

# Historiography of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici's Cultural Politics and Theories of Cultural Hegemony and Opposition

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## Introduction

“Thus the Republic died.” Or so it was believed when the new constitution of 1532 declaring Alessandro de' Medici hereditary duke put an end to the legendary struggle between the Medicean and republican governments, “the great and memorable drama” of the Florentine Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Duke Alessandro's assassination in 1537 and uncertainty surrounding his adolescent and politically inexperienced successor, Cosimo de' Medici, briefly rekindled hope for a return to a republic. However, not only did the eighteen-year-old cousin of the Duke survive the crisis, but Cosimo would go on to rule Florence for thirty-seven years and build a Grand Dukedom that survived until 1737. The consolidation of the Medici dukedom under Cosimo has had an impact upon the manner in which historians characterize the Duke and interpret the political, social and cultural aspects of his state. In short, Duke Cosimo, and not Alessandro, came to be considered the destroyer of Florentine liberty and republicanism.<sup>2</sup> As one scholar puts it, his time marked the political transition that “led Florence from a republicanism uniquely energetic in its cult of liberty to the drowsy acceptance of near-absolutist rule.”<sup>3</sup> Artists and intellectuals of the Medici dukedom have thus been portrayed as unable to recreate the cultural vibrancy that had characterized the Florentine scenes in the so-called High Renaissance.

This thesis takes part in the vigorous attempt of recent scholarship to revise these historical assumptions, investigating some of the inner workings of the visual culture of sixteenth century Florence. In spite of Eric Cochrane's call in his influential *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries 1527-1800* (1971) for a more complete picture of Duke Cosimo and his politics, that remains a desideratum.<sup>4</sup> This thesis attempts to address this absence, by reconsidering Cosimo de' Medici's regime. It will focus on the ways in which the regime sought representation through works of art, particularly those produced for three

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 60. The first statement “Thus the Republic died” is a quote from Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten centuries 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Konrad Eisenbichler, “Introduction,” in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), xi.

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Hale, *Florence and the Medici* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Eisenbichler, “Introduction,” xi.

important public cultural events: the marriage entry of Eleonora of Toledo in 1539, Benvenuto Cellini's *Perseus* and his competition for the Neptune fountain, and the funeral of Michelangelo in 1564. The political negotiations evident in the visual representations for each of these artistic displays will be explored as they moved between the extremes of subversion and blatant flattery of the established order. In this way, the thesis strives to restore and elaborate the dynamics of the Florentine cultural scene, hitherto seen as fundamentally weakened by the absolutist regime of Duke Cosimo.

When he was declared head of Florentine government in January, 1537, Cosimo was anything but the powerful and successful monarch he would eventually become. Those who enthroned Cosimo were members of local aristocratic families who intended to establish an oligarchical government, using the young duke only as a figurehead. Anti-Medici factions, in exile following the reinstatement of the Medici family in 1532, prepared to invade Florence with the help of the French king. At the same time, imperial troops of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, were stationed near Florence and appeared ready to intervene directly. The illustrious republican tradition of the city, vividly conspicuous in the monuments and sculptures commissioned by earlier republican governments, further complicated Cosimo's already difficult task of securing the new Medici dynasty in Florence.

Nevertheless, Cosimo immediately assumed authority, receiving the recognition of Emperor Charles V and driving those who had made him the head of Florence into retirement. In July of 1537, the Duke celebrated his first political victory when he successfully crushed the invasion of the anti-Medici exiles at Montemurlo. His marriage in 1539 to Eleonora of Toledo, the daughter of the Spanish Viceroy in Naples, consolidated his tie with Charles V. By 1545 he was confident of his power. Advising his ambassador to France how he should deal with the French king, Francis I, Cosimo wrote:

[W]e are a ruler who accepts the authority of no one apart from God and, but sole on account of our gratitude for benefits received, the Emperor ... to whom we have never paid tribute nor offered vassalage – unlike the duke of Ferrara who pays homage to the Pope.<sup>5</sup>

In the ensuing years, Cosimo conquered most of Tuscany and stimulated new industries in order to revitalize the Florentine economy that had been adversely affected by decades of internal political strife and foreign invasion. All his success would eventually culminate in the formation of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1571, a monarchical state unprecedented in Florence's history.

While Cosimo's political accomplishments have not been overlooked by historians, he has often been portrayed unfavorably. Eric Cochrane contends that

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<sup>5</sup> Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 129.

many modern scholars of Florence have viewed Cosimo and the Medici dukedom in light of their republican beliefs that principalities exerted control over individual voices and therefore were incapable of intellectual or cultural creativity.<sup>6</sup> Some immoral aspects of Cosimo's politics, namely his ruthless purge of political enemies and his strict surveillance over the Florentines, have stood out to characterize him as an autocratic and uncompromising ruler obsessed with his power. Nevertheless, Cochrane argues that the lower classes of the city's population responded favorably to Cosimo, as did middle class artisans and smaller merchants who had been the mainstay of the earlier Florentine republic as well as of previous Medici ruling figures like Cosimo 'il Vecchio' (the Elder) and Lorenzo 'il Magnifico' (the Magnificent).<sup>7</sup> More recently Lorenzo Pollizzotto finds a state of unreal calm in Florence in 1537 that cannot be simply attributed to the strict security instituted there by Cosimo and his advisers. He argues that in the emergent situation during the ducal transition, the Florentines, wary of further internal strife and potential foreign invasion, maintained a "wait-and-see" attitude.<sup>8</sup> The variety of notably contradictory opinions expressed by historians about Cosimo and his politics suggests the need for a reassessment of this complex figure and his political maneuvering.

One effective way to reexamine Cosimo's statecraft has been through interdisciplinary study, as seen in the recent volume *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici* (2001), edited by Konrad Eisenbichler. The book brings to attention the Duke's statecraft operating at a subtler level of cultural politics. The Duke propagated the success of his regime in the visual art, celebrating Florence as "the center of Italian civilization."<sup>9</sup> Cosimo's cultural policy was also directed toward potentially disruptive elements within the regime, dealing with them sometimes with oppressive measures, but at other times also with unexpected tolerance.<sup>10</sup>

Cosimo's mobilization of cultural politics was indeed integral to his transformation of Florence as a Medici principality. For example, Cosimo changed the main civic space of Florence, the Piazza della Signoria, into a

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<sup>6</sup> Cochrane, *Florence*, xiv.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28: According to Cochrane, the lower class registered their confidence in Cosimo by lining the streets and shouting "*Palle! Palle!*" – a chant traditionally associated with the Medici family referring to the Medici balls on their coat of arms – at anyone who dared challenge his authority. For how the *Popolo* was important to the republican configuration see *ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> Lorenzo Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494-1545* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 420.

<sup>9</sup> Eisenbichler, "Introduction," xxi.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Margaret A. Gallucci discusses on how Cosimo deliberately changed sodomy law to control his courtiers, particularly his artists. The law became very strict, but Cosimo also left himself room to intervene and reduce punishment of the accused. See Margaret A. Gallucci, "Cellini's Trial for Sodomy: Power and Patronage at the Court of Cosimo I," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 37-46.

ducal plaza, the Piazza Ducale. The space had been so resonant with republican memories due to the proximity of the government building and the presence of public sculptures commissioned or appropriated by the republican governments.<sup>11</sup> Cosimo therefore desired to neutralize the republican messages already encoded in those sculptures and reduce them to artistic masterpieces, with the new Piazza serving as “an open-air gallery” (Figure 8).<sup>12</sup> As the Duke added new spectacular sculptures to the *Piazza*, they would serve as emblems of the city’s cultural preeminence, alongside Michelangelo’s *David* and Donatello’s *Judith and Holofernes* (Figure 10).<sup>13</sup> This process of recontextualization labored to legitimize the new dukedom that lacked hereditary claim to power and sought approval from abroad, by recapturing the cultural eminence of Florence in the previous centuries.

Cosimo’s founding of the *Accademia del Disegno* in 1563 reveals an even more systematic implementation of his cultural politics, as demonstrated recently by Karen-edis Barzman’s study of the archival record of the institution, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State* (2000). On the one hand, the *Accademia*, the first academy of art throughout Europe, aimed at maintaining the Tuscan cultural preeminence of the previous centuries that would ensure favorable perceptions about the Medici dukedom in Europe. The institution enforced the discipline of *disegno*, a sixteenth-century Florentine artistic discourse that combined knowledge of universal forms with the ability to render the forms graphically. The promotion of *disegno*, distinctively associated with the legacy of Michelangelo, was crucial for the ducal agenda. Michelangelo himself, representing the pinnacle of Florentine artistic achievement, had withdrawn permanently from Florence since 1534 after the last republic had collapsed. Therefore, in the absence of Michelangelo, training artists capable of high levels of cultural production at the *Accademia* was an important part of Cosimo’s cultural program.<sup>14</sup>

Barzman’s most compelling argument comes from her observation that the *Accademia del Disegno* was a disciplinary apparatus, serving to consolidate Cosimo’s regulatory power over Florentine artists. This observation is framed by a Foucauldian analysis of the effects of power on the production of knowledge and the constitution of subjectivity and the claim that codified practices within institutions are themselves a form of power capable of producing subjects by disciplining their minds and bodies.<sup>15</sup> The *Accademia* took over the functions of

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter 2 of this thesis will discuss in detail the process of recontextualizing public sculptures in the Piazza della Signoria.

<sup>12</sup> John Shearman, *Only Connect...: Art and The Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 52.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 144.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

the traditionally communal institutions of confraternities and guilds of artists, bringing together previously separated communities of painters, sculptors, and architects under Cosimo's authority. Conformity through *disegno* ensured the rank of "academician" that offered lucrative Medici patronage, privilege and authority both inside and outside the *Accademia del Disegno*. Lack of conformity to the *Accademia*, however, was taken as criticism of the institution and oppositional views were considered "the seeds of scandal ... and of civil unrest."<sup>16</sup> In addition, the *Accademia* governed behavior of its members and even instituted a dress code in its official regulations. Violation of the regulations could result in financial penalty or even imprisonment.<sup>17</sup> The power dynamic between the artists and the Medici dukes, in effect, compelled the former to promote the prestige and cultural interests of the Grand Dukes.<sup>18</sup>

There has already been vigorous scholarship, particularly among art historians, addressing the political messages and intended effects on viewers of important works of art that were commissioned by Cosimo and produced by the artists of the *Accademia*. The scholarship, in turn, has presented multiple interpretations of political meanings registered in the works.

Some of the most influential scholars of Cosimo's political imagery have argued that the works of art commissioned by Cosimo glorified his persona as an absolute ruler and the founder of the new Tuscan state. Randolph Starn and Loren Patridge observe that the procession into Florence in 1565 of Giovanna of Austria, betrothed to Cosimo's son and heir, Francesco de' Medici, essentially celebrated the political triumph of Cosimo by reviving and emulating the distinctively imperial tradition of the ancient Roman triumph. The procession from the city gate to the *Sala Grande*, the great audience hall of the Palazzo Vecchio, offered a theater where decorative schemes composed of ephemeral triumphal arches and the fresco paintings in the *Sala* extravagantly represented the superiority of the ducal regime over the previous republican governments (Figure 6).

Roger J. Crum has elaborated on the imperial imagery of Cosimo, arguing that the sculptural program of the Uffizi façade represented Cosimo as an imperial, world power. If the triumphal arches at Giovanna of Austria's procession were temporary constructions, the façade functioned as a permanent triumphal arch. There, Cosimo's statue was identified with Augustus, a quasi-imperial figure positioned under a dome suggestive of the globe (Figure 7). The dome, as Crum suggests, established a relationship between Cosimo and the "Cosmos."<sup>19</sup> The statue was then enframed by an architectural motif derived

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>19</sup> Roger J Crum, "Cosmos, the World of Cosimo: The Iconography of the Uffizi Façade," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 71 (June 1989): 249.

from the iconography of late Roman imperial display.<sup>20</sup> The iconography of the Uffizi façade symbolically marked the inseparability of Cosimo from the recently centralized Florentine bureaucracy that was installed within the Uffizi complex. Starn and Patridge find that the procession of Giovanna, while soliciting public support and attention, sought to secure the approbation of Florentine subjects, or if necessary, to overwhelm any potential resistance. The representation of the dukedom at the procession “never ceases, never fails to master the opposition and celebrate real or imagined victories.”<sup>21</sup> The result they envision is similar to the disciplining effect of institutionalized aesthetics within society that Barzman finds in Cosimo’s *Accademia*.

However, these interpretations primarily ascribe politically oppressive functions to the works of art. Indeed, according to Stephen Campbell, until very recently art historians have failed to consider the extent to which oppositional perspectives can be articulated within sixteenth-century Florentine visual culture. He finds that the study of Mannerism, an artistic style that dominated Florentine art along with the discipline of *disegno*, has largely assumed that there was a harmony between the wishes of patrons and the creative agenda of artists, reducing mannerist artworks to an illustrative or ornamental role to the power of the patrons.<sup>22</sup> Campbell therefore finds it necessary to restore “a sense of critical potential” and “reopen the question of Mannerism as a reaction to historical tensions and predicaments.”<sup>23</sup> In his study of Agnolo Bronzino’s *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, Campbell contends that in fact Mannerism, once labeled “the style of Cosimo I,” allowed for a simultaneous, if not harmonious, co-existence of overt political and religious meanings embedded within a work of art as well as the operation of ulterior meanings skillfully veiled by the artist.<sup>24</sup> In fact, the visual complexity and ambiguity that is characteristic of mannerist works could have distinct political advantages. The potential to invest the imagery with multiple meanings could allow the artist to dissimulate and disguise his intent and thus shift the burden of articulating potentially subversive meaning onto the beholder.<sup>25</sup> In turn, the visual culture of the Florentine Renaissance could offer a site of resistance to what has largely seemed an ideological climate of absolute conformity under the Medici dukedom.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>21</sup> Randolph Starn and Loren Patridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300 – 1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 163.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen J. Campbell, “Counter Reformation polemic and Mannerist counter-aesthetics,” *Res*, 46 (Autumn 2004): 100.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>24</sup> Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 142. In the case of Bronzino’s *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, Campbell’s central argument is that the painting cannot be reduced “to the totalizing ends of either Medici power or ecclesiastical authority, and that it finally constitutes a distinct critical initiative of its own.” See. Campbell, “Counter Reformation,” 115.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

The search for oppositional practices in the sixteenth-century Florentine visual culture can be a difficult task. The problem, above all, is how to locate traces of opposition from the available evidence and records that are generally thought to demonstrate the extent to which Duke Cosimo dominated the visual culture in the city and controlled the production and consumption of culture in general. It is precisely in this regard that the recent debates about the study of popular culture can serve as a valuable guide in exploring more fully the visual culture of Florence under Cosimo.

The diverse practices categorized as popular culture in capitalist societies in the modern period are considered to be systematically interconnected in relation to broader social, political, and economic processes. In the more recent discussions of popular culture, there has been an attempt to envision the field as being structured by a dialectical process involving the efforts of the ruling class to secure hegemony and the opposition to that endeavor initiated by disaffected subordinate social groups.<sup>26</sup> There is much debate over the ideological valence of popular culture – whether it is formulated out of consent or opposition to the prevailing social order, whether it is a form of incorporation or evidence of resistance.<sup>27</sup>

On the subject of hegemony, many have looked particularly to the writings of Antonio Gramsci. Before Gramsci's view received attention in earnest, there had been a controversy in which some viewed popular culture in structuralist terms as rigidly determining the thoughts and experiences of historical subjects, while others considered the practices in popular culture a genuine expression of the authentic interests and values of subordinate social groups and classes.<sup>28</sup> Either way, dominant culture and popular culture were considered to exist as irreconcilably pure forms representing different class interests, with the ruling class insisting upon and assuming superiority. In short, hegemony equaled domination.

Gramsci, too, viewed cultural and ideological practices as functioning within an antagonistic relationship between the bourgeoisie and the working class in capitalist society. However, for Gramsci cultural and ideological relations between the ruling and subordinate classes consist less in the domination of the ruling class than in the struggle for hegemony where the ruling class seeks “moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership over the whole of society.”<sup>29</sup> In a Gramscian sense, the life of a modern state is conceived of as a “continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria between the interests of the fundamental group and those of

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<sup>26</sup> Tony Bennett, “Popular Culture and the ‘turn to Gramsci’,” in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey, 2nd ed. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 221.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

the subordinate groups, equilibria in which the interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point.”<sup>30</sup> For example, the exercise of hegemony in a parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent. The processes of force and consent balance each other without the former predominating excessively over the consent of the majority expressed by the organs of public opinion such as newspapers.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the ruling class culture never oppresses elements of opposing class culture entirely. It allows for some accommodation of the values of the subordinate classes. In sum, the spheres of culture cannot be simply divided into two separate and entirely oppositional class cultures and ideologies according to the Gramscian concept of hegemony.

The Gramscian formulations, however, have a disadvantage, according to Ross Chambers. The inequality of social struggle and the conditions of hegemony assumed by Gramsci allow for “counter” or “oppositional discourse” in popular culture only in terms of repression or cooption.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Chambers argues for a need to analyze the ways in which opposition in popular culture maneuvers through the extremes of repression and cooption.<sup>33</sup> Further elaborating on the Gramscian vision of the modern state, he argues that power “needs” or “at least produces” opposition and in doing so, authorizes it.<sup>34</sup> An oppositional discourse, on the other hand, relies on the power it undermines for its genuine oppositional effectiveness.<sup>35</sup> Literature is a field particularly apt for such workings because of its paradoxical position in culture. It enjoys considerable social privilege as a high-cultural form with notable symbolic capital as a marker of distinction, but at the same time, it can speak opposition on behalf the subordinate classes.<sup>36</sup> In Chambers’ term, such an opposition in literary form takes shape in an “oppositional narrative.” An oppositional narrative does not attempt to change the structure of the power within which it operates. It merely borrows from its privilege as a prestigious cultural form a power to change its reader in ways that are potentially radical.<sup>37</sup>

An even more active expression of opposition by subordinate groups is found in Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau investigates the ways in which ordinary consumers of mass culture in capitalist societies defy their alleged passivity and create a network of operations that can

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<sup>30</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 182.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 80n.

<sup>32</sup> Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

mediate their opposition without resorting to the vicarious power of, say an oppositional narrative. One such process is reading or the act of interpreting by consumers that lends itself to what de Certeau calls “the ‘exorbitant’ force of contemporary culture and its consumption.”<sup>38</sup> De Certeau is keenly conscious of the role of vision and visuality in today’s societies where there has been “a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown and transmuting communication into a visual journey.”<sup>39</sup> In response to the kind of vision broadcast by television and evident in urban space, products and newspapers, De Certeau finds necessary a study of what the cultural consumer makes or does with those images or other kinds of texts. He argues that texts and images are internalized and then serve as a platform for creative inventions, appropriated and used as reference points or forms of expression in new context.<sup>40</sup> As a result, an alternate world of the reader enters into to what the author has created in his text. The force of “reading” is in fact also what Chambers finds so potentially radical and empowering for oppositional narratives:

For it is the ongoing readability of texts (and works of art), their ability to transcend the context of their production, that enables them to make all the necessary concessions and compromises with the prevailing power of the moment – to make use of the existing means of publications, for instance – but to do so, so to speak, as a tactic of “survival,” ...<sup>41</sup>

What these recent debates in the study of popular culture bring to light is a more nuanced understanding of opposition in cultural practices. These practices do not seek a revolution but locate an oppositional culture that “articulates conflicts and alternately legitimizes, displaces or controls the superior force.”<sup>42</sup> Here survival, not revolution, is the foremost aim in popular culture. Here, victories of the “weak” over the “strong” are manifested not by political subversion, but by clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, and “joyful discoveries” that save the day.<sup>43</sup>

The question, of course, is in what ways can these theories, operating in the context of modern capitalist society, be applied in the study of visual culture in Florence under Duke Cosimo? The answer is that their conceptual frameworks enable a recontextualization of the cultural activities within Cosimo I de’ Medici’s Florentine dukedom in more fluid terms. On the one hand, the

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<sup>38</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxi.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>40</sup> To take Michel de Certeau’s examples, “Barthes reads Proust in Stendhal’s text; the viewer reads the landscape of his childhood in the evening news.” See *ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>41</sup> Chambers, *Reading Oppositional*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-11.

