*The Painting Career of Piero di Cosimo (1462-1522)*
Dennis Geronimus
Magdalen College
D. Phil in Modern History
Trinity term, 2000

**Abstract (300 words)**

In *The Painting Career of Piero di Cosimo (1462-1522)*, I have sought to assemble a critical, monographic study of Piero's painting oeuvre that presently includes close to fifty works that are either extant or exist only in references and sources. The Florentine painter has historically proven to be among the most elusive artists of the Italian Renaissance and yet acted as a seminal figure in the artistic transitions occurring from the close of the fifteenth century to the beginnings of Mannerism in Florence.

My thesis consists of close iconographic and stylistic analyses that have been balanced by archival work and technical examination. The latter involved numerous meetings with restorers in United States and European conservation laboratories. The resulting in-depth study of the physical states of Piero's paintings as objects—involving painting technique, working methods and present condition—produces some of the most revealing results. My research with original documents and other primary sources in Florence also introduces a number of new discoveries, particularly from the early and middle stages of the painter's life and career.

The varied nature of Piero's art calls for a multidisciplinary approach. Combining iconographic, conservational and archival methods, I aim to contribute new insights into several specific areas. These include: a biographical grounding of Piero's life and those of his known patrons; Piero's advances in portraiture; the use of visual narrative forms and literary sources in Piero's mythologies; and the painter's large-scale devotional works.

The questioning of past assumptions concerning Piero's work and biography also leads me to consider the larger scope of influence, legacy and modes of transmission between Piero and other contemporary artists. As one of the most important older innovators, living well into the sixteenth century, Piero was a major catalyst for the new generation of highly inventive artists such as Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo, both of whom passed through his studio. It was Piero, however, who proved to be perhaps the most groundbreaking practitioner in the domestic secular painting tradition before his pupils' ascendance.

*The Painting Career of Piero di Cosimo (1462-1522)*

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**Abstract (2500 words)**

**A. Aims of the Study**

Despite all that has been written about Piero di Cosimo (1462-1522), much discussion remains open in matters of iconography, dating, condition of works and areas such as patronage and artistic (and textual) influences. During the last five years, I have striven to assemble a rigorous, critical study of Piero's paintings and to accurately map the painter's biography, artistic chronology and the circumstances surrounding his commissions.

A large part of my work returns to the backbone of Piero scholarship, that of detailed iconographic and stylistic analyses. This is especially the case with regard to Piero's 'Early Civilisation' panels in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and a small group of other *spalliere* that became grouped together with them as a result of Erwin Panofsky's influential article of 1939. In contrast to Panofsky's unified arrangement, I instead propose three separate commissions. Iconographic research and the examination of potential literary sources also figure prominently in my study of other secular domestic paintings, such as Piero's baffling *Portrait of a Lady (Simonetta Vespucci?)* in Chantilly, his *Bacchanals* and *Tritons and Nereids* panels for the Vespucci family and two other mythologies now in The National Gallery, London.

These uses of literary sources and the paintings' internal clues have been supplemented by archival and direct physical evidence. Recently discovered documentary traces—both by myself and other scholars during the course of my dissertation—shed light on Piero as a social being and on his professional career, while also dispelling some past inaccuracies promulgated first by Giorgio Vasari and at times accepted by later scholars. Close examination of Piero's panels and canvases, with the naked eye as well as by means of conservation photographs and other laboratory results, has furthered my understanding of Piero's multifaceted painting techniques while answering many questions surrounding condition.

Together, these methods provide the pieces necessary to study and appreciate Piero's challenging images anew.

**B. Materials**

The paucity of documents relating to Piero encouraged me in the search for new material pertaining to his vaguely defined biography and artistic commissions. My work with original documents and other primary sources in Florence concentrated in the Archivio di Stato, the Biblioteca Nazionale, and the Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo, in which I discovered Piero's birth date with the aid of the city's baptismal records. In the Archivio di Stato, I spent most of my time working with church and notarial records, the latter being notoriously difficult but potentially the most rewarding. This research ultimately produced a number of new discoveries, particularly from the painter's early and mature life and career.

The study of the paintings' physical condition involved numerous meetings with restorers and visits to conservation laboratories throughout the United States and Europe. This appraisal of the works' physical states extends not only to matters of condition but also painting method. A number of *pentimenti*, revealed through infrared reflectography imagery, provide some of the most surprising findings in the progression of Piero's painting states. A number of the studied X-radiography, infrared reflectography and raking light photographs, together with pigment analysis reports, have been carried out only in the recent past and comprise an invaluable, emerging resource in matters of painting practice and dating.

My reliance on Piero's drawings, of which approximately thirty remain, is also connected to my attempts to gain a larger overview and understanding of Piero's working processes. I focus predominantly on the role that his few extant preparatory drawings played in a number of his altarpiece commissions. In isolated cases, I attempt to approach the chronology of the painted panels in an alternative way: through the stylistic dating of the preparatory drawings' execution and Piero's handling of particular drawing media.

**C. Synopsis of contents**

Piero's chameleon-like changes of style and his wide ranging subject matter necessitated a multidirectional approach. Combining iconographic, technical and archival methods, as outlined above, I aim to contribute new insights into a number of different areas. I believe that the thesis' organisation into chapters based on pictorial types allows me to focus on each individual genre and its highly specific contexts, while maintaining the fluency of discussion and permitting for interconnections and larger overviews.

Chapter I attempts to establish a more secure biographical grounding of Piero's life. Only briefly touched upon here in relation to Piero's sophisticated base of patronage as a whole, the same biographical scrutiny is applied in following chapters with regard to individual known patrons, for works religious and secular. This is achieved in part through documentary evidence. New archival findings include Piero's precise birth date, early family history, his first known participation in the Compagnia di S. Luca, the city's professional and religious artists' confraternity, and the possibility of Piero's previously unknown occupation as a manuscript illuminator. This chapter also confronts a number of issues dealing with Vasari's biography of Piero and the Aretine's specific terminology. Parallels and disjunctions with Leonardo and his art, mentioned specifically by Vasari in relation to Piero, are introduced.

Piero's advances in portraiture are explored in Chapter II. First touching briefly upon the Florentine portrait tradition that preceded Piero and from which he made notable departures, I move on to discuss each of Piero's six portraits and images of saints in turn. *The Portrait of a Lady* in Chantilly, the idealised identity of which I support to be Simonetta Vespucci, commands the most attention here, in light of its complex iconographic artifice.

Chapter III discusses the use of visual narrative forms and literary sources in Piero's pagan mythologies, beginning with his *Death of a Nymph* in London and ending with the 'Story of Prometheus' companion images in Munich and Strasbourg. Again, Piero's deviations from known literary sources, both classical and contemporary, in a number of the images prompt new investigations, including a rereading of the texts and recourse to technical analysis. The *spalliera* genre, Renaissance domestic settings, artistic intention and viewers' responses are also treated in the context of specific inquiries. In part an extension of the previous chapter in its study of the *spalliera* form, Chapter IV specifically addresses Piero's so-called 'Early History of Man' panels and their relation to four other highly ambiguous secular images.

Chapters V and VI deal with the painter's large-scale devotional works. The former chapter covers Piero's altarpiece commissions from his beginnings as a practicing artist, in the 1480s, to his mature period of 1500-10. As in the previous two chapters on Piero's *favole*, much attention is given to issues of patronage, function and intention on the part of both artist and patron.

The final chapter (VI) seeks to ask new questions regarding Piero's three altarpieces from his last stage of production. The appearance of these panels has changed exceptionally in relation to earlier efforts such as the animated Tedaldi *Incarnation*, now moving toward subdued palettes and restrained, more monumental compositions. I examine several factors, including the paintings' condition and their original destinations, in an attempt to attribute these changes in style. Rather than

judging these images as uninspired or inferior, however, I attempt to show that Piero has instead directed his art into a new and more austere, final direction.

