardo's *Baptist* — a reaction rooted in Aristotle's debasement of the female form. However, although this critical chorus against the *Baptist's* offensive effeminacy was motivated by Leonardo's adulteration of the heroic male body, these criticisms also reveal sensitivity to Leonardo's actual intention: the Hermaphrodite Effect is evident in an early drawing

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[71] Quoted in Richard Turner, *Inventing Leonardo* (London: Papermac, 1995), p. 110.

[72] Ibid., p. 111.

[73] Ibid., p. 148.

formally related to the *Baptist* known as the *Angelo incarnato* (private collection, c. 1512, fig. 3.21). The three quarter-length composition reveals a penis attached to an otherwise proportionally feminine torso.[74]

Pontormo's *Saint Quentin*

Although Leonardo's strategy of communicating spirituality through the hermaphroditic body of *St. John* may have influenced Pontormo's San Sepolcro *Saint Quentin*,[75] the student went beyond his master's example because the full-length body of *Saint Quentin* is a specifically Mannerist *invenzione*: a *figura serpentinata* elegantly performed by the saint's exaggerated *contrapposto.*[76] Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, in fact, could well have based his definition of the *figura serpentinata* in his 1584 *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* on Pontormo's *Saint Quentin* as his definition described accurately the pose of Pontormo's

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[74] See Charles Nicholl's discussion of this drawing in *Leonardo da Vinci: The Flights of the Mind* (London: The Penguin Group, 2004), pp. 469-470.

[75] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 340. According to Vasari, Pontormo studied under Leonardo.

[76] David Summers, "*Maniera* and Movement: The Figura Serpentinata," in *Readings in Italian Mannerism,* ed. Liana De Girolami Cheney (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 279. The author suggests that the *contrapposto* was the basis of the *figura serpentinata.*

figure. The author defined the *figura serpentinata* as

> A letter S or an undulating flame, the painted figure may also stand like a pyramid that has the base… turned upwards, and the point downwards; so that the figure will show breadth in the upper part, either showing both the shoulders, or extending the arms, or showing one leg and hiding the other, as the wise painter will judge best.[77]

The body of Pontormo's *Saint Quentin,* his arms restrained and extended, and his legs one in front of the other, stands like an upside down pyramid in the way that Lomazzo described.

The author further explained that the *figura serpentinata* was a form in which artists could convey "the greatest grace and loveliness" of a figure by causing it to appear "to move itself."[78] This grace that Lomazzo observed was exhibited through the serpentine figure's paradoxical gestures, which departed from the natural movements of the human body.[79] The adept manipulation of the human form that resulted in the *figura serpentinata* facilitated the successful exhibition of *grazia,* but only by overstepping

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[77] Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte de la Pittura* (Milan, 1584), quoted in David Summers, "*Maniera* and Movement: The Figura Serpentinata," p. 276. Notice here that Lomazzo also implied that the virtuoso artist knew to exercise good judgment – perhaps an evocation of *il giudizio dell'occhio* – in representations of the painted figure.

[78] Summers, "*Maniera* and Movement," pp. 275-276.

[79] Ibid., p. 296.

the limitations of nature.

Pontormo's *Saint Quentin* is, thus, not merely serpentine. The artist, to make visible a "grace exceeding measurement,"[80] combined the *figura serpentinata* with "new" anatomical proportions that are no longer based on natural standards, but founded instead on artistic shrewdness and refined through skill in drawing or *disegno*. Indeed, Pontormo seemed to have designed his figures to deliberately flout the prevailing artistic canon,[81] violating Leonardo's instruction that

> [e]very part of the whole must be proportionate to the whole. Thus if a man has a thick and short figure, he must be the same in all his limbs, that is to say, with short and thick arms, with wide, thick hands, and short fingers, with their joints in the aforesaid manner, and so on with the remainder.[82]

Leonardo also suggested that

> [t]he span to which the man opens his arms is equivalent to his height.[83]

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[80] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 618.

[81] Franzsepp Würtenberger, *Mannerism: The European Style of the Sixteenth Century,* trans. Michael Heron (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 46.

[82] *Treatise on Painting by Leonardo da Vinci,* ed. and trans. A. Philip McMahon, intro L. Heydenreich, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 286. Quoted in Kemp, *Leonardo on Painting*, p. 119.

[83] Ibid., p. 120.

A comparison of Pontormo's *Study of St. John* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, c. 1525, fig. 3.22) for his 1528 *Lamentation* (Florence, Capponi Chapel, fig. 3.23) with Leonardo's *Nude Man from the Rear* (Windsor Castle, Royal Library, c. 1499, fig. 3.24) illustrates well Pontormo's violation. The elongated limbs of Pontormo's nude, if spread out, would extend far beyond Leonardo's parameters.

Pontormo's departure from the ideal proportions of the Renaissance body can also be illustrated by employing Vasari's critical distinction between works of art of the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento.[84] Although portrayals of Saint Quentin are rare, he is related typologically to the crucified Christ and Saint Sebastian. Comparisons with early representations of the crucified Christ, such as Masaccio's *Trinity* (Florence, Sta. Maria Novella, 1427, fig. 3.25) and Andrea del Castagno's *Crucifixion with Four Saints* (Florence, Sta. Maria degli Angeli, 1454-55, fig. 3.26) demonstrate how Pontormo's *Saint Quentin* deviated from Quattrocento proportions. Castagno and Masaccio emphasized the musculature of the figure to indicate the potency of the body of Christ and the importance of the savior's corporeality in humanity's redemption without

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[84] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 618. Vasari made this distinction in his preface to the third part of the *Lives.*

deviating from measurable proportions. The same difference is apparent when Pontormo's *Saint Quentin* is compared to Antonio del Pollaiuolo's *St. Sebastian* (fig. 1.14). As an effective invocation of the saint's suffering, the body of *St. Sebastian* remains within the masculine norm despite his emaciation. Pontormo, on the other hand, feminized the body of Saint Quentin to convey spirituality in a way radically different from Quattrocento examples. He combined the extremely stylized pose of Saint Quentin's elongated body with a subdued and understated musculature so that *Saint Quentin* effectively embodied theological grace.

Secular *Grazia*: Imaging Castiglione's *Courtier*

Turning now to a discussion of *grazia* in non-religious art, I examine Raphael's *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* (fig. 3.4) and Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier* (fig. 3.5), both of which visually hover within a hermaphroditic middle-ground into which the gender boundary was pushed to make feminine grace visible. The seemingly conflicted relationship of grace with masculinity asserted by Castiglione in the *Courtier* can be apprehended in the tension between male and female in these masculine personifications of *grazia*.

The *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* evinces Raphael's awareness of Castiglione's notion of *grazia*. Raphael figured

most prominently among all the artists in *The Courtier*, and undoubtedly, the painter was familiar with the author's suppositions since the two had been friends in Urbino and were reacquainted in Rome.[85] Specifically, the very feminine features of Raphael's Renaissance banker indicate that Castiglione's conception of *grazia* found its way visually into Raphael's painting. Just as Castiglione's courtier must negotiate the boundary between masculinity and femininity, Bindo's "unblemished skin, ruddy complexion, swanline neck, sensual lips, and shadowed eyes"[86] betray his feminine side.

The expression of *grazia* in Raphael's painting is comparable to the manner by which grace issued from Leonardo's painting of *St. John the Baptist.*[87] Indeed,

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[85] David Alan Brown and Jane Van Nimmen, *Raphael and the Beautiful Banker: The Story of the Bindo Altoviti Portrait* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 25-26. For a discussion of the circumstances of this commission, see David Alan Brown, "Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti," in *Raphael, Cellini and a Renaissance Banker: The Patronage of Bindo Altoviti,* eds. Alan Chong, Donatella Pegazzaro, and Dimitrios Zikos (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2003), pp. 93-110. Although *The Courtier* was not published until 1528, Castiglione was already writing from 1508 to 1516.

[86] Brown, "Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti," p. 98.

[87] Summers, "*Maniera* and Movement," p. 296. See also Brown, "Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti," p. 100; and Jodi Cranston, "Desire and Gravitas in Bindo's Portraits," in *Raphael, Cellini and a Renaissance Banker: The Patronage of Bindo Altoviti,* p. 118; and Emison, *Grazia,* p. 440. Raphael's illustration of *grazia,* by overstating the feminine qualities of this male sitter, could have been

Vasari's estimation that "Rafaello came very near to [Leonardo] more than any other painter and above all in grace of colouring"[88] may have been an allusion to the Leonardesque lighting of Raphael's paintings exemplified in Bindo's portrait. Although less dramatically, Raphael, like Leonardo, employed light and shadow to describe his sitter's embodiment of grace. Raphael's banker is partly obscured in an alluring darkness that heightens the portrait's ineffability, amplifying the expression of *grazia.* Bindo's emergence beyond the shadows takes the viewer by surprise because despite one's consciousness of his masculinity, his mien is decidedly feminine. However, the spectator is captivated, caught in a state of bewilderment, as light and shadow work in concert to accentuate the beauty of Bindo's

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also a reaction to his rivalry with Michelangelo. Emison contends that Raphael celebrated the qualities of womanly beauty in his art to competitively contrast against Michelangelo's nudes that exemplified *difficultà* and *terribilità.* By exploiting feminine beauty to convey *grazia* as a new representational feature equal to the visual significance of the heroic male ideal, Raphael's attribution of female qualities to the *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* could also be considered as an alternative to — and a subversion of — the prevailing paradigm of masculine representation. See Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, pp. 742-743 for Vasari's comments regarding Raphael's artistic reaction to Michelangelo; and chapter 2, pp. 133-134, for a discussion of the competitive nature of the Florentine artistic environment.

[88] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 1, p. 741.

features.

This Leonardesque system of visualizing the light of theological *grazia* extended into Bindo's secular world to illustrate the grace required from the proper courtier. Courtly and theological grace, however, could be easily conflated because although grace, according to Castiglione, was something that could be cultivated, he also maintained that *grazia* could be a birthright[89] and therefore a gift from God.

Another comparison, this time to similar three-quarter-length portraits by Raphael — the portraits of *Agnolo Doni* and *Maddalena Strozzi* (Florence, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, 1505-06, fig. 3.27) — demonstrates how the *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* exemplified immeasurable grace achieved through idealized proportions. In the *Doni* and *Strozzi* portraits, Raphael's straightforward approach

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[89] Castiglione-Bull, *Courtier,* pp. 54-55: "It is true that, through the favour of the stars or of Nature, certain people come into the world endowed with such gifts that they seem not to have been born but to have been formed by some god with his own hands and blessed with every possible advantage of mind and body." He then writes that "in addition to noble birth," the courtier possesses "gifts" from Nature including "talent and beauty of countenance and person" and "that certain air and grace that makes him immediately pleasing and attractive to all who meet him." He then writes of grace as "an adornment informing and accompanying all [the courtier's] actions, so that he appears clearly worthy of the companionship and favour of the great."

to physiognomy, costume, and landscape was derived from Flemish examples,[90] which are famous for their strict adherence to realism. While the portrait of Altoviti exhibits a certain freedom in execution that heightens the painting's enigmatic quality, the double portraits' exacting details are more in accord with the rigorous quality of Quattrocento art to which Vasari objected, lacking the "sweet and facile grace that hovers midway between the seen and the unseen."[91]

This Vasarian "midway," from which grace manifested artistically, paralleled Castiglione's concept of courtly moderation. The portrait of Bindo successfully maneuvered Vasari's artistic middleground, and like Castiglione's perfect courtier, Raphael's figure nearly crossed the line between male and female — a danger about which Castiglione cautioned.