<sup>43</sup> De Certeau, *Practice*, xix.

attempt by the ruling regime to control rigidly artistic production was countered, though never overwhelmed, by individual and collective agency that manipulated the rituals and representations of the state and sought to subvert the enforced order in subtle ways. On the other hand, in a Gramscian sense of hegemony Cosimo's regime secured its seemingly absolute domination of Florentine culture by in fact allowing for some degree of self-determination, agency and creative alternative expression. In either case, there appears room for cultural practices involving visual representation that enabled alternative collectivities and identities for Florentines beyond those that the ducal regime was imposing upon them. For one thing, de Certeau was quick to point out an early modern precedent for the kinds of oppositional practices articulated in his work.<sup>44</sup> The sixteenth century Spanish colonizers had imposed their culture on the indigenous Indians. The Indians, however, interpreted the enforced rituals, representations, and laws in ways that diverged from their conquerors' original intentions. The Indians used them to "ends and references foreign to the system" that they were unable to challenge.<sup>45</sup> The prevailing order emerged undisturbed, but the Indians subverted its cultural system in a manner that "they escaped it without leaving it."<sup>46</sup>

In the early stages of my work on this thesis, I had hoped to find evidence of similar subversive consumption of visual art in the sixteenth century Florence where subordinate groups and popular audiences read works of art patronized by the ducal regime "against the grain" and presented counter-images in literary and artistic production, possibly through the burgeoning printing culture. Unfortunately, in my preliminary research using published and translated primary and secondary sources, I was unable to locate such evidence. Instead, the thesis turned to the more conspicuous players in the Florentine political cultural arena, Duke Cosimo and his artists. The artists faced a situation where the Duke and his court asserted a strong control over artistic production. It seemed to me, however that the theoretical perspectives discussed above could also be applied to these more elite strata of cultural activity, particularly in light of the socio-historical conditions that attended Cosimo's assumption of power and the consolidation of the dukedom during his rule. I argue that artists too had room to maneuver within this new Florentine court society and they could turn to their advantage "the exorbitant force of reading" that attended the reception of their work.<sup>47</sup> After all, the period was characterized by a cultural trend in which certain publics were acculturated into the visual discourses of classical, Tuscan, Republican and Medicean symbolic

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>46</sup> In a similar way, subversion by the twentieth century consumers manifest itself through the divergent ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order. See *ibid.*, xii.

<sup>47</sup> Admittedly, my approach is inspired by de Certeau and Chambers' discussions on the act of reading and its empowering effect to the consumers.

language and primed to look for sophisticated encoding of meaning. As described earlier in this introduction, Steven Campbell has just recently argued for the need to restore a sense of self-determination for artists during the Mannerist Period and to explore their agency in articulating discrete meanings through their artwork.

The main body of the thesis consists of three chapters that explore important public ceremonies or commissions for public works of art during the reign of Cosimo I de' Medici. The chapters are arranged in chronological order and address three different political and cultural contexts. Chapter 1 investigates the decorative program and festivities at Cosimo's nuptial in 1539, examining how the Duke negotiated with the imperial authority in images by calling attention to his own lineage and legitimacy, while seeming to flatter Emperor Charles V. On the other hand, it also appears that the visual representations at the wedding strove to mark continuity with Florence's republican past. The fatal pronouncement of the republic's death under Cosimo thus appears premature after all. Analysis of Florentine artists' agency in visual representations is the chief task of the second and third chapters of this thesis. Chapter 2 deals with how Benvenuto Cellini, an eminent goldsmith and sculptor, negotiated his artistic ambition in his relationship with Duke Cosimo, as described in his *Autobiography*. The chapter revisits some of the better-known incidents of dissidence associated with the Perseus commission, while highlighting the lesser-known example of the Neptune fountain competition. Chapter 3 contends that the *Accademia del Disegno*, the academy of art, strove to prove itself a vital institution for the dukedom and glorify its profession in the visual representations for Michelangelo's funeral in 1564, an event usually associated with the institution's glorification of the Medicean rule.

## Chapter 1: Between Medicean Present and Republican Past: Representing Duke Cosimo I de' Medici and His Regime at the Festivities for His Marriage to Eleonora of Toledo in 1539

Duke Cosimo I de' Medici and Eleonora of Toledo's marriage in June 1539 and the nuptial celebrations were of political and cultural significance to the Medici dukedom. The immediate political implication of the marriage is apparent. Eleonora was a daughter of Don Pedro de Toledo, the Viceroy of Naples and one of the most powerful noblemen in the Spanish world. The marriage strengthened Cosimo's allegiance to Emperor Charles V, whose soldiers still controlled the fortress of Florence. The marriage also offered an unmistakable opportunity for Cosimo to establish his as yet unstable visual imagery as the ruler. Like other public events of the Italian Renaissance princes,

the marriage celebrations were a highly orchestrated affair, rich in allegorical representations, or as one scholar has put it, “rife with symbolic possibilities.”<sup>48</sup> The decorative projects for the nuptials, from Eleonora’s procession at the gate of Florence to the banquet at the Palazzo Medici, transported the entire city to an alternate reality. They literally and symbolically linked space and time.<sup>49</sup> Their allegorical references ranged from allusions grounded in classical mythology and ancient Roman history to immediate Medici ancestors, just as they also looked ahead to the future. This chapter is an investigation of how the Duke, within the dynamic and fluid operations of these representations, might have negotiated his position within the constraints imposed, notably the dominant power of the Emperor on the one hand, and Florence’s republican past, on the other. I will argue that the artistic and literary images in Cosimo’s nuptials register a process of negotiation between different political entities. The subordinate position of Duke Cosimo to the Emperor was reconfigured as at least equal, if not superior, to the imperial authority, while his regime was projected as a continuation of the Florentine republican aspirations.

The journey of Eleonora of Toledo began on June 11, 1539, the twentieth birthday of Duke Cosimo, when she left Naples with seven galleys. She arrived at Livorno and met Cosimo en route to Pisa. The couple then went to Poggio a Caiano, the Medici country house that had been built by Lorenzo ‘il Magnifico,’ on June 25. On June 29 Eleonora finally made her elaborate entry into Florence, processing slowly through the city while Cosimo took a shorter route to the Palazzo Medici in order to receive the bride formally. The procession began at the Porta al Prato, one of the western gates of the city (Figure 1). Having proceeded along the Arno, Eleonora paid a visit to the city’s main cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, and turned up to the Piazza San Marco before she arrived at the Palazzo Medici. There a luxurious wedding banquet was held and a comedy was performed.

The study of the decorative program for the ducal marriage of 1539 in this chapter relies on the account of the event written by Pier Francesco Giambullari to Giovanni Bandini, the Florentine ambassador to the Spanish and imperial court, published as *Apparato et feste nelle nozze del Illustrissimo Signor Duca di Firenze, et della Duchessa sua consorte, con le sue Stanze, Madriali, Comedia, et Intermedii, in quelle recitati* (translated by Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell in *A Renaissance Entertainment*).<sup>50</sup> While the music performed

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<sup>48</sup> Mary A. Watt, “Veni, sponsa. Love and Politics at the Wedding of Eleonora di Toledo,” in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 29.

<sup>49</sup> Randolph Starn and Loren Patridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300 – 1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 163: In this passage I am using the anthropological vocabulary the authors employ to conceptualize procession and passage in anthropological terms, related to the work of Victor Turner.

<sup>50</sup> Pier Francesco Giambullari, *Apparato et feste nelle nozze del Illustrissimo Signor Duca di*

at the wedding was published in Venice on an independent initiative in August 1539, the account appears to have been commissioned by the Duke or other members of his court as an effort to preserve the memory of the wedding festivities and make them known outside Florence, particularly in the imperial court.<sup>51</sup>

Cosimo was minutely involved in the planning of the marriage, set to capitalize on the propagandistic potential the occasion offered. He even decided upon the number of bridesmaids and how Eleonora and his mother should greet each other.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, the marriage celebrations were a highly collaborative affair that brought together the works of a new generation of artists, musicians and writers, whose participation was desperately needed because of the emigration of the Florentine talents after the siege of Florence in 1530.<sup>53</sup> Many indeed emerged visibly in the cultural and artistic life of Florence under Duke Cosimo. Giambattista Gelli, the writer of stanzas performed at the banquet, and Antonio Landi, the author of the comedy, as well as Giambullari, became eminent members of the *Accademia Fiorentina*, an institution dedicated to the study of the Tuscan vernacular and thus aimed at propagation of Florentine cultural eminence.<sup>54</sup> Among the young artists who participated in the decorations was Agnolo Bronzino, one the most prominent painters in Duke Cosimo's service in the years to come.

It is easy to assume that the emergence of a new cultural community worked to Cosimo's advantage where he was able to select and control its members. The marriage festivities in 1539 thus may appear a perfect example of Cosimo's absolute control over the Florentine cultural community.<sup>55</sup> I propose, however, a less rigid reading of the situation, taking into consideration

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*Firenze, et della Duchessa sua consorte, con le sue Stanze, Madriali, Comedia, et Intermedii, in quelle recitati* (Firenze: Giunti, 1539), as translated and reproduced in *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, ed. Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 92-353.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell, "Literary Background," in *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, ed. Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 26. *A Renaissance Entertainment* also includes transcription of music and it appears that Giambullari was aware of the publication of the music in Venice when he wrote the account. See Giambullari, *Apparato*, 353.

<sup>52</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 29.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. It is unfortunate that the degree of collaboration is not as well documented as the decorations for the marriage of Francesco de' Medici, Duke Cosimo's heir, in 1565 where substantial number of documents survive and allow us to envision how Vincenzo Borghini and Giorgio Vasari worked together to devise the iconographies. For the lack of the documents for the 1539 marriage decorations, see Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell, "Art Historical Background," in *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, ed. Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 73.

<sup>54</sup> Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27.

<sup>55</sup> Indeed this is the position Mary A. Watt contends in the most recent study of the marriage decorations. See Watt, "Love and Politics," 31.

Cosimo's still unstable position as a ruler, particularly in relation to the Florentine republican past in 1539. Although Medicean rule had been effectively in place since 1530, and the Battle of Montemurlo in 1537 had ended uncertainty over Florence's political destiny after the assassination of Duke Alessandro, the lingering memories of the Florentine republic and surviving republican exiles in Rome mounted a serious challenge to Cosimo's regime. The murderer of Duke Alessandro, Lorenzino de' Medici, was celebrated as the new Brutus by the republican sympathizers.<sup>56</sup> The exiles in Rome created literary counterimages of Cosimo as a "bloody tyrant" and a "Nero who let Florence burn."<sup>57</sup> The rumors spread from Rome against Cosimo proved so disturbing that in 1540 the Duke felt compelled to write to Charles V, elaborating his accomplishments and soliciting the Emperor's support.<sup>58</sup> In response to these challenges, it was necessary for Duke Cosimo to develop an iconography that could neutralize his negative images. A cultural and artistic community in favor of or at least conforming to the Medici dukedom was therefore vital. The relationship between Duke Cosimo and the executors of the marriage festivities and decorations should therefore be read in more reciprocal terms, as a collaboration of interests, with Cosimo having a less absolute role.

The peculiar fluidity of the political moment of 1539 has not been fully appreciated in scholarly discussions of the Duke's intentions in the decorative program for his marriage. In general, it is argued that Cosimo strove to link himself to the achievements of his Medicean ancestors, demonstrate his loyalty to Emperor Charles V, and win provisional consent of the Florentine people and other Tuscan localities.<sup>59</sup> There appears to be a contradiction between the latter two agendas, however. Just how could the visual representations at the ducal marriage appeal to the Florentines while they sought to flatter the Emperor? For one, the Florentines were not entirely happy about imperial influence, not least Cosimo's marriage to Eleonora, through which the Duke apparently aimed to strengthen his ties with the Spanish royalty and the Hapsburg regime. Contemporary accounts indicate that the Florentines frequently saw the Duchess essentially as a foreigner, one who, according to one observer,

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<sup>56</sup> Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Duke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 70. Also see Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo IV: The Tomb of Julius II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 76, 132.

<sup>57</sup> Starn and Partridge, *Arts of Power*, 180.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery of Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence* (New York: Garland, 1978), 30.

<sup>59</sup> See Watt, "Love and Politics," 22. Also see Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell, "Political Background," in *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, ed. Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 18. For a detailed study of how Cosimo visually associated himself with his ancestors, see Janet Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny in Medici Art: Pontormo, Leo X, and the two Cosimos*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 237-250.

smiled only at her Spanish handmaids.<sup>60</sup> In this chapter I explore how the decorative program in Cosimo's marriage festivities negotiated the contradictory task of ingratiating the ducal regime with the Florentines while visually negotiating Cosimo's subordinate relationship to the Emperor. I suggest that the images of Duke Cosimo's father, Giovanni dell Bande Nere, and of his military exploits in the marriage entry consciously competed with those adulating Emperor Charles V without dangerously compromising Cosimo's homage to the Emperor. I further argue that the frequent reference to the ancient Roman emperor Augustus, expressed in a variety of means, provided a narrative of historical continuity between Medicean present and republican past, likely to rebut the tyrannical counterimages propagated by the republican exiles.

Relatively little attention has been paid to the abundant images of Giovanni delle Bande Nere in the decorations for Cosimo's marriage. The neglect of their potential implications is in part due to the assumption that Giovanni, a *condottiere* throughout his life, was of little political significance to Cosimo. After all, he was a father who, according to the eminent literary figure Pietro Aretino, had even sold "all his possessions to his son to get the money to pay his soldier's overdue back pay" before he died in 1526.<sup>61</sup> He was neither a titled ruler nor patron of art, and according to Janet Cox-Rearick, Cosimo was compelled to turn to the rich heritage of the art of his Medicean ancestors, particularly that of Pope Leo X, for lack of "an inheritance of imagery from his father."<sup>62</sup>

Giovanni became a *condottiere* in 1516 when he took the command of the forces of Leo X, to whom he was fiercely loyal. So loyal was he that when the Pope died in 1521 he made his men carry black banners and wear black shoulder belts; thereafter, his army became known as the Black Bands, and he was nicknamed delle Bande Nere, 'of the Black Bands.'<sup>63</sup> He pursued a very distinguished military career in a period when Emperor Charles V and Francis I, the King of France, bitterly fought for control of Italy and the Medici Popes Leo X and Clement VII hoped to extend papal and Medici influence. Giovanni was largely in the service of Charles V, but he died prematurely in 1526 while trying to prevent the advance of the Emperor's army that would notoriously destroy Rome in the following spring.<sup>64</sup> Giovanni was respected for his unparalleled vigor as a soldier and generosity as a commander.<sup>65</sup> Pietro Aretino maintained his admiration for the *condottiere*.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 37.

<sup>61</sup> Pietro Aretino to Francesco degli Albizzi from Mantua, December 10, 1526, in Pietro Aretino, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, trans. Thomas Caldecot Chubb (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1967), 27. The entire letter is translated and reproduced in *ibid.*, 22-28.

<sup>62</sup> Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 232.

<sup>63</sup> Minor and Mitchell, "Political Background," 12; Cochrane, *Florence*, 22.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 22; Minor and Mitchell, "Political Background," 12.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. For a contemporary description of Giovanni, see Aretino, *The Letters*, 27.

Curiously enough, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote to his friend Francesco Guicciardini in 1526 that the young Medici *condottiere* might be the desperately needed prince, or at least the general, who could lead a united Italy against the invading foreign armies.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Giovanni, after his tragic death, became “one of the most popular and romantic heroes of the early sixteenth century.”<sup>68</sup>

For Cosimo, the fact that Giovanni was a military hero allowed him to claim for himself what no other illustrious Medici ancestors, not even Cosimo ‘il Vecchio,’ nor Lorenzo ‘il Magnifico,’ were able to do. Through his father the Duke could characterize himself as a genuine military leader.<sup>69</sup> Military prowess was considered an essential virtue for princes in political and cultural discourse during the Italian Renaissance, for, as Machiavelli declared in *the Prince*, “A ruler, ... should have no other objective and no other concern, nor occupy himself with anything else except war and its methods and practices.”<sup>70</sup> Cosimo’s military aspect is pronounced in Bronzino’s official portrait of the Duke, executed in 1545 and sent to Charles V (Figure 2). Dressed fully in armor, Cosimo rests his hand on a helmet, thus referring to his early years, when he had to defend his position militarily, and also to the peace he brought to Florence.<sup>71</sup> By 1539 Cosimo’s only military triumph had been his victory at Montemurlo in 1537, and therefore his identification as a military commander was as yet unstable. Images of Giovanni would have made up for such a liability and established Cosimo within a lineage of celebrated generals.

Consider just how prominently the images of Giovanni and his military exploits figured in Florence as Eleonora entered the city and made her way to the Palazzo Medici. The triumphal arch and entranceway built at the Porta al Prato was decorated entirely with allegorical figures associated with military virtue and with paintings of Giovanni’s military victories. On the highest part of the façade were three isolated figures: Giovanni was situated in the center with a figure of Slaughter on the right offering him her disheveled hair while Mars, on the left, presented him with a sword. Giovanni’s triumphs depicted in the paintings include his victory over the French in 1521 at Milan, the rescue of San Secondo in 1522, and the siege of Milan in 1526 against the imperial

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<sup>66</sup> Cochrane, *Florence*, 22. For Piero Aretino’s description of the death of Giovanni, see Aretino, *The Letters*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> Minor and Mitchell, “Political Background,” 13.

<sup>68</sup> Cochrane, *Florence*, 22-23.

<sup>69</sup> In fact, Cosimo planned for the tomb of his father almost immediately after his rise to power. For Cosimo’s plan for his father’s tomb, see Virginia L. Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento from Michelangelo to Giovanni Bologna* (New York: Garland, 1976), 143; 182-183. Also Eric Cochrane finds that Giovanni’s fame was one of the few political assets that Cosimo had had at his disposal when he came to power. See Cochrane, *Florence*, 22-23.

<sup>70</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52. Baldesar Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* also considers proficiency with arms an important virtue of a courtier. See Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 57-58, 115.

<sup>71</sup> Richelson, *Personal Imagery*, 5.

troops.<sup>72</sup>

The significance of this triumphal imagery celebrating Giovanni delle Bande Nere becomes clear when one compares Cosimo's decorative program with that of Duke Alessandro for Charles V's entry to Florence in 1536. Alessandro, who was just as dependent on the imperial favor as his successor, essentially presented a triumphal procession to Charles V, on whose arrival at the gate of the city Alessandro is said to have presented "the love and the keys of Florence" and said "These, and all I have, are yours."<sup>73</sup> The entry in 1536 and the nuptials in 1539 share a similar motif of imperial flattery, as allegorical figures and paintings representing various parts of the world under Charles V's influence celebrated his territorial conquests and worldwide dominion.<sup>74</sup> However, while imperial adulation had gone unchecked in 1536, Cosimo seems to have matched it in celebrating his father's own military exploits. At the entranceway to the city, the depiction of the Emperor and his temporal power began only after Giovanni had been extravagantly celebrated.<sup>75</sup> In any processional event, the ordering of the parts has implications, and the case here demonstrates a level of confidence and self-determination remarkable for a young Duke who was dependent on the Emperor. Charles V had temporized on the matter of withdrawing his army from the fortress of Florence despite the Duke's request that the forces remain.<sup>76</sup> Cosimo's marginal position had already been brought home to him at the time he was arranging his marriage. He had first sought the widow of Duke Alessandro, Margherita of Austria, an illegitimate daughter of the Emperor. However, Charles V had given her in marriage in 1538 to Ottavio Farnese, the more politically valuable nephew of Pope Paul III.<sup>77</sup>

Returning to the 1539 marriage entry, Cosimo's intention to establish his princely persona as a military leader and to assert self-confidence in the process of negotiating imperial favor is manifest to an even greater extent in a second reference to Giovanni delle Bande Nere: the bronze equestrian statue of Giovanni by Tribolo in the Piazza San Marco. The statue consisted of a bronze horse, twelve *braccia* high, rearing up and ridden by Giovanni with dead and wounded men lying beneath on a ten-*braccia*-high pedestal that included two grisaille paintings in bronze color by Bronzino, again depicting Giovanni's

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<sup>72</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 101.

<sup>73</sup> Pietro Aretino to Giorgio of Arezzo from Venice, December 19, 1537 in Aretino, *The Letters*, 125. The entire letter is translated and reproduced in *ibid.*, 125-128. The letter has a detailed description of Charles V's entry in 1536.

<sup>74</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 120-121. For the description of Charles V's entry in 1536, also see Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 3, ed. William Gaunt (London: Dent, 1963), 167.

<sup>75</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 120.

<sup>76</sup> Cochrane, *Florence*, 35.