The challenging of past assumptions concerning Piero's life and art also lead me to consider the broader issues of influence, legacy and modes of transmission between artists. Throughout various parts of the thesis, I critically reexamine the links between Piero and the art of Leonardo, particularly during the older master's last stay in Florence in 1500-1506. Other particular images, such as the *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* or the *Pala Del Pugliese* raise other possibilities of influence, in this case with Michelangelo and the incoming examples from North of the Alps, respectively. Also as yet largely overlooked is an examination of Piero's legacy, for he along with Leonardo and Filippino Lippi provided the most vital links between the strange exoticism and experimentation of the late 1400s and the new idioms of the early 1500s. As one of the most important older innovators, bridging the two centuries, Piero can be seen as a major catalyst for the new generation of highly inventive artists such as Andrea del Sarto, Pontormo, Rosso and the mysterious Master of Serumido that followed. On the other hand, Piero's late style also touched artists working in a more conservative, understated manner, such as Fra Bartolomeo, Mariotto Albertinelli and Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. Ironically, the ingeniously designed mythological themes in Piero's *spalliere* may have been the most difficult to view and, thus, of circumscribed influence. The *spalliere* tradition as a whole was to soon die out after the 1520s and the creative climax of the Borgherini panels of 1515-19. It is instead in Piero's numerous tondi that we may be able to find the most copies after the master's compositions, as evidenced by the long list of 'Attributed Works' in volume II of the thesis.

Through my findings, I attempt to shed new light not only on this individual artist but, in part, on the particular culture that demanded his highly unconventional images. It is my argument that, contrary to Vasari's claims of Piero di Cosimo's misanthropy and 'bestial' lifestyle, of which we can never be certain, the painter was professional in carrying out finished commissions, succeeded in attracting a highly prestigious circle of patronage and was sought after precisely for his idiosyncratic treatment of subjects and not in spite of it.

# THE PAINTING CAREER OF PIERO DI COSIMO (1462–1522)

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Finally, my most sincere thanks go to my parents—and their shared fascination with Piero, infinite patience, encouragement and unshakable belief in me. This thesis is dedicated to them.

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### Volume I



### Volume II

## Abbreviations

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| ACSAF | Archivio del Convento della SS. Annunziata di Firenze |
| ACSFF | Archivio del Convento di S. Francesco a Fiesole |
| ANN | Archivio Notarile di Norcia |
| AODF | Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo di Firenze |
| ASF | Archivio di Stato di Firenze |
| CS | Carte Strozziane |
| Comp. Rel. Sopp. | Compagnie Religiose Soppresse di Pietro Leopoldo |
| Corp. Rel. Sopp. | Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese |
| MSS | Manoscritti |
| Not. Antecos. | Notarile Antecosimiano |
| ASIF | Archivio dello Spedale degli Innocenti di Firenze |
| BNF | Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze |
| OPDF | Opificio delle Pietre Dure di Firenze |

# Introduction: 'Odd Man In'

'In all that there is to be seen by his hand, one recognizes a spirit very different and far distant from that of other painters, and a certain subtlety in the investigation of some of the deepest and most subtle secrets of Nature, without grudging time or labour, but only for his own delight and for his pleasure in the art. And it could not well be otherwise; since, having grown enamoured of her, he cared nothing for his own comfort' – Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives* (1568)[1]

It should be admitted from the start that this study champions a cause: 'A Case for Piero' Such deep personal involvement was evoked in part by an alarming number of past misunderstandings concerning the painter's life and works.[2] Throughout the last century, Piero has been pressed into service by a wide range of scholars and art movements, most categorising him as one of art's proto-bohemians. In the 1930s, Piero was championed by the Surrealist movement, gaining him a popularity heightened by George Pudelko's Freudian interpretations in the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* and the inclusion of his paintings in a New York exhibition at the Schaeffer Galleries in 1938.[3] Just as Botticelli was mentioned in the same breath as Beardsley and the Pre-Raphaelites in past literature, so was Piero 'the visionary' with the likes of Dalì and Max Ernst (although Henri Rousseau and Paul Gauguin would seem to have been even more appropriate comparisons). As recently as 1982, at the conclusion of his work on Piero, Alain Jouffroy made a dedication to the memory of André Breton, 'who most attentively kept the vigil for the breakers of barriers', while Piero's mythical hybrids have reminded others of Picasso and his minotaur monstrosities.[4]

While my work continues to confront Vasari's idea that art must inevitably reflect personality, consequently breeding George Eliot's lasting image of Piero as an outlandish crank in *Romola* (1862-3), this study also attempts to escape the other more recent trend of over-normalising the painter. In eliminating interpretations of Piero as a wild eccentric, justly now seen to be overly reductive, an equally great distortion may have been created, erroneously denying Piero the exceptional degree of strangeness and innovation that cannot be overlooked in his actual works.[5] The sanitation of Piero's images that has followed as a side effect also paints too incomplete and simplistic a portrait of a painter who undeniably possessed a most extraordinary character. It is thus my intention to further explore rather than under-emphasise the nature of Piero's uniqueness and sensitivity of mind in its positive, creative sense. As his artistic production and quality of patronage clearly exemplify, it appears that Piero's reputation was regarded highly in large part because—and not in spite—of the strangeness of his images and his unorthodox approach to painting. As so aptly characterised by Theodore Rabb, Piero truly was an 'odd man in'.[6]

The multifaceted nature of many of Piero's works has encouraged me to pursue a multifaceted approach, calling for a range of complementary interpretative tools. As a result, the catalogue format,

already employed in monographs by Mina Bacci (1966 and 1976) and Anna Forlani Tempesti and Elena Capretti (1996)[7], has been forgone for an organisation along pictorial types—such as portraits, mythologies and similar secular domestic images, and altarpieces—in an attempt to gain a wider perspective and sustain a continuous discussion. The detailed consideration of separate projects *within* this structure is intended to bridge the frequent polarisation of form from content in previous studies and to restore the sense of the painter's intention, in so far as it can be inferred from each commission. In an attempt to bring together the various threads of Piero's achievements to form a more contextualised picture, where appropriate I discuss his reinterpretation of visual models and, in turn, the ageing master's stimulating influence on both the young Mannerists as well as the less daring painters working in a more traditional style in the cinquecento yet, in the great number of their commissions, playing no less a part in Florentine High Renaissance art.

Leaving no dated or signed works, Piero has been—in this sense—an insubordinate figure, consequently making for a fascinating case study on method. The dearth of secure documentary evidence necessitated extensive work with primary material in Florence's various archives. The searches have borne new fruit, including Piero's precise birth date (Appendix, document 1), the earliest mention of his membership in the Compagnia di S. Luca at the age of twenty (App., doc. 7) and the most unexpected possibility that Piero may have practiced another artistic profession: that of manuscript illuminator (App., doc. 9).[8] Together with additional recent documentary discoveries by other scholars, the picture of Piero's family genealogy, relations with other artists and artistic career have grown much clearer since the last monographic study by Forlani-Tempesti and Capretti in 1996.[9] Certainly, no longer can it be lamented that 'virtually nothing is known about his life'.[10] Other contributions here—also mostly based on archival work—include further clarification of Piero's patronage and connected matters of chronology. Together, such recent discoveries have yielded the kinds of illuminating biographical facts that help to recreate Piero as a real social being and ultimately to cast much of Vasari's biography of the artist into serious doubt, leading us to altogether different conclusions.

In investigating Piero's paintings as individual objects, the thesis likewise relies heavily on another kind of firsthand evidence: technical analysis. The findings made available through conservation laboratory material, some only recently, and by direct contact with conservators have allowed me to supplement and at times alter discussions of style and chronology with the often neglected factors related to condition and actual painting execution. A number of technical results as revealed through restoration efforts have yielded perhaps some of the most unexpected and provocative conclusions and, as with archival findings, it is such small tesserae of material evidence that have helped make up the larger whole of this study.