Pontormo's *Halberdier*

Like Raphael, Pontormo endowed *The Halberdier* with feminine features. Elizabeth Cropper points to the "anatomy of beauty and grace as precise as any contemporary anatomy

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[90] Brown, "Raphael's Portrait of Bindo Altoviti," p. 98

[91] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 618.

of the female form."[92] Lorne Campbell observes, "The youth, with his narrow, slanting shoulders, ridiculously small waist, relatively wide hips, jutting codpiece and rather phallic pike, is sexually ambiguous."[93] Although the overt Aristotelian bias against the female body, unhindered in turn-of-the-century criticism of Leonardo's *Baptist,* is absent in these twentieth-century descriptions of Pontormo's *Halberdier*, the similar tones of perplexity suggest that the manner in which grace is articulated through the Baptist's feminine body is also operative in Pontormo's portrait. In a way, our experience of *The Halberdier* is similar to Ghiberti's reaction to the *Hermaphrodite Sleeping* when it was first unearthed in Rome, c. 1450. The presence of multiple phallic signifiers in Pontormo's portrait – his "phallic pike" and "jutting codpiece" – is surprising as they refer back to the *Halberdier's* unmistakably feminine body.

The pose of the halberdier's strikingly feminine body is unexpected, but more specifically, his physiognomy, as a

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[92] Elizabeth Cropper, "Preparing to Finish: Portraits by Pontormo and Bronzino around 1530," in *Sixteenth-Century Italian Art,* ed. Michael Cole (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 178.

[93] Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 9.

visual tool devised by the artist, is perplexing. Traceable as early as 1518 to a *Study for a Madonna* (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, c.1518, fig. 3.28) for the Visdomini altarpiece (Florence, S. Michele Visdomini, 1518, fig. 3.29),[94] this physiognomy, because Pontormo liberally applied it to numerous figures in various paintings, amplifies the crisis of identity that has beleaguered this portrait.

When compared to the artist's *Portrait of Alessandro de' Medici* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1534, fig. 3.30), *The Halberdier's* purpose becomes even more uncertain. Pontormo did not idealize Alessandro's features because he intended to paint a portrait faithful to Alessandro's actual appearance.[95] In contrast, *The Halberdier* could have been an image of youthful beauty intended "to inspire hero worship in boys."[96] The *Halberdier's* "generic" face, shared by many figures in different paintings by the artist,

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[94] Elizabeth Cropper, *Pontormo: Portrait of a Halberdier* (Los Angeles: Getty Museum Studies on Art, 1997), p. 12.

[95] Janet Cox-Rearick, "An Important Painting by Pontormo from the Collection of Chauncy D. Stillman" (New York: Christie's sale catalogue, May 31, 1989), p. 22. Each of these pictures was painted to fulfill very different needs.

[96] Cropper, *Portrait of a Halberdier,* p. 10. See also Christopher Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence," *Art Journal* 56 (1997), pp. 31-40.

visually supports the claim that this work is not a portrait of anyone in particular. More importantly, that *The Halberdier* was meant for wider consumption is plausible if we consider the possible meaning conveyed by Pontormo's physiognomic invention.

The *Halberdier's* physiognomy is significant, particularly in relation to Hermaphroditic Masculinity, because Pontormo applied this facial convention with seeming disregard to gender. If the *Halberdier* is the male personification of this facial archetype, certain characters in Pontormo's *Lamentation* (fig. 3.23) and the women of the *Visitation* (San Michele, Carmignano, 1528, fig. 3.31) are his female counterparts. Pontormo, by using this facial representation interchangeably on male and female figures, caused this pictorial device to be gender indeterminate. By virtue of association, depicting the *Halberdier* with the paradigmatic physiognomy initially intended for the Madonna of the Visdomini Altarpiece — the same one that he would then use to delineate the facial features of the various male *and* female figures in the Capponi *Lamentation,* and of the women of the 1528 *Visitation* — Pontormo effectively infused the young soldier with *grazia,* which could communicate spiritual substance in the same manner as these various female saints.

The Halberdier could have therefore served a secular purpose, but with strong religious overtones. This work was painted at a time when the republic was infused with a fervent spirituality during the 1529 siege of Florence. While enveloped in a recurrence of Savonarolan zealotry, the Florentines believed that they were the chosen people, and the city was dedicated to Christ.[97] For a painting intended to inspire young men into divinely sanctioned military service, intersecting opposing gender characteristics allowed the artist to communicate simultaneously the necessary masculinity of a soldier and, as an embodiment of *grazia,* the halberdier's feminine side to convey his divine significance.

Bocchi's *Paragone* and Pontormo's San Lorenzo Frescoes

Undoubtedly, the ways by which Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael articulated *grazia* in their works inspired Pontormo. However, there seems to have been a hesitation on the part of High Renaissance masters to fully accept *grazia* as a revelation of artistic talent. The competitive milieu in which these artists worked contributed to this reluctance.[98] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the

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[97] Cropper, *Portrait of a Halberdier,* p. 89.

[98] Emision, *Grazia,* pp. 446-447, 450. The author suggests that Michelangelo and Raphael combined *terribilità* and

virtuoso representation of the heroic male body was the ultimate standard of artistic excellence, particularly in central Italy. Depicting the feminine quality of grace may have been viewed as a lack of artistic prowess, and therefore a flaw.

Yet, as we have learned, *grazia* became an important and relevant measure of artistic merit, and throughout this chapter, examinations of works from Pontormo's oeuvre reveal how he embraced and visualized the expressive value of *grazia* by prioritizing grace above all other art-theoretical options. In his final work in San Lorenzo, Pontormo unabashedly embraced artistic grace by further redefining the body. S.J. Freedberg described the figures in San Lorenzo as distortions of Michelangelo's formal vocabulary;[99] they were as eccentric as the artist himself. Even Vasari expressed bewilderment:

> It does not seem to me that in a single place did he give a thought to any order of composition, or measurement, or time, or variety in the heads, or diversity in the flesh-colours, or, in a word, to any rule, proportion, or law of perspective…. And although there may be seen in this work some bit of a torso with the back turned or facing to the front and some attachments of flanks, executed with marvelous care and great labour of Jacopo, who made finished models of clay in the round for almost all the figures,

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grazia in certain works, to demonstrate an awareness of each other's artistic strengths, so that one might not outdo the other.

[99] Freedberg, *Painting in Italy,* p. 463.

> nevertheless the work as a whole is foreign to his manner, and, as it appears to almost every man, without proportion, the torsi for the most part being large and the legs and arms small, to say nothing of the heads, in which there is no trace to be seen of that singular excellence and grace that he used to give to them.[100]

In the *proemio* to the third part of the *Lives*, Vasari praised the "grace exceeding measurement" found in works of art of the 1500s. However, in the case of the San Lorenzo frescoes, the biographer determined that an excess of *grazia* resulted in its nullification. Pontormo must have pushed allowable representational limits, even during this period of creative tolerance, to elicit such a harsh response.

As if building on Vasari's criticism, Franceso Bocchi, in his 1571 *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello,* criticized Pontormo's indulgence in *artificio* but nevertheless praised Pontormo's skillful execution as *mirabile*.[101] To review Bocchi's premise, the author gendered the *paragone* so that sculpture, exemplified by Donatello's *Saint George,* was a masculine art, active because of the "unornamented purity" of the sculpted image. Painting, in contrast, was passive and feminine. Aptly, in the previous

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[100] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* vol. 2, p. 370.

[101] Campbell, "The Gendered Paragone in Late Sixteenth-Century Art Theory," p. 230.

chapter, examples of Machiavellian Masculinity were mostly sculptural works. In contrast, the Renaissance works of art that exemplify Hermaphroditic Masculinity mentioned in this chapter are, without exception, paintings.

Bocchi singled out Pontormo's San Lorenzo frescoes as exemplifications of the feminine art of painting, and herein lies a contradiction: if Bocchi denoted the San Lorenzo frescoes as the most vivid example of a typically feminine art form, how could Vasari claim that the very feminine quality of *grazia* had been lost in Pontormo's frescoes? These contradictory opinions point to the fluctuations in the understanding of *grazia* and the attendant confusion that may have resulted from gender paradoxes in the artistic practices of Cinquecento artists — despite the desirability of such contradictions. The tenets of artistic grace embodied by Pontormo's works throughout his career still informed and inspired at least some of the figures in the frescoes, which can be attested further by the few drawings for this project that survive.

For example, in his preparatory drawing *Christ the Judge with the Creation of Eve* (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, c. 1546, fig. 3.32), Pontormo's feminized Christ emanates *grazia* in the same manner as Rosso's *Dead Christ;* Pontormo's seated Christ, with his legs clinched, assumes the same female

convention. The San Lorenzo Christ is a marked contrast to the strapping Christ of the Sistine Chapel *Last Judgment* (Rome, Sistine Chapel, 1541, fig. 3.33). As a reflection of *dolcezza* void of any sense of *terribilità,* Pontormo's *Christ as Judge* brims with sweetness, full of *grazia.*

In the same drawing, Pontormo appropriated the pose of the Louvre *Sleeping Hermaphrodite* (fig. 3.6) for the figure of Adam at the bottom of the study. Adam's head lies on his right hand similarly to how the *Hermaphrodite's* head is positioned. Like Michelangelo's *Leda*[102] Pontormo's *Adam* is also a descendant of the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite.* Pontormo, however, employed the body of the ancient statue, not to construct the body of a female character, as did his predecessor. Instead, Pontormo saw it fit to adopt the *Hermaphrodite's* body to portray a masculine figure. Unlike the statue, there is no question as to the sex in Pontormo's drawing; his penis is patently displayed to declare that he is Adam and that it was from this body that the female form of Eve was derived. However, the merging of male and female characteristics exemplified by the statue is fitting since the creation of Eve from Adam's rib implied a primordial state of composite sexual potential that could be illustrated suitably by a hermaphroditic

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[102] See note 11.

figure. Pontormo thus went beyond a simple adaptation of the *Hermaphrodite's* form to explore, as well, the meanings behind the conflation of sexualities embodied by the concept "hermaphroditism." Over a hundred years after Ghiberti first expressed fascination with the ancient statue's ambiguous sexuality, the Hermaphrodite Effect was still inciting artistic responses, evidenced by Pontormo's quotation of the *Hermaphrodite's* pose. The statue that first stimulated the thinking behind androgynous masculinity had evidently inspired the artist whose works most unhesitatingly exhibited the feminine quality of artistic grace.

Equicola's phrase, *femmina masculo e masculo femmina,* is a succinct summation of the tensions and the contradictions that typify representations of the Hermaphroditic Deviant. Yet, despite the apparent antithesis, Hermaphroditic Masculinity in art sought to unite ineffable grace with the male form. Because *grazia,* whether theological, aesthetic, or courtly, was a decidedly feminine property, portrayals of gracious and graceful men were necessarily feminized. And thus, until such license became available to the artists of the Cinquecento — to go beyond nature, that is to say, the "perfect" male form — *grazia* in images of men remained dormant. Images of

Machiavellian Masculinity could not have exhibited *grazia* in the same manner; hence, in conjunction with the Mannerist predilection for artistic experimentation, the Hermaphroditic Deviant was devised.

The artistic appropriation of feminine features in depictions of men allowed for the exhibition of masculine grace that accorded with an apparently new artistic agenda: the immeasurability of *grazia* had replaced Renaissance rules of proper proportions — exemplified by Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man* — as a new criterion of artistic excellence. This departure from established artistic standards, however, would not go uncorrected for very long. Already, the effects of the Counter-Reformation were being felt in Central Italy and, ever responsive to the winds of political, religious, and aesthetic change, the artists of the Renaissance, to satisfy the needs of an increasingly rigid Catholicism, invented yet another masculine paradigm: the Emasculated Prophet.