<sup>77</sup> For Cosimo's search for his bride, see Minor and Mitchell, "Political Background," 17; Watt, "Love and Politics," 19.

military heroics.<sup>78</sup>

This statue, which no longer survives, had symbolic potential. In the Italian Renaissance, the equestrian statue, inspired by Roman imperial prototypes, had long been a part of decorations for celebrating military triumphs and representing princely or even imperial status.<sup>79</sup> Charles V himself was frequently represented in equestrian form. In fact, for his entry into Florence in 1536, Tribolo had planned an ephemeral statue of the Emperor on horseback, seven braccia high, for the Piazza S. Trinita.<sup>80</sup> However, according to Vasari, Tribolo was unable to finish the statue because the wood-carver delayed in making the pedestal and other woodwork, so that the sculptor was only able to “cover the horse alone with tin over the still wet clay.”<sup>81</sup> A comparison between the aborted statue of the Emperor and the completed statue of Giovanni is irresistible, and its political implications fascinating. With Giovanni’s equestrian statue, Cosimo put his father in the guise of a prince or even an emperor. That the same artist who had failed to produce the statue for the Emperor in 1536 succeeded in producing an even larger statue for the Duke’s father in 1539 would have amplified the effect of aggrandizing Cosimo.

Simultaneously, this particular type of equestrian statue with a rearing horse would have called to mind Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous equestrian monument of Francesco Sforza, the clay model for which was executed in 1493 (Figure 3). This model had been displayed for the marriage festivities for Bianca Maria Sforza and Emperor Maximilian in the same year, and it continued to inspire later equestrian statues. In fact, in 1530 Domenico Beccafumi made a portrait of Charles V mounted on a horse rearing above personifications of three conquered provinces.<sup>82</sup> It is likely that Tribolo’s statue for Charles V was styled in a similar manner. With such explicit prototypes in mind Pietro Aretino lamented the failure of the statue made in haste for the Emperor’s entry in 1536: “I am sorry that our rare Tribolo ... did not have more time, for certainly he would have finished a horse of such excellence that the one made by Leonardo at Milan would never have been spoken of again.”<sup>83</sup> In such a context, the successful execution of Giovanni’s equestrian statue enhanced the perception of Cosimo as equal to the Sforza and Hapsburg rulers. As if to inscribe permanently the implication of Tribolo’s statues, Giorgio Vasari later made sure to describe both in his *Life of Tribolo*.<sup>84</sup>

In short, the equestrian statue of Giovanni delle Bande Nere was the

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<sup>78</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, 176-177; Giambullari, *Apparato*, 122.

<sup>79</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 171.

<sup>80</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, 167.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 167; Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 172.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>83</sup> Aretino, *The Letters*, 127.

<sup>84</sup> Vasari, *Lives*, 162-181. It appears that Vasari was aware of Giambullari’s account. See *ibid.*, 177: “I will not speak of the paintings, because they are described in the accounts of the preparations for the wedding.”

culmination of Cosimo's celebration of his father as a military hero and himself as an *imperator*. At this point it is important to note that images of Giovanni were concentrated in the streets of Florence which, according to Giambullari, "were so full of spectators that there was hardly room to pass."<sup>85</sup> The intention was perhaps that Cosimo, lacking in military achievement, wanted to make a permanent impression of his father as a military hero in the minds of the Florentines, as a promise of his own future military achievement. It is also possible that the viewers might have been reminded of the nature of Giovanni's death in battle defending Italy against the forces of Charles V. The statue seems to have made quite an impression on his subjects. When Baccio Bandinelli later executed a seated statue of Giovanni in San Lorenzo, a popular verse scorned the inappropriateness of the seated image for a warrior like Giovanni (Figure 4):

Messer Giovanni delle Bande Nere,  
Dal lungo cavalcar noiato e stanco,  
Scese di sella, e si pose a sedere.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, the abundant visual references to Giovanni did not necessarily risk destabilizing the relationship between the Duke and the Emperor. Visual references to Giovanni became less prominent within the Medici Palace where the banquet was held and where the most important people in the city, "prelates and lords," welcomed Eleonora.<sup>87</sup> Here, Cosimo's obligation to Charles V constituted a major theme of the decorations. The coats of arms of the Medici and the house of Toledo were, according to Giambullari, "joined together and embraced by the Imperial Eagle."<sup>88</sup> Cosimo's dependence on the Emperor was proclaimed at the gate of the Palazzo Medici: in the second courtyard of the Palazzo, the site of the banquet, there were two paintings, one depicting Charles V crowned by Clement VII, and the other representing Duke Cosimo invested by Charles V (Figure 5). Figured among the other paintings of the Medici *illustri*, they would remind the attendants of the pivotal role of Charles V in the past and present of Medici rule in Florence and of the interdependence of the two powerful families. The career of Giovanni also offers a flexible reading of his images. They can refer to the *condottiere*'s frequent service to Charles V as a *condottiere* and thus imply Cosimo's devotion to the Emperor. The paintings in the second courtyard of the Medici palace seem to have also explored such a fluid and polysemic potential. Right next to the

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<sup>85</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 121. Once Eleonora entered the Medici Palace, however, reference to Giovanni was markedly toned down.

<sup>86</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 182n. The verse is translated as "Master Giovanni delle Bande Nere / Bored and tired after riding so long / Got down from the saddle, and seated himself." Translation is provided by Professor Megan Holmes.

<sup>87</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 123.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

painting of the coronation of Charles V was the painting describing Giovanni delle Bande Nere's Battle of Biagrasa, a victory he won for the Emperor. Opposite this scene was Cosimo's Battle of Montemurlo. When read in relation to one another, these paintings perhaps celebrated Cosimo as a genuinely competent military leader like his father and a pseudo-imperial prince, capable of defending the city from war, all the while maintaining his allegiance to Charles V.

The richly allusive and abundant imagery representing Giovanni delle Bande Nere in the wedding entry also permitted Cosimo to thematize his rule in relation to classical Roman imperial prototypes. At one point in the decoration for Eleonora's procession through the city, Giovanni was likened to a Julius Caesar and Cosimo cast in the role of the emperor Augustus. In his account of the marriage Giambullari read the painting of Giovanni's rescue of San Secondo on the triumphal arch at the Porta al Prato in the following manner:

Lord Giovanni, having been called to help this lady [widow of Count of San Secondo], had arrived with a small but choice troop. No sooner had he shown himself in the place than the enemy army, overcome by his formidable name, turned its disgraced banners to cowardly flight. These banners were scattering over the spacious countryside with such fury that that Lord could well say: VENIENS VICI, ...<sup>89</sup>

As Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell have noted, Giambullari, in his reading of the painting, probably paraphrased Caesar's famous words "Veni, vidi, vici."<sup>90</sup> The reading is not at all groundless because below this painting was sculpted an allegorical figure of Military Virtue that bore the inscription that read "Palm branches, prize for the victors."<sup>91</sup> The line is a phrase from a passage in the fifth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* in which Aeneas held funeral games in honor of his father Anchises.<sup>92</sup> The passage has a particular resonance with the funeral game that Augustus, then Octavianus, organized for his assassinated stepfather Caesar in 44 BC described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.<sup>93</sup> In Giambullari's reading, the painting, statue and inscription together implied to a beholder the commemorative act that Cosimo, Augustus-like, put together for his father at his marriage. It is also in line with a distinctive characteristic of the program that all of the quotations used for emblems, statues and paintings

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<sup>89</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 101.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 101n: "PALMAE PRAECIUM VICTORIBUS"

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>93</sup> At this funeral game, a comet appeared as if to evidence the apotheosis of Caesar. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), 391-392.

were taken from Roman authors of the Augustan age.<sup>94</sup>

Such an allusion to Augustus was just one of many references to the Roman emperor in the ducal marriage festivities in 1539. The thematic link to Augustus is usually thought to have invoked the peace and prosperity associated with the Roman emperor and referred to the accomplishments of Charles V and also of Cosimo 'il Vecchio' and Lorenzo 'il Magnifico.'<sup>95</sup> It is therefore generally assumed that with the Augustan theme Duke Cosimo solicited the imperial support and aligned himself with the Medici *illustri*. This interpretation usually presupposes a single-minded purpose to entreat imperial favor and, by articulating his Medicean dynastic destiny and configuring his ducal regime in an imperial manner, to mark a radical break from the Florentine republic. One scholar has observed that depictions of Charles V as a new Caesar Augustus simply put an end to any republican notions that might have remained in the minds of the Florentines.<sup>96</sup>

However, Henk Th. van Veen, in his study of Cosimo's visual propaganda in the 1560s, has boldly argued that the Augustan theme articulated how republican aspirations were absorbed into the visual representations of the Duke and his regime. As evidence for this "republican perspective" in the Duke's later visual propaganda van Veen cites the *Apotheosis of Cosimo I* in the central tondo of the ceiling of the *Sala Grande* in the Palazzo Vecchio (Figure 6). The tondo was initially designed with Fiorenza, the personification of Florence, alone as the central figure but in 1563 Cosimo decided that he should appear in the center of the tondo crowned with a civic crown by Fiorenza.<sup>97</sup> Scholars have interpreted the change as an indication of Cosimo's desire for self-glorification.<sup>98</sup> Van Veen, however, argues that Cosimo appears as a republican officeholder acting in the interest of the ancient city-state.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, instead of a ducal crown, Cosimo is crowned with a civic crown.<sup>100</sup> The inscription of the crown, 'ob cives servatos,' is no doubt a reference to the event in 27 BC when Augustus appeared before the Senate, renounced all of his powers and declared the Republic restored. The Senate in return voted

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<sup>94</sup> Richelson, *Personal Imagery*, 29.

<sup>95</sup> For a study of how Augustan images were deployed in relation to Cosimo and Charles V see *ibid.*, 28-30. According to Paul Richelson, some of the images at the 1539 wedding consciously linked Charles V and Cosimo I with Augustus or Hercules, in a flattering gesture to the Emperor. Mottos and inscriptions referred Charles V as Caesar Augustus. The key to the Augustus-Charles V-Cosimo triumvirate was the device of Capricorn with the motto FIDUCIA FATI that appeared as a lunette in the first courtyard of the Palazzo Medici. This device became an essential image for Cosimo's political imagery and Janet Cox-Rearick extensively explores it in Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 251-291.

<sup>96</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 34.

<sup>97</sup> Henk Th. Van Veen, "Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda of Cosimo I de' Medici," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 55 (1992): 202-203.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>100</sup> For why the crown Cosimo is coronated in the central tondo was a civic crown, not a ducal crown, see *ibid.*, 203n.

him the civic crown, ‘ob cives servatos,’ for having safeguarded the life of his fellow citizens.<sup>101</sup> The analogy indicates the Duke’s calculated desire to appear as being awarded the crown by the Senate and people of Florence, who were represented by the heraldic shields of the commune, the people and the city of Florence, and by the twenty-one guilds of the city.<sup>102</sup>

The sculptural programme for the courtyard of the Uffizi provides further evidence to van Veen’s republican perspective in Cosimo’s later visual propaganda. The Uffizi, built by Cosimo in 1560 to house government offices, was to become the center of the ducal administration. The planned sculptural programme included twenty-six statues of the illustrious Florentine men, and according to Bernardo Baldini, Cosimo desired only those who “had been bright and illustrious in arms, arts and civil government.”<sup>103</sup> According to van Veen’s point of view, the plan implies that Cosimo intended that the statues should emphasize the continuation and the fulfillment of the past republic’s political aspirations.<sup>104</sup> The sculptural programme also included the figure of Cosimo as Augustus adorning the inner river façade. However, evidence suggests that for that pivotal space, Cosimo had initially refused to grant permission for anything more than his ducal coat of arms placed between two nude figures, representing Equity and Rigor.<sup>105</sup> It was only after Vincenzo Danti, the sculptor, vigorously argued for the Augustan statue that the Duke commissioned it (Figure 7).<sup>106</sup>

However, with regard to Cosimo’s early visual propaganda, van Veen insists that such a republican perspective was “utterly lacking.”<sup>107</sup> For one, he finds, “... in the earlier stages of Cosimo’s reign illustrious Florentines from the republican past had been used in visual propaganda only *outside* Florence.”<sup>108</sup> However, when applying van Veen’s conceptualization to the Duke’s marriage festivities in 1539, it appears quite possible that already, during this very early phase of his rule, Cosimo projected his regime as a continuation and realization of Florentine republican goals, *inside* Florence. A visual imagery configuring Cosimo, in the guise of Augustus – be it an Augustus mindful of his adoptive father’s legacy or one glorious in military affairs yet anxious for peace – permitted the young Duke the flexibility to mediate what appears to have been the contradictory and paradoxical task of appeasing the possible republican sentiments of the Florentines in the context of

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>103</sup> The passage is my translation of “che fussero stati chiari e illustri nelle armi, nelle lettere e nei governi civili.” The passage is from Baldini, Bernardo. *Panegirico della clemenza. Orazione fatta nell’ Accademia Fiorentina in lode del Serenissimo Signor Cosimo Medici Gran Duca di Toscana, Gloriosa Memoria* (Florence 1578), quoted in *ibid.*, 206.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

a ducal marriage.

The ambition to revive the memory of Ancient Rome during the Italian Renaissance is legendary, and in Quattrocento Florence that aspiration was met with a particular fervor. The Florentine republic was declared the heir particularly to the Roman republic and humanists even rewrote history to make the connection clearer. While earlier tradition held that Julius Caesar was the founder of Florence, Coluccio Salutati ascribed the city's origin to the soldiers of Sulla.<sup>109</sup> Writers insisted that Florence succeeded the Romans in its republican form of government, military glory and the revival of classical literature instigated by Petrarch and Boccaccio. Leonardo Bruni, a leading humanist and the chancellor of Florence in the early fifteenth century, wrote a eulogy to Florence in his oration for the public funeral of Nanni Strozzi in 1427 that scrupulously outlined this position:

[T]here has never been a time within the memory of man when this city has not been the capital of Tuscany. Also deserving of praise are the citizens of this present age, who have extended the city's power even beyond what they inherited from their fathers, adding though the exercise of virtue and arms Pisa and other large cities to their dominion.

What should I say about letters and studies, in which our city enjoys by universal consent a great and brilliant preeminence? ... Who can name any poet, of this or an earlier age, who was not a Florentine? ... Who, if not our city, recognized the value of Latin letters, which had been lying abject, prostrate, and almost dead, and saw to it that they were resurrected and restored?<sup>110</sup>

At Duke Cosimo's wedding banquet in the second courtyard of the Palazzo Medici in 1539, the aspiration to project Florence as a New Rome was evoked with a surprisingly similar rhetorical strategy in the literary images of the Duke and his regime. A singer in the guise of Apollo first sang a eulogistic poem that celebrated a new beginning of the Medicean golden age in Cosimo's Florence under imperial protection. Following this performance Flora (Florence) appeared, accompanied by nymphs and rivers representing various parts of Tuscany under the Florentine rule.<sup>111</sup> Introduced by Apollo, each nymph came forward, blessed the marriage and pledged her loyalty to the Duke. It is particularly noteworthy that among the nymphs there was one representing Verrucola, a region which had been a key point of defense for Pisa against Florence. This earlier conflict between Florence and Pisa was alluded to again when the nymph associated with Pisa came right after Flora and sang, "That I

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<sup>109</sup> Ronald G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983), 251-252.

<sup>110</sup> Leonardo Bruni, "Oration for the Funeral of Nanni Strozzi," in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, trans. Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins and David Thompson (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), 124, 126.

<sup>111</sup> For the entire description of the performance of Apollo and the nymphs, see Giambullari, *Apparato*, 166-223.

am your friend as well as you servant I now long to show you.”<sup>112</sup> In addition, contrary to van Veen’s assumption, some of the performances at the banquet precisely invoked the famous Florentine *uomi illustri* connected with the Florentine republican past. The stanzas singled out the native cities of celebrated Tuscan literary figures. In particular Ancisa, the birthplace of Petrarch, and Certaldo, Boccaccio’s native city, appeared with Flora. The prestige of these cities was considered equal to Arpino or Padova, the native cities of Cicero and Livy respectively.<sup>113</sup> Montepulciano, Politian’s home city, also made an appearance as a nymph.<sup>114</sup> At the end of the performances for the banquet came Tiber, representing Rome. Introducing Tiber, Apollo claimed, “... kindled by native zeal today, he [Tiber] abandons his old Rome and comes to honor you to show that he recognizes your beautiful realm as his homeland.”<sup>115</sup> Tiber sang in response:

If my noble daughter [Rome] put rein and bridle on the earth for as far as the sun turns with its sphere, this lady, who was born from her hopes through you, ... to adorn herself with rich spoils and, proud and haughty, to rise above the others. So that, like the Tiber and Rome, the fame of the Arno and of Flora may now go up to Heaven.<sup>116</sup>

The spirit of conceptualizing Florentine greatness in the guise of Ancient Rome, based on its territorial influence and cultural eminence, appears quite similar in both the earlier Florentine republic and the new ducal regime. While Bruni had been disdainful of principality and would likely have disapproved of the new ducal regime, Politian, in his *Stanze*, had already provided a precedent for grafting this classical idyl onto Medicean protagonist. On Cosimo’s part there seems a genuine intent to maintain continuity with the aspiration for a New Rome in Florence that the republican humanists had articulated and earlier Medici cultural patrons had set as their ideal. Moreover, the songs at the banquet spelled out and elaborated a set of territorial and cultural policies that the Duke was to pursue in reality. He indeed sought to protect and expand his Tuscan territory, conquering the old Florentine republic’s archrival Siena in 1559. Just as Bruni had argued, Florence remained the capital of Tuscany and Cosimo established the *Accademia Fiorentina* to champion the Tuscan language, exemplified in the works of the celebrated writers from the republican period.<sup>117</sup>

In the light of van Veen’s reading of the central tondo of *Sala Grande*, it is also possible to see that the Augustan theme at the marriage allowed the kind of fluidity that Cosimo needed to accommodate the republican past without abandoning the equally vital need to establish visually his princely persona. The parallel between Augustus and Cosimo is beyond their sharing of the Capricorn

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 169. Arpino, south of Rome, was also thought to be the birthplace of Julius Caesar.

See *ibid.*, 169n.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>117</sup> Minor and Mitchell, “Literary Background,” 24.

astrological sign and their having won their most important military victories, Battles of Actium and of Montemurlo respectively, on the same day.<sup>118</sup> Both had emerged as rulers following the assassination of the previous ruling figure, at exceptionally young ages through an electoral procedure. They had each fought a civil war, pacified their respective states and took on the difficult tasks of consolidating the transition from a republic to a principality.

In 1539, when Cosimo had only just begun his reign, the example of how Augustus had established an empire would have been seminal for the young Duke. Augustus managed, especially in his early reign, a very subtle balance between the Roman republican heritage and his clearly unprecedented authority. In appearance, he was insistent in honoring the republican offices and institutions and took the civic title of Princeps, the First Citizen. When he wrote the *Res Gestae*, he remained insistent that he had restored the Roman republic ruled by the Senate and the people of Rome.<sup>119</sup> In short, he would have demonstrated for Cosimo that the seemingly contradictory aims of consolidating an empire and propagating it as a continuation of the illustrious republican past could be realized simultaneously. Cosimo was no stranger to such ambiguity. After all, on the outset of his reign in 1537, Cosimo had been elected as the Head and First Citizen of the Florentine republican government.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, a poem contributed by Giovambattista Strozzi for an *intermezzo* during the comedy performed in the Palazzo Medici suggests just how the Augustan theme and its republican meanings might resonate to the former republican sympathizers. Strozzi was a leading member of a family and political faction that had been traditional rivals of the Medici. He was in fact the brother of Filippo Strozzi who led the exiles at Montemurlo against Cosimo and his forces. Scholars have simply noted Strozzi's participation and considered it a gesture of reconciliation on the part of the Duke.<sup>121</sup> Strozzi was no doubt a republican sympathizer, having written a book of illustrious Strozzi men, the main section of which was a glorification of Filippo.<sup>122</sup> However, Giovambattista Strozzi's poem for the ducal marriage suggests the working of layered meanings. A Silenus, specifically dressed according to a description in the Sixth Eclogue of Virgil, sang the poem:

O beautiful golden years, O divine century! Then there was no rake or scythe; then there was no birdlime or snare, no evil iron or poison. ... Nymphs and shepherds went round in groups together, ... O beautiful golden years, shall I ever see you? Bring

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<sup>118</sup> Both battles were fought on August 1. Battle of Actium, the decisive victory of Augustus, then Octavianus, over Mark Antony and Cleopatra was won in 31 BC. For the parallel between Augustus and Cosimo, see Cox-Rearik, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 257.

<sup>119</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34., as translated in *Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Ronald Mellor (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), 68.

<sup>120</sup> Minor and Mitchell, "Political Background," 10.