In addition to the archival and technical research, I have sought to delve deeper into a much more heavily mined area of Piero scholarship: the relationship between the painter's erudite mythological creations and their potential literary sources. Concentrating on the novel—if not virtually unprecedented—forms taken by his visual narratives, I present several new conclusions, including a division of the formerly unified configuration of the so-called 'Early History of Man' *spalliere* as proposed by Panofsky in his pioneering essay in *Studies in Iconology* of 1939. Although many iconographic interpretations are inevitably conjectural by their nature, such processes of decoding still must be relied upon in the search for the *most* plausible and convincing meanings. And so, albeit with frequently different proposals, I too have joined a long list of scholars in an attempt to extract the most telling clues from Piero's mythologies in an effort to reconstruct their original purposes, locations and sources of inspiration.

Likewise, it is fair to mention the subjects that largely fall outside the scope of this dissertation. While the organisation by pictorial type generally allows for greater breadth and exploration of interconnections, it has resulted in the exclusion of a small number of works from the type of in-depth discussion afforded to other projects. These underrepresented works are few in number, however, consisting of several of Piero's tondi for private devotion. Last, the inclusion of Piero's drawings has been limited for the most part to five sheets securely identified as preparatory studies for known paintings, together with a small number of other relevant sketches. A wider study of Piero as a draughtsman would have been made largely redundant by Griswold's standard catalogue raisonné of thirty-eight drawings in 1988.[11] As Griswold noted, 'Analyzing Piero's drawings helps to clarify the muddled chronology of his paintings', and it is particularly with this purpose in mind that I have relied upon a number of the preparatory sketches in the study of Piero's altarpieces.

Although called an eclectic, it remains a great challenge to find direct quotations from either contemporary or antique models in Piero's paintings, and his highly personal treatments of classical subjects are practically without precedent during the period. Fully capable of developing a variety of solutions to suit his intentions and those of his patrons, Piero poses serious difficulties in drawing a clear linear chronology of his style. In expanding both formal and iconographic boundaries during Florence's transition into the sixteenth century, Piero's experimental and highly personal idiom continued into the second decade of the 1500s and should, in turn, make present scholars question the artificial boundaries established in restrictive chronological models that have classified the painter as strictly a quattrocentro 'primitive'

[1] G. Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, 2 vols. (New York, 1996), I, p. 657. Original: *Le vite de'piu eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, eds. Bettarini and Barocchi, 6 vols. (Florence, 1966-87), IV, p. 69. 'E nel vero si conosce in quel che si vede di suo uno spirito molto vario et astratto dagli altri, e con certa sottilità nello investigare certe sottigliezze della natura che penetrano, senza guardare a tempo o fatiche, solo per suo diletto e per il piacere dell'arte; e non poteva già essere altrimenti, perché innamorato di lei, non curava de' suoi comodi...'

[2] Excerpts from a selection of critical texts mentioning Piero—ranging from Vasari to Wittkower—are offered in M. Bacci, *L'opera completa di Piero di Cosimo* (Milan, 1976), pp. 10-14.

[3] For his Freudian reading of Piero's myths and, specifically, his landscapes in the *Bacchanals*, see: Pudelko, 'Piero di Cosimo, Peintre Bizarre', *Minotaure*, XI (May 1938), pp. 19-26; and also A. Frankfurter, 'Piero di Cosimo: A Modern Master of the Renaissance', *Art News*, XXXVII (Nov. 1938).

[4] For the connections made between Piero and Picasso see Y. Levanto, 'Lepakhomies Olympos-vuorella', *Taide. Julkaisija Suomon. Taiteljaseura Helsinki*, XXI (1980), pp. 40-3.

[5] Such an attempt to generally underplay Piero's strangeness can be seen in S. Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction, invention, and fantasìa* (London, 1993).

[6] T. Rabb, 'Odd Man In'—S. Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction, invention and fantasìa* (1993) [book review], in the *Times Literary Supplement* (19 November 1993), p. 4.

[7] M. Bacci, *Piero di Cosimo* (Milan, 1966); M. Bacci, 1976; and A. Forlani Tempesti and E. Capretti, *Piero di Cosimo* (Florence, 1996).

[8] All three documents are discussed in D. Geronimus, 'The Birthdate, Early Life, and Career of Piero di Cosimo', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), pp. 164-70.

[9] Louis A. Waldman's recent documentary evidence has revealed new material concerning the final years of Piero's life and the circumstances of his death in Waldman, 'Fact, Fiction, and Hearsay: Notes on Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo, *alias* Piero di Lorenzo Ubaldini', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), pp. 171-9 (see App., docs. 21-3, 25-6 here). For a recent discussion on the chronology of Piero's Innocenti altarpiece and other works see L. Cavazzini, 'Un documento ritrovato e qualche osservazione sul percorso di Piero di Cosimo', *Prospettiva*, nos. 87-8 (July-Oct. 1997).

[10] Quoted from J. Paoletti, 'Wadsworth Atheneum: Italian School: Problems and Suggestions', *Apollo*, LXXXVIII (Dec. 1968), p. 420. Indeed, it is only in the past twenty-five years that many of the significant documentary finds have come to light.

[11] W. M. Griswold, *The Drawings of Piero di Cosimo* (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1988). The study also includes four copies after lost drawings and four drawings by anonymous artists apparently working close to Piero.

# Chapter I. A Biography of Piero di Lorenzo 'Ubaldini' and Vasari's 'Life of Piero': A Reconsideration

'Excellent painters are not unsociable from pride, but either because they find few minds capable of the art of painting or in order not to corrupt themselves with the vain conversation of idle persons and degrade their thoughts from the intense and lofty imaginings in which they are continually rapt' — Michelangelo, as quoted in Francisco di Hollanda, *De Pintura Antiguao* (1548)[1]

On 2 January 1462, at fifteen hours after sunset, or approximately nine in the morning, Piero di Lorenzo di Piero d'Antonio was born as the first of eight children to Lorenzo di Piero and Alessandra di Cresti di Bartolomeo (App., doc. 1).[2] In the family's *catasto* (property and income tax declaration) of 1480, Piero was noted as already involved in Cosimo Rosselli's workshop in the parish of Santa Maria in Campo, and it was during these teenage years and his apprenticeship with Rosselli that Piero changed his name, not unlike Andrea di Cosimo Feltrini, assuming his master's first name as a part of his own (App., doc. 6). Only now has it also been revealed through recent documentation, spanning the final four years of his life, that Piero later used the surname of Ubaldini ('de Ubaldinis', in Latin) (App., docs. 21, 23).[3] The same surname was repeated in mentions of Piero's younger brother Bastiano, a shoemaker living in Pisa, in two documents directly following Piero's death in 1522 (App., docs. 25-6). Piero's adoption of the Ubaldini surname so late in life may carry added significance, possibly suggesting a desire for elevated social status through the name of an older ancestor.[4]

Further discoveries in the Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence have revealed the birth dates of all seven of Piero's siblings, while statements from the *catasti* in the city's Archivio di Stato have allowed for the reconstruction of Piero's family history back to three generations, as far as the painter's great-grandfather, Antonio (fig. 1). Piero was certainly born and baptised in Florence, where his father was recorded in the tax records of 1457 (App., doc. 2). The 1457 *catasto* (filed in the quarter of S. Giovanni, *gonfalone* [electoral district] Leon d'Oro, like the others to follow) mentioned, however, that Lorenzo di Piero and his brother, Giovanni, had been 'staying with others until now', while the payments for the previous *catasto* were left blank. The next return of 1469 (App., doc. 4) clearly stated that 1457 marked the first time that either Lorenzo di Piero or his father, Piero d'Antonio, had made a tax declaration.[5] This absence of a previous residence and past tax declarations strongly suggests that Piero's father was the first to settle in the city. What is certain is that Piero di Cosimo's father was not a goldsmith, as remarked by Vasari,[6] but a maker of small tools (*succhiellinaio*) or a blacksmith (*fabbro*), as he described himself in a new 1461 document outlining

the purchase of a house on via della Scala in the parish of San Paolo (quarter of San Giovanni, *gonfalone* Leon d'Oro) from the Badia di Settimo (App., doc. 3).