Chapter 4

The 'New' Decorum, The Counter-Reformation, and the Emasculated Prophet

The artistic transformation that occurred during the Counter-Reformation entailed the dramatic reconception of the male body because existing paradigms of masculinity could no longer meet the changing needs of the Catholic Church. Depictions of Machiavellian Masculinity, although manifestations of physical prowess, did not effectively defend Catholicism against Lutheran aggression since the battle for religious supremacy was waged in the spiritual arena, where victory was declared through the conquest of souls instead of bodies. And, while the Hermaphroditic Deviant capably delivered spiritual *grazia,* the feminized male body offended the exceedingly sober proclivities of Counter-Reformation critics and patrons. A "new" decorum in art[1] – defined here as the imposition of appropriate style

[1] Robert Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy: From Techne to Metatechne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 75. On p. 85, Williams writes that decorum "might be said to govern the relation of an image to its setting or function… [I]t might apply to the relation between things in a picture and the things in nature that they represent… [I]t might refer to the relations among the parts of a picture to one another, to the kind of internal correspondences that produce a satisfyingly self-consistent whole."

hastened by the challenge to Catholicism – attended religious renewal and required the invention of a new paradigm of maleness. Artists responding to the demands of the Counter-Reformation Church stripped the male body of both heroic potential and sensuality to arrive at the Emasculated Prophet. This model of masculinity was intended to support the Church's efforts to communicate Catholic doctrine effectively and stimulate religious devotion, and hence, the Emasculated Prophet can be seen generally in religious works of art.

An early response to the Northern Reformation also signals the emergence of this ideal of masculinity. In the previous chapter, the possibility that Rosso's *Dead Christ with Angels* (fig. 3.1), Sansepolcro *Deposition* (San Lorenzo, 1528, fig 3.18), and Louvre *Pietà* (Paris, 1537-40, fig. 3.19) demonstrated the artist's sensitivity to ecclesiastical renewal was introduced. An expanded discussion of this proposition explores how the treatment of Christ's body in these paintings imparted its sacramental relevance.

As the spirit of reform gained momentum in Central Italy around the 1540s, nearly 20 years after Rosso reacted to the Reformation, a somber sensibility became increasingly manifest. Proponents of Catholic reform

held the sins of humanity culpable for the Church's unfortunate predicament, and the pessimistic outlook that man, like Adam and Eve after the commission of original sin, had fallen once again from God's grace contributed to the period's overwhelming anxiety. The notion of the *imago dei*[2] – man as mirror of God's supreme grace – was supplanted by this increasingly uneasy view of a less innocent humanity.[3] This pervasive anti-humanist offensive dethroned the human individual from the lofty position he once occupied, depriving him of grace; consequently, the male form, no longer believed to possess unlimited beauty, became in dire need of a "makeover." A discussion of man's Counter-Reformation "Fall" provides the ideological groundwork for case studies that help to illustrate the development of a Counter-Reformation style.

A fundamental understanding of this style can be grasped from the Council's decree on religious art, which states:

> The holy council commands all bishops and others who hold the office of teaching and have charge of the *cura animarum,* that in accordance with the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and with the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers and the

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[2] See chapter 2, pp. 130-131.

[3] Marcia B. Hall, *After Raphael* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 178.

> decrees of sacred councils, they above all instruct the faithful diligently in matters relating to intercession and invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the legitimate use of images…. Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be placed and retained especially in the churches, and that due honor and veneration is to be given them… so that by means of the images which we kiss and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness they bear.[4]

Although Tridentine regulations were not published until 1564, a regressive and uncomplicated style, one perceived to heighten the piety of works of art, had already begun to replace the very exploratory nature of Mannerism. During the 1540s, artistic exploration was curbed to give way to art that encouraged proper adoration and worship. This Counter-Maniera style[5] was aimed at reinforcing the Church's role in the cultivation of spirituality and the custodianship of faith. The Council, in an effort to maintain ecclesiastical orthodoxy and Christian dignity, subjected iconography to a process of "purification."[6] As a

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[4] H. J. Schroeder, trans., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis and London: Herder, 1941). Quoted in Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, *Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series: Italian Art 1500-1600* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 120.

[5] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 178. See also, Hall, *Renovation and Counter-Reformation: Vasari and Duke Cosimo in Sta. Maria Novella and Sta. Croce, 1565-1577* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[6] Klein and Zerner, *Italian Art 1500-1600,* p. 120.

result of this cleansing, Counter-Maniera art "tended toward… rather traditional forms, without individual initiative, clear as to its subject, respecting classical decorum as well as modern decency, but aiming, however, at a dramatic or pathetic effect."[7]

To arrive at this "dramatic or pathetic" effect, visual precedents from the early 1500s such as the works of Raphael and Andrea del Sarto, and, in certain cases, paintings and sculptures from the Middle Ages were mined for elements to "enhance" the devotional substance of artworks. The practice of reviving stylistic antecedents is characteristic of the Counter-Maniera style because retrospection to an age perceived to be "holier" was thought to produce works that were free of artifice and conceit. The phenomenon of retrospection in art is explained in four case studies. Unlike Rosso's early examples, which were responses to the effects of the Northern Reformation, these studies explore the direct impact of the Catholic Reformation on Central Italian art.

The first study is an analysis of Michelangelo's artistic transformation. *Il Divino* himself abandoned the demonstration of artistic virtuosity through depictions of robust masculinity to comply with rigorous Counter-

[7] Ibid.

Reformation demands. A thorough examination of the gamut of his Counter-Reformation style reveals the complexity of Michelangelo's transition. The artist's Counter-Maniera style was bifurcated, with the Pauline Chapel frescoes, *The Conversion of St. Paul* and *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* (Rome, 1542-45, figs. 4.1 and 4.2), on the one hand, and his late renderings of Christ's crucifixion on the other hand. The frescoes have been disparaged historically in large part due to the apparent absence of artistic *grazia*, and the drawings from the 1560s, which exemplify Michelangelo's late style, have been similarly dismissed as lackluster.[8] However, unlike the last frescoes, these drawings are charged with a unique and mysterious spiritual quality that rivals the creative profundity of his earlier works. Since Jesus' body was a primary locus of stylistic change, I survey the artist's depictions of Christ — from the early Roman *Pietà* (St. Peter's, 1498, fig. 4.3) to these late crucifixions — to shed light on Michelangelo's artistic transformation.

The next two case studies explore the artistic shift

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[8] Paul Joannides, "'Primitivism' in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo: The Master's Construction of an Old-age Style" in *Michelangelo's Drawings: Studies in the History of Art,* ed. Craig Hugh Smyth in collaboration with Anne Gilkerson (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), pp. 245-262. Joannides calls Michelangelo's late style his "drab manner."

of Michelangelo's *epigone*, Sebastiano del Piombo. Acutely sensitive to the implications of church reform, Sebastiano was receptive to the constantly changing landscape of Cinquecento politics and religion partly because he experienced first-hand the 1527 Sack of Rome. He reacted to the Counter-Reformation with thoughtful works that influenced a generation of painters and sculptors who were initiated into the ascetic artistic tenor of the later 1500s.[9] Sebastiano's *Raising of Lazarus* (London, National Gallery, 1517-1519, fig. 4.4) represents the artist's pre-Counter-Reformation manner; a comparison of this painting with Santi di Tito's late sixteenth-century version (Florence, Santa Maria Novella, 1576, fig. 4.5) supports this analysis. I then contrast Sebastiano's *Christ Carrying the Cross* (fig. 4.6), which exemplifies the painter's Counter-Reformation style, with the Milanese Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli's (called Giampietrino) painting of the same subject matter (National Gallery of Art, London, c.1510-30, fig. 4.7) and with Salviati's Uffizi version (fig. 4.8). These juxtapositions illustrate how, by diverging from representations of Hermaphroditic Deviants, Sebastiano depicted an outstanding example of emasculated masculinity.

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[9] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 175. Also, Federico Zeri, *Pittura e Controriforma: L'"arte senza tempo" di Scipione da Gaeta* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1957), p. 35.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of propositions advanced by Post-Tridentine theorists, who harshly condemned artists responsible for works perceived to transgress decorum and dispensed critical advice and guidelines to correct stylistic lapses in judgment. An inquiry into Giovanni Andrea Gilio's *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istoria* (1564), Francesco Bocchi's *Discorso sopra l'eccellenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto, pittore fiorentino* (unpublished, written in 1567) and the same author's *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1571, 1584) will elucidate the manner in which the Church's changing artistic expectations were codified.

Rosso's Dead Christ(s) in light of Church Reform

Rosso's depictions of Christ from the 1520s are some of the earliest manifestations of emasculated masculinity; it was as if the painter anticipated the directives that would be decreed by the Council of Trent forty years later. His 1524 *Dead Christ with Angels* (fig. 3.1), discussed in the previous chapter as an example of feminized masculinity, was a particularly early forerunner of the Emasculated Prophet. Two later altarpieces, the Sansepolcro *Deposition* (fig 3.18) and the Louvre *Pietà* (fig. 3.19), are included in this discussion because compositionally, they

address the same issues as the Boston painting. First, the centrality of Christ's body in these altarpieces suggests that Rosso may have intended these pictures to engage in the deeply contested debate over the doctrine of transubstantiation – that bread and wine become in substance the body and blood of Christ during mass. Second, Rosso's clever concealment of Christ's genitalia seems to have portended the necessary rejection of sensuality in sacred art.[10]

Many scholars concur that the brazenly flaunted body of Rosso's *Dead Christ* was an allusion to the doctrine of transubstantiation.[11] In relation to the emasculated

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[10] Roberto Paolo Ciardi, "Il Rosso e Volterra," in *Il Rosso e Volterra,* ed. Roberto Paolo Ciardi (Italy: Giunta regionale toscana; Venice: Marsilio, 1994), pp. 79-80. Artists such as Daniele da Volterra, a Counter-Reformation painter charged by the Council of Trent to cover "unsavory" portions of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* based his *Deposition* (Rome, 1541, Santa Trinità dei Monti) on Rosso's 1521 Volterra *Deposition.* Ciardi suggests that in Rosso, Daniele found a way of depicting figures "austere e intense." See also Ciardi, p. 180, on Rosso's influence on Santi di Tito.

[11] Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion," pp. 679-693. See also Freedberg, *Painting in Italy,* p. 201. The author writes that Rosso's *Dead Christ* "is a demonstration of the Eucharistic miracle of Christ's real presence." Also, Simona Lecchini Giovannoni, "Il Corpus Christi e la mensa d'altare in alcuni dipinti fiorentini del Cinquecento," in *Altari e committenza: episodi a Firenze nell'età della Controriforma,* ed. Cristina De Benedictis (Florence: Pontecorboli, 1996), pp. 28-35.

For an opposing point of view, see Shearman "The 'Dead Christ' by Rosso Fiorentino," p. 148. He suggests that

paradigm of masculinity, the deliberate omission of the sacred genitalia is particularly important. This feature is common to the three above-mentioned altarpieces, and this exclusion seems to function as a defense of Catholicism against Protestant attack. The elimination of Christ's sex removes connotations of sensuality so that Christ's body can be conspicuously displayed without the fear of inciting inappropriate reactions. The prominence of Christ's form then effectively argues for the validity of transubstantiation as the salience of the Savior's body visually reverses the supposed metamorphosis that occurs during this process. Bread and wine are reconverted to Christ's body and blood to signify graphically the actual material presence of Christ's flesh in the consecrated host.