<sup>121</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 32. For biographic information of Strozzi, see Minor and Mitchell, "Literary Background," 27-30.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

them back, O new Sun, bring them back now.<sup>123</sup>

The poem refers to the violent internal and external struggles of Florence in the past, for which the Medici family and the Duke himself had significant responsibilities. Nonetheless, the poem also illustrates weariness with war and anticipates revival of the Augustan and Laurentian golden age in the city under Cosimo, who was the only hope for Florentine independence from Charles V. Thus the fluidity of the Augustan theme perhaps lent itself as a creative outlet for the expression of the consent by the republican sympathizer who could do so without fully abandoning his political convictions.<sup>124</sup>

I have discussed how the decorative program and festivities for Duke Cosimo's wedding figured him as a competent and independent ruler by celebrating his father, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, in imperial trappings and how his regime was also consciously projected as a continuation, if not fulfillment, of republican aspirations. In the light of these arguments, it is possible to envision that the decorative program and thematic occupations of the festivities for Cosimo's wedding in 1539 essentially created a genealogy in two dimensions. On the one hand, Giovanni, never before celebrated publicly as one of the Medici *illustri*, was figured alongside the illustrious Medici ancestors like Cosimo 'il Vecchio' and Lorenzo 'il Magnifico' that Cosimo was destined to follow.<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, his regime was put in the context of the entire history of Florence as a rightful heir to the city's glorious republican past. Put in Foucauldian terms, a discursive operation of this kind allows for certain contradictions:

An examination of descent also permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which – thanks to which, against which – they were formed. Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. ... On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify

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<sup>123</sup> Giambullari, *Apparato*, 298.

<sup>124</sup> As Andrew C Minor and Bonner Mitchell suggest, in accommodating the potential republican sympathizers like Giovambattista Strozzi, it would certainly have been useful that Cosimo's grandfather Giovanni de' Medici was nicknamed 'il Popolano' because of his support of popular elements against Piero de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo 'il Magnifico' who was eventually expelled from Florence in 1494 for his tyrannical rule. See Minor and Mitchell, "Political Background," 15.

<sup>125</sup> To display images of illustrious members of the Medici, for example their portraits, had been a family tradition in important rituals like marriage. Duke Alessandro had the portraits of his ancestors displayed for Charles V's entry to Florence in 1536 but apparently Giovanni delle Bande Nere never appeared in the formula until Cosimo rose to power. See Cox-Rearik, *Dynasty and destiny*, 242-243.

the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the error, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.<sup>126</sup>

If so, the two dimensions of the genealogy created at Cosimo's marriage can be seen as finally putting into order the series of complicated events that took place after the assassination of Duke Alessandro with regard to Florence's history. Cosimo, through the imagery of his father as a victorious general, marked a dissociation not only with the republican past, but also with the previous Medici ruling figures in Florence. Having become the ruler of Florence, it was important for Cosimo to publicize a new political reality that had only just emerged in the city following the death of the unpopular Alessandro. However, some of the Florentine republican values and ideals, epitomized in the Augustan theme, were still meaningful and useful to the present regime, and he sought to illustrate continuity with that particular aspect of the city's history by every means.

These strategic maneuvers in the visual representation for the ducal marriage in 1539, utilizing images of Giovanni delle Bande Nere and Augustus, place the Duke in a very interesting and unique position in terms of the theories of culture visited in the Introduction. On the one hand, from the perspective of the theoretical models of Michel de Certeau and Ross Chambers, Cosimo was in the subordinate position in the context of negotiating his relationship with Emperor Charles V, working within the constraints imposed upon him by the dominant political regime in order to create for himself a sphere of autonomous action and self-determination in the cultural domain.<sup>127</sup> Cosimo took the liberty of appropriating the visual vocabulary in the Hapsburg imperial propaganda in order to represent his father and to maximize his lineage, status and right-to-rule. Nevertheless, he never tried to subvert the imperial superiority entirely, but articulated and legitimized the established order by acknowledging the importance of the imperial favor to the ducal regime. On the other hand, if one takes the Gramscian view, the Duke appears to have been a ruler who sought to establish hegemony by incorporating subordinate oppositional cultural perspectives to a significant extent. Therefore, wherever possible, he would equate the aspirations of his regime with those of the supporters of the previous republican government. The classical Augustan theme

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<sup>126</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard; trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 146.

<sup>127</sup> Michele Lamont, "Review of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, by Michel de Certeau," *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 93 (Nov 1987): 720.

offered an almost perfect framework for such an effect.

In addition, the triumphal nature of the marriage celebrations, from Eleonora's procession to the pictures of Giovanni delle Bande Nere's exploits and his equestrian statue, offered an ideal and highly visible stage for performing the kinds of strategies and maneuvers discussed above. In anthropological terms, triumphal and processional events construct alternative temporalities. On the one hand, they mark discontinuity, be it an end of war or the beginning of peace; on the other hand, they literally and symbolically link space and time between one state of affairs and another.<sup>128</sup> In processional and festive events it is also difficult to decide social and political implications of the jokes and mimicry of the superior orders made by the disempowered groups.<sup>129</sup> By the same token, the 1539 nuptials marked discontinuity, be it the end of war against the republican partisans in 1537 or the beginning of peace and stability promised by Eleonora's arrival. With regard to Cosimo's positioning himself in relation to Emperor Charles V, however, it was unclear "where Cosimo's desire to impress other heads of state with the quality of his artists ended and where his desire to awe them with Florentine superiority began."<sup>130</sup>

Finally, what the analysis above enables is the possibility of putting into a broader historical context the extent and the variety of ways in which Cosimo throughout his reign developed an image of a ruler keen to absorb the Florentine republican past, on the one hand, and of an independent and victorious sovereign. What we will find is that iconographies and thematic concerns usually associated with later projects are anticipated in the imagery of the marriage entry of 1539. What this suggests is that the marriage celebration, and its commemoration in published texts, continued to resonate within cultural memory of Cosimo's regime.

Ilaria Hoppe has identified a sense of Florentine self-awareness visible in Giorgio Vasari's much later decorations of Eleonora's apartments in the Palazzo Vecchio. One of her main pieces of evidence is the room of Gualdrada, named after the woman who refused to kiss Emperor Otto IV during his procession to Florence in 1180. The theme illustrates an independent Florentine attitude towards imperial hegemony and a keen intention to mark temporal and historic continuity between republican and Medicean Florence.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Starn and Partridge, *Arts of Power*, 163.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>130</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 33.

<sup>131</sup> Ilaria Hoppe, "A Duchess' Place at Court: The Quartiere di Eleonora in the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 113. Pamela J. Benson adds that in identifying Eleonora with Gualdrada and therefore with ancient republican values, the visual imagery functioned to neutralize the Florentines' apparent animosity against the Duchess as a foreign woman. See Pamela J. Benson, "Eleonora di Toledo among the Famous Women: Iconographic Innovation after the Conquest of Siena," in *ibid.*, 153.

The thematic occupations of Cosimo's nuptials in 1539 were further developed during celebrations for the marriage between Cosimo's son, Francesco de' Medici and Giovanna of Austria, the daughter of Emperor Ferdinand I, in 1565, in such a way as to emphasize the accomplishments of Cosimo's regime after 1539. By 1565, Cosimo was able to boast of himself as a military victor with multiple conquests, and therefore the scenes of his military victories replaced the images of Giovanni's exploits, as can be seen in the *Sala Grande* of the Palazzo Vecchio, the great audience hall that was redecorated in time for Francesco and Giovanna's marriage. A mock-battle was added to the processional entry staged at the Porta al Prato as if to give the impression that Giovanna was Cosimo's prize for his political accomplishments.<sup>132</sup> Indeed the Duke would go on to process through the streets of Florence with his daughter-in-law. In the mean time he and his advisors did not forget to satisfy the citizens of Florence, adding two wine-spouting fountains.<sup>133</sup> The imperial and victorious manner with which Cosimo celebrated himself and his regime at the marriage in 1565 was such that Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge refer to it "a triumph of triumphalism in Florence."<sup>134</sup>

I conclude this chapter by discussing a letter exchanged between Cosimo's diplomats, which illustrates the sense of confidence with which the Duke himself (as well as his advisors, courtiers and the Florentine public that bolstered his regime) preserved the memory of his wedding despite the extreme difficulty of Cosimo's position as a ruler in 1539. On December 13, 1539 Agnolo Niccolini, Cosimo's senior diplomat, who followed Charles V from Rome to Genoa and to Paris in hope of negotiating Cosimo's claim to Duke Alessandro de Medici's estate, but who had yet to obtain an audience with the Emperor, wrote to the Ducal Secretary Ugolino Grifoni about the decorations for the Emperor's entry to Paris:

I will concentrate on seeing the city, the arches and other decorations, and then finally the entrance of Caesar [Charles V] for whom they have ordered many honors, festivities, jousts and other entertainments. Here as apparently elsewhere in his journey, they have commanded that those in His Majesty's retinue are not to pay for anything, though they are in fact rather few in number, not exceeding four hundred horses. Your Lordship shouldn't imagine that the arches here are of the beauty and grace that you have seen there [in Italy], most recently for the arrival of the Duchess [Eleonora di Toledo de' Medici] or previously for the entrance of Caesar [Charles V]. The ones here are very simple and uncouth, with only the Imperial eagle painted on them, without any other

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<sup>132</sup> Starn and Partridge, *Arts of Power*, 185.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

devices or inscriptions.<sup>135</sup>

The letter indicates that for the members of the Medicean court, the comparative complexity and artistic excellence of the 1539 marriage celebrations carried the day even in the face of political inferiority of the ducal state.

## Chapter 2: “Come Signore, et non come artista”: The Relationship between Benvenuto Cellini and Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici and the Politics of the Sculptural Commissions for the Piazza della Signoria

If Cosimo’s 1539 marriage temporarily transformed Florence into a theater for displaying his new regime, the Piazza della Signoria proved a permanent space where Duke Cosimo was engaged in a “war of representation” with the city’s republican past, powerfully visible there even after its collapse (Figure 8).<sup>136</sup> For one, Michelangelo’s colossal *David* at the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio remained an almost irreplaceable legacy of earlier republican visual propaganda. Cosimo, as he did for his marriage, needed the service of capable artists. Hence he welcomed the visit in 1545 of Benvenuto Cellini, a famed Florentine goldsmith who had earlier enjoyed the patronage of popes and of the king of France (Figure 9).<sup>137</sup> Cellini now seized the offer of Cosimo’s patronage with a burning ambition to establish himself as one of the best artists in Florence.<sup>138</sup> However, the relationship between the Duke and the artist, while producing a series of major sculptural commissions for the Piazza, was only occasionally productive and ultimately failed. Cellini shows in his biography how he manipulated the Duke to further his own artistic ambitions in ways that

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<sup>135</sup> Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 1176a, ins. 2, fol. 146 [cited 10 February 2006]. Available from World Wide Web: (<http://www.medici.org/news/dom/dom062000.html>). The document and the website is provided by the Medici Archive Project.

<sup>136</sup> The presence of republican works of art in the city in the early sixteenth century is a result not only of the republic’s vigorous commissions, which included Michelangelo’s *David*, but also of its appropriation of works of art belonging to the Medici. For a study of the *David* as a republican symbol see Charles Jr. Seymour, *Michelangelo’s David: a Search for Identity* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), 55. “Come Signore, et non come artista in the title,” translated as “like a prince, but not like an artist,” is a passage from Benvenuto Cellini, *La Vita* (Parma: Ugo Guanda Editore, 1996), 661. I acknowledge that the expression of “war of representation” is a concept that Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge has developed in Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300 – 1600* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 180.

<sup>137</sup> Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, trans. John Addington Symonds (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., INC, 1927), 316-317: According to Cellini, Cosimo said to him, “If you are disposed to work for me, I will treat you in a way that will astonish you, provided the fruits of your labours give me satisfaction ...”

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

flouted ducal authority, without however entirely ignoring it and ultimately unable to resist it.

The chief source for any study of the troubled relations between Duke Cosimo and Cellini is the artist's autobiography, begun in 1558, but published well after his death, in 1728. Recognized as an extraordinary literary achievement, its reliability as a historical source continues to be questioned, chiefly because of the omissions of problematic events in his life and the overplaying of others that better served his autobiographical purposes.<sup>139</sup> However, there are many ways in which Cellini's autobiography is uniquely relevant for the subject this chapter will probe.

The Medici dukes formally introduced into Florence a courtly society that displaced the traditional oligarchs of the republican period. Artists in Medicean Florence were particularly notable beneficiaries of this new political and social reality. While figures like Michelangelo had been able to elevate their status under the earlier regime, the artists patronized within the ducal court were more broadly empowered by the public role and value that Duke Cosimo accorded the visual arts. This encouraged them to reject the status of artisan and refashion themselves as courtiers.<sup>140</sup> Nonetheless, to the extent that they were deprived of the traditional markers of status – whether family, rank, wealth or education – the artists' position within the Medicean court could be ambiguous and unstable. For some artists, a rigorous literary production provided a means of strengthening their newly elevated status and presence within the court. The period is marked by the emergence of artist-writers like Giorgio Vasari and Agnolo Bronzino. Not only did these artist-writers desire to ensure their historical reputation, recognizing that their fame in posterity rested on the written words, but also they were consciously emulating the intellectuals and professional literati who filled the most powerful and lucrative positions within the Medicean court structure.<sup>141</sup> Cellini was just one of those artist-writers. He produced a large body of sonnets as well as treatises and theoretical tracts, and his autobiography was perhaps intended to serve similar social purposes.<sup>142</sup>

For the purpose of this thesis, the significance of Cellini's autobiography goes beyond its value as a text that reflects social and political transformations in Medicean Florence. Its value here lies in what it might

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<sup>139</sup> Margaret A. Gallucci, *Benvenuto Cellini: Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16-17. For the literary commentators, the achievement of his work is mainly attributed to the originality of Cellini's writing style. See Paolo L. Rossi, "Sprezzatura, Patronage and Fate: Benvenuto Cellini and the World of Words," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at The Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55-56.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 62. It should be noted that the pretensions of artist-writers were often met by contempt and antagonism of the traditional literati and intellectuals. See *ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

reveal about the nature and limits of opposition within the state. If the creation of this literary work can, on the one hand, be read as an emulation of court culture for means of advancement, it contains within itself the seeds of its own subversion. For Cellini expresses his discontent with Duke Cosimo and registers his refusal to play by the conventions of court culture that the work aspired to emulate.<sup>143</sup> He notes, “I had the greatest wish to oblige my lord as his affectionate and faithful servant, but ... I did not understand the arts of flattery.”<sup>144</sup>

It is clear that Cellini’s autobiography is an extremely complex literary construction in which the effects of characters and events on the course of his life and career were carefully thought out.<sup>145</sup> Evidence suggests that Cellini made numerous corrections and deletions to his manuscript concerning materials critical of Duke Cosimo.<sup>146</sup> What is more, the autograph text shows evidence of strikeouts and marginal corrections by an unknown hand. This intervention was nonetheless embraced in the published version of 1728.<sup>147</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that what remains of rancor and criticism in the published version of the autobiography provides evidence of the oppositional limit that the artist himself and an outside observer believed the ducal authority would tolerate. It is precisely within this limit that I seek to explore the inner dynamic of the relationship between Duke Cosimo and Cellini as it appears in the artist’s autobiography. In addition, since my interest is particularly how the politically weak deal with the strong, it is all the more helpful that those workings were envisioned by the artist after an extensive self-reflection. Finally, considering the complexity of Cellini’s narrative, it appears possible and necessary to explore the symbolic possibilities of events and exchanges described in the autobiography, just as one would do when analyzing a mannerist work of art. It now remains to be shown just how Cellini registered his oppositional discourse in the autobiography. Two sculptural commissions, the Perseus and the Neptune fountain, have been chosen as the subjects of this chapter. They are the major episodes of the second part of Cellini’s autobiography that exclusively deals with the theme of the artist at court.<sup>148</sup>

The episode of the Perseus commission is one of the most vigorously

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<sup>143</sup> For examples of Cellini’s dissidence and criticism of Cosimo in his autobiography, see Margaret A. Gallucci, “Cellini’s Trial for Sodomy,” in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 43-45. It is, however, necessary to acknowledge that Cellini also allied himself with the Medici, explaining in detail how even his father and brother worked for the family in his autobiography. For Cellini’s description of the relationship between his father and Lorenzo ‘il Magnifico,’ see Cellini, *Autobiography*, 11-12.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>145</sup> Rossi, “Sprezzatura,” 57.

<sup>146</sup> John Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 281.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-59; Gallucci, “Cellini’s Trial,” 44.

<sup>148</sup> Rossi, “Sprezzatura,” 68.

studied events in the life of Cellini. Scholars have already identified a number of examples of subversion in the episode as described in the artist's autobiography. In particular, Cellini reverses the patron-client relationship with Cosimo into one of "master and student" and appears critical of the Duke's artistic tastes in his account.<sup>149</sup> This chapter elaborates further upon the literary subversion recorded in Cellini's autobiography by exploring how in spite of the ducal displeasure, Cellini created in his *Perseus*, through subtle mythic reference, a network of meanings that served as channels for his artistic ambition.

The requirements of Cosimo's commission – its subject (Perseus), the medium (bronze) and the location (the Loggia dei Lanzi) – all had political significance. The Perseus legend had a clear resonance with Cosimo's career. Just as Perseus slew the Gorgon, rescued Andromeda from a monster and brought peace to the people of Ethiopia, Cosimo could be seen as having rescued Florence from partisanship in the previous republican period and pacified the city.<sup>150</sup> Bronze was an appropriate medium for Cosimo, for, as one of his courtiers noted, the Duke had a particular interest and knowledge in the study of metals.<sup>151</sup> The location where the statue was to be displayed, beneath the left-hand arch of the Loggia dei Lanzi, bore a more direct political connotation. Set in that frame, it elicited comparison with Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes* which stood under the right-hand arch of the Loggia (Figure 10). Initially a Medici commission displayed in the Medici palace garden, the republican government had confiscated Donatello's statue after the family went into exile in 1494.<sup>152</sup> Through this juxtaposition, Cosimo sought to soften the republican allegory invested in Donatello's legendary statue and propagate a new vision of Florence under his rule. The *Perseus* was therefore intended as a statue emblematic not only of Cosimo's virtues, but also of the first achievements of his reign.

In creating the commission, Cosimo would probably have known of the disastrous reception accorded an earlier commission of a Medici duke: Baccio Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* commissioned by Medici Duke Alessandro

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<sup>149</sup> Gallucci, "Cellini's Trial," 43.

<sup>150</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 174. For the Perseus legend, see Apollodorus, *The Library of Greek Mythology*, trans. Robin Hard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 65-66; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), 100-114. It is also worth pointing out that the previous Medici duke Alessandro had already utilized Perseus within his personal iconography and Cosimo may well have appropriated the theme for himself. One of Alessandro's medals depicted the Perseus legend in the reverse. See Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 168.

<sup>151</sup> Michael Cole, *Cellini and the Principles of Sculpture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 60.

<sup>152</sup> The republic added an inscription on the base that runs "EXEMPLVM · SAL · PVB · CIVES · POS · MCCCCXCV ·" – "the *cives* now erect a monument of their own to the *salus publica*." For the inscription and its translation, see H. W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello*, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 198, 200n.

(Figure 11).<sup>153</sup> By the early sixteenth century, unveiling of a sculptural commission in the Piazza della Signoria was a distinctively public spectacle that garnered a spontaneous critical reaction from the Florentines, usually expressed in sonnets. The sonnets posted onto the *Hercules* were predominantly negative. They not only criticized its artistic failure, but also elicited anti-Medicean political meanings from the imagery. So severe were the political criticisms that some of the sonneteers were imprisoned.<sup>154</sup> Cosimo would have been determined to prevent a similar response to his first major sculptural commission for the Piazza.

Given its significance, the making of *Perseus* for the Piazza della Signoria would have been a difficult task for any artist. Cellini, however, jumped at the commission. Having worked for many years away from Florence, Cellini desperately desired to establish himself as a sculptor in the fiercely competitive atmosphere of the city. *Perseus*, if Cellini could succeed, was an ideal opportunity to display his sculptural skills, set in competition with the likes of Donatello and Michelangelo whose works were located in the Piazza della Signoria, “*il principale e universale bellissimo sito*” – “principally and universally the most beautiful site.”<sup>155</sup> When the Duchess Eleonora urged Cellini to work as a goldsmith for her, he replied, according to his account in his autobiography:

[E]verybody, nay, all Italy knew well I was an excellent goldsmith; but Italy had not yet seen what I could do in sculpture ... Now I hope to show them that I am *an old sculptor*, if God shall grant me the boon of finishing my *Perseus* for that noble piazza of his most illustrious Excellency.<sup>156</sup>

His peer sculptors, who were present, laughed at Cellini’s response and called him a “new sculptor.”<sup>157</sup>

Contemporary evidence suggests that Cellini transgressed the limits of Cosimo’s initial plan for the sculpture.<sup>158</sup> His inventions include the whole body of Medusa beneath the statue’s feet, a marble base with the statuettes of Jupiter, Minerva, Mercury, Danaë and the child Perseus, a relief of Perseus saving

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<sup>153</sup> John Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and The Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 53. Cellini, in the presence of the Duke and Bandinelli had also referred to the event and famously criticized Bandinelli’s *Hercules*. See Cellini, *Autobiography*, 340-342.