It should be made clear that the stated parish of San Lorenzo in the baptismal records for both Piero and his brother Giovanni, along with the evidence in the *catasti* of 1457 and 1469, indicate that the family remained elsewhere than the parish of San Paolo at the time of Piero's birth, however. This variance again posed the question of the family's origins and subsequent movements. At least part of the answer is found in Lorenzo di Piero's 1457 *catasto*, where he stated that he was renting a house (along with his brother and mother) in Borgo la Noce from a mona Nanna, wife of Nanni d'Ugolino. The narrow via Borgo la Noce, running directly north from the church of S. Lorenzo, has retained its old name and certainly existed as a part of the same parish.[7] It was this rented house that most likely served as the family's first residence. Thus the permanent move to via della Scala, in the parish of San Paolo, was not made until a later date, sometime between 1464 (the birth of Giovanni di Lorenzo, parish of S. Lorenzo) and 1466 (birth of Girolamo di Lorenzo, parish of S. Paolo).

Blurrings of parish boundaries were not uncommon. In his 1461 purchase of the house in via della Scala, Lorenzo di Piero was mentioned as living in the parish of San Marco at the time of the transaction. Such a discrepancy (between S. Lorenzo and S. Marco) may have resulted from their relative proximity within the same *gonfalone* Leon d'Oro. Piero's own first documented tax declaration of 1498, for example, showed him continuing to live in his father's via della Scala home, yet now listed the parish as that of Santa Maria Novella (rather than S. Paolo).[8] In either instance the house would have actually fallen within the quarter of Santa Maria Novella, in the *gonfalone* of Leon Rosso (in the case of S. Paolo) or Leon Bianco (in the case of S. Maria Novella).[9] Nonetheless—despite various family members' ongoing residence in via della Scala, as seen from the *catasto* of 1469 to the *decime* (of Piero's younger brothers) dating as late as 1534—the tax declarations continued to be filed in S. Giovanni, Leon d'Oro throughout the years without exception.

In 1473, twelve years following the purchase of his house in via della Scala, Lorenzo di Piero bought a house and various lands in the parish of San Michele in nearby Carmignano, an area rich in vineyards and olive groves (App., doc. 5): property that was to remain with Piero until his own death, upon which time it entered the possession of his younger brothers Bastiano and Raffaello.[10] This land purchase, together with other property holdings listed in the 1480 *catasto*, indicate a growing financial security on Lorenzo's part.

In 1481, Piero di Cosimo took part in the largest project of his young career as Rosselli's assistant in the fresco decoration of the Sistine Chapel on the orders by Pope Sixtus IV, marking Piero's sole documented trip outside of his native city (fig. 3). As claimed by Vasari, Piero—as varied in his discourse as his art—was wanted to work in Rome 'per sua buona conversazione'. Piero's presence in

Florence's art community following his return is now significantly less clouded thanks to new documented traces of his membership in the Florentine Compagnia di S. Luca, the city's religious and social brotherhood of painters.[11] As previously known, Piero's debts and payments were entered in the confraternity's book of accounts ('Libro Rosso'), along with those of his fellow artists, in 1503-5 (App., doc. 14). In 1504, Piero became a member of the larger Arte dei Medici e Speziali (Guild of Doctors and Apothecaries), which subsumed the city's painters (App., doc. 15). Relying on two discovered documents, we can now not only follow Piero's earliest professional progress but also dispel the assumption by modern scholars that Piero's previously known late membership in the company and guild was a sign of his asocial character, implicitly buttressing Vasari's claims of Piero's misanthropy.[12] A notarial contract of 25 November 1482, containing a list of members present at a meeting of the Compagnia di S. Luca in the guildhall of the Arte dei Medici e Speziali near Sant'Andrea, included 'Petrus Laurentii Petri', then twenty years of age (App., doc. 7). Now thirty-seven, 'Pierus Laurentii Pieri' reappears in a *mandatum* of 18 October 1499 in a roll-call of the brotherhood's fifty-five members at a meeting in the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova (App., doc. 13). These inclusions indicate that Piero was an active member of the society at a much earlier date than anyone had imagined: twenty-one years earlier to be precise. On 5 January 1504, our painter also had the honour of serving on a thirty-two person committee convened in the Opera del Duomo to vote on the most suitable site for Michelangelo's *David* and was recorded as the final speaker in the debate (App., doc. 15).[13]

Despite progress in the unearthing of fresh biographical evidence, Piero's documented commissions unfortunately still remain skeletal. What we do know with some security begins in 1489 with Piero Capponi's payment to Chimenti del Tasso for an altarpiece frame intended for the family chapel in Santo Spirito (App., doc. 8).[14] The contract implies a date of 1489-90 for the altarpiece, which most likely refers to Piero's *Visitation*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (fig. 54). Next, 1493 marked the order for a *Madonna and Christ Child with Saints* (now in the Galleria dello Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence) from Piero by Giovanni Tesori, *spedalingo* of the Spedale degli Innocenti, on behalf of the Pugliese family (App., doc. 11) (fig. 56).[15] The work would have been placed in the Pugliese chapel in the Hospital's church shortly afterwards. In 1505, for Federigo Gondi, Piero executed a *Nostra Donna*, costing a relatively inexpensive 14 florins and intended for export to Naples (App., doc. 17).[16] Strozzi family documents reveal two other mature commissions, the first a design for a 1507 *mummeria di guantai* (dumb-show for the glove-makers) (App., doc. 18). Three years later, Filippo Strozzi paid 'fiorini 6 larghi d'oro per parte di camera', most likely corresponding to a part-payment for Piero's *Liberation of Andromeda spalliera*, commissioned

*c.*1510-13 by Filippo Strozzi the Younger and now belonging to the Uffizi, Florence (App., doc. 19) (fig. 29).[17]

Piero's *mummeria* for the Strozzi recalls the artist's great reputation as a designer of *trionfi* (public spectacles), so popular in late quattrocento Florence.[18] As described with great enthusiasm by Vasari, Piero was much celebrated for his skills of invention in the ephemera for masquerades held during Carnival. The designs for the spectacular *Carro della morte* (fig. 4), made shortly prior to the return of the Medici into Florence in 1512, in fact inspired Vasari to compose his longest and most detailed passage in Piero's biography.[19] Soon after, along with a host of younger artists such as Pontormo, Bugiardini and Granacci, Piero was occupied with the 'dipinctura et abigliatura di homini' (painting and dressing of men) arranged in the Triumphal arches for the entry of Leo X into Florence in 1515 (App., doc. 20).[20]

Still calling for a cautious approach, an unexpected archival discovery has also introduced the possibility of Piero's other and previously unknown artistic profession of manuscript illuminator.[21] Among the witnesses of a 11 September 1493 *compromissum* (a mutual promise to abide by the award of an arbiter) relating to an Alesso di Domenico di Piero, weaver, we find listed a 'Piero Laurentii Pieri miniatore' (App., doc. 10). The contract was drafted in the parish of Santa Maria in Campo, the site of Cosimo Rosselli's workshop. A second notarial document drafted in the same parish almost exactly two years earlier in 1491 likewise included a Piero di Lorenzo di Piero, miniaturist, as the second of three witnesses (App., doc. 9).[22] Most important, the notary here named the illuminator's parish as Santa Maria Novella, contiguous to Piero's known residence in via della Scala and named as his parish in the 1498 *decima*. Piero would have been twenty-nine and thirty-one years of age at the dates of the two documents and already a well-established painter in Florence.[23]

Although manuscript illumination was a distinctly different practice from panel painting, requiring its own particular skills, Piero's potential practice of the craft in the early 1490s would not be altogether surprising in light of his highly detailed, meticulous painting technique and use of luminous colour, demonstrated in early commissions both secular and ecclesiastical.[24] Still, the likelihood that the two documents refer to another Piero di Lorenzo di Piero is not to be discounted, as no extant illuminations by Piero di Cosimo's hand have yet been identified. The necessity to search for other confirming documentary evidence therefore still remains. However, the possible reference to Piero as an illuminator further contributes to the need to reexamine not only his painting oeuvre but also the variety of late fifteenth-century painting practice in Florentine workshops as a whole.[25]

As further documentation, discovered by Louis Waldman, has revealed, the circumstances surrounding Piero's death in 1522 differed starkly from Vasari's melodramatic version, in which Piero's body was supposedly found one morning crumpled at the foot of his stairs.[26] A document

drawn up by a notary on 20 March 1522 includes a later marginal *ricordo* in Italian, unlike the rest of the document in Latin, but also by Ser Girolamo's hand: 'Note that the said Piero died of plague at the tenth hour and on the 12th day of April 1522', the morning before Palm Sunday (App., doc. 23).[27] In addition to revealing the previously unknown cause of death—the plague that struck Florence between 1522 and 1524—the recording of the exact time of the event also establishes that Piero did not die alone and that his passing had indeed been witnessed. It now appears that Piero expired in the kind of circumstances Vasari claimed he dreaded most during his last days: in a sickroom and surrounded precisely by the people from whom he sought to be spared in the doting doctors, friends and relatives.