The representational strategy of excluding Christ's genitalia occurs also in Rosso's Sansepolcro *Deposition* and Louvre *Pièta.* It is notable that the same Bishop Leonardo Tornabuoni who contracted Rosso to paint the Boston *Dead*

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the painting refers, instead, to Christ's resurrection. He opposes the proposal that Rosso's *Dead Christ* "seated upon this altartomb… refers to the Mystery of Transubstantiation" because, in his opinion, "all signs of Christ's sacrifice, and particularly of the blood, are unusually suppressed." He further asserts that the painting represents a resurrected Christ, the emblem of Sansepolcro, because the altarpiece was commissioned by Leonardo Tornabuoni to commemorate his ascension to the bishopric of this diocese.

Christ brokered the commission for the *Deposition* with the confraternity of Santa Croce.[12] Known for their "chaste, introspective mentality,"[13] the confraternity members asked that Rosso paint a picture of Christ's removal from the cross.[14] However, the Sansepolcro altarpiece is not a true deposition. Christ's descent from the cross is merely implied by the two men releasing Jesus' body to His mother and by the figure that straddles the ladder leaning against the cross. Indeed, the central characters – Christ and the Virgin – are arranged in a way more suggestive of a pietà. This configuration allows Christ's "transubstantiated" body to be exhibited more prominently, making it more available for devotional consumption. The accessibility of the savior's body may have also been Rosso's concern when he painted the Louvre *Pietà; c*ommissioned by the Constable Anne de Montmorency for the chapel in his château in Écouen,[15] this altarpiece was compositionally derived from the *Deposition*.[16]

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[12] David Franklin, *Rosso in Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 161. Also Ciardi, "Il Rosso e Volterra," pp. 74-75.

[13] Ibid., p. 183.

[14] Ibid., p. 164.

[15] Ibid., p. 175.

[16] Franklin, *Rosso in Italy,* p. 183.

Comparisons with earlier and contemporaneous depictions of the deceased Christ bolster the proposal that Rosso's eradication of Christ's phallus may have been prompted by the Protestant Reformation. Christ's sexuality is unabashedly displayed in Michelangelo's 1510 *Entombment* (London, National Gallery of Art, fig. 4.9), for example. Likewise, in Rosso's Volterra *Descent from the Cross* (Cathedral, 1521, fig. 4.10) and Pontormo's Capponi Chapel *Lamentation* (Florence, Santa Felicità, 1528, fig. 3.14), the cloth that covers Christ's loins implies, even as it conceals, the presence of his member underneath.[17] Christ's sexuality is not stifled in these works because they weren't meant to address the impact of the Northern threat to Catholicism.

In contrast, the emasculation of Rosso's castrated Christs is absolute, and sensitivity to Northern allegations about the profligacy of Catholic art may have influenced Rosso's design. Devoid of sensuality, these paintings were aimed at warding off charges trumped up by Reformers. Toward this end, Rosso employed the "medieval expedient of ridding the Incarnate's loins of the sinning member."[18] Although this medieval device had become

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[17] Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ*, pp. 298-303.

[18] Ibid., p. 323.

unacceptable during the Renaissance, because "artists perceived such evasion as offensive to both nature and scripture,"[19] the emasculation of Christ in the Boston painting, the Sansepolcro *Deposition,* and the Louvre *Pietà* served to boost the religious content of these altarpieces. Rosso's visual retreat to a mode of representation from the Middle Ages anticipated the regression[20] that would characterize Counter-Reformation artistic practice. This practice was intended to ensure art's spiritual efficacy since its devotional utility was of paramount importance in the struggle for religious primacy.

The Counter-Reformation Fall of Man

Rosso's reaction to the early symptoms of church reform prefigured the extensive transformation in art that would occur later in the Cinquecento, when an austerity and severity permeated Europe as a result of religious discord. This solemnity was due, in part, to the Church's diminished estimation of humanity, and the root of this negative view was the belief that mankind's collective sinfulness had

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., pp. 94-106. Another medieval representational convention informs the Sansepolcro *Deposition.* Rosso's placement of Christ's hands as if in a gesture of "self-touch" is traceable prior to 1320. This gesture may be a suggestion of the impending resurrection.

weakened Catholicism's claim to religious primacy; humanity's trangressions made the Church vulnerable to Protestant attack.

This drastic depreciation in humanity's status coincided with the growing crisis in humanism:[21] since mankind was no longer thought to be an incarnation of the divine, the humanist understanding of man's intrinsic goodness could no longer be convincingly reconciled with Christian thought. Catholic belief was cleansed of humanist adulteration, causing the dissolution of the once wholly accepted grandiose view of humanity's exalted state.[22] Pico della Mirandola's Neoplatonic musings about masculine self-authorship, which were discussed in chapter 2,[23] had lost credibility given humanity's perceived debasement. Since man had fallen from God's grace, "the easy optimism embodied by the concept of the *imago dei"* was replaced by a "harsh recognition of the depravity of man and his dependence upon divine Grace."[24]

In the visual arts, the consequence of this

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[21] Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 6-11.

[22] Clark, *A Failure of Nerve,* p. 7.

[23] See chapter 2, pp. 130-132.

predicament was the abatement of the once seemingly boundless beauty of the human form. Written in the 1510s, Baldassare Castiglione's assertion that "for the most part the ugly are also evil, and the beautiful good"[25] seemed entirely applicable by mid-century. Castiglione continued,

> And it can be said that beauty is the pleasant, gay, charming and desirable face of the good, and that ugliness is the dark, disagreeable, unpleasant and sorry face of evil. And no matter what things you study, you will always find that those that are good and useful are also graced with beauty.[26]

By the 1540s, the nude male form, predominant in the artistic vocabulary of Central Italy, could no longer be "graced with beauty" and was spectacularly reconfigured. The heroic haughtiness and political arrogance of the Machiavellian Man and the affectation exhibited by the Hermaphroditic Deviant were shunned in religious art in order to foster a mode of devotional expression that emphasized, instead, the suffering and passions of Christ and other biblical men. Works by Michelangelo, Sebastiano del Piombo, and Santi di Tito exhibit the monumental artistic change that occurred during this period of spiritual renewal.

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[24] Hall, *After Raphael,* pp. 178-179.

[25] Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* pp. 330-331.

[26] Ibid.

The Counter-Reformation Michelangelo

Michelangelo resisted the period's cynical view of humanity because he was unwilling to discount immediately the male body's beauty and artistic primacy. Even into the 1540's, in the Sistine Chapel *Last Judgment* (Rome, 1541, fig. 3.25), the muscular body of Michelangelo's Apollonian Christ reveals the artist's unflinching predilection for antique models of heroism. Indeed, Michelangelo's artistic transformation did not occur until later in the decade, when the artist "reexamined his art… [and] in his search for the means to represent the transcendental, he rejected the sensuousness, facility, and artifice of his previous work."[27] Marcia Hall suggests that this transition surfaced initially in the lower portion of the *Last Judgment;* she cites Michelangelo's Pauline frescoes as pioneering archetypes of the Counter-Maniera style.

Although I concur that Michelangelo did not transition until this point in his career, I question the characterization of his mid-Cinquecento shift as "pioneering." Other artists, recognizing the onset of Catholic renewal, formulated their responses to Church reform long before Michelangelo. However, once the gravity of ecclesiastical reform permeated Michelangelo's person,

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[27] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 175.

the astonishing change in his style attests to his commitment to the new decorum; his transition illustrates explicitly the Counter-Reformation phenomenon of artistic conversion. The strong, graceful bodies of *David* and the Sistine Chapel *Adam* yielded to images of emasculated men — from the Pauline Chapel's Saints Peter and Paul to a series of depictions of the crucified Christ. Evident in these works is Michelangelo's unequivocal disavowal of High Renaissance artistic bravura; it is perhaps in this sense that Michelangelo was a vanguard of the Counter-Maniera.

Two chief features that characterized the collective response to the Counter-Reformation also informed Michelangelo's anti-Maniera style. Firstly, his acceptance of mankind's sinful decline irreversibly reduced the male form's capacity to embody artistic virtuosity in his works. This phenomenon will be illuminated in an analysis of the Pauline Frescoes. Secondly, artistic retrospection provided him with the visual prototypes necessary to reinvent Counter-Reformation manifestations of masculinity. Michelangelo's creative retreat will be explained in a discussion of the crucifixion drawings from the 1560s. I evaluate Michelangelo's Counter-Reformation period in two parts because two distinct styles seem to have been triggered by Counter-Reformation concerns: the former, a

more public response that reflected the period's unfavorable view of humankind; the latter, highly personal and more spiritually charged.

Michelangelo's renewed artistic point of view first surfaced in the frescoes of the Pauline Chapel,[28] *The Conversion of St. Paul* (fig. 4.1) and *the Crucifixion of St. Peter* (fig. 4.2). The Pauline frescoes were painted in the first of his two Counter-Reformation styles, lacking the fervent devotional quality of the drawings of Christ's crucifixion, which represent Michelangelo's second Counter-Reformation style. The figures of Sts. Peter and Paul are representations of this paradigm. Unlike the drawings, which, as we shall see, were the result of Michelangelo's retrospection, the heroes of the Pauline frescoes were the by-products of Michelangelo's acknowledgment that human weakness had caused the beauty of the male body to erode. Indeed, the two scenes reflect Michelangelo's "own conversion and his consciousness of the collective guilt which he shared with all humanity."[29]

In view of Michelangelo's personal investment in these paintings, it is probable that the artist himself designed

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[28] For the specifics of this commission, see Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 70.

[29] Ibid., p. 71.

the program for the Pauline Chapel. Charles de Tolnay suggests that the artist may have even altered the chapel's decorative scheme after he painted the first fresco, the depiction of Paul's conversion.[30] However, the very personal nature of this space – the Pope's private chapel – suggests that Paul III must have also been significantly involved in planning the decorative content for the Chapel. The gravity of the Counter-Reformation may have encouraged the pope to alter the chapel's program to declare his loyalty to the Church as an assertion of papal authority. The inclusion of St. Peter's martyrdom instead of the *Conversion of Paul's* traditional pendant, a *Delivery of the Keys by Christ to St. Peter,* may have been meant to promote the pope's interests. Peter had chosen the manner in which he was martyred – crucified inversely, his head to the ground – to proclaim his subservience and loyalty to Christ. The fresco's message of submission and deference helped to declare Pope Paul's own allegiance to Christ and, thus, his commitment to uphold the tenets of the Church. As de Tolnay proposes, the conversion and martyrdom scenes "offer two successive stages of an existence dedicated to God."[31] Thus, these frescoes promulgated Paul's fealty, while

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

simultaneously serving as a defense of Catholicism: the story of Paul's conversion "is a wonderful example of that *grazia divina* about which [the Pope's] contemporaries had so much disputed," while the *Crucifixion* protected "the primacy of the Roman Church against the Protestants."[32]

The programmatic shift, however, may have allowed Michelangelo to express his views regarding humanity's "collective guilt" as the actual designs for the frescoes were, very likely, entirely the artist's own invention. Specifically, his depictions of the Pauline protagonists — St. Paul, old, blinded, and seemingly unable to lift himself off the ground, and St. Peter, undignified and helplessly inverted — can be understood as the visual equivalents of Michelangelo's acceptance that humanity had plummeted into a state of disgrace. As Hall observes, "the mortified heroes Paul and Peter are both more vulnerable and more plausible than glorious Adam at the moment of his *Creation* on the Sistine Chapel vault."[33]

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 179. See also Leo Steinberg, *Michelangelo's Last Paintings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 17. According to Steinberg, the unveiling in 1550 of the Pauline frescoes "created no stir" and the fact that only Michelangelo loyalists Vasari and Condivi praised the paintings is revealing. Writing on Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* S.J. Freedberg asserts, "*grazia,* and the kind of beauty that it helps to generate, is less" and on the *Conversion of St. Paul,* Freedberg

The difference Hall observes between Peter and Paul and the Sistine Adam parallels the disparity between Vasari's restrained reaction to Michelangelo's Pauline paintings and the author's adulation for Adam. The author, who still referred to a *Delivery of the Keys* in the 1550 edition of the *Lives*[34] — suggesting that perhaps there was indeed a modification to the Chapel's program — barely spoke of its central characters. Vasari admired Peter only as "a nude figure of rare beauty;"[35] on the figure of Paul, he was virtually mute.[36] Vasari's tempered opinion regarding

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declares that Michelangelo's lack of concern with *grazia* "exceeds the symptoms in the *Judgment*," in *Painting In Italy 1500-1600,* pp. 475-476. For a more positive analysis of the frescoes, see William E. Wallace, "Narrative and Religious Expression in Michelangelo's Pauline Chapel," in his *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), vol. 4, pp. 526-527.