<sup>154</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 53.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. I have made the translation of the phrase.

<sup>156</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 336 (emphasis mine).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>158</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 169: When Cellini reported that Cosimo had desired ‘solo un Perseo’, it seems to have meant something more specific than ‘a Perseus.’ He wrote in 1561 to Bartolomeo Concini, the ducal secretary, that the Duke at first envisioned a figure of Perseus “three *braccia* high, with the head of Medusa in hand, and nothing more.” Also see Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 60.

Andromeda, and above all Perseus' extraordinary stance that allows him to display the head of Medusa.<sup>159</sup>

It appears that Cellini designed each of these additions to Cosimo's original vision of *Perseus* specifically to demonstrate and glorify his artistic workmanship. The way in which Cellini managed without buttressing to have Perseus extend his arm to hold up Medusa's head while positioned in such a difficult stance on top of Medusa's twisted body was viewed as an outstanding achievement, which gave Cellini a crucial technological edge over Donatello and Michelangelo (Figure 12). Unlike Cellini's *Perseus*, Donatello's bronze *David*, which had stood in the courtyard of the adjacent Palazzo Vecchio, needed to be buttressed by the wing of Goliath's helmet (Figure 13).<sup>160</sup> Cellini's design also allowed him to overcome the most visible technical difficulty of marble figural sculpture, that of extending a limb far from the trunk of the body holding something in its hand without letting the limb break.<sup>161</sup> Not even Michelangelo in his marble statue of *David* could raise a decapitated head as Cellini's *Perseus* did.

A comparison with the initial wax model for *Perseus* shows that Cellini also seems to have added to the bronze statue the thick spirals of blood (Figure 14).<sup>162</sup> Michael Cole suggests that such a design sought to instigate and amplify the effect of the Medusa topos.<sup>163</sup> The topos was a conventional expression of sculptural criticism in Cellini's time. It referred to the petrifying effect of Medusa's treacherous beauty and imagined that just as those who saw Medusa were turned into stone, a beholder of a statue could become marble-like before it, struck by its beauty.<sup>164</sup> In the case of Cellini's *Perseus*, the raised head of Medusa and the spirals of blood dropping from her head set to enact literally the topos.<sup>165</sup> For such a design, it was all the more relevant that the topos derived from the Perseus myth.<sup>166</sup>

The addition of blood to Medusa's head, together with other modifications to the original design of the Perseus, had further mythic implications. Cole cleverly interprets the addition of blood as setting up a correlation between molten bronze and blood, creating the effect of Cellini's

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<sup>159</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 169.

<sup>160</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Cellini's *Perseus* and Donatello's *David*, see Shearman, *Only Connect*, 50, 53-54.

<sup>161</sup> For a more discussion of this particular aspect of design, see Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 49-50.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>164</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 48. For a Petrarchan interpretation of the Medusa Topos, see Deborah Parker, *Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 90. Most famously the topos had appeared in a celebrated exchange of poems on *La Notte* in the Medici chapel between Giovanni Battista Strozzi and Michelangelo. For the exchanges between Giovanni Battista Strozzi and Michelangelo, see Shearman, *Only Connect*, 48.

<sup>165</sup> Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 69.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

having breathed life into the statue.<sup>167</sup> Sixteenth-century metallurgists attributed the liquid quality of metals to spirit, sentiment or passion.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, metals could be animated through liquefaction. The association of metal, liquidity and spirit is central to the decisive episode of Cellini's autobiography, his heroic casting and animation of *Perseus*.<sup>169</sup> Cellini's act of vivification could then be compared to that of the classical god Jupiter.<sup>170</sup> In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Jupiter oversaw the recreation of humanity by Deucalion and Phyrre following a flood that had wiped out the human race.<sup>171</sup> They threw stones behind them and "the earthly portion, damp with some moisture, turned to flesh, the solid was bone, the veins were as they always had been."<sup>172</sup> Cellini casts *Perseus* in a similar manner, pouring liquid metal, the fictive blood, into the mold of clay and brought the statue to life.<sup>173</sup> Perhaps then, the statuette of Jupiter in the base of *Perseus*, the only sculpture of the god by Cellini on public display in Florence, was placed there not merely as the father of the mythic hero but as a reference to the artist himself (Figure 15).<sup>174</sup>

The marble base itself and its statuettes further intensified the vivification of *Perseus* by invoking the popular Pygmalion topos.<sup>175</sup> Pygmalion was a legendary sculptor who fell in love with his beautiful female ivory statue and made offerings to Venus, who in turn gave life to the statue. In the Renaissance, the topos was frequently employed to celebrate a sculptor's workmanship. In case of Cellini's *Perseus*, the base appears as an altar for the artist and his own vivification of *Perseus*, with the decapitated Medusa head

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 50: The sixteenth-century neo-Aristotelian metallurgists of Italy claimed that according to Aristotle, the material of metals was not mere water, but rather "a water found in some sentiment and passion."

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>169</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 352. In this extravagant account at a critical moment when the molten metal had unexpectedly solidified, he revives the lifeless bronze and breathes spirit into his *Perseus*. As the bronze liquefied, his assistants celebrate his resuscitation of the statue. Liquid metal would therefore function as the fictive blood that Cellini poured into the statue. For a more extensive discussion of this account, see Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 67.

<sup>170</sup> For a more extensive the analogy between Cellini and Jupiter in *Perseus*, see *ibid.*, 50-53.

<sup>171</sup> It should be noted that art historians genuinely assume that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was a main guiding text for Cellini and therefore, use the book for identifying the meanings of *Perseus*. See Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 174.

<sup>172</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.

<sup>173</sup> Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 68: One of the sonnets dedicated to Cellini's *Perseus* does compare Cellini's creation of *Perseus* with the act of Deucalion and Phyrre. See Shearman, *Only Connect*, 57: "[The sonnet describes] *Perseus and Medusa* now, the one by his human beauty, the other by her poisonous mask, turn men back into stones, reversing the creation myth of Deucalion and Phyrre; thus, not only is Hercules made to look stupid, and David disdainful, but also the nearby beautiful Judith stands amazed, ..."

<sup>174</sup> Some of Cellini's poems do make explicit analogy between the act of bronze-maker to and that of God who "made the first man of earth, then lit him with his immortal spirit, living and holy." But also in one poem, Cellini claimed that Jove, "the great maker," gave spark to him, and then named him Benvenuto, just as he had done with Adam. See Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 53.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 68. For the Pygmalion myth, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 241-243.

and its blood as his offerings to the gods (Figure 16).<sup>176</sup> Overall, the entire effect of the new design allowed Cellini to claim something only a caster of bronze statues could do: “he could explain just how he spirited his figures.”<sup>177</sup>

It needs to be pointed out that a significant number of unpleasant exchanges between Cellini and Duke Cosimo in Cellini’s autobiography are situated in the context of the artist’s deliberate extension of the initial ducal plan. Cellini describes that even after having seen his waxen model for the statue, the Duke wondered if the figure could actually be cast in bronze and the head of Medusa “stand so high up there in the grasp of Perseus.”<sup>178</sup> In short, Cosimo believed “the laws of art do not admit of it.”<sup>179</sup> In a manner in which a master might teach a student, Cellini eloquently justified his design, frequently using technical terms. Heated debate ensued, after which, unable to put a brake on Cellini’s determination, the Duke shook his head and departed from the artist’s workshop.<sup>180</sup> An incident involving Duchess Eleonora of Toledo and Cellini is also worth noting. Having seen the statuettes on the base of the *Perseus*, Eleonora insisted upon displaying “those exquisite figures” in one of her apartments and indeed carried them away.<sup>181</sup> In desperation, Cellini went to the palace while the Duke and Duchess were absent, and seized back his statuettes.<sup>182</sup> Eleonora was so incensed that she refused Cellini further access to the palace. The event demonstrates that the statue and its base were inseparably linked in the artist’s design. That Cellini risked losing the favor of Duchess speaks volumes for how important it was for him to fully realize his grand scheme for the statue. In short, for Cellini, his artistic ambition took priority over an opportunity to cement ducal favor; or so his autobiography contends. On the other hand, one might note that neither Eleonora nor Cosimo seems to have punished the artist for his behavior, though they could easily have confiscated the statuettes, if they so desired. The event thus seems to testify to the degree of artistic freedom that ducal authority could allow.

Cosimo’s anxiety over the success of the statue is understood as his caution against the notorious critical failure of Bandinelli’s *Hercules and Cacus*. In fact so concerned was the Duke with the reaction of the Florentines that he tried to force Cellini briefly but publicly to unveil the sculpture before the artist was ready:

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<sup>176</sup> Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 68.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 50. One might note that the statuettes of Mercury, Pallas and Jove were central figures to Perseus’ adventure to whom the hero himself dedicated an altar for each. For Cole’s discussion of the relationship between the base and the altar of *Perseus*, see *ibid.*, 68. For the reference to Perseus’ offering to the gods see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 104.

<sup>178</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 346.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 368: “those exquisite figures” was how Eleonora referred to the statuettes according to Cellini.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

When the Duke was informed that the whole of my work for the Perseus could be exhibited as finished, he came one day to look at it. ... [He] said: “Although this statue seems in our eyes a very fine piece, still it has yet to win the favour of the people. Therefore, my Benvenuto, before you put the very last touches on, I should like you, for my sake to remove a part of the scaffolding on the side of the piazza, ... in order that we may learn what folk think of it. ...”<sup>183</sup>

Upon Cellini’s protest, the Duke “smiled ironically” and replied with “great kindness,” “Do what I ask, my Benvenuto, just to please me.”<sup>184</sup> On the day of formal unveiling of the *Perseus*, Cosimo in fact stationed himself at a window low upon the first floor of the palace, just above the entrance, “half-hidden, he heard everything the folk were saying” of the statue.<sup>185</sup> Thus, while Duke Cosimo allowed Cellini to develop his self-aggrandizing designs for the statue, he insisted on his right to ensure its favorable reception. In short, as Cellini once cynically called his patron, Duke Cosimo was “a connoisseur like a prince, not like an artist.”<sup>186</sup>

Fortunately, when *Perseus* was unveiled in April 1554, both the artist and the Duke were pleased. The Florentine audience, who, in the words of Giorgio Vasari, “spend most of their time and energy hanging around the shops, busy with nothing other than speaking ill of the work of others,” were unanimous in celebration of the statue.<sup>187</sup> Their opinion was expressed in a similar manner to that of Bandinelli’s *Hercules*. Again sonnets were attached to Cellini’s *Perseus*, but this time they were eulogies.<sup>188</sup> These eulogies were channeled by a similar mythic reference that guided Cellini’s account of the production of *Perseus*. As John Shearman has vividly described, the learned readers of Cellini’s *Perseus* cleverly identified with the Medusa topos, claiming that the beauty of *Perseus* and Medusa made the spectator become marble before it.<sup>189</sup> And according to this conceit, the existing sculptures at the Piazza, oriented so that the figures appear to be looking toward Medusa, also became marble (Figure 17).<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>185</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 371.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>187</sup> Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries 1527-1800: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 73. Vincenzo Borghini described the Florentines as having “buon occhio e cattiva lingua”, “a good eye and an evil tongue” (my translation). For this passage, see Shearman, *Only Connect*, 44.

<sup>188</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 371.

<sup>189</sup> Shearman, *Only Connect*, 55.

<sup>190</sup> For example, in a Latin epigram, *Perseus* actually comes alive and expounds that just as once Jupiter ordained that whoever beheld the Gorgon would become stone, so now Cellini, godlike, has given the statue the same power, as it turned whoever looks at him to marble. Benedetto Varchi’s sonnet describes how Michelangelo’s *David* and Donatello’s *Judith* appear delighted to have such a worthy neighbor. Baccio Bandinelli’s *Hercules and Cacus*, on the

It may appear that Cosimo's original intention was lost in these exchanges. The sonnets scarcely addressed how the statue might invoke Cosimo's intended meanings for the statue.<sup>191</sup> However, Shearman observes that the strategy of Cosimo was above all to neutralize the encoded political message of existing sculptures in the Piazza. The ducal commissions were intended to shift the readings of the republican sculpture until it became "little more and little less than a sculptural masterpiece, an emblem of the city's cultural preeminence," or in the language of one of the sonnets, a work that "ornaments Cosimo's realm."<sup>192</sup> Therefore, the Duke would particularly have been satisfied with the reference to the petrifying effect of *Perseus* upon Michelangelo's *David* and Bandinelli's *Hercules*, as well as Cellini's triumph over Donatello in the sonnets, as it signaled the transformation of the Piazza into a site of aesthetic competition. The reception of *Perseus*, in short, introduced a fictional realm to the Piazza where Cellini's vision for the statue and the political aims of Cosimo could be successfully mediated by the audience's almost mythic reading of the work.

Given the paramount success of the *Perseus*, one might expect that Cellini's career as a sculptor took off at this point. In the following decades, however, Cellini led an uneasy life. One reason for this was Cosimo's tardiness in making payments for the *Perseus*.<sup>193</sup> More serious were Cellini's own actions: in 1556 he killed a fellow goldsmith after a bitter dispute, and in the next year he was accused of sodomy. For both crimes he was imprisoned and was only released through a ducal grant.<sup>194</sup> At an artistic level, his fellow sculptors in Florence, led by Baccio Bandinelli, remained critical of his sculptural skill.<sup>195</sup> Cellini confessed that because he no longer received ducal commissions, he was compelled to devote to writing.<sup>196</sup> It must have seemed to Cellini that in order to regain and consolidate his reputation as an artist in

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other hand, seemed struck dumb. Antonio Allegretti's sonnet "plays with the conceit that the mythical power of the dead Medusa is transferred through the sculptor's art to the effigy, which now transfixes whoever looks at her, including Hercules among these..." See *ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>191</sup> One of the sonnets, however, does relate the petrifying effect of *Perseus* to Cosimo's regime. See *ibid.*, 57: "Once the snaky Medusa head could turn men to flint, and now Cellini, imitating the gods, ornaments Cosimo's realm with such art that those who look at the statue had better take care lest they, too, become stones."

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. The phrase "ornaments Cosimo's realm" is taken from the sonnet that I have cited in footnote 55 of this chapter.

<sup>193</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 372: Cosimo had promised that he would "reward him [Cellini] in a way which will astonish him". For the dispute over the payment of the *Perseus*, See *ibid.*, 372, 379, 380, 382-383.

<sup>194</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 253. For the sodomy trial, see Gallucci, "Cellini's Trial," 37-46.

<sup>195</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 372. In Cellini's autobiography there are many examples of how the artist felt the jealousy and criticism of other Florentine artists. See *ibid.* 85, 274, 324, 336. Michael Cole also describes how Cellini, through his *Perseus*, struggled in an atmosphere where bronze was considered inferior to marble. For a more extensive discussion of the debate surrounding the primacy of the media (bronze and marble) and the competition between Cellini and other Florentine sculptors, see Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 79-117.

<sup>196</sup> Rossi, "Sprezzatura," 68.

Florence, another monumental commission was necessary.

The opportunity came in the largest and most significant ducal commission for the Piazza, the Neptune Fountain. A project for a large fountain in the Piazza had been conceived early in the 1550s, and Bandinelli, probably aided by Eleonora's favor, had been assigned the commission.<sup>197</sup> Upon the discovery of an extraordinarily large block of marble at Carrara in 1558, the fountain was designed to include a colossal statue made out of that marble.<sup>198</sup> Sculptors other than Bandinelli became interested in the commission, and the fiercely competitive Cellini seized the opportunity. "No envy prompted me to dispute his (Bandinelli's) claims," Cellini says in his autobiography, "but rather pity for that poor unfortunate piece of marble."<sup>199</sup> Indeed, it was important that the medium for the colossal statue be marble; for Cellini's rivals considered the sculptor incapable of handling a monumental marble sculpture in which Michelangelo excelled.<sup>200</sup> Cellini was therefore even more eager to win the commission and demonstrate his skills with marble.

The case of Cellini and the Neptune is somewhat less studied than the episode of *Perseus*, usually brushed aside as an epilogue to his declining career.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, in his autobiography Cellini reported in detail how he had tried rigorously to claim the commission for himself, insistently negotiating with Duke Cosimo. In the interest of this chapter, the exchanges between Cellini and the Duke described in the autobiography are fascinating in a number of ways. Because he did not receive the commission from the beginning, Cellini was unable to develop and mobilize a complex construct of meanings and techniques that had so empowered him while working on his *Perseus* and negotiating with the Duke over his artistic aspirations. Cellini had to engage successfully in courtly exchange in order to win the ducal support that he desperately needed for the commission. Cellini managed some intriguing rhetorical maneuvers in the exchanges and was not without success. But in a manner that confirms his hegemony, the Duke ultimately gave the commission to a sculptor who he felt could bring the work to successful completion, though as Cellini and later scholars have maintained at the expense of aesthetic quality.<sup>202</sup>

When the block of marble from Carrara arrived, Cellini proceeded to inspect it, and then paid a visit to the Duke and the Duchess who were at Poggio a Caiano. Cellini's aim was to convince them to hold an open

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<sup>197</sup> Virginia L. Bush, *Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento from Michelangelo to Giovanni Bologna* (New York: Garland, 1976), 143.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 146. The marble was brought to Florence two years later.

<sup>199</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 384.

<sup>200</sup> Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 80-81.

<sup>201</sup> In particular, this is the manner in which the Neptune commission is treated in John Pope-Hennessy's influential biography of the artist, *Cellini*. See Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 271-273.

<sup>202</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 148-149.

competition for the commission. The conversation that took place at this meeting, as described in Cellini's autobiography, is remarkably rich in terms of the artist's rhetorical strategies and their meanings. It is perhaps not unlike the kind of courtly exchanges characterized by dissimulation in Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. Set in the Montefeltro court of Urbino, Castiglione valued the skillful veiling of intention through allusion, subversion in dialogues, and use of imagery with multiple meanings.<sup>203</sup> In a no less courtly environment in Medicean Florence, Cellini's words indeed seemed replete with hidden references and meanings that would still have been legible to his patrons.

Only after gradually introducing the subject of the Neptune commission did Cellini remark that Cosimo's Medici ancestors "had brought the magnificent school for Florence to such a pitch of excellence only by stimulating competition among artists in their several branches."<sup>204</sup> The rhetoric here likely referred to the ways in which Duke Cosimo had rigorously aligned himself with the Medici *illustri* and aspired to repeat the cultural golden age of his ancestors, as was already apparent in the decorations for his 1539 marriage. Cellini argued that facilitating competition among artists was one of the reasons the early Medici had succeeded in bringing the Florentine visual arts to "such a pitch of excellence."<sup>205</sup> According to Cellini, Duchess Eleonora reacted violently. She "observed that she very well knew" what he meant and bade him never to mention "that block of marble in her presence," apparently because she was determined to give the commission to Bandinelli. Even as Cellini disingenuously argued that the competition would encourage Bandinelli to perform better, the Duchess asked Cosimo to confirm that Bandinelli should have the commission. Cosimo duly concurred with his wife. In response, Cellini told Cosimo:

You will remember, my lord, that the marble which Bandinello used for his Hercules and Cacus ... I believe that more than a thousand sonnets were put up in abuse of that detestable performance; and I know that your most illustrious Excellency remembers the fact very well. ... Arrange, my lord, that every one who likes shall make a model; ... in this way, finally, you will not throw away your money, ...<sup>206</sup>

Cellini was obviously referring to the embarrassing reception of Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*. Cosimo needed to be reminded of how that failed

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<sup>203</sup> JoAnn Cavallo, "Joking Matters: Politics and Dissimulation in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 53 (Summer 2000): 422.

<sup>204</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 384.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 384: "I then proceeded to remark that their ancestors had brought the magnificent school of Florence to such a pitch of excellence only by stimulating competition among artists in their several branches."