Turning back to four years before his demise, the painter, seriously ill and perhaps sensing the imminence of his end, left funds to the Compagnia dell'Annunziata, of which he was a member (App., doc. 21).[28] Although Piero died intestate, this contract drafted on 22 June 1518 can be said to have served as an equivalent of a will and was the first of three highly revealing contracts drawn up by Piero during his final years, providing insight not only into his posthumous wishes but his various social relations. His fastidiously stipulated donation of 35 florins to the Servite friars of the church of Santissima Annunziata reflects a great concern for self-commemoration in the request for a most devout burial, carried out by an unusually large number of participants that was to include the confraternity's members together with the church's friars, its prior and all the clergy of Piero's parish of San Pier Maggiore. Piero's bequest, painstakingly arranged, consisted of ten gold florins to be used for the funeral rites, seven additional florins for the celebration of a cycle of Gregorian Masses and the saying of an annual mass on the feast day of St. Peter (his namesake) for the next twenty-five years, together with the provision of candles and other requirements. Hardly the acts of a scatter-brained and 'bestial' character, the elaborate instructions for his funeral rites do support one of Vasari's claims that Piero was most zealous ('zelantissimo') in matters of religion, especially as he neared his end.

Approximately three years later—on 27 May 1521 and thus a year before his death—Piero had another document drafted: a sizable posthumous gift of fifty florins to his neighbour Giovan Simone di Marco di Bartolomeo di maestro Lacha, in gratitude for his care of the artist during old age, in times of 'his illnesses and in his prosperity', by providing him with meals and clothing (App., doc. 22). Finally, less than a month before his end, on 20 March 1522, Piero di Cosimo bequeathed another fifty florins to the same Giovan Simone, from whom he had received 'so many benefits' (App., doc. 23). As security for the two payments, Piero mortgaged seventeen *staiora* of land that he owned at Valagli, in the parish of S. Michele a Carmignano, and, in the second instance, a house in Carmignano in a nearby location.[29]

Piero was buried on 13 April 1522, and while the funeral ceremonies were performed by his fellow members of the Compagnia dell'Annunziata, a document published by Eugenio Casalini shows that the painter was not buried in the company's tomb at Santissima Annunziata, as specified in 1518, but rather in San Piero Maggiore, a church within his home parish (App., doc. 24).[30] As suggested by Waldman, the reason for this change, made contrary to Piero's wishes, was probably the fear of further contagion from the plague, necessitating the quick interment of the body.

Unexpectedly, Piero's 1518 donation to the Compagnia dell'Annunziata also reveals for the first-time securely documented presence of a pupil in Piero's household: a Nicola di Giovanni di Rosa Caprini, a 'painter, in the aforesaid Piero's house' and hailing from the vicinity of Rome. Although Vasari mentioned that 'his disciples were many',[31] Pontormo and Andrea del Sarto were the only students mentioned by name in the *Lives*, while Andrea di Cosimo Feltrini was also noted as having worked alongside Piero on the spectacular *Triumph of Death* and provided large parts of the procession's eye-witness account. The newly found presence of a live-in assistant again challenges Vasari's picture of Piero as a peevish recluse—and the claim that Piero could not bear the presence of assistants during his last years—as well as introducing the possibility of a second hand in a number of the master's late panels in the second decade of the 1500s. Although Piero is not believed to have had a workshop of any significant size, if at all, the great number of tondi painted after his style or copied directly may suggest more open-ended possibilities of collaboration.[32]

Finally, the late documents discussed here contradict another of Vasari's claims that Piero spent his last years in squalor. All of the evidence instead suggests that, not unlike his father, Piero appears to have been comfortably off, possessing a substantial amount of land holdings, not only in Florence but in nearby Carmignano—real estate that passed down to him after his father's death. Piero's land portfolio included not only the home on via della Scala mentioned in 1504, and most likely the same one purchased by his father in 1461, but also a plot of land on via del Rosaio (the present via Laura), as early as 1505.[33] In January of the following year, Piero was also leasing 'half a house' in the parish of San Michele Visdomini,[34] and in 1522, although ill, Piero acquired or built a house in the old via Laura (now via della Colonna) (App., doc. 25). Both situated near and to the east of Santissima Annunziata, the lot in old via Laura was larger than the one at the via del Rosaio location, having included a courtyard and a garden—perhaps that described so romantically by Vasari in his Life as intentionally unattended and left to grow wild!

The management of Piero's estate subsequently entered the hands of Bastiano Ubaldini, and in a contract drafted less than a month after Piero's death, on 7 May 1522, we find Bastiano leasing the house on via Laura for three years to an intriguing tenant: Piero's former pupil, Jacopo da Pontormo (App., doc. 25).[35] The younger painter's residence proved short-lived, as Pontormo was forced to flee

Florence before February 1523 and seek refuge in the Certosa of Galluzzo under the threat of plague, the same that had claimed Piero's life a year earlier. No more than six years had passed before Pontormo purchased two lots on the same old via Laura from the Hospital of the Innocents on 15 March 1529, with the intention of building lodgings and a bottega—finally realising his wishes in 1534.[36] Pontormo's earlier lease from his former teacher does suggest that he probably remained on at least fairly close terms with Piero in the final years of his mentor's life.[37]

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Turning from the known facts of Piero's life, nothing has affected future perceptions of the painter to the extent of Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite de'piu eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, published in two editions of 1550 and 1568.[38] Inaccuracies and hyperbole—such as that surrounding Piero's death—are found throughout Vasari's colourful account of Piero's life and career (fig. 2). Circumstantially, it must be remembered that the Aretine was only ten years old at the time of Piero's passing and although many of the gaps must have been supplied by Andrea del Sarto and Andrea di Cosimo Feltrini, Piero's partner in the *trionfi* designs, Vasari must have relied on anecdote and hearsay for many of his accounts.[39]

The intrusion of his concern with social status in the *Lives* has, in effect, made Vasari a 'rewriter' of art history and, in the final estimation, his biography of Piero has proven as damaging to the latter's reputation in its misleading aspects as it has been helpful in establishing a framework for some of Piero's works, their locations and patrons. Keeping in mind the painted works themselves rather than Vasari's implicit didactic motives, we should not hesitate to challenge the Aretine's notions of excellence. The more one studies the *Lives*, the more the work begs the question of whether or not Vasari ever truly understood the creative minds and intentions of artists like Piero. In a sense, the pointed criticism in the biography can be viewed more accurately as prescriptions for the Aretine's own works: products of a highly complex artifice, involving elusive and often reflexive symbolism, as best seen in his *Portrait of Alessandro de' Medici* or his often copied *Immaculate Conception*. Vasari's base of patronage consisted of sophisticated clerics and Duke Cosimo I. The social nature of his art and the importance of reception are crucial to understanding the differences between his artistic approach and that of Piero. The strong rhetorical element to Vasari's art is glaringly absent from works by Piero, Pontormo or Rosso, for example, all of whom created images imbued with an intensity of emotion that is largely suppressed in Vasari's images.