[34] de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period,* pp. 70-71; Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 178; and Creighton Gilbert, "The Usefulness of Comparisons Between the Parts and the Set: The Case of the Capella Paolina," in *Michelangelo: Selected Scholarship in English,* vol. 4, pp. 117-130.

[35] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, pp. 695-696.

[36] Vasari did not elaborate on Michelangelo's St. Paul until his own biography, and even then, only to insinuate that the painter may have made an error in his portrayal of the saint. Instead of depicting Paul as a young man, Michelangelo painted an old St. Paul — a reversion to a medieval tradition. Vasari tells us that when designing his own *Conversion* in San Pietro in Montorio, in order to correct Michelangelo's mistake and "to vary it from that which Buonarroti had executed in the Pauline Chapel, [he] made S. Paul young … and fallen from his horse, and led

Peter and Paul is telling when compared to his effusive praise of Michelangelo's Adam, whom the author described as

> a figure of such a kind in its beauty, in the attitude, and in the outlines, that it appears as if newly fashioned by the first and supreme Creator rather than by the brush and design of a mortal man.[37]

Hall's assertion that Peter and Paul are "more plausible" indicates that, unlike Adam, the protagonists of the Pauline Chapel, far from godlike, are profoundly human. No longer "graced with beauty,"[38] to use Castiglione's words, Peter and Paul are the post-lapsarian consequence of mankind's plunge from God's grace.

A second Counter-Reformation style grew out of Michelangelo's predisposition toward revisiting the works of his artistic ancestors. This tendency is evident in extant drawings by the artist after Masaccio (*Copy after Masaccio's Tribute Money,* Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, ca. 1495, fig. 4.11) and Giotto (*Drawing of two figures after Giotto,* ca. 1490, Paris, Louvre, fig. 4.12). Even at this early stage in his career, Michelangelo already understood the importance of looking back at the

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blind by the soldiers to Ananias." Vasari-de Vere, *Lives*, vol. 2, p. 1051.

[37] Ibid., p. 670.

[38] Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier,* pp. 330. See also Steinberg, *Michelangelo's Last Paintings,* p. 21.

works of his predecessors as a source of inspiration.[39] This same sensibility is apparent in the drawings of the crucified Christ from the 1560s.[40]

Giotto's Santa Maria Novella *Crucifixion* (Florence, 1290-1300, fig. 4.13), for example, was the formal basis of Michelangelo's *Christ on the Cross between the Virgin and Saint John* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, c. 1560s, fig. 4.14).[41] Particularly the body of Michelangelo's Christ, despite the reversal, is Giottesque in both pose and proportion. He adapted the Dugento "apron" type of crucifixion (for example by Berlinghieri, *Crucifix,* Lucca, Museo Civico, c. 1260, fig. 4.15), where Saint John and the Virgin flank Christ's dead body,[42] in several of these compositions. In one from the British Museum (London, c. 1560s, fig. 4.16), the palpable explosion of emotion is an

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[39] Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9. According to Nagel, this consciousness is "a claim to epochality, for a retrospective sensibility is one of the distinguishing features of much of what we call High Renaissance Art."

[40] Joannides, " 'Primitivism' in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo," p. 245.

[41] Hugo Chapman, *Michelangelo: Closer to the Master* (London: The British Museum Press, 2005; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 278. The naked male figure on the right side of Christ is probably not St. John but Longinus, the Roman centurion who stabbed Christ with a lance.

[42] Joannides, " 'Primitivism' in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo," p. 253.

elaboration of this type. In one final example (*Christ on the Cross between the Virgin and Saint John,* British Museum, London, c. 1560s, fig. 4.17), Michelangelo derived the Y-shaped cross that towers behind the figures of Mary and Christ from a crucifix in Santa Croce that was carried through Florence at the end of the fourteenth century by penitents in white or *bianchi*.[43] In this iteration, the inert body of Christ, which pulls painfully downward, was inspired by Giovanni Pisano's Trecento wooden *Crucifix* (Siena, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, 1305, fig. 4.18).[44]

Unlike the copies after Masaccio and Giotto, these late crucifixions are more than simply exercises in emulation. The fervent spirituality of these works that Michelangelo created for his own use – we assume for devotional purposes[45] – reflects Michelangelo's desire to restore his commitment to the Church. When writing about a drawing of a dead Christ that Michelangelo presented as a gift to Vittoria Colonna, an adherent of church reform, Vasari implied that the period's overwhelming piety was in

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[43] Ascanio Condivi, *The Life of Michelangelo,* 1553, trans. Alice Sedgwick Wohl, ed. Hellmut Wohl (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 103.

[44] Joannides, " 'Primitivism' in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo," p. 256.

[45] de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period,* pp. 79-81.

concert with Michelangelo's spiritual journey:

> He much delighted in the sacred Scriptures, like the excellent Christian that he was; and he held in great veneration the works written by Fra Girolamo Savonarola, because he heard the voice of that friar in the pulpit.[46]

Several sonnets by Michelangelo further evidence the amplification of the artist's religious convictions[47] and can be tied to the drawings from the 1560s. In sonnet 285, he wrote:

> Neither painting nor sculpture will be able any longer to calm my soul, now turned toward that divine love that opened his arms on the cross to take us in.[48]

In sonnet 290, the artist explicitly recalled imagery of Christ's suffering:

> Relieved of a troublesome and heavy corpse,
> and set free from the world, I turn to you,
> my dear Lord, as a tired and fragile boat
> heads from the frightful tempest toward sweet calm.
>
> Your thorns and your nails and both of your palms
> and your benign, humble, and merciful face,
> promise to my unhappy soul the grace
> of deep repentance and hope of salvation.
> May your holy eyes not look upon my past
> with justice alone, nor likewise your pure ear,
> and may your stern arm not stretch out to it.

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[46] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, p. 739.

[47] Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo*, p. 30. Saslow indicates that "religious themes appear with increasing frequency beginning about 1532" in Michelangelo's sonnets. He further asserts that the artist's spiritual yearning "intensified as he grew older." See p. 29.

[48] Ibid., p. 476.

> May your blood suffice to wash and cleanse my sins,
> and the older I grow, the more may it overflow
> with ever-ready aid and full forgiveness.[49]

These sonnets radiate the same devotional quality as the aforementioned drawings because these literary reflections on Christ's passions served the same contemplative purpose: by invoking imagery of Christ's crucifixion, the artist hoped to find solace for the matters that troubled his soul.

The change in style that was induced by this period of religious anxiety can also be understood by comparing these crucifixions to Michelangelo's earlier depictions of Christ.[50] Stylistically, these drawings are at one end in the spectrum of the artist's representations of Christ's body, bookended on the other end by his Roman *Pietà* (fig. 4.3). Even though the earlier works were commissioned for public purposes, the change in Michelangelo's treatment of Christ's body suggests a corresponding change in the

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[49] Ibid., p. 484.

[50] Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art,* pp. 16-17. The author contends that Michelangelo's choice to depict the dead Christ in his later works was significant because "a restored emphasis on Christ's sacrifice, in opposition to the quasi-polytheistic saint worship of the late Middle Ages, was a battle cry of reformers of all stripes. At a basic iconographic level, therefore, the return to Christ involved the removal of the later accretions of hagiographic piety and the restoration of an 'originary' Christocentric emphasis in Christian art."

artist's attitude toward physicality: his reliance on antique sources to communicate the ideals of heroic masculinity was replaced by the retrospection to medieval models that resulted in the emasculation of the Savior's body.

In the early *Pietà* for the French emissary in Rome, Michelangelo purposely carved the body of Christ, who seems more asleep than dead, with only the faintest indication of the wounds of His Passions. Deliberately avoiding the desecration of Jesus' masculine form, Michelangelo placed greater emphasis on the monumental figure of the Virgin.[51] At the pinnacle of his creativity, during the middle years of his professional life, Michelangelo crafted glorious depictions of the resurrected Christ – the Santa Maria Sopra Minerva *Risen Christ* (Rome, 1521, fig. 4.19) and the Christ of the Sistine *Last Judgment* (Rome, 1541, fig. 3.33). Michelangelo's incarnate Christs are visions of reinvigorated beauty, compelling affirmations of the Savior's return to life. To convey potency, he modeled the Christ of the Sistine fresco after antique statues – the Belvedere *Apollo* and *Torso*. No indication of suffering blemishes Michelangelo's depictions of Christ's resurrected body. However, in the later crucifixion drawings,

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[51] de Tolnay, *Michelangelo: The Final Period,* p. 63.

Michelangelo departed significantly from these manifestations of masculinity for which he was renowned. Although a hint of Michelangelesque muscularity remains, the "body" as defined by Michelangelo in earlier representations of Christ is barely present in these *non-finito* phantasms.[52]

Sebastiano del Piombo and Santi di Tito: The *Raising of Lazarus*

Like Michelangelo's, Sebastiano's reaction to religious reform also involved the reconception of the sacred male body. Since he had been a follower and collaborator of Michelangelo, his transition necessarily included a relinquishment of his mentor's fixation with the masculine form as an expressive tool. Sebastiano had to undo the influence of Michelangelo, which is evident in the jointly produced *Raising of Lazarus* (fig. 4.4), to arrive at an acceptable Counter-Reformation style. A comparison of the Sebastiano/Michelangelo altarpiece with Raphael's *Transfiguration of Christ* (Vatican, Pinacoteca, 1518-1520, fig. 4.20), both of which were commissioned by Cardinal

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[52] Chapman, *Michelangelo Drawings,* p. 283. "The drawings' emotional intensity… is an expression of Michelangelo's emotional investment in the subject… [These depictions of Christ] are paralleled in the pared down figures in the *Rondanini Pietà."*

Giulio de' Medici for the same purpose, demonstrates how the *Raising of Lazarus* departed from High Renaissance stylistic conventions. Observations regarding Raphael's altarpiece will help to illustrate the style to which Counter-Reformation artists referred later in the century. Then, a comparison of the Sebastiano/Michelangelo *Raising of Lazarus* with Santi di Tito's 1576 version will show how the human form was deemphasized to accord with Tridentine decrees against sensuality in religious art.