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

commission offered a rallying point for opinions against the Medici dukedom, an outcome he had precisely tried to avoid in commissioning *Perseus*. The rhetoric had an immediate effect on Duke Cosimo. He advised Cellini to make a model, “for what you say is the truth, and I acknowledge it.”<sup>207</sup>

The subsequent actions of Cellini are no less interesting. “Burning with eagerness,” Cellini worked on two little models of the statue, one of which impressed Cosimo greatly.<sup>208</sup> Cellini then privately visited the Duchess and offered her a marble Crucifix that he had worked on. He “would not sell it for two thousand golden ducats” but would present it to the Duchess in exchange for her favor. “All I ask,” he said, “is that your Excellency will not use your influence either against or for the models which the Duke has ordered to be made.”<sup>209</sup> The sculpture he offered here is the same famous marble Crucifix that John Pope-Hennessy calls “Cellini’s greatest work” (Figure 18).<sup>210</sup> It was a very personal and religious work that Cellini had begun after he had a vision while imprisoned in the Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome in 1539.<sup>211</sup> Cellini was deliberately redeploing such a spiritual work in order to negotiate with the Duchess for a major public commission that he desperately desired for himself. The reaction of Eleonora is equally intriguing. She replied with “mighty indignation,” “So then you value neither my help nor my opposition?”<sup>212</sup> It is uncertain whether she was angry because Cellini did not value her role as a judge or because he did not seek her active endorsement.<sup>213</sup> As he quickly insisted, he might well have presented it as a sign of his respect for the Duchess’ authority. Nevertheless, what seems clear is that she probably reacted to the ambiguous intention of Cellini’s offering, not unlike the vague and concealed speeches that enabled Castiglione’s courtiers to “reprehend something without seeming to mean to do so.”<sup>214</sup> At the end of the conversation, Eleonora was in a “half-angry mood.”<sup>215</sup>

Cellini used a similar rhetorical strategy of ambiguity when Cosimo came with the ambassadors from Ferrara and Lucca to inspect his finished model for the Neptune. When he was complimented, Cellini advised the Duke

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<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>210</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 255.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>212</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 387.

<sup>213</sup> Cellini seems to have been very keen to maintain Eleonora’s favor and frequently offered small objects he made as gifts. However, he became entangled in a very complicated situation when the Duchess asked Cellini to appraise a necklace at a higher value than Cellini believed in order to convince Cosimo to purchase it. For the account of the incident, see *ibid.*, 359-363: He lamented that he lost Eleonora’s favor “[o]nce and for ever.”

<sup>214</sup> Cavallo, “Joking Matters,” 419. Also see Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 172: “Well-turned metaphors are also very useful for humorous sarcasm as they are for serious praise, ...”; *ibid.*, 184: “Often, too, we use a word in which there is a hidden meaning quite remote from the one we seem to intend.”

<sup>215</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 387.

to hold a more formal competition where artists would present a clay model exactly of the same size as the marble would be:

... I may observe that if your Excellency does not give it to the sculptor who deserves it *this will not wrong the man so much, but will reflect great discredit upon yourself, since the loss and shame will fall on you.* On the other hand, if you award it to the one who has deserved it, you will acquire great glory in the first place, and will employ your treasure well, while artists will believe that you appreciate and understand their business.<sup>216</sup>

Cellini's eloquent words are cleverly double-edged. To expound the necessity for a competition even when the Duke had expressed satisfaction with his model is a telling evidence of what Cellini sought from the competition. He had told the Duchess that "I hope to win the palm, even against the great Michel Agnolo Buonarroti, from whom and from no one else I have learned all that I know."<sup>217</sup> A citywide competition would provide an appropriate setting for his victory, of which he had little doubt, but since only Cosimo had the authority to hold such a competition, he needed to persuade the Duke. Yet in doing so, the artist prescribed as a princely virtue an ability to choose the right artist for a commission. Failure to ensure aesthetic success of the commission would directly undermine the prince's reputation. Cellini is again probably referring to the failure of *Hercules* and the consequence it had for Duke Alessandro. It also illustrates Cellini's awareness of the inherent paradox in Cosimo's cultural politics. In order to realize his cultural agenda, he regularly needed services of competent artists, just as he did for his marriage entry. Cellini had already referred to this paradox when he had made a request for adequate financing for the *Perseus*. He had threatened the Duke that he would leave Florence again following the suits of Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci in the past, and "our incomparable Michel Angelo Buonarroti in the present."<sup>218</sup> Though irritated, the Duke responded, "Benvenuto... you shall lack for nothing."<sup>219</sup> In the present conversation, Cellini seems to have further indicated that good artistic taste on the ruler's part was a requisite for retaining capable artists. The point perhaps came across too clearly to a third person present at the conversation. The ambassador of Lucca apparently later said to the Duke: "Prince, this Benvenuto of yours is a terrible man!"<sup>220</sup> Cosimo nonetheless approved the competition for Neptune.

Historians have generally agreed with this account from Cellini's

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<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 387 (emphasis mine).

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 322-323. Also see Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 271. Michelangelo still did not return to Florence.

<sup>219</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 323.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

autobiography that he proposed and brought about the competition for the fountain commission. In fact, the competition, intensified by Bandinelli's death in 1560, took place in a highly visible manner throughout the dukedom. The likes of Bartolomeo Ammanati, Giambologna, Vincenzo Danti and Montosoli joined Cellini and worked on their colossal models in various places.<sup>221</sup> Cellini and Ammanati set up shop in spaces in the Loggia de' Lanzi by the Duke.<sup>222</sup> Cosimo, in the end, was only interested in the models of these two sculptors and eventually favored Ammanati over Cellini. Cellini could never quite overcome the impression among his fellow sculptors that he could sculpt well only in bronze or when executing small figures. Ammanati had a decisive advantage over his competitors because of his previous experiences with large-scale marble work, and therefore could guarantee a successful execution of the colossal statue that had already become too famous to allow for any failure.<sup>223</sup> It appears that even Michelangelo, who was in Rome, was kept informed of the competition. In a letter to the great artist, Leone Leoni reported how Cellini was "spitting fire through his eyes" and "flouting the Duke with his tongue."<sup>224</sup>

When the *Neptune fountain* was unveiled, the Florentines again registered their criticism, which was less than favorable (Figure 19). One popular verse sang "Ammanato, Ammanato / Che bel marvo hai rovinato!" – "Ammanati, Ammanati / what beautiful marble you have destroyed!"<sup>225</sup> While the *Neptune* was intended to function as an emblematic statue signifying Cosimo's naval enterprise, his pacifying achievement, and even his effort to increase the water supply of Florence, the Florentines simply nicknamed it "*il biancone*," "the big white thing" in the same manner that they called Michelangelo's *David* the *Gigante*.<sup>226</sup> Nonetheless, in the context of Cosimo's strategy for the Piazza della Signoria, the competition for the Neptune had further neutralizing effects in transforming the space as a site for Tuscan art and neutralizing historical memory of the place as the political center of the republican regime.

In a more nuanced understanding of Cellini's actions in the events of the Perseus and Neptune commissions, they have a surprising resonance with the kinds of oppositional practices and tactics in popular culture that I have introduced earlier. One might see Cellini's maneuvers in the light of how the politically weak in popular culture win small but meaningful victories over the strong by deploying "clever tricks" while articulating conflicts and alternately

<sup>221</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 389.

<sup>222</sup> A modern reader only needs to be reminded that the Loggia de' Lanzi was named so because Cosimo's bodyguards were stationed there.

<sup>223</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 147.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 148. Also see Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 273. Leone Leoni was a respectable sculptor and goldsmith in his own right.

<sup>225</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 149. I have translated the verse.

<sup>226</sup> For the reference of the *Neptune* as *il biancone* see *ibid.*, 149; Cole, *Cellini and the Principles*, 109.

legitimizing and displacing the superior political entity.<sup>227</sup> In case of Cellini's *Perseus*, a delicate layering of meanings operated with reference to classical antiquity that allowed for the artist's self-aggrandizement, but all the while articulated the Perseus theme that represented Duke Cosimo's propagandistic aims. The sculpture also negotiated the historical memory of the negative reception of Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus*. With the success of Cellini's *Perseus*, Cosimo avoided the politically disastrous consequence of his predecessor.

It is also opportune to recall Michel de Certeau's discussion of how the Indians subverted the culture imposed by the Spanish colonizers by adopting it in a manner different from what the conquerors had intended.<sup>228</sup> In his autobiography, Cellini can be seen to have operated in such a way when he adapted the theme of the Medicean cultural golden age in Cosimo's propaganda, in order to make his case for the Neptune competition. He drew on the power of the Duke to seek an opportunity to demonstrate his talents in a monumental sculptural achievement.

Not unlike oppositional practices within modern society, Cellini's actions did not seek to overturn authority; rather his maneuvers aimed to accomplish what mattered to him the most, that is reputation as an artist comparable to Michelangelo.<sup>229</sup> And he did achieve certain victories. He won an enduring fame among his contemporaries for his *Perseus* that is now considered one of the greatest sculptural achievements in the Italian Cinquecento. Though he did not win the Neptune commission, Cellini at least managed to bring about a competition that one scholar has referred to as "one of the most intricate and important episodes in the history of colossal sculpture in the Cinquecento."<sup>230</sup>

The episodes of the *Perseus* and the Neptune competition also clearly illustrate the complex workings of Medicean hegemony under Cosimo. It is the new reality of European court culture where artists were perceived as valuable but socially inferior subjects whose position at court was ambiguous. King Francis I once told Cellini: "... you [Cellini] show your greatness only through the opportunities we give you. Now you ought to be a little more submissive, not so arrogant and headstrong."<sup>231</sup> The quote suggests that hegemony of the royal patron over the courtier-artist was established through complex negotiations that acknowledge, but at the same time channel and instrumentalize the agency of an artist. The inner workings of the reciprocal but nevertheless asymmetrical relationship between Duke Cosimo and Cellini appear not entirely

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<sup>227</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xvii.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>229</sup> Ross Chambers, *Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 9.

<sup>230</sup> Bush, *Colossal Sculpture*, 142.

<sup>231</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 305.

different.

### Chapter 3: “Under the auspices and with the help of Duke Cosimo de’ Medici”: The *Accademia del Disegno*’s Decorative Program for Michelangelo’s Funeral in 1564

Michelangelo died in Rome on February 18, 1564. A sumptuous funeral was conceived almost immediately. Only three days after the artist’s death, Vincenzo Borghini, the lieutenant of the *Accademia del Disegno*, the institution of artists that had just been established in 1563, suggested to Giorgio Vasari that “an imposing funeral service” be undertaken to honor the artist.<sup>232</sup> Borghini and Vasari worked rigorously to transport Michelangelo’s body to Florence, organize the funeral, solicit ducal support and mobilize a group of eager young artists to make the funeral decorations. The funeral the *Accademia* staged on July 14, 1564 in the overcrowded church of San Lorenzo is considered by some scholars to have been the most magnificent ceremony in the history of events associated with this church, only matched by the obsequies held for Duke Cosimo I de’ Medici ten years later.<sup>233</sup>

The decorative program for Michelangelo’s funeral has been described as a “monotonous repetition of stereotyped conceits” in exaltation of the artist and as “the apotheosis of the Medici.”<sup>234</sup> This chapter reevaluates the intentions behind the funeral and suggests that there were certain contradictions in the aims that the decorations sought to achieve. It analyzes how the contradictions played out, and proposes that the *Accademia*’s decorative program for the funeral was abundant in symbolic possibilities and political implications more complex than is usually suggested. The imagery was polyvalent, offering multiple readings. While one available reading of the representations flattered the ruling regime, another celebrated artistic achievement as if it were equal to ducal greatness. In his political wisdom, Duke Cosimo tolerated some representational practices that were potentially destabilizing to his authority. This cultural and artistic independence appeared necessary in maintaining his

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<sup>232</sup> Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, “Introduction,” in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, ed., *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy’s Homage on His Death in 1564* (London: Phaidon, 1964), 11.

<sup>233</sup> Cristina Acidini Luchinat, “Michelangelo and the Medici,” in Cristina Acidini Luchinat *et al.*, *The Medici, Michelangelo, and the Art of Late Renaissance Florence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 9.

<sup>234</sup> The concept of “the apotheosis of the Medici” is used by the Wittkowers in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, “Appendix III,” in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, ed., *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy’s Homage on His Death in 1564* (London: Phaidon, 1964), 155. George Bull also deploys this concept in George Bull, *Michelangelo: a Biography* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 417.

hegemony, unless the Duke perceived it as a direct threat to his regime. In order to illustrate the point, the chapter highlights an incident in 1556 recently uncovered and elaborated upon by Domenico Zanrè, when members of a private academy, consisting of influential intellectuals of Florence, staged a mock funeral of a prominent member of the Medici court.<sup>235</sup>

In considering Michelangelo's funeral, this chapter relies on the *Esequie del Divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti* published by Jacopo Giunti's booklet in 1564, translated by Rudolf and Margot Wittkower in *The Divine Michelangelo: the Florentine Academy's Homage on his Death in 1564*, which also provides perhaps the most in-depth analysis of the funeral decorations.<sup>236</sup> The *Esequie* seems to have been written on the day of the funeral and published before the funeral decorations were removed in August.<sup>237</sup>

Since the funeral *apparati* were predominantly ephemeral, they no longer exist. Therefore, Giunti's booklet remains the most reliable primary source for envisioning the funeral decorations.<sup>238</sup> Giunti was a member of the famous printers' family in Florence to whom Vasari would entrust publication of the second edition of his *Vite*. The Wittkowers suggest that Borghini and Vasari, who were likely responsible for the visual program and the iconography of the funeral decorations, must have been deeply involved in the process of conceiving, writing and publishing the project.<sup>239</sup> Therefore, the booklet seems to reflect what the *Accademia* desired to achieve in visual representations for Michelangelo's funeral, while at the same time serving the interests of the Medici dukedom. An anonymous and undated letter by a Florentine who was present at Michelangelo's funeral has survived and is published in the Wittkowers' book. The writer demonstrates a genuine effort to comprehend the allegorical meanings of each decorative scheme and also an attempt to

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<sup>235</sup> See Domenico Zanrè, "Ritual and Parody in Mid-Cinquecento Florence: Cosimo de' Medici and the Accademia del Piano," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 189-205.

<sup>236</sup> Jacopo Giunti, *Esequie del Divino Michelagnolo Buonarroti* (Firenze: Giunti, 1564), as translated and reproduced in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, ed., *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy's Homage on His Death in 1564* (London: Phaidon, 1964), 49-133. The passage in the title of this chapter ("Under the auspices and with the help of Duke Cosimo de' Medici") is quoted from the epitaph that was placed on the catafalque in Michelangelo's funeral, as recorded in Giunti, *Esequie*, 94.

<sup>237</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 31.

<sup>238</sup> However, copies after the paintings have survived and the Wittkowers have published them in their book. For the nature of these drawings and their documentary value, see Wittkower and Wittkower, "Appendix III," 162. I have included some of these drawings in the Figures where appropriate. Also out of the nine biographical paintings that had appeared in the funeral decorations, six scenes recur in the pictorial cycle for the Gallery of the Casa Buonarroti in Florence, completed in 1620. The Wittkowers discuss the cycle in detail. See *ibid.*, 164. I have included relevant paintings in the Figures to help the readers to imagine what the original paintings would have looked like.

<sup>239</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 34. The Wittkowers note that the account of the funeral in Vasari's *Life of Michelangelo* in the 1568 version even appears to be an edited and revised version of Giunti's account. See *ibid.*, 32.

appreciate the works of different media in relation to one another. He was in fact quite successful in identifying the figures in the paintings and sculptures and in deciphering the intentions of the schemes that Giunti described, only failing with a Latin inscription: “I was not able to know how to interpret it or to find someone who could have explained it to me.”<sup>240</sup> Therefore, it appears safe to assume that the funeral decorations operated within a visual register that an educated or well-informed Florentine would have been able to understand.

The funeral decorations consisted of a complex network of literary and artistic works produced by eminent literary figures and young artists who were invited to participate and voluntarily contributed their works without pay.<sup>241</sup> In the central nave of San Lorenzo a catafalque was erected, decorated with ephemeral sculpture and paintings that illustrated the virtues of Michelangelo and events from his life (Figure 20). Among the statues placed on the catafalque were allegories of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, representing the three arts of design that Michelangelo practiced and that the *Accademia* unified in its chief discipline, *disegno*. On top of the catafalque was a figure of Fame blowing a three-horned trumpet, a further reference to the tripartite practices of the academicians. Poems commemorating Michelangelo’s genius and his illustrious life were laid upon the catafalque. Around the columns of the nave and all along the chapels black draperies were hung. On these more paintings of Michelangelo’s life were displayed along with symbols of death alternating with Michelangelo’s personal emblem of the three crowns, again referring to his excellence in painting, sculpture and architecture (Figure 21).

Historians and art historians have concluded that the *Accademia*’s decorative program for Michelangelo’s funeral was intended not only to honor Michelangelo, but to publicize the institution, to celebrate the new elevated status of the artist that Michelangelo had helped to secure and that the academicians aspired to perpetuate, and finally, to solicit ducal support for the institution.<sup>242</sup> These four agendas embedded within the decorative program were intricately related. Michelangelo’s monumental achievements in painting, sculpture, and architecture and the respect paid to Michelangelo by popes and secular rulers alike allowed the academicians to boast of a new type of artist that the *Accademia* sought to sponsor in Florence, regardless of their social or geographical origins. This new artist was independent from the guilds that

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<sup>240</sup> “Draft of an Anonymous and Undated Letter by a Florentine Present at the Ceremonies in S. Lorenzo, and Addressed to an Unnamed Friend,” in Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, ed., *The Divine Michelangelo: The Florentine Academy’s Homage on His Death in 1564* (London: Phaidon, 1964), 144-147. The passage of the letter is translation of “...non l’ho possuto nè saputo interpretare nè trovato chi me n’habbia dato lume.” See *ibid.*, 147. Professor Megan Holmes provided the translation of the entire letter.

<sup>241</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Introduction,” 22.

<sup>242</sup> For examples of how the funeral decorations have been discussed by scholars, see *ibid.*, 155; Bull, *Michelangelo*, 417; Karen-edis Barzman, *The Florentine Academy and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69.

organized production according to the materials with which the practitioners worked.<sup>243</sup> The new artist was judged according to his technical skill, formal style (*maniera*) and imaginative conceptualizations. He could also command the respect of popes and rulers. The *Accademia* publicized the idea that Michelangelo was the main inspiration for its establishment when, a year before his death, it elected him *primo Accademico e capo* of the *Accademia*. His funeral was an ideal opportunity to demonstrate how the institution championed the new type of artist that the deceased artist so vividly epitomized. Giunti begins his account by elaborating how the origins of the *Accademia* and outlining its admission policies in detail, as if to make clear that the *Accademia* was a protagonist in the event as much as the deceased artist was.<sup>244</sup> Giunti further reports that when the Florentines saw the academicians carrying Michelangelo's bier to Santa Croce, "Everywhere people discussed the great power of true excellence. Passing the assembled old men or groups of youths one heard it said: ... when all hope has passed that any benefit may be gained from a man, his genius is none the less loved and honoured for its own sake and for its intrinsic merit."<sup>245</sup>

In order to achieve the creative and functional independence they sought, the members of the *Accademia* needed to be released from the regulatory and juridical constraints of the traditional guild system.<sup>246</sup> The Duke had the necessary authority to facilitate their aim. Once the idea of founding an institution of artists was conceived, they had sought Cosimo's approval, electing him as the President of the institution so that the guild's influence would be reduced instantly. Yet the *Accademia* proved a source of the kind of strife that the Duke had been keen to avoid. Within a month of its inauguration in 1563, six members openly opposed the admission and election policy and submitted a complaint to Cosimo. The Duke was apparently displeased and concerned about the potential escalation of the conflict. His official reply followed:

His Excellency says to carry on with the work and not with words, and not to pay heed to so much babble and humbug, because that is the way not of getting things done, but *merely of spreading scandal*.<sup>247</sup>

Any further signs of discontentment within the institution could well have led to the loss of ducal support and left an unfavorable impression upon the public.

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<sup>243</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 42.

<sup>244</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 53-57.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>246</sup> For a study of the relationship between guilds, princely courts and artists in the late medieval and early modern court, see Martin Warnke, *The Court Artist. On the Ancestry of the Modern Artist*, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993)

<sup>247</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 19 (emphasis mine). For further discussion of this early incident see Barzman, *The Florentine Academy*, 35-39.

Therefore, the *Accademia* wished to prove itself to be a viable and useful organization that could serve the Medici dukedom through Michelangelo's funeral.