Despite its subjectivity and overemphasis on social eccentricities, Vasari's Life of Piero certainly should not be discarded altogether and still remains one of the most important surviving sources from

which to quarry clues.[40] Vasari's most direct contribution is the attribution of a body of work to Piero: sixteen paintings or cycles of paintings, one cartoon, and book of pen drawings ('Libro d'animali'). Much more ambiguous than often supposed, Piero's Life also provides us with elucidating and *positive* points of discrimination.

Unfortunately, it is still the resulting myth of Piero as the solitary hypochondriac that has shaped future perceptions of the painter's career most. After giving an account of Piero's early promise in Rosselli's studio, in which we read of the youth's lofty spirit and imagination (*fantasia*) and his abstracted, self-absorbed character (*astrattezza*), Vasari soon switches to a more sensationalist voice:

> E bene lo ['stranezza'] dimostrò meglio dopo la morte di Cosimo, che egli del continuo stava rinchiuso e non si lasciava veder lavorare, e teneva una vita d uomo più tosto bestiale che umano. Non voleva che le stanze si spazzassino, voleva mangiare allora che la fame veniva, e non voleva che si zappasse o potasse i frutti dell'orto, anzi lasciava crescere le viti et andare i tralci per terra, et i fichi non si potavono mai né gli altri alberi, anzi si contentava veder salvatico ogni cosa come la sua natura, allegando che le cose d'essa natura bisogna lassarle custodire a lei senza farvi altro. Recavasi spesso a vedere o animali o erbe o qualche cosa che la natura fa per istranezza et a casso dimolte volte, e ne aveva un contento e una satisfazione che lo furava tutto a se stesso....[41]

Piero's Life was not the first occasion upon which Vasari presented an artist as solitary, abstracted, moody and excitable. The same character traits are evident in descriptions of Paolo Uccello, Il Sodoma, Il Graffione, Parmigianino and Pontormo[42]; even in the Life of his most revered artist, Michelangelo, Vasari makes it clear that the profile of the obsessive creative spirit may be more of a *topos* than an unadulterated observation that is specific to a given individual. This following passage, more than any other in Piero's Life, reveals Vasari's interest in a didactic—rather than purely descriptive—mode.

> E se Piero non fusse stato tanto astratto e avesse tenuto più conto di sé nella vita che egli non fece, arebbe fatto conoscere il grande ingegno che egli aveva, di maniera che sarebbe stato adorato, dove egli per la bestialità sua fu più tosto tenuto pazzo, ancora che egli non facesse male se non a sé solo nella fine, e benefizio et utile con le opere a l'arte sua. Per la qual cosa doverebbe sempre ogni buono ingegno et ogni eccellente artefice, ammaestrato da questi esempli, aver gli occhi alla fine.[43]

This chastisement of Piero's deviant conduct forms a direct link between an artist's societal behavior, or public decorum, and the judgment of his art. And while the neglect of material comforts was forgiven in Michelangelo (and the condition of his boot-clad feet) and Leonardo (and his studio's 'stench of dead animals'), the trait was constantly highlighted in Piero's case. Vasari dwelled upon anecdotes that have now become common trademarks of the artist, exploited to the point of caricature.[44] Vasari's account lead Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, in *Born Under Saturn*, to speculate: 'We cannot doubt that artists like Piero di Cosimo and Pontormo were deeply disturbed men and probably clinical cases.... We have no idea how many medieval artist-craftsmen were neurotic; and

even if there were many (which is unlikely) it would still be uninteresting because nobody would have paid special attention to their troubles.... Moreover, men like Piero and Pontormo were looked upon as eccentric rather than ill, as typical rather than exceptional, and they helped to shape the image of the new artist' [45] Even Erwin Panofsky can be judged guilty of oversimplification in equating Piero's character and his compositions. Holding to Vasari's psychological portrait of the painter, Panofsky claimed that 'Piero di Cosimo is better known to us than almost any other artist of his period' thanks to Vasari, who 'was able to immortalize his character by a most convincing psychological portrait', before describing Piero as 'an atavistic phenomenon' on the ground of his 'primitivistic notions' [46] In his *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, again discussing the so-called 'History of Early Man' panels in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Panofsky referred to Piero as a 'displaced primitive himself'.[47]

In using Piero's biography as an admonition against obsessive behavior and lack of manners, Vasari leads us to believe that it was Piero's lack of self-control and cultivation that consequently robbed him of the great rewards warranted by his talents. Thus, while Raphael's charm won him many prized commissions and an open door into the highest social circles, Piero's said deficiencies in polished grace and his strangeness denied him such opportunities of patronage and the connections of the type that Vasari himself desired. It is precisely this criticism that proves to be the most misleading and damaging in the Life. Studying the pattern of Piero's commissions and their execution, we are consistently presented with the picture of a professional, enterprising and versatile craftsman. In surveying his career, Piero enjoyed highly prestigious commissions. Comprised of Florence's most wealthy and influential *popolani* families, some of exceptionally notable antiquity, the list includes Filippo Strozzi il Giovane, Gino Capponi, Francesco del Pugliese, Giovanni Vespucci il Giovane and Federigo Gondi.[48] According to Vasari, the highly discerning collectors further extended to Cosimo Bartoli, provost of Florence Cathedral, who possessed a cartoon for a portrait, as well as Giuliano de' Medici and later Duke Cosimo I, who owned an image of a sea monster, together with a book of animal drawings, executed in pen and ink. This high demand for Piero's paintings from such an élite foundation of patrons and collectors—in addition to Piero's hard working and prompt method of execution—have been all too often overlooked in favour of the myth of Piero as an unpredictable wild man.

Like Leonardo, Piero produced a style that was difficult to imitate successfully, particularly in the sophisticated pagan subjects for private patrons. It is important to stress, however, that of his extant works, all are finished products and most likely would have been accessible as such. In this important respect, Piero's professionalism in fulfilling his commissions was in sharp contrast to Leonardo's chronic inability—whether due to failed materials or, more likely, his time-consuming intellectual

pursuits and experimentation—to bring demanded projects to full completion. Vasari alone explicitly mentioned no less than six incomplete projects, ranging from a design depicting the Fall for a tapestry to be sent to the King of Portugal, a Medusa head (later among the collection of Duke Cosimo) and the *Mona Lisa*,[49] to much more ambitious projects such as the *Adoration of the Magi* ordered in 1481 for S. Donato a Scopeto. It is striking that Vasari, the most punctilious and prolific of artists, remained so effusive in his forgiveness for the artist's unreliability, citing Leonardo's striving after difficulties and perfection.[50]

Despite his unrealised commissions, Leonardo must have been an extremely important artistic presence in Florence, and Vasari is fairly explicit in establishing a link between him and Piero. I will, therefore, use Leonardo as my main point of comparison and departure in discussing Vasari's critical terminology, Piero's own artistic development and the larger subject of transmission. In fact, correlations between the two men have been made no less often than appropriations of Piero as a pioneer of the bizarre and have gripped Piero literature since Vasari, albeit often with little elaboration, in effect distilling Piero to 'una sorta di Leonardo istintivo e plebeo'.[51] Bernard Berenson, in *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, regarded Piero as 'a feebler version of Leonardo', 'on the fanciful side of that many-faceted genius'.[52]

Leonardo's exerted influence on Piero first must be tempered by a number of factors, the foremost being practical, due not only to the brevity of Leonardo's stays but also the paucity of his artistic production in Florence from *c.*1472-82 and again 1500-1506. With the larger part of his production unfinished and his Florentine stays interrupted, the extent of Leonardo's impact on contemporaries like Piero has remained frustratingly mysterious. Leonardo's constant peregrinations in fact form one of the most obvious biographical contrasts between the two artists, as Piero is not documented as having taken any journeys outside of his home city with the exception of the Sistine Chapel project in 1481. More important, Leonardo was the most deceptive of models, whose experimental and almost inimitable techniques must have greatly limited the ability of fellow painters to follow his examples. It is, therefore, most misleading to assume a direct one-to-one correlation between their artistic approaches. One promising thread of evidence concerning Leonardo's impact in Florence in the first decade of the sixteenth century is granted by the visiting Raphael and his sketches after the *Battle of Anghiari* of 1503-6 (or at least its right side)—one of several examples of what must have been a great many copies after Leonardo's fresco and cartoon. With regard to Piero, I believe we can hypothesise about the influence of Lorenzo di Credi as a possible intermediary. Not only did Lorenzo earlier share the Verrocchio studio with Leonardo as the most faithful of their master's assistants, but he also appears as one of the three executors of Piero's 35 florins bequest to the Servite company of Santissima Annunziata in 1518 (App., doc. 21).