The circumstances that surround the making of *The Raising of Lazarus* epitomize the complex professional partnership that Michelangelo forged with the young Sebastiano, who had recently moved to Rome from Venice to decorate the Villa Farnesina for the Sienese banker Agostino Chigi. Sebastiano was one of Cardinal Giulio's (later Clement VII) choices to realize this gift to the Cathedral of St. Just on the occasion of his appointment as bishop of Narbonne.[53] Prior to commissioning the Venetian to paint the *Lazarus,* however, Giulio had called upon Raphael to paint a *Transfiguration of Christ*. In his biography of Sebastiano, Vasari wrote that these works were painted in

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[53] Cecil Gould, *The "Raising of Lazarus" by Sebastiano del Piombo* (London: The National Gallery, 1967), p. 9.

competition with each other.[54]

The Raising of Lazarus was among several works by Michelangelo and Sebastiano that resulted from this implicit rivalry between Raphael and Michelangelo. The differences that Renaissance critics observed between Michelangelo's and Raphael's styles are manifest in these altarpieces.[55] In the *Lazarus,* Michelangelo's complex handling of space and the disorderly placement of figures as a virtuoso display of *difficoltà* departed from the High Renaissance spatial standards that characterize Raphael's oeuvre as a whole and are explicit in his *Transfiguration*. Characters gracefully conceived in lively colors inhabit Raphael's offering, which is divided neatly into two straightforward parts. Conversely, the boldly contrasting colors of Sebastiano's *Lazarus* add to the disharmony of Michelangelo's design, despite the gain in dramatic effect.

Even though Raphael's expanded composition combined

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[54] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, p. 142, pp. 143-144.

[55] The competition between Raphael and Michelangelo recalls the debate between color and drawing in which the Cinquecento art world was engrossed. According to Vasari, Michelangelo's detractors praised Raphael because his works exhibited many qualities that were desirable in paintings, including the excellent application of color. Conversely, Michelangelo's paintings were praiseworthy only in one respect: *disegno*. Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, p. 142.

Christ's Transfiguration with the account of the apostles' failure to exorcise a young boy, Raphael was able to depict both narratives legibly because of his strict adherence to a High Renaissance sense of organization. Amusingly, the effective conflation of these two events presented Raphael with an opportunity to comment on Michelangelo's fixation with the male body. In the lower portion of the painting, Raphael displayed his knowledge of the male anatomy by exaggerating the musculature of the possessed adolescent boy — à la Michelangelo. This decision was certainly not a homage; when Raphael imbued a specifically lunatic child with Michelangelesque traits, he was also implicitly disparaging Michelangelo's obsession with the male physique.[56]

The skillfully executed male body, however, was Michelangelo's primary weapon in defense of his art, and,

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[56] On Raphael's reaction to Michelangelo's artistic preoccupation, Vasari wrote:

> Knowing, however, that in this respect he could never attain to the perfection of Michelagnolo, he reflected, like a man of supreme judgment, that painting does not consist only in representing the nude human form, but has a wider field; that one can enumerate among the perfect painters those who express historical inventions well and with facility, and who show fine judgment in their fancies….

In Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 1, p. 743.

in this competition with Raphael, the naked form of Lazarus was deployed from this creative arsenal. Through this body, Michelangelo reasserted his command of *disegno*[57] by envisioning the moment beyond the biblical account of Lazarus' revival:

> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." (John 11:38-44)

As if in obedience to Christ's command, Michelangelo stripped the dead man's burial garments to unveil the flawless body of the restored Lazarus. Thus, the naked body of Michelangelo's Lazarus *is* theologically sound. A reply to Jesus' reproach of Martha's skepticism — "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" — the exceptionally delineated physique of Lazarus is a proclamation of divine authority.

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[57] See chapter 2, pp. 122-128.

Lazarus' Fall From Grace: Santi di Tito's Version

The Sebastiano/Michelangelo *Lazarus*, however, would have been unacceptable by Tridentine standards, in large part because of the indecorous portrayal of Lazarus. The Council of Trent declared,

> [I]n the invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, all superstition shall be removed, all filthy quest for gain eliminated, and all lasciviousness avoided, so that images shall not be painted and adorned with a seductive charm, or the celebration of saints and the visitation of relics be perverted by the people into boisterous festivities and drunkenness, as if the festivals in honor of the saints are to be celebrated with revelry and with no sense of decency.[58]

In the same way that Counter-Reformation critics objected to the nudes in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,*[59] advocates of ecclesiastical change would have found the exposed body of the London *Lazarus* offensive. In this regard, Santi's 1576 version is the diametric opposite of the Sebastiano/Michelangelo painting. Unlike Michelangelo and Sebastiano, Santi depicted a fully covered Lazarus. It was as if Santi's Lazarus was embarrassed by the nakedness of the earlier Lazarus of Michelangelo's design and had

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[58] Klein and Zerner, *Italian Art 1500-1600,* p. 121.

[59] For a discussion of the sixteenth-century reaction to Michelangelo's *Last Judgment,* see Hall, p. 189-193; and Bernadine Barnes, *Michelangelo's "Last Judgment": The Renaissance Response* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1998), pp. 71-101.

sought to be covered, as Adam did after committing the first sin.

The Santa Maria Novella *Lazarus* demonstrates the process of retrospection characteristic of Counter-Reformation artistic practices, and in the case of Santi, he retreated toward the quintessentially High Renaissance standards that appear in the works of Raphael. Indeed, Santi's *Raising of Lazarus* is a showcase of High Renaissance harmony.[60] The clear spatial construction of Santi's composition, like Raphael's *Transfiguration,* enhances its legibility. Colors are pleasantly complementary: the red and blue of Christ's robes are echoed on the garments of the two figures surrounding Lazarus. A discreet light bathes evenly the foreground of the painting, while the figures in the background recede gradually in shadow. To further unify the painting, Christ's gestures — his outstretched arm and open palm — are returned by Lazarus's adoring gaze. The disruption caused by the stark nakedness of the Sebastiano/Michelangelo Lazarus is dispelled in Santi's altarpiece, in which no one figure stands out to interrupt

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[60] See Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 252. Also Jack J. Spalding IV, "Santi di Tito and the Reform of Florentine Mannerism," *Storia dell'arte* 47 (1983), p. 47. Spalding states that the trend toward High Renaissance alternatives to Florentine Mannerism was partly due to Vasari's exaltation of High Renaissance artists in the *Lives.*

the painting's unified composition.

Unconcerned with the theoretical/theological[61] matters that absorbed Michelangelo, Santi painted his *Raising of Lazarus* in the Counter-Maniera style, of which he was a major proponent.[62] One of the most noteworthy characteristics of Santi's stylistic response[63] to Tridentine restrictions was his decisive departure from Michelangelo's sculptural mode of individualizing figures.[64] He preferred the unity that resulted from less individuation, esteeming the "unadorned simplicity that had

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[61] Of the anti-Mannerist style, Walter Friedlaender writes, "What is absent from the thought of all these men is the theoretical side. They did not theorize nearly so much as the *maniera* people." Walter Friedlander, *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p. 53.

[62] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 252.

[63] Spalding, "Santi di Tito and the Reform of Florentine Mannerism," pp. 42-45. Santi's earliest training was with Bastiano da Montecarlo, a very conservative Florentine painter. Spalding speculates, "this early exposure to a retardataire painter could have predisposed Santi to practice later a conservative, essentially devotional style." Despite his later graduation to Bronzino's workshop, Santi never adopted Bronzino's High Maniera style. Santi's stint in Rome, under the inquisition's strictest enforcer, Paul IV (1555-59), undoubtedly had an impact on the development of his style. Given these facts, Friedlaender was mistaken in placing Santi di Tito, "although more reactionary and conservative," in a group of artists that includes Vasari, Salviati and Alessandro Allori. See Friedlaender, *Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism,* p. 51.

[64] Regarding Michelangelo's "relief-like" style, see Hall, *After Raphael,* passim.

been the hallmark of fresco cycles from the time of the Arena Chapel to the Stanza della Segnatura."[65]

Finding inspiration from the Arena Chapel, Santi's restrospective consciousness facilitated the artist's adherence not only to the biblical narrative of Lazarus' revivification, but to iconographic tradition as well. To conform to this tradition, Santi modeled his altarpiece after Giotto's medieval depiction of Lazarus' resurrection (*The Raising of Lazarus,* Arena Chapel, Padua, 1304-1313, fig. 4.21). As in Giotto's painting, Santi's Lazarus is fully shrouded in burial garments, his body indiscernible. In both works, greater emphasis is given to the true protagonist of this spectacle, Jesus Christ. Almost all the gazes in both frescoes are focused toward Christ, including that of Lazarus, who is bound in white garments, nearly fading away in a sea of onlookers. Christ, unobstructed, stands out against the background. By retreating to his artistic past, Santi found in Giotto a solution that appropriately suited the Counter-Reformation's austere preferences.

Sebastiano's Reformation

The qualities of the Emasculated Prophet described

[65] Spalding, "Santi di Tito and the Reform of Florentine Mannerism," p. 46.

above are exemplified in a *Christ Carrying the Cross* by Sebastiano (fig. 4.6), which was painted later in the artist's career, when he too succumbed to the demands of Church Reform. Sebastiano's Counter-Reformation style is typified by a rejection of *ornamenti,* here understood as artistic devices that amplify substantially the complexity of a work of art. To clarify Sebastiano's transformation, I compare his altarpiece to comparable versions by Giampietrino and Salviati.

The disavowal of *ornamenti* that typified the art of Catholic reform is a significant aspect of Sebastiano's transition. In terms of the paradigms of masculinity discussed in this study, *ornamenti* were an aspect of Hermaphroditic Masculinity that facilitated the visual articulation of *grazia.* Two ways in which the Hermaphroditic Deviant exemplified *grazia* can be understood as *ornamenti:* Leonardo's unprecedented handling of light and shadow[66] and that Mannerist adulteration of *contrapposto,* the *figura serpentinata,* as performed by the body of Pontormo's *Saint Quentin* (San Sepolcro, 1517, fig. 3.3).[67]

Sebastiano's renunciation of *ornamenti* is decisive in

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[66] See chapter 3, pp. 177-184.

[67] Ibid., pp. 181-185.

his *Christ carrying the Cross,*[68] where he appropriated Leonardo's lighting scheme, which served to express the beauty and grace of the hermaphroditic *St. John the Baptist* (Paris, Musée du Louvre, 1512, fig. 3.2), to propound, instead, Christ's anguish and suffering. In Sebastiano's painting, light and shade help to delineate the agony that is apparent, for example, in Christ's deep-set eyes and the angular planes of his tormented face. The lighting accentuates the painting's solemnity and sanctity, drawing the viewer into a deeper meditation on Christ's Passion.

To further convey suffering, Sebastiano abandoned the grace of the serpentine figure to emphasize instead the awkward and encumbered body of Christ, which bears the cross's excruciating weight. The drapery that weighs heavily on the figure heightens the depiction of Christ's misery as it efficiently conceals the Savior's body. The inhibition of Christ's body in this painting contrasts strikingly to the exposed Lazarus of the above-mentioned collaboration with Michelangelo. Implicit in this disparity is Sebastiano's divergence from Michelangelo's artistic ideology.

Sebastiano's rejection of *ornamenti* is unequivocal when comparing his *Christ Carrying the Cross* to

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[68] Hall, *After Raphael,* p. 176.