At this point, it should be noted that the *Accademia's* plan for the funeral decorations was only finalized after a bitter conflict among the leading academicians.<sup>248</sup> Benvenuto Cellini, selected as a member of the committee for Michelangelo's funeral alongside Vasari, Agnolo Bronzino and Bartolomeo Ammanati, had considered the church of San Lorenzo too great a space for the funeral and proposed a far less grand plan than that which Vasari and Borghini had envisioned.<sup>249</sup> Like Cellini, Ammanati proved so uncooperative and arrogant that Borghini complained, "if the cupola [of Santa Maria del Fiore] were a cap it would be too small for them [Ammanati and Cellini]." <sup>250</sup> Nonetheless, Giunti's detailed account of the preparations for the funeral makes no mention of the alternative proposals and the early discord they generated.<sup>251</sup>

While the motivations that gave rise to the final program for the funeral decorations discussed above are straightforward enough, when considering how they were realized in the decorative imagery, one finds a range of meanings complex in their potential for paradox and rich in their implications. First of all, in order to celebrate Michelangelo and to please the Duke simultaneously, the *Accademia* found it necessary to address the issue of Michelangelo's extended absence from Florence during his later years. After he left Florence in 1534, the artist would never return to the city despite Cosimo's repeated invitations. While Michelangelo's political orientation remains debatable, it appears that he expressed his republican sympathies through a variety of means.<sup>252</sup> Anton Francesco Doni published in 1552 an imagined dialogue between a native Florentine and a foreign tourist as a part of his book *I Marmi*. The two men stood in the Medici Chapel in San Lorenzo, admiring Michelangelo's famed sculptures and discussing Florentine affairs. The foreigner

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<sup>248</sup> For more discussions on the dispute among the artists while planning Michelangelo's funeral, see John Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 276-278; Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 19-21.

<sup>249</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 276: Cellini preferred the Laurentian library or the chapter house of San Lorenzo for the location. His proposal did not include a painted encomium of Michelangelo's life and was biased towards depicting Michelangelo as a sculptor. Ever competitive, Cellini also demanded that each committee member should submit his plan.

<sup>250</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 20-21: The Wittkowers discuss in some detail that the rivalry among the leading academicians was deeply rooted in the long-standing debate over the primacy of the different arts.

<sup>251</sup> Pope-Hennessy, *Cellini*, 277: Cellini's absence at the funeral was attributed to his illness, though it appears that Cellini was particularly discontent with the preferential position accorded to the allegory of Painting over that of Sculpture on the catafalque.

<sup>252</sup> For one of Michelangelo's sonnets that appears to have anti-Medicean connotations see Mary A. Watt, "Veni, sponsa. Love and Politics at the Wedding of Eleonora di Toledo," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 30-31. One might also take into account the artist's bust of Brutus, dated 1540, as potentially expressing his republican sympathies. See Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo IV: The Tomb of Julius II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 76, 132.

then asked the Florentine citizen about the absence of so many great Florentines, living and dead: “Where’s your Dante? Your Petrarch? How’s Boccaccio? ... Where [is] Michelangelo?”<sup>253</sup> For all the claims to the renewal of a cultural golden age that Duke Cosimo made in the visual imagery of his artistic patronage, Michelangelo’s absence left an enormous vacuum in Florentine cultural production under the Duke’s regime.<sup>254</sup>

While the *Accademia’s* effort in the context of Michelangelo’s funeral to propagate a harmonious relationship between the Medici Dukedom and Michelangelo has already been recognized by scholars, it is still worth noting just how the academicians sought to convince their audience of such a relationship in visual representation. One of the paintings hung in the chapels of San Lorenzo depicted a meeting between Duke Cosimo and Michelangelo (Figure 22). The Wittkowers find that the painting was a “propaganda device” to enlist ducal support, likening Cosimo to the rulers of antiquity who valued their artists.<sup>255</sup> However, Giunti’s account explains that the painting “represented in a beautiful and sweet manner” Michelangelo explaining to Cosimo his reason for his not returning to Florence in response to the Duke’s invitation. Perhaps to help the viewer’s understanding of the painting and imaginative relationship to it, the writer even described exactly what the conversation might have been like:

As your Excellency can see, said the good old man [Michelangelo], I am quite incapacitated by my great age; the air of Florence has always been adverse rather than otherwise to my constitution. Here I have lived most of my life; therefore I am more than certain that to leave Rome would take off my life a few years ...<sup>256</sup>

This explanation for Michelangelo’s absence from Florence had already been asserted earlier in the booklet, with Giunti claiming “that was the truth.”<sup>257</sup> It is a remarkable example of how the pictorial imagery, together with a written account or pamphlet, sought to inspire imaginative readings and direct memories. In 1564 this kind of funeral booklet was rare in Italy and the only precedents were those that were published after the funeral of Emperor Charles V in Piacenza (1558) and Bologna (1559).<sup>258</sup> The organizers of Michelangelo’s funeral not only recognized the propagandistic value of such a book, but they were also determined to maximize the effect of the funeral decorations while the event still remained fresh in the minds of those who attended it. The fact

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<sup>253</sup> Lisa Pon, “Michelangelo’s Lives: Sixteenth-Century Books by Vasari, Condivi, and Others,” *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 27 (Winter 1996): 1015.

<sup>254</sup> Barzman, *The Florentine Academy*, 144.

<sup>255</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Introduction,” 42-43.

<sup>256</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 118.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>258</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Introduction,” 33.

that such a publication was associated recently with imperial ceremonies would further add to the glorification of Michelangelo that the *Accademia* sought to achieve. Indeed the booklet would set the tone for a long series of funereal descriptions in the following years that employed the same formula of eulogizing the deceased and explaining the meanings of images in the funeral decorations.<sup>259</sup>

Another image that was likely intended to please Duke Cosimo and ratify his cultural politics was the painting of Lorenzo ‘il Magnifico’ receiving the young Michelangelo in the Medici sculpture garden at San Marco (Figure 23). The importance of the painting is already apparent in the fact that it took the privileged position on the catafalque, facing the nave of the church.<sup>260</sup> Giunti addressed the painting at length in his account of the funeral. He praised Lorenzo as “the splendour of Italy” and “benefactor of all *virtuosi*.”<sup>261</sup> Perhaps the most noteworthy of Giunti’s statements regarding the painting is that the garden of San Marco, the famous studio of Lorenzo for talented painters and sculptors that the *Accademia* had claimed as its prototype, was the single cause of Michelangelo’s greatness.<sup>262</sup> The Wittkowers suggest a line of thought implied by the painting: “[I]f Cosimo could be convinced of Lorenzo’s patronage he would wish to follow in his great ancestor’s footsteps. Then in addition the Academy, founded under Cosimo’s auspices, could be regarded as the splendid heir to Lorenzo’s informal ‘academic’ exemplar.”<sup>263</sup>

I agree with the Wittkowers’ observation that the effect of the painting’s rhetoric was ultimately to secure Cosimo’s support for the *Accademia*, but what they fail to address is that Cosimo had already declared himself the heir to the Laurentian golden age at his marriage ceremonies in 1539. The academicians in 1564 would have been well aware of how Cosimo considered the association with Lorenzo essential in his visual propaganda. For one, Bronzino, one of the four members of the funeral committee, had participated in the decorations for the marriage. Cellini, too, had engaged in a similar rhetorical strategy when he referred to the Medici ancestors’ sponsorship of artistic competition in order to propose a competition for the Neptune fountain.<sup>264</sup> The academicians, in planning Michelangelo’s funeral, used the image of the Medici *illustri*, a key image in Cosimo’s visual iconography, in their interests, perhaps holding Cosimo to his promise of revitalizing the Laurentian golden age. This is exactly how they solicited ducal support for

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<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>260</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Appendix III,” 148.

<sup>261</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 90.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 93. For how the *Accademia* considered Lorenzo’s garden as its precedent see Vasari’s *Life of Montorsoli* in Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, vol. 4, ed. William Gaunt (London: Dent, 1963), 51.

<sup>263</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Introduction,” 45.

<sup>264</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

arranging Michelangelo's funeral. On behalf of the academicians, Borghini wrote to Cosimo:

[B]y order of Lorenzo the Magnificent a statue was raised in the main church for Giotto, who had died so long ago, and a most beautiful marble tomb was erected for Fra Filippo; on many occasions he had had divers other things done both useful and most honourable and *all at his own cost*. Animated by these precedents I felt encouraged to recommend to Your Excellency the petition of this Academy to be permitted to honour the genius of Michelangelo, ...<sup>265</sup>

This letter is of particular significance because it was published in Giunti's account along with all the important correspondence between the *Accademia* and the Duke regarding arrangement of Michelangelo's funeral. Exaggerating Michelangelo's debt to Medici patronage and therefore flattering the current regime is one thing, but the letter also subtly manipulates Duke Cosimo, encouraging him to support the institution lest he betray his own image. The painting of Lorenzo receiving the young Michelangelo can thus be seen as an astutely calculated expression of self-promotion on the part of the *Accademia* as well as a blatant manipulation of Michelangelo's life to flatter the Duke.

The manner and visual language with which Michelangelo was celebrated in the funeral were characteristic of the encomiastic rhetoric usually applied to a pope, an emperor, or, in case of Florence, the Duke himself. This created a certain tension, whereby the visual representations illustrating the many faces of Michelangelo's genius (*ingenio*) competed with the *Accademia's* outright celebration of the Medici at the funeral.

The theme of the supremacy of artistic genius (*ingenio*) is clearly expressed in the fact that five of the eight paintings shown within the chapels of San Lorenzo during the funeral depicted scenes of Michelangelo's meetings with rulers, popes and nobles.<sup>266</sup> Giunti made the intentions of these paintings clear:

[G]enius evokes so much renown and respect that the nobility, people of high rank, titled and other great personages, who are favoured by Fortune are often obliged to bow before it. It was the intention of the academicians to relate in the stories ... that they showed only those which were deemed noteworthy for their profession, such as gaining fame, esteem, benevolence, honours and other similar distinctions from the princes of the Church as well as of the realm ...<sup>267</sup>

In terms of representing this theme, one particular motif stands out. In one of

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<sup>265</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 61 (emphasis mine).

<sup>266</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 42.

<sup>267</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 110.

the paintings for the chapels, Pope Julius III was shown receiving Michelangelo in such a manner, according to Giunti, that while they were conversing, the cardinals, bishops and other great courtiers “remained standing” (Figure 24).<sup>268</sup> This particular gesture of respect is traditional in the representation of a courtly environment where mere acts of sitting and standing instantly set up hierarchy.<sup>269</sup>

In a similar manner, one particular painting touches upon Medicean ducal authority. It depicts Francesco de’ Medici, the young son of Cosimo, encountering Michelangelo in his old age, standing up to offer his seat to the aged artist (Figure 25). Giunti noted in his description of the episode that in spite of Michelangelo’s protest, “the prince remained standing and listened to him with that attention and reverence which sons pay to a beloved father.”<sup>270</sup> The Wittkowers assert that the painting “clearly meant to show him [Francesco] as the worthy follower of his father’s example” and was a part of the *Accademia’s* propaganda in the funeral demonstrating that Medici patronage over generations had nurtured Michelangelo’s genius.<sup>271</sup> However, this interpretation is too occupied with the theme of the Medici apotheosis that the Wittkowers identify as an essential aim of the paintings concerning Michelangelo’s life.<sup>272</sup> It is just as possible to take a more literal reading of the painting and see in it a statement by the academicians that Michelangelo’s supreme accomplishments elevated him to a status within the arts analogous to that of a prince. Only a figure like Michelangelo allowed the academicians to raise the status of their profession to such a height, and the painting demonstrates a determination to capitalize on the opportunity and popularize the special position of their profession in the Medici dukedom. The Wittkowers note the painting’s prominent position, as the first painting the viewers of the funeral would have encountered in the recess of the first chapel on the left in the nave of San Lorenzo and argue that it was meant as a tribute to the young Prince who in fact became the Regent of the ducal state on May I, 1564 after his father nominally retired.<sup>273</sup> Michelangelo’s funeral, held just two month after Cosimo’s abdication was perhaps one of the earliest public events in which the transition of power was publicly expressed in representation.<sup>274</sup> It demonstrates a shrewd

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<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>269</sup> Andrea Mantegna’s depiction of the Mantuan court in the Camera Picta in the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua offers an example.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 113. The meeting was not entirely fictional and the Wittkowers document it in *ibid.*, 112~113n.

<sup>271</sup> See Wittkower and Wittkower, “Introduction,” 44.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 155. Recently George Bull’s biography of Michelangelo has also taken the view. See Bull, *Michelangelo*, 417.

<sup>273</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, “Appendix III,” 157.

<sup>274</sup> Here, in elaborating upon the Wittkowers’ thesis, I rely on Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell’s compilation of a list of important public events during Cosimo’s reign. See Andrew C. Minor and Bonner Mitchell, “Cosimo’s Reign,” in *A Renaissance Entertainment. Festivities for the Marriage of Cosimo I, Duke of Florence, in 1539*, ed. Andrew C. Minor and Bonner

judgment by the academicians to reflect the new political situation and seek favor from the new regent. The painting itself thus actively promoted the role that the academicians, as the successors of Michelangelo, could play on behalf of the ducal regime in attaining Tuscan cultural eminence.

The paintings placed on the catafalque mainly ascribe different aspects of Michelangelo's talents in painting, sculpture and architecture. Somewhat oddly from a political, if not an artistic perspective, there was also a painting that showed Michelangelo directing the fortifications of the hill of San Miniato during the siege of Florence in 1529 in defense of the Florentine Republic (Figure 26). Pope Clement VII had desired to restore Medici influence in Florence after the family had been thrown out of the city in 1527 and Emperor Charles V agreed to send his army to attack the city on the Pope's behalf. Michelangelo had been appointed head of fortifications of Florence by the brief Republican government and had worked vigorously for the defense of the city until it fell in 1530.

This painting was counter-balanced by another that depicted Michelangelo's meeting with Clement VII, in which, according to Giunti, Clement gave his pardon to Michelangelo, thus reducing the immediate anti-Medicean connotation of the painting of the fortification.<sup>275</sup> But why was an image of Michelangelo included that implied his republican and anti-Medicean action when the *Accademia* was soliciting ducal support? The Wittkowers justify the meanings of this problematic image by arguing that what Michelangelo achieved as an engineer in fortifying the city illustrated a new facet of his genius that could not be omitted from the program.<sup>276</sup> I argue that the *Accademia* may have included the image in order to suggest that their contribution to the ducal regime went beyond painting, sculpture and architecture.

Engineering, particularly military, had been an area in which artists could significantly contribute to a state away from the representational realm. An incident in Cellini's autobiography illustrates just how politically significant that particular aspect of artists' ability was perceived to be for the ruling regime. Just after Duke Cosimo became the ruler of the city, Cellini had briefly returned to Florence only to find that there was a rumor about his antagonism against the Duke: "some wicked scoundrel had told my lord the Duke that I [Cellini] had bragged I meant to be the first to *scale his*

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Mitchell (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), 90-92.

<sup>275</sup> The painting itself depicts Michelangelo showing Clement VII the model of the Medici Chapel. However, Giunti's reading of the painting follows that Michelangelo was called before the Pope after the siege of the Florence, "for it was generally believed that he had sided with the opposition party, " and Clement forgave him and commissioned the New Sacristy and the Library of San Lorenzo. In a manner similar to his reading of the painting of Michelangelo's meeting with the Duke, Giunti therefore stabilized the relationship between the Medici family and the deceased artist. See Giunti, *Esequie*, 93-94.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 95n.

*Excellency's walls*, and also that I had abused him personally.”<sup>277</sup> According to Cellini, it turned out that Vasari had spread the rumor but what is really noteworthy is that when making a political accusation against an artist, Vasari specifically highlighted the potential for the artist to contribute military engineering expertise to the regime’s enemy.

After all, Cosimo himself was eager to mobilize his artists in his campaign against Siena in the 1550s and the artists’ contributions to the campaign were acknowledged when they made appearance in the paintings for the Sala Grande of the Palazzo Vecchio (Figure 27). It is thus unnecessary to read the funeral painting of Michelangelo fortifying the hill of San Miniato as a statement against the regime; it also functioned as a powerful manifestation of how the *Accademia* could continue to contribute to support the regime. The kind of reconciliation between a republican past and a Medicean present was familiar within the political culture of Florence and involved other cultural figures associated with the Florentine public spectacles that we have been examining here. The Giunti family, for example, had been outspoken anti-Medici republicans. One of the writers who contributed a poem to the collection of funeral sonnets was Giovanbattista Strozzi, the very same writer who had also contributed poems to Duke Cosimo’s wedding in 1539 and had been a republican sympathizer. Because Cosimo had emphasized the continuity between the Florentine republic and the Medici dukedom in his visual propaganda in the early stage of his regime, by 1564, invoking the republican period was not entirely as problematic as it would seem in the first glance.

The sculptures that decorated the catafalque, like the paintings discussed above, configured the *Accademia*’s negotiation of its position with Duke Cosimo. At each corner of the catafalque was a group of sculptures that represented a victory of a virtue over vice: Genius subduing Ignorance, Christian Charity subduing Vice, Minerva-Art overcoming Envy and Study overcoming Idleness. The form of each sculptural group was basically the same where a figure of virtue stood with that of vice beneath its feet. As a *concetto*, its similarity to Michelangelo’s *Victory* is unmistakable (Figure 28). Whether the *Victory* was carved for the tomb of Pope Julius II or was a fundamentally private endeavor, as has been debated, the Wittkowers give too little emphasis to the significant implications of the similarity between the *Victory* and the sculptures for the funeral when they argued that such groups had already become “fashionable” and perhaps all the major sculptors had attempted variations of the conceit.<sup>278</sup>

Yet in order to fully appreciate and explore the symbolic possibilities of

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<sup>277</sup> Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, trans. John Addington Symonds (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., INC, 1927), 159 (emphasis mine).

<sup>278</sup> For the debate over the *Victory* see Edith Balas, “Michelangelo’s *Victory*: Its Role and Significance,” in *Michelangelo, selected scholarship in English*, ed. William E. Wallace, vol. 3 (Hamden, CT: Garland, 1995), 459-472. Also see Johannes Wilde, “Michelangelo’s ‘*Victory*,’” in *ibid.*, 437-458.

these funeral sculptures, it is necessary to take into account that the first specific reference to the *Victory* group, now in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, was made in an exchange of letters between Vasari and Michelangelo's nephew and heir Leonardo Buonarroti, following Michelangelo's death in March 1564.<sup>279</sup> Leonardo, advised by Michelangelo's close friend Daniele da Volterra, had desired to place the statue in the center of Michelangelo's tomb that was to be erected in Santa Croce. Vasari was entirely against the plan. At that time Vasari was redecorating the *Sala Grande* in the Palazzo Vecchio where one of the major themes in the pictorial cycles was the Florentine republic's victory over Pisa and Duke Cosimo's recent victory over Siena. In Michelangelo's *Victory*, Vasari would have found a device perfect fit in representing the theme of triumph through a work of the greatest Florentine artist whose service Cosimo had failed to secure.<sup>280</sup> In addition, Vasari believed that remaining works of Michelangelo had to go to Cosimo in order to win his support for the funeral and temper his stated disappointment with the fact Michelangelo had burnt before his death most of his papers and drawings, and among them the drawings for the façade of San Lorenzo. In a letter to his ambassador in Rome, written on March 5, 1564, Cosimo wrote, "[O]ur regret is increased by his not having left behind any of his designs. To have thrown everything into the fire seems to us an act unworthy of him."<sup>281</sup> On March 4 Vasari had already advised Leonardo Buonarroti that in order for Leonardo to secure the ducal favor, the remaining sculptures in Michelangelo's Florentine workshop "should be his [the Duke's] if they please him."<sup>282</sup> Regarding Michelangelo's statue, Vasari wrote to Leonardo on March 10, "I wonder what it is that Victory with that prisoner below would signify [on Michelangelo's tomb] for Michelangelo never was a soldier and did not defeat anybody."<sup>283</sup> The *Victory* was eventually moved to the *Sala Grande* of the Ducal Palace on December 29, 1564 and no sculpture similar to the statue was incorporated in the finalized tomb of Michelangelo in Santa Croce (Figure 29).

The episode of the *Victory* illustrates that Michelangelo's work, instead of being employed to commemorate and honor the artist, as his heir had envisioned, was deliberately recontextualized in order to maximize the propagandistic effect of the visual imagery associated with Duke Cosimo whom Michelangelo had declined to serve. The sculptural groups of virtues and vices on the funerary catafalque of Michelangelo may have been a conscious emulation of the *Victory*, symbolically preserving the meaning the artist's heir gave to the work, reasserting the triumph of Michelangelo's fame over death

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 437.

<sup>280</sup> Balas, "Michelangelo's Victory: Its Role," 461.

<sup>281</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 12.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>283</sup> Balas, "Michelangelo's Victory: Its Role," 68-69.

while also referring to the statue that had passed into the Ducal collection. In addition, the victory sculptures on the catafalque perhaps were a confident homage by the *Accademia* to the deceased artist demonstrating that the academicians could emulate and master a form of sculpture that exemplify Michelangelo's understanding of body and forms at the highest level.<sup>284</sup> The many surviving sculptures that engage the *Victory concetto* illustrate the zeal with which the sculptors who followed Michelangelo appreciated this work.