It has been argued that Leonardo remained open to those artists who wished to gain insights into either his ideas or his actual artistic designs. This willing type of exchange remains controversial. With matters of influence, it remains necessary to qualify that the most frequent assumptions surrounding the impact of Leonardo, Filippino Lippi and Northern Europe on Piero's art still present serious problems in the lack of substantiating evidence, a weakness that colours many seemingly authoritative statements about artistic cooperation and the borrowing of themes and techniques in the Renaissance as a whole. Though sometimes borrowed or traded, workshop drawings still remained carefully guarded property of the workshops and, more so, of individual masters. Regardless of whether or not Vasari was accurate in describing how Michelangelo burned his preparatory drawings in order to erase all traces of his creative process and thus elude all imitators, there is enough evidence to show that Michelangelo was not the only artist who fiercely protected his sense of originality and showed an intensely private attitude toward sharing designs. In the Life of Piero, specifically, we read of Piero's mistrust of onlookers in his work for the Ospedale d'Innocenti.[53]

Money was unlikely to have been the cause of Piero's indignation. Instead, the instance illustrates the painter's conventional desire for a degree of secrecy. The same can be seen in other *Lives*, in which artists tend to become confrontational at having visitors stealing through the church to peek at works through scaffolding, or worse yet, having the patron remove the scaffolding before the artist feels the work to be completed. It becomes relatively apparent that during this period, when originality and a personal trademark style often typified success, for a mature artist to copy another's work—be they as revered as Leonardo—was, on one level, a compromise.[54] This desire of the artist to separate himself from dominant 'traditions' in his own art must have been equal in intensity to the artist's need to keep his own secrets of the trade to himself alone. Thus, while it is not only interesting but imperative to investigate matters of influence, the search for concrete, direct links can be a dangerously speculative one.[55]

The quandary of transmission, and even direct relevance, of Leonardo's writings to Piero as a potential receptor, arises as it does with many of Piero's literary sources for his mythological panels and greatly inhibits our readiness to establish clear links. Piero almost certainly would not have had direct access to Leonardo's written theories in manuscript form, with many of the notes collected and ordered after Leonardo's final departure from Florence, as seen in Melzi's efforts in the Codex Urbinas, or *Trattato della Pittura.* The most pressing question, however, appears to be whether Leonardo's theories—such as those on narrative and the viewer's emotional involvement with the depicted subject, whether expressed in portraiture or the participants of an *istoria*—would have materialised and become available to other artists in visual examples. The *Battle of Anghiari* in Palazzo Vecchio's Sala del Maggior Consiglio and the *Adoration* serve as two of the most obvious

illustrations, secular and devotional, and yet both images remained incomplete lessons.[56] Relations between Leonardo's theory and practice contained their own manifest disjunctions in his own art, and an almost unanswerable question remains as to whether Leonardo himself succeeded in achieving the 'great intimacy' of which he writes. It could be argued that he accomplished the rare fusion of body and soul in his revolutionary portraits and their psychological charge. And yet early Florentine examples such as the *Ginevra di Benci* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, function more as a remote idealisation of the Renaissance courtly beloved and her inaccessibility, as well as an exercise in the perfection of a painting technique based on the use of light and shadow, colour and atmosphere. A much more communicative image—with greater narrative potential—was achieved approximately ten years later in the *Cecilia Gallerani* (*c.*1485) in Cracow, but was produced in the court of Ludovico Sforza. Martin Kemp noted that without Leonardo's writings and based solely on the visual evidence of his few paintings, Leonardo would 'less obviously and incontrovertibly be seen as a natural heir to the Florentine tradition of rational naturalism'.[57] Instead, the unexpected effects and ambiguities of his images, such as the *Mona Lisa* or the *Deluge* black chalk drawings of *c.*1515 (Windsor), conspire to baffle rather than elucidate, as 'the microcosm is simultaneously a poetic image and a scientific cause' with no easy separation between the two.[58] The main impression that lingers from Leonardo's figural images above all else is that of ambiguity and portent.

Despite such limitations, it is difficult to deny the role played by works such as the *Adoration of the Magi* and the Santissima Annunziata *Virgin and St. Anne* cartoon, exhibited in the church in 1501 and described by Vasari as causing a stir to match a festival.[59] Both must have been responsible for firing Piero's creative sense and furthering his development to a significant extent. Yet, again, both projects were abandoned and issues of transmission prove problematic. The same case occurred with the *Battle of Anghiari*—highly visible but equally ephemeral. As the most often invoked point of connection between Leonardo and Piero, the Battlepiece indeed demonstrates vital commonalities with Piero's *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs spalliera* (The National Gallery, London) in its turbulent energy (fig. 24). Although many fundamental stylistic and technical differences remain, Piero's *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs*, together with his two *Bacchanals* companion panels commissioned by Giovanni Vespucci (figs. 26-7), reveal the same union of *fantasia* and intellect as Leonardo's short-lived design in being researched, highly sophisticated images.

It was precisely in their *fantasia*, powers of observation and an inventiveness exceeding all prototypes that Piero and Leonardo show the strongest kinship. In relating Piero's habit of examining a wall upon which sick people had spat, conjuring equestrian combats and cities upon the grimy surface,[60] Vasari presented an image that was in perfect accord with the lure of accidental shapes on a wall stained with damp mentioned in Leonardo's notes, later assembled into the *Trattato*—and, going

back further, with Philostratus the Athenian's 'centaurs and heraldic animals' imagined in the formations of irregular clouds.[61] The appeal of this spontaneous way of seeing and creating, an aid in 'quickening the spirit of invention' as Leonardo wrote, falls under a definition of *invenzione* unlike the more 'classical' one exemplified by Raphael or prescribed by Alberti. The meaning of *invenzione* is a multifaceted one in the *Lives*, but the aspect deemed most important by Vasari appears to be that which is offered in his Technical Preface on Painting: one that 'demands an inner propriety springing out of harmony and obedience'.[62]

While *invenzione*, in this context, is defined in terms of the effective arrangement of figures that produces a compositional harmony, the invention of Leonardo and Piero is largely embodied in the fertility of the imagination. In the case of Piero, the term *invenzione* was often coupled with adjectives like *capriccioso* and *stravagante* within Vasari's vocabulary. Early in his biography, Vasari referred to Piero's roaming fancy in his youth, 'always building castles in the air'[63] Calling attention to the painter's masterful trompe l'oeil depiction of St. Nicholas' attribute of the golden balls in the Capponi *Visitation* altarpiece for Santo Spirito, Vasari claimed that from this detail we can 'perceive the strangeness of his brain ('la stranezza del suo cervello') and his constant seeking after difficulties' [64] In describing the background of the Uffizi *Incarnation with Six Saints* for the Tedaldi family chapel in Santissima Annunziata (fig. 61), Vasari similarly wrote of a landscape that was 'very bizarre ('biz[z]arro'), what with the strange trees and certain grottoes',[65] while a lost marine monster for Giuliano de' Medici proved striking for its incredible deformity, 'so extravagant, bizarre and fantastic' ('tanto stravagante, biz[z]arro e fantastico').[66] It is his unique creations such as the 'curiously deformed' serpents, his book of 'curious and strange animals...executed with admirable patience', and most notably his masquerades and processional triumphs 'full of ornaments, spoils and curious fancies, which enchanted the people' that are singled out by Vasari as the most fitting illustrations of Piero's idiosyncratic type of invention. Bestowing the greatest amount of attention in the Life on a detailed description of Piero's public projects, Vasari began with an early design for a masquerade during Carnival (most likely the documented project for the Strozzi), calling it fanciful and extravagant in invention ('capriccioso e di stravagante invènzione') and proceeded to extol the *Triumph of Death*: producing effects 'grand and ingenious' ('grande e...ingegnoso').[67] This immediately calls to mind Leonardo's own allegorical pageant and theatrical designs for the stage, and their necessary machinery, in Milan (1490 and 1496),[68] as well his automated lion for Francis I's entry into Lyon on 12 July 1515, and the opening of the beast's chest out of which issued a stream of lilies.