Giampietrino's version (c. 1510-1530, fig. 4.7). The influence of Leonardo is evident in the London painting,[69] particularly in the depiction of light. Unlike Sebastiano, who exploited light to communicate suffering, Giampetrino illuminated his painting to imbue Christ with the same grace possessed by Leonardo's *Baptist*. The idealized facial features of Giampietrino's Christ and, more importantly, the figure's partially exposed torso differ from the severe attributes of Sebastiano's Emasculated Prophet. The articulated physicality of Giampietrino's Christ significantly increases the sensual quality of the painting.

Even in comparison to Salviati's altarpiece, which is a later work painted in 1545 – the same year that the Council of Trent convened – the features of Sebastiano's emasculated Christ are unmistakable. Salviati's altarpiece indicates that in some circles, Mannerism continued to be a stylistic preference even during this period of religious renewal. Indeed, Salviati's painting (fig. 4.8) is a characteristically Mannerist work of art[70] – a composition

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[69] For a brief discussion of Leonardo's influence on Giampietrino, see S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy,* p. 383.

[70] According to Hall, this painting is "pure Maniera": *After Raphael,* p. 230.

of *ornamenti* that appeals "to aesthetic emotion" instead of "a bald statement of simple piety," which is the case with Sebastiano's painting.[71]

Hall maintains that "Salviati preferred easing his viewer through a sequence of responses, perhaps even contradictory responses, rather than the direct, unequivocal address Sebastiano's piety makes to his audience."[72] I further suggest that the hermaphroditism of Salviati's Christ provokes the "contradictory responses" that one experiences upon viewing this painting. The ringlets of golden hair that slither down Christ's exposed shoulder and His elongated fingers are reminiscent of Raphael's sexually ambiguous *Portrait of Bindo Altoviti* (fig. 3.4). Like Raphael's sitter, Salviati's cross-bearing Christ was feminized to exude *grazia* in the manner of Hermaphroditic Deviants.[73] Sebastiano's Christ, in contrast, was sanitized to eliminate traces of Mannerist *ornamenti*. Unidealized, he is a more human Redeemer; the viewer's access to the picture's religious message is unobstructed.

Sebastiano's painting, thus, like other works designed to satisfy the Church's Counter-Reformation objectives, was

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Hall, *After Raphael*, p. 230.

[73] See chapter 3, pp. 167-175.

meant to stimulate proper religious adoration. To achieve this end, artistic regression was key: artists looked back to High Renaissance progenitors and explored models from the Middle Ages to find ways of augmenting the piety of works of art. In the next section, it will be clear that the development of a retrospective sensibility was strongly endorsed by art theoreticians of the late Cinquecento.

Counter-Reformation Artistic Theory: Francesco Bocchi

Francesco Bocchi's *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1571, 1584) — discussed earlier in this study in relation to Machiavellian Masculinity and Hermaphroditic Deviance — and his *Discorso sopra l'eccellenza dell'opere d'Andrea del Sarto, pittore fiorentino* (unpublished, written in 1567) advocated for stylistic retrospection as a way of addressing issues around Counter-Reformation aesthetics. In the *Eccelenza*, Bocchi focused on the matter of viewer response to holy art, and in his praise of Andrea del Sarto, he launched a forceful theoretical assault against the Maniera. In both treatises, I propose that Bocchi may have criticized obliquely Michelangelo's artistic fixation with the nude male form.

It is ironic that this critic considered Andrea del Sarto a commendable model for Counter-Reformation artists since Andrea, as teacher of both Rosso and Pontormo,

indirectly spawned the style to which Catholic Reformers would object.[74] But his reputation as proto-Mannerist gave way to Andrea as anti-Mannerist[75] when Vasari severely reevaluated the painter's style. In the first edition of the *Lives,* the author described Andrea's art as *senza errori.* However, in the 1568 edition, the biographer seems to have rethought his opinion of the artist, commenting that an extended stay in Rome would have been to the painter's advantage.[76]

This change in Vasari's view intersects with Bocchi's favorable assessment of Andrea's style. Counter-Reformation art, as mentioned previously, was characterized by a return to past conventions by which subject matter was more directly and legibly portrayed. Because Vasari preferred the style that typified the third age of Central Italian art — the complex and exploratory maniera of which Vasari was an adherent — his adverse reestimation of Andrea may have been a criticism of the simplicity and plainness of the painter's approach, which had become, as Bocchi's

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[74] Robert Williams, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi in Praise of Andrea del Sarto," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 52 (1989), p. 118.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 1, p. 853.

endorsement indicated, suitable for emulation by Counter-Reformation artists.

Bocchi's promotion of Andrea's style was structured as a rebuke of artists who failed to use nature as the chief basis of their works, and *disegno* was at the heart of Bocchi's theoretical reproach. Unlike the Cinquecento predilection for outlines that Michelangelo exploited to emphasize the plasticity of figures in two-dimensional media, Bocchi counseled Counter-Reformation painters to render outlines invisible because lines, after all, do not exist in nature. The author, in his rejection of outline, however, may have had an ulterior motive: as Michelangelo was best known for his mastery of *disegno,* Bocchi's objection to outline may have been peripherally a commentary on Michelangelo's artistic obsession with male nudes, through which the artist professed his command of this theoretical precept.

Bocchi's advice regarding *disegno* as contour in drawing recalled the theories propounded by two titans of Central Italian art — Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci. According to Alberti:

> One should take care that circumscription is done with the finest possible, almost invisible lines, like those they say the painter Apelles used to practise and vie with Protogenes at drawing. Circumscription is simply the recording of the outlines, and if it is done with a very visible line, they will look in the

> painting, not like the margins of surfaces, but like cracks. I want only the external outlines to be set down in circumscription; and this should be practiced assiduously.[77]

Leonardo similarly suggested that:

> The boundaries of bodies are the least of all things. This proposition is proved to be true because the boundary of a thing is a surface, which is not part of the body clothed in that surface, nor is it part of the air surrounding these bodies, but it is the division interposed between the air and the body, as is proved in the right place. But the lateral boundaries of these bodies are the boundary lines of the surface, which as a line is invisible.[78]

The Albertian and Leonardesque aversion to outline was the foundation of Bocchi's thesis, and in his recollection of this fifteenth-century view on *disegno*, the author inevitably opposed Vasari's understanding of this concept:[79]

> In outlining every figure, the lines are of service in many ways because when they are well drawn, and made correct and in proportion, the shadows and lights that are then added give the strongest relief to the lines of the figure and the result is all excellent and perfection.[80]

The opposition between Vasari's and Bocchi's notions of

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[77] Alberti-Grayson, *On Painting,* p. 65.

[78] *Les Manuscrits de Léonard de Vinci, Manuscrit G. de l'Institut de France,* ed. C. Ravaisson-Mollien, 6 vols., (Paris: Institute de France 1881-91), no. 37r. Quoted in Kemp, *Leonardo on Painting,* p. 53.

[79] Chapter 2, pp. 121-123.

[80] Giorgio Vasari, *On Technique,* trans. Louisa S. Maclehose, ed. G. Baldwin Brown (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), p. 207.

disegno neatly corresponded to the disparity between High Maniera art and the ensuing Counter-Maniera style. Vasari's predilection for outline to attain three-dimensionality that, in turn, enhanced the "lifelikeness" of figures – an effect that Michelangelo made vastly popular among Mannerists[81] – was exactly the practice to which Bocchi objected.

Andrea's works were Bocchi's visual paragons, and significantly, artists such as Santi di Tito – already noted for his predisposal to artistic retrospection – looked to Andrea for the development of a Counter-Reformation style that was evocative of the early Cinquecento.[82] Santi's refusal to individualize figures in the manner of Michelangelo,[83] which the master achieved primarily by outlining his figures, concurred with Bocchi's insistence on the cancellation of contours. Indeed,

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[81] Freedberg, *Painting in Italy,* pp. 330-349. Although Michelangelo, Raphael, and antique models were responsible for the development of the relief-like style, High Maniera artists such as Agnolo Bronzino, Jacopino del Conte, and Vasari learned from Michelangelo the importance of anatomical sculpting on a painted surface for greater dimensionality. See also Hall, *After Raphael*, p. 10 and passim.

[82] Williams, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi," p. 117. Williams writes that Santi's "prosaic or bland" style is an attempt to "represent *costumi* of exceptional purity." See also Freedberg, *Painting in Italy,* p. 380.

[83] Spalding, "Santi di Tito and the Reform of Florentine Mannerism," pp. 42-45.

Bocchi's recollection of Albertian *disegno* was a rejection of Vasari's understanding of *disegno,* which was most decidedly exhibited in the works of Michelangelo.[84] Since Michelangelo professed his command of *disegno* through representations of the nude male form,[85] Bocchi's opposition to Vasarian *disegno,* although couched theoretically in terms of outline, could have also been a criticism of Michelangelo's fixation with male nudity.

Bocchi may have also indirectly reacted to Michelangelo's concentration on the nude male body in the later *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello,* in which Bocchi assigned gender to the *paragone*[86] – the debate on the relative merits of artistic media – to facilitate his tribute to Donatello's *St. George* (fig. 1.18). Painting, the more feminine of the arts, had now fallen entirely out of artistic favor, while sculpture, its masculine counterpart, is praiseworthy because of its perceived "purity."[87]

This treatise was written in a Counter-Maniera voice

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[84] See footnote 59.

[85] See chapter 2, pp. 122-128.

[86] Campbell, "The Gendered *Paragone* in Late Sixteenth-Century Art Theory," pp. 227-238.

[87] Ibid.

because like artists of the period, Bocchi, too, was exercising a retrospective sensibility by lauding Donatello's *St. George.* One of his aims was to advance the moral and ethical values that the St. George personified. Even though the statue was not an example of the emasculated paradigm that would proliferate in Central Italian Counter-Reformation art, Bocchi felt that Donatello's *St. George* stood for morally authentic art because the statue educed from spectators the proper spiritual response:[88] Donatello's *St. George* reminded the faithful of their innate goodness and a time before this era of religious tumult, when human decency and morality were not in doubt.

Compared to the discourse on Andrea del Sarto, the *Eccelenza* was a more forceful endorsement of art intended to stimulate the spiritual response of viewers. To promote the religious significance of the *St. George*, Bocchi adduced the similarities he perceived between the statue and Filippo Brunelleschi's cupola for Santa Maria del Fiore:[89]

Many were the reasons that many masters propounded

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[88] Bocchi-Barrochi, *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello*, p. 151.

[89] Williams, "A Treatise by Francesco Bocchi in Praise of Andrea del Sarto," p. 121.

> when they wanted to vault the dome of our cathedral, but only one was the true reason, simple and natural, and only one the way: that, strong in its nature, graceful to the sight, beautiful in each part, it had to be useful to the people who would occupy it, and well-ordered for the divine offices. And in truth, knowledgeable artists cannot well decide whether this sovereign building is more beautiful or more stirring, for joined together, these two things compete with each other for first place, and yet are at the same time in harmony in generating wonder and amazement. Of this nature is the *St. George:* simple in its appearance, restrained in its beauty, wholly alive, wholly graceful and wholly beautiful, it seems to want to act with fervor, and constantly seems ready to move.[90]

By aligning the *St. George* with Brunelleschi's dome, Bocchi constructed an incontrovertible case for the sanctity inspired by Donatello's statue.