This chapter has thus far explored the potential implications of some of the visual representations from Michelangelo's funeral and analyzed how they sought to empower the *Accademia* in negotiating its position within the dukedom. But to a great extent Duke Cosimo himself was an active agent in the staging of the funeral and the production of the funerary imagery. Cosimo granted extraordinary privileges for the arrangement of funeral, which the *Accademia* was keen to secure. The Duke approved San Lorenzo to be used for the site of the funeral ceremony. At least fourteen funeral ceremonies had been held in the church since the fifteenth century, all of which were arranged only for the deceased members of the Medici family or eminent papal and governmental dignitaries of Church.<sup>285</sup> With Cosimo's consent, Benedetto Varchi, an eminent orator and rhetorician of the ducal court who had delivered the funeral orations for the Duke's mother and his daughter Lucrezia, spoke at the funeral.<sup>286</sup> Perhaps in a most startling manner, Cosimo agreed to waive all rules of etiquette and to concede Michelangelo an honour normally reserved for nobles.<sup>287</sup>

Giunti's account made every effort to publicize the Duke's generosity and his keen interest in the arrangement of the funeral.<sup>288</sup> However, in reality Cosimo's involvement in the proceedings of the funeral arrangement appears minimal.<sup>289</sup> Having promised significant financial aid for the decorations, Cosimo was neither extravagant in the amount he provided nor prompt in making the promised aid.<sup>290</sup> It was after the preparatory work for the catafalque and the funeral decorations for the church went ahead that Cosimo came to inspect the arrangements and Bronzino, Ammanati and Vasari had to visit Francesco in person to solicit the Prince's inspection.<sup>291</sup> In fact, on the day of the funeral the Duke and other members of his family were absent.<sup>292</sup> The

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<sup>284</sup> Wilde, "Michelangelo's 'Victory,'" 457-458.

<sup>285</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 14.

<sup>286</sup> Luchinat, "Michelangelo and the Medici," 18.

<sup>287</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 14.

<sup>288</sup> For Giunti's illustration of the Medici support for the funeral, see Giunti, *Esequie*, 89, 125.

<sup>289</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>291</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 125-127. The Wittkowers speculate that Cosimo's visit to San Lorenzo would also have been a result of the prodding by the academicians. See Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 18.

<sup>292</sup> See *ibid.*, 18. Also for Giunti's account of the Medici absence, see Giunti, *Esequie*, 125.

Wittkowers attribute Cosimo's aloofness to personal reasons: he had lost his wife and two of his sons in 1562 and was preparing for retirement by early 1564. They also observe that Cosimo was disappointed with the *Accademia's* early strife in 1563.<sup>293</sup> However, the special honors he conferred to Michelangelo's funeral do speak for his appreciation of the political implication of the funeral. As Cristina Acidini Luchinat argues, Michelangelo's universal fame illustrated the cultural preeminence of Florence in European art.<sup>294</sup> It is difficult to imagine Cosimo's simply losing interest in the manner in which he and his regime were to be visualized in such an important event on account of "personal reasons." After all, Cosimo had been deeply engaged in the redecorations of the *Sala Grande* around the time of the funeral. The episode where Cosimo changed Vasari's intended plan for the central tondo of the ceiling in the *Sala Grande* by inserting himself in the center replacing a personification of Florence, now legendary in the study of Cosimo's iconography, took place less than a year before Michelangelo's death.<sup>295</sup> In this regard, the *Accademia* was unusually independent and confident in designing the funeral decorations, able to include images that maximized the *Accademia's* ambitions but were also potentially problematic to the Duke.<sup>296</sup> Why would Cosimo, always mindful of how he was portrayed in art, indeed grant such self-determination and permit images that could undermine him? I suggest that Cosimo's apparent indifference in the planning of the program for Michelangelo's funeral and in attending the ceremony was not a result of personal disinterest, but possibly a calculated strategy of his cultural politics which allowed a significant degree of independence for representational practices outside his immediate control as long as they did not have direct political consequences.

This strategy is in evidence in a scandal reported by the ducal secretary Lorenzo Pagni to Duke Cosimo in 1556, demonstrating that such a tolerance in the cultural milieu of his regime was a stated policy of the Duke just a few years before the funeral.<sup>297</sup> In two letters, Pagni informed the Duke that a group of Florentines had staged suspicious festivities in the house of Bartolomeo Panciatichi. These Florentines were members of the *Accademia del*

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Benedetto Varchi mentions Francesco's presence in the funeral in the published version of his oration for the event. From what I have researched, it is very difficult to document whether Francesco was present or not. See Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 18n.

<sup>293</sup> For the Wittkowers' view of why Cosimo appeared unenthusiastic about Michelangelo's funeral, see *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>294</sup> Luchinat, "Michelangelo and the Medici," 18.

<sup>295</sup> Hank Th. Van Veen, "Circles of Sovereignty: The Tondi of the Sala Grande in Palazzo Vecchio and the Medici Crown," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 206.

<sup>296</sup> The epitaph placed on the catafalque emphasized that the funeral decorations were arranged by "the members' own hands." See Giunti, *Esequie*, 94.

<sup>297</sup> See footnote 4 of this chapter.

*Piano*, one of the lesser-known academies that existed outside the academies sanctioned by the Duke such as the *Accademia Fiorentina*.<sup>298</sup> Some of the members of the *Accademia del Piano*, called *Piangiani*, were from the influential families of Florence with anti-Medicean background who had had earlier scrapes with the law.<sup>299</sup> Giovanni Bandini, Tonino Martelli and Pandolfo Pucci had been arrested on charges of sodomy and Pucci had been further convicted on “political impropriety.”<sup>300</sup> Alfonso de’ Pazzi, a distinguished member of the *Accademia del Piano*, was from a family associated with its conspiracy against Lorenzo ‘il Magnifico’ in 1478 and continued support for the later anti-Medicean Florentine republics. A literary figure and once a member of the *Accademia Fiorentina*, Pazzi had registered the hostility of *Piangiani* toward the *Accademia Fiorentina* in his work.<sup>301</sup> Bartolomeo Panciatichi, in whose house the *Pianigiani*’s festivities were held, was under suspicion of heterodox beliefs.<sup>302</sup>

For Cosimo’s agent Pagni, there were many reasons to be concerned about the unusual gatherings of the *Pianigiani*. When noting the members’ family background, he informed the Duke that the participants of the event were men of “high social standing.”<sup>303</sup> The number of people involved was of concern, enumerated in the dispatch at around forty-five.<sup>304</sup> Pagni was also alarmed by the symbolic implications of the *Pianigiani*’s practices. Afraid of misinterpreting the meanings of any of their gathering, he had sent for an officer of the Bargello and ordered him to inform him of “all that he had seen and heard.”<sup>305</sup> Pagni was informed that the *Pianigiani* assumed pseudonymous identities and used a secret code to discuss the Duke and other eminent figures of Florence. They staged a mock trial concerning “all of the affairs pertaining to the citizens of Florence, among which they made those resolutions and judgments that seem to them most suitable.”<sup>306</sup> Pagni was disturbed, too, by the decoration of the house with stalks of cabbage. As Domenico Zanrè suggests, Pagni was likely worried that the sexual connotation of cabbage would draw public attention to the *Pianigiani*’s gathering.<sup>307</sup>

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 189. The two letters of Lorenzo Pagni to Duke Cosimo, January 6, 1556 (1555 *Florentine style*), and the Duke’s reply on the same sheets in Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato are published in Zanrè, “Ritual and Parody,” 199-201 and Professor Megan Holmes provided translation for all the letters.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>302</sup> Stephen J Campbell, “Counter Reformation polemic and Mannerist counter-aesthetics,” *Res*, 46 (Autumn 2004), 116.

<sup>303</sup> “... quegli huomini da bene ...” Zanrè, “Ritual and Parody,” 200.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>305</sup> “... tutto quel che havessi visto o sentito.” *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>306</sup> “... tutte le faccende particolari de’ cittadini di Firenze, sopra le quali si facevano quelle resolutioni et giuditii che a loro parevano più convenire.” *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 194. The phallic connotations of cabbage would have been enhanced by the fact that some members of the *Accademia del Piano* had been accused of sodomy.

In Pagni's report to Cosimo, the highlight of the *Pianigiani's* gathering was a macabre funeral where they fabricated an effigy of the dead and his body with rape, leeks, and carrots.<sup>308</sup> What offended Pagni was that the subject of the funeral was the recently deceased Archbishop of Pisa, Onofrio Bartolini. Bartolini, from a family known for its loyalty to the Medici, had been appointed to the Archbishop of Pisa by Pope Leo X in 1518. He was an important member of Cosimo's court and an eminent member of the *Accademia Fiorentina*. By coincidence, he had played a visible role in some of the cultural events that this thesis has investigated. It was Bartolini who received Eleonora of Toledo at Livorno in 1539.<sup>309</sup> When arguing with Cellini over the exact value of *Perseus*, Cosimo had sent Bartolini to Baccio Bandinelli for an independent evaluation of the sculpture. Bartolini returned with an estimate of "sixteen thousand crowns or more" and Cellini reports in his autobiography that the Duke was "mightily enraged."<sup>310</sup> The *Pianigiani* celebrated Bartolini's death in a burlesque manner. After an oration had been delivered, raucous drums and horns were played and the members sang the obsequy services. An owl emerged from the effigy's head and flew around the darkened room to represent the spirit of the Archbishop "freed from the punishments of Hell."<sup>311</sup> "That particular thing disturbed me" wrote Pagni to the Duke, regarding the manner with which the mock funeral was staged. The members of the *Accademia del Piano* were apparently parodying the obsequies of the *Accademia Fiorentina*, and for Pagni, it was even more significant that the spectacle took place on the anniversary of the assassination of Duke Alessandro de' Medici.<sup>312</sup> Though Pagni admitted that he might be exaggerating the meaning of the event, he recommended a legal retribution, referring to a law issued in 1549 that forbade group meetings without prior ducal authorization in order to prevent conspiracy.<sup>313</sup>

Cosimo's reaction to his secretary's report of a politically dangerous gathering is unexpectedly tolerant, contrary to the Duke's historical reputation for his obsession with controlling his subjects. Pagni's letters do show the extent of the ducal control, able to police private gatherings at such an intimate level. Cosimo considered the information important. In his reply to Pagni, he noted, "The changing of the names is good to know about and ours in particular, and [the identity of] the leader and the inventor of the stories."<sup>314</sup> However, the Duke considered retribution against the kind of carnivalesque

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<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>309</sup> Watt, "Love and Politics," 98.

<sup>310</sup> Cellini, *Autobiography*, 381.

<sup>311</sup> "... liberata dalle pene dell'Inferno." Zanrè, "Ritual and Parody," 202.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>313</sup> Regarding Pagni's suggestion and the nature of this particular law, see *ibid.*, 196.

<sup>314</sup> "La mutatione de' nomi è ben spaerla e il nostro soprattutto, e il capo e inventor delle novelle che fanno, ..." *Ibid.*, 201.

practices celebrated by the *Pianigiani* unnecessary unless it disrupted the political affairs of his regime and threatened its stability.<sup>315</sup> In fact, in his reply to the second letter where Pagni had encouraged the Duke to react against the *Pianigiani*, Cosimo went on to justify his decision to hold back:

There is always the custom in the city to make similar games [jokes] and they don't always have such a basis as people imagine, but, in the time of the republic, similar groups arose forming little factions within the councils and magistracies; because conspiracies against the state cannot be done with such great numbers, or with such a variety of people... *because the minds of Florentines do not know how to be idle, it is better sometimes that they would be occupied in similar intrigues than to be mulling over things.*<sup>316</sup>

Cosimo's reply works on multiple layers of meaning.<sup>317</sup> The Duke respected the republican tradition of the city, acknowledging that private gatherings like those of the *Pianigiani* had taken place in the time of the republic and that people then had participated in similar carnivalesque practices. Taking into account how as early as 1539, Cosimo had consciously associated his regime with the republic, the continuation of the republic was not merely a theme of visual propaganda, but served as a guiding precedent in making political decision. In fact, he felt that permitting his subjects to engage in such playful representational practices that were blatant in their parody but nonetheless not perceived to be immediately dangerous, was necessary in order to defuse potential discontent in his subjects to allow for the venting of that built up through his acknowledged autocratic rule.

There are interesting ways in which the episode of the *Pianigiani*'s mock funeral has implications to our study of Michelangelo's funeral. In mid-sixteenth-century Florence, funeral rituals were often occasions for promoting the agenda of a cultural institution, be it a private literary gathering assembled for joyful and carnivalesque practices or an official academy honoring the life of its deceased member. As Karen-edis Barzman notes, funeral was one of the privileges the *Accademia del Disegno* offered to its distinguished members, and the inevitability of death and the need for commemoration provided vital opportunities for displaying the *Accademia*'s fellowship and corporate unity, and for reflecting the institution's achievement through the particular deceased member.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> "... il proibirlo loro non ci par da farlo, se non quando faccino una delle dua cose, o vita non conveniente, o mescolanza di cose di stato." *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>316</sup> "Sempre si usò nella città far di simili baie, e non anno sempre tanti fondamenti quanto le persone s'immaginano, ma sì ben, a tempo della republica, si soleva in simili congreghe far le sette nelli consigli o nelli magistrati; perché le congiure di stato non si posson far in tanto numero, nè con tanta varietà di persone; ... perché li cervelli fiorentini non sanno star otiosi, è meglio alle volte si occupino in simil tresche che stien cogitabundi." *Ibid.*, 202 (emphasis mine). However, Pagni's concern was ultimately justified when many leading members of the *Pianigiani* were found plotting against the dukedom in 1559. This time, Cosimo would execute all the conspirators.

<sup>317</sup> For Domenico Zanrè's analysis of Cosimo's reply, see *ibid.*, 196-197. He explains the Duke's tolerant attitude in the context of the stability of his regime by late 1550s.

<sup>318</sup> Barzman, *The Florentine Academy*, 195.

In the case of Michelangelo's funeral, the *Accademia* would have found a momentous occasion for visibly asserting itself as an important organization within the ducal regime.<sup>319</sup> Some of what have been described in this chapter as more problematic images in the funeral sought to maximize this effect. And if Duke Cosimo had been willing to authorize the burlesque expression of his political opposition in the case of the *Pianigiani*, perhaps there was little reason for him to interfere immediately with the *Accademia del Disegno's* decorative program that extravagantly celebrated itself through works of art. After all, the institution's self-promotion in Michelangelo's funeral also exalted him and the Florentine cultural preeminence. The academicians had indeed prescribed Cosimo's minimal involvement in their institution on the outset. Regarding the establishment of the institution, Giunti's account reported, "they [the academicians] knew very well that His Excellency is extremely busy and that it was not fair to molest him at every occasion, ... they knew that the intervention of the name and consequently the good will and renown of His Excellency were sufficient not only to keep the enterprise alive but to make it thrive better from day to day."<sup>320</sup> It is for this reason that they recommended appointment of a ducal representative as the *luogotenente* of the *Accademia* and it is generally argued that the *luogotenente* was there to implement the ducal agenda.<sup>321</sup> However, it is just as possible to reason that a more indirect form of ducal interference would have helped the *Accademia* to maintain its autonomy, especially when it was sure that Vincenzo Borghini, a man devoted to the cause of the institution and in fact the first to propose the elaborate funeral for Michelangelo, would be the *luogotenente*. But just as he remained attentive to the activities of the *Pianigiani*, noting its members, their number and activities, Cosimo was perhaps never as aloof as scholars have assumed with regard to the funeral. Indeed the academicians' exuberant self-celebration in Michelangelo's funeral did not go unchecked. Upon receiving Vasari's report of the success of the funeral ceremonies, Cosimo sent the following reply through his secretary Bartolommeo Concino: "His Excellency vastly enjoyed the description of the most unusual obsequies for the divine Michelangelo... *Do not become vain even though the glory is all yours ...*"<sup>322</sup>

In this chapter I have analyzed the ways in which the *Accademia* celebrated itself in visual representations related to Michelangelo's funeral in 1564 and how Duke Cosimo calculated his involvement in the proceedings. I have argued that the *Accademia*, through Michelangelo, actively sought to propagate its exalted position within the Medici dukedom. Images in Michelangelo's funeral operated with multiple symbolic possibilities, some potentially problematic to the dukedom but nonetheless effective in maximizing the institution's ideological aims. Cosimo granted artistic independence to the *Accademia* in designing the funeral decorations and was absent in the funeral.

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<sup>319</sup> Indeed, in a vainglorious manner, Giunti's account asserted, "And truly, great as has been Michelangelo's fortune not to have died before the foundation of this most honourable Academy, which has celebrated his funeral with such honour, magnificence and dignified splendour..." See Giunti, *Esequie*, 122.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>321</sup> Barzman, *The Florentine Academy*, 35.

<sup>322</sup> Wittkower and Wittkower, "Introduction," 25 (emphasis mine).

However, he was keen to remind the academicians of his authority and warned against gratuitous self-glorification by the academicians and their institution.

My analysis draws upon the same cultural theories that informed my conceptualization of the potential implications of the decorative program for Duke Cosimo's wedding in 1539 in Chapter 1, and those of Cellini's negotiation of his position with the Duke in Chapter 2. Michelangelo's funeral perhaps stands out among these other events because it demonstrates how, on the one hand, a social group like the academicians who stood in a subordinate position to the ducal authority within the Medicean regime worked to empower themselves. On the other hand, we have seen how a ruling regime sought to establish its hegemony. The members of the *Accademia*, in order to liberate themselves from their obligations within the traditional guild system and survive as a viable cultural institution, could not do so without Duke Cosimo and therefore actively sought ducal favor. They did so not by simply submitting themselves to the Duke, but by showing the Duke, in the words of Giunti, "the benefit and the advantage that has been derived, and is to be expected, from members of the Academy" through their homage on Michelangelo's death.<sup>323</sup> The rhetorical strategy in the funeral decorations recalls how Michel de Certeau and Ross Chambers theorize the ways in which the social groups with little political and economic power create a realm for their autonomous actions by creatively deploying dominant culture "against the grain" in a modern society. The academicians used the language of Cosimo's visual propaganda, notably the theme of the Laurentian golden age, and the deference shown by popes, nobles and princes in exalting Michelangelo. The strategy is similar to how the Duke himself took on an imperial identity at his wedding or how Cellini sought to reinforce his claims in negotiating with the Duke. As for how Duke Cosimo maintained his hegemony, one might recall that the Duke, in a Gramscian manner, had incorporated republican traditions and symbols into his iconography at his wedding. In a similar manner he allowed the *Accademia del Disegno* the freedom to construct its own iconography through Michelangelo, just as he had allowed the *Pianigiani* to express their opposition in representational practices.

The *Accademia del Disegno* as an integral apparatus of Cosimo's cultural politics has been investigated thoroughly. Scholarly attention has focused in particular on how the academy's disciplining effect on a new generation of artists and its vital role in the cultural production of the ducal regime helped the Duke to fulfill his cultural and political ambition. As Stephen Campbell points out, such an emphasis has resulted in the predominance of a "patron-centered model" for the analysis of works of art produced under Cosimo's reign.<sup>324</sup> Mannerism, a stylistic term generally used to

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<sup>323</sup> Giunti, *Esequie*, 125.

<sup>324</sup> Campbell, "Counter Reformation," 100.

characterize the works of the sixteenth-century artists, is sensitive to how an artist's self-consciousness, wit and ingenuity are expressed in his or her work. Yet too often the term has been interpreted to imply the artist's lack of agency when as executors of the patron's agenda. With regard to such a tendency, Stephen Campbell warns against reducing the so-called Mannerist art to "the totalizing ends of Medici power" and against ignoring possibilities of artistic self-determination.<sup>325</sup>

What this chapter and the other chapters in the thesis have strived to achieve is to restore the possibilities for complex agencies operating in and through works of art in sixteenth-century Florence under the seemingly absolutist Medici dukedom. Cellini, as an artist, and the *Accademia*, as an institution, acted as agents of their own respective causes and mobilized works of art to negotiate actively their position with the Duke. They did not necessarily antagonize the regime but sought to use it to empower their own positions. As for Duke Cosimo, he was not as absolutist as historical assumptions usually suggest. For one, he was an agent of his own regime. In visual representation, the Duke actively competed with the imperial power even when he appeared to be flattering it, while at the same time, he accommodated the memory of Florence's republican past in order to further legitimize his regime and establish political and cultural hegemony. To return to Campbell's proposition, I hope that the thesis has been able to "restore a sense of critical potential and reopen the question of Mannerism as a reaction to historical tensions and predicaments."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

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