Ostensibly, Bocchi's goal was simply to ensure that holy art provided devotees with sufficient spiritual nourishment. However, by skipping a generation to select a model of masculine excellence from the Quattrocento, Bocchi also slighted Michelangelo. Michelangelo was tremendously inspired by Donatello, and presumably, by the statue of *St. George* itself. Donatello's influence on Michelangelo's fabrication of masculine archetypes was extensive. Yet, from the viewpoint of this Counter-Reformation author, the student had not surpassed the master. Although Bocchi does not express this rebuff explicitly, it can be inferred that

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[90] Bocchi-Barrochi, *Eccelenza del San Giorgio di Donatello,* p. 189. Translated by Williams in *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy,* p. 209.

his preference for the fully-clad *St. George* over the many possibilities in Michelangelo's oeuvre was indicative of a distaste for nudity: Bocchi would have been hard-pressed to find a decorous Michelangelesque model of masculinity to illustrate his views on religiously efficacious art.

Counter-Reformation Artistic Theory: Gilio

I end this chapter with a discussion of Giovanni Andrea Gilio's critique of sacred art, which was based on Tridentine decrees, because Gilio's *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istoria* (1564) provides the most forceful theoretical articulation of the characteristics of the Emasculated Prophet. The problem of nudity is, in fact, the crux of Gilio's polemics. Although "lamentably out of date"[91] by the time that it was written, since artists had already been reacting for decades to the issues finally codified by the Council of Trent in the year of his own publication, Gilio's commentary, nevertheless, helps to explain how artists working in the milieu of Catholic Reform aimed to produce art in concordance with the new decorum.

The centerpiece of Gilio's diatribe is Michelangelo's *Last Judgment.* In criticizing the Sistine altarpiece,

[91] Joannides, " 'Primitivism' in the Late Drawings of Michelangelo," p. 246.

Gilio, in the now familiar Counter-Reformation practice of artistic retreat, commended artists from the past who created works

> of sacred images modest and devout, with those signs that have been given by the ancients for the privilege of sainthood, which have seemed to the moderns to be vile, clumsy, common, humble, without *ingegno* and art. Through this, opposing art to modesty, abandoning the customary practice of making draped figures, they have made and keep making them nude. Abandoning the customary practice of making them devout, they have made them strained, it seeming to them a great accomplishment to twist the head, the arms, the legs, so that it seems they represent acrobats and actors rather than those who stand in contemplation. And they have so lowered that holy usage with this their new invention, that they could hardly paint figures more immodest in bathhouses or taverns.[92]

In contrast, Vasari's defense of the Sistine fresco four years later broadly opposes Gilio's criticism:

> It is enough for us to perceive that the intention of this extraordinary man has been to refuse to paint anything but the human body in its best proportioned and most perfect forms and in the greatest variety of attitudes, and not this only, but likewise the play of the passions and contentments of the soul, being satisfied with justifying himself in that field in which he was superior to all his fellow-craftsmen, and to lay open the way of the grand manner in the painting of nudes, and his great knowledge in the difficulties of design; and finally, he opened out the way to facility in this art in its principal province, which is the human body, and, attending to this single object, he left on one side the charms of colouring and the caprices and new fantasies of certain minute

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[92] Giovanni Andrea Gilio, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'istoria* (1564), in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma,* vol. 2, p. 80. Translation by Barnes in *Michelangelo's "Last Judgment,"* p. 85.

> and delicate refinements which many other painters, perhaps not without some show of reason, have not entirely neglected.[93]

The core of both Gilio's protestations and Vasari's praise is the overwhelming nudity contained within Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, which became an easy target for critics who were unable to convey their objections to the Maniera style itself.[94] If for Gilio nudity had become the marker of an absence of decorum, for Vasari – and Michelangelo – the human body remained the "principal province" of art from which the "passions and contentments of the soul" radiated. Unlike Vasari, Gilio was fearful that nudity in ecclesiastical commissions would provoke inappropriate reactions.[95] He thus encouraged the invention of "fictions"

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[93] Vasari-de Vere, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 2, p. 691.

[94] Hall, *After Raphael,* pp. 190-191. The author points out that regulations on art did not focus on secular works. Furthermore, she asserts that because of Michelangelo's popularity, faulting him would suggest that no artist could "escape judgment."

Pietro Aretino was one of the *Last Judgment's* main detractors, although his criticism was probably motivated by personal reasons. See his letter to Michelangelo in *Lettere sull'arte di Pietro Aretino,* ed. Firenzio Pertile and Ettore Camesasca, 3 vols. (Milan, 1957-60), no. 364.

[95] Richard C. Trexler, "Gendering Jesus Crucified," in *Iconography at the Crossroads: Papers from the Colloquium sponsored by the Index of Christian Art,* ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 114. Gilio also suggested that representations of a naked Christ were proclamations of the Church's vulnerability.

for

> reasons of decency which are praiseworthy, and they ought not in any way be abandoned. These are to cover the shamed part of sacred figures with some nice cloth.[96]

Even though biblical narrative might require the depiction of nudity, Gilio exhorted artists to eschew scriptural accuracy for the sake of decorum.[97] So convincing was Gilio's tirade that, to augment the *Last Judgment's* spiritual value, the visible "shameful parts" within the altarpiece were indeed later cloaked behind "some nice cloth." In typical Counter-Reformation fashion, but more emphatically than Bocchi, Gilio's criticism of the *Last Judgment* is a repudiation of the body tantamount to a rejection of Michelangelo's primary expressive vehicle, the nude male form.

Conclusion

At the zenith of the Counter-Reformation, the nude male body, divested of beauty and stripped of *grazia,* became undesirable as a carrier of spiritual missives. A change was required so that depictions of masculinity could communicate Catholic doctrine legibly — without the burden of complex artistic contrivances or *ornamenti*. The new

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[96] Gilio-Barrochi, *Dialogo*, p. 77. Translation by Trexler in "Gendering Jesus Crucified," p. 113.

[97] Trexler, "Gendering Jesus Crucified," p. 113. See also Williams, *Art, Theory, and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Italy,* p. 93.

decorum urged that artists rethink their approach to physicality.

As early as the 1520s, Rosso's elimination of Christ's sex in depictions of the dead Christ looked forward to Tridentine recommendations. The concealment of the Savior's genitalia, however, had the effect of feminizing Christ's masculine body – as if to suggest that like all of humanity, Christ himself had become "imperfect." A more direct response to the Council of Trent's decrees was Sebastiano's *Christ Carrying the Cross.* Lacking sensuality, the painting was a straightforward appeal for Christian piety. Likewise, in Santi di Tito's rendition of the *Raising of Lazarus,* the artist treated the human body to conform to Tridentine regulations: the artist did not merely cover Lazarus' offensive parts; Lazarus' body is barely extricable beneath his heavy shroud. Even Michelangelo, famed for his recollection of antiquity to articulate heroic masculinity, created images of the suffering Christ that were inspired, instead, by medieval sources in an effort to imbue the male form with sanctity.

It is ironic that the male body's religious potency was made more compelling by its disempowerment. Incapacitated by the pessimistic Counter-Reformation belief in humanity's inexorable decline, the male form could no

longer be revered as a hallmark of artistic achievement. As a reaction to the demands of the Counter-Reformation, the Emasculated Prophet was intended to engage the faithful's spirituality directly and immediately without the encumbrances of stylistic contrivances, artistic artifice, or erotic appeal. In both theory and practice, artistic retrospection was a significant factor in the development of this third paradigm of masculinity.

The Emasculated Prophet, like the two other paradigms of masculinity before him, was an artistic solution to the different and changing demands of patrons and viewers. All three are testaments to the alertness of Central Italian artists of the Cinquecento to the vicissitudes of their political, artistic, and religious environments. Images of Machiavellian Masculinity flourished throughout the century despite major upheavals because this ideal was meant to survive such historical cataclysms. The Hermaphroditic Deviant, on the other hand, primarily a Mannerist invention, was relatively short-lived in part because this deviation from the canonical Heroic Male had a limited, rarefied audience. Once the all-encompassing changes precipitated by the Counter-Reformation permeated Europe, the immediate invention of the Emasculated Prophet was required to defend the Church's primacy against its attackers.

Conclusion

A skewed sexual hierarchy based on the classical, pseudoscientific assertion of the male form's perfection was bolstered by the equally authoritative voice of the Catholic Church fathers who insisted that, having been formed in the likeness of Christ, Adam was superior to Eve; men, categorically, were superior to women. This institutionalization of masculinity's primacy manifested in Central Italian Renaissance works of art, particularly in representations of men, and many works attest to how the notion of male superiority influenced the formation of the period's political, artistic, and religious ideologies.

Although medieval and early Renaissance artists demonstrated an understanding of the male body's expressive capacity, it was not until the sixteenth century that painters and sculptors fully explored and realized the male figure's potential. Working in apparent dialogue with contemporaneous authors, Cinquecento artists exploited the male body's expressive significance to articulate a patron's political aspirations, to demonstrate their own talents and their grasp of specific art-theoretical precepts, and to communicate the changing needs of the Counter-Reformation Church. I conclude that, in order to achieve each of these objectives, Cinquecento artists

developed three paradigms of maleness.

The first, Machiavellian Masculinity, was the sixteenth-century iteration of the heroic male ideal. I named this paradigm after Niccolò Machiavelli because this ideal embodied concepts that were in line with Machiavelli's political propositions, particularly ones that he propounded in his highly influential manual for rulers, *The Prince*.

Since this paradigm was most closely related to the belief in the male body's perfection, artists exploited the faultless corporeality of heroic masculinity to demonstrate their artistic prowess, especially their command of *disegno.* In fact, the religious and artistic perspectives on male perfection are fused in Giorgio Vasari's declaration of God's masterful demonstration of *disegno* when God created Adam. As the deified centerpiece of Vasari's *Lives,* Michelangelo appropriately exhibited his grasp of *disegno* through representations of the male form.

The second ideal was a product of Mannerist invention that resulted from a creative desire to transcend and transgress the lofty artistic objectives of the High Renaissance. Characterized by feminine attributes, images of the Hermaphroditic Deviant were drastic departures from representations of heroic masculinity. The expression of

the ineffable quality of grace was the primary function of this male paradigm.

The emergence of hermaphroditic masculinity signaled not only a highly experimental artistic trend, but also an ideological freedom that enabled a less rigid approach toward sexuality. Mario Equicola's definition of *grazia* as a coalescing of sexual features is an example of this sort of expansive thinking. Similarly, in the *Book of the Courtier,* Baldassare Castiglione's ruminations about grace reflected an appreciation for gender indeterminacy. The latter's assertions about *grazia* were highly influential and informed profoundly manifestations of artistic grace such as those explicitly and consistently exhibited in the works of the Florentine mannerist painter, Pontormo.

Finally, the third paradigm of maleness was a response to the demands for religious renewal. The Emasculated Prophet mirrored the austerity of the Counter-Reformation milieu, a severity caused by the perception of humanity's decline from a state of divine grace. Representations of emasculated masculinity were also distinguished by a plainness that resulted from a retrospective sensibility since art from the past became models from which Counter-Reformation artists drew inspiration.

Critics such as Francesco Bocchi and Giovanni Andrea

Gilio insisted on the need for sweeping change in religious representation. They were particularly incensed by nudity, and thus the male body became devoid of heroic potential and sensual appeal to adhere to the “new” rules of decorum. The artistic response to this religious shift was emphatic in the creative shift experienced by Counter-Reformation artists such as Santi di Tito, Sebastiano del Piombo, and especially in the very personal articulation of Counter-Reformation ideals by Michelangelo.

Although the century ended with the seeming artistic disempowerment of the male body, the primacy of masculinity, tested during a period of religious uncertainty, never truly waned. The male figure’s capacity to hold multifarious meanings and to communicate a broad range of ideological beliefs continued long after the end of the Cinquecento. Indeed, the belief in the potency of the male body was one of the period’s most palpable legacies.

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