Although Vasari's focus on Piero's art often dwelled on the notions of *fantasia* and *capriccio*, he also praised the great care and excellence of technique with which Piero finished his works.[69] On

Piero's method of oil painting, Vasari praised the Tedaldi *Incarnation* for its grace and harmonious colouring in oils: 'e per il vero ci sono parti bellissime, come certe teste che mostrano e disegno e grazia, oltra il colorito molto continovato: e certamente che Piero possedeva grandemente il colorire a olio' [70] About Piero's *Liberation of Andromeda*, Vasari added: 'il paese è bellissimo et un colorito dolce e grazioso: e quanto si può unire e sfumare colori, condusse questa opera con estrema diligenzia'.[71] Vasari's comments in this vein again involved Leonardo, namely his use of oil technique. In one of his most insightful remarks in Piero's biography, Vasari wrote:

> Diede opera al colorire a olio, avendo visto certe cose di Lionardo fumeggiate e finite con quella diligenza estrema che soleva Lionardo quando e'voleva mostrar l'arte; e così Piero, piacendoli quel modo, cercava imitarlo, quantunque egli fusse poi molto lontano da Lionardo, e da l'altre maniere assai stravagante: per che bene si può dire che e' la mutasse quasi a ciò ch'e' faceva.[72]

It is precisely this variability of execution within Piero's corpus of works that makes a reconstruction of his chronology such a difficult task. One suitable juxtaposition of contrasts is provided by a *Madonna and Child* tondo in the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio (fig. 84), datable approximately to the 1490s, and the *Holy Family with Young St. John the Baptist* in the Palazzo Cini, Venice, belonging to the last decade of Piero's production (fig. 96). Throughout Piero's Life, there is a glaring refusal by Vasari to speak of any kind of unified style belonging to the artist. This has been interpreted to mean that Piero's style, by implication like his temperament, changed from one work to another, producing an erratic and somewhat belaboured development that was in sharp contrast to Raphael's seemingly smooth, logical growth towards ultimate grace and ease of expression. There is, nonetheless, a positive import to this comment—related to Piero's curiosity, diligence and *varietà*. Piero's predilection for experimentation and change is highlighted repeatedly in the Life, and his capacity to adapt and court subjects of great *difficultà* supports an alternative view that Piero's frequent permutations in style reflect a highly original and—as his enviable base of patronage showed—desirable form of artistic diversity.

It is most notable that for all of his criticism of Piero's social eccentricities, Vasari's delight in Piero's works was at its highest when the subjects tended to be the most fantastic rather than the most restrained. Describing the Tedaldi *Incarnation*, Vasari mentioned the bizarre landscape 'with the strange trees and certain grottoes' Even more attention was then given to the work's predella scenes, among which St. Margaret was shown issuing from the belly of the serpent: 'che per aver fatto quello animale e contraffatto e brutto, non penso che in quel genere si possa veder meglio, mostrando il veleno per gli occhi, il fuoco e la morte in uno aspetto veramente pauroso. *E certamente che simil' cose non credo che nessuno le facesse meglio di lui nè le imaginasse a gran pezzo* [own emphasis]'. Vasari proceeded to marvel at the marine monster ('che per la deformità sua è tanto stravagante,

biz[z]arro e fantastico, che pare impossibile che la natura usasse e tanta deformità e tanta stranezza nelle cose sue') that Piero presented to Giuliano de' Medici, before judging the *Liberation of Andromeda* for Filippo Strozzi as Piero's best work. Vasari enthused: '...non fece mai Piero la più vaga pittura né la meglio finita di questa, attesoché non è possibile veder la più bizzar[r]a orca marina né la più capricciosa di quella che si immaginò di dipingere Piero...'.[73]

It thus becomes clear that a balanced reading is required for the understanding of Vasari's Life of Piero, a problematic account oscillating between historical fact and personally motivated rhetoric. While some of the biography's anecdotal passages seem almost too vivid to be dismissed as pure invention, the distortions of second-hand and other outside accounts are often evident, infusing the text with the Aretine's own agendas. His criticism confined almost solely to didactic points warning against an artist's social deviations, Vasari was consistently positive with regard to Piero's works and their technical mastery. Borrowing liberally from Vasari's version published sixteen years earlier, Raffaello Borghini wrote not a single negative word about Piero's career in his short biography of Piero in *Il Riposo*. Borghini's account is instead full of wonder, the author calling Piero a 'persona molto stravagante, e d'inventioni nuove, e capricciose', while describing the particular works as 'bizzarro' and executed 'con grandissima diligenza' on the one hand or, more generally, 'bella e lodevole' on the other.[74]

Consequently, Vasari's alternative use of *invenzione* in Piero's case had led past scholarship to interpret rather one-sidedly that Piero was deemed a reclusive dreamer, rather than a masterful and decorous orchestrator of compositional structures, although there is no evidence to support such an explicitly negative reading. In proposing that Vasari found Piero's work no less pleasing for this different use of *invenzione*, as more abstract and imaginative, we must look no further than Piero's *Venus, Cupid and Mars* panel now in Berlin (fig. 22). In the highest commendation of all, we know that Vasari prized this panel in his own collection from a passage occurring in the second edition of the *Lives*, leading us to believe that the Aretine acquired the picture between 1550 and 1568. After describing the subject, Vasari added: 'Questo quadro è in casa Giorgio Vasari, tenuto in memoria sua da lui, perché sempre gli piacquero i capricci di questo maestro'—a testament to Piero's highest inventive powers.[75]

[1] F. di Hollanda, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, trans. A. Bell (Oxford, 1928), pp. 11-12.
[2] D. Geronimus, 'The Birthdate, Early Life, and Career of Piero di Cosimo', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), pp. 164-70. The article clears up the past confusion over Piero's birth date, stemming from differing statements in his father's *catasti* of 1469 and 1480 (App., docs. 3-4), and explains the collated search and elimination process by which the 'real' Piero di Lorenzo's baptismal date was found.
[3] L.A. Waldman, 'Fact, Fiction, and Hearsay: Notes on Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo, *alias* Piero di Lorenzo Ubaldini', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), p. 171 of pp. 171-9. Despite efforts, the precise link to the Ubaldini name remains untraced.
[4] On the adoption of a surname in the Renaissance and the accompanying social aspirations and prestige, see C. Klapisch-Zuber and D. Herlihy, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 345-52. On artists' social ambitions (and surnames) also see R. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore and London, 1980), pp. 418-20.
[5] The earliest *catasti* of 1427 yielded ten Piero di Antonios as possibilities for Piero's grandfather. Three, in fact, resided in the quarter of S. Giovanni, *gonfalone* Leon d'Oro. However none of the ten choices matched the known facts; none were married to a mona Nanna (born *c.*1392) and had a recent child named Lorenzo. Several were unmarried altogether and/or had the wrong surnames (such as Stoldo, Vanni or Neri).
[6] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 59: 'un figliuolo d'un Lorenzo orafo' Vasari's misidentification also led to past confusion between Piero's father and a Lorenzo di Piero Chimenti (born 1436 and matriculated in the *Arte dei medici e speziali* in 1460), a goldsmith who may have also been a painter; see Thieme and Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Kunstler*, XXVII (Leipzig, 1933), p. 15. There is some possibility that this Lorenzo di Piero Chimenti was the same Lorenzo di Piero *dipintore*, living in the parish of S. Felice in Piazza, and the father of four offspring baptised from 1456 to 1463 (AODF, Registri Battesimali dal 4.11.1450 al 31.8.1464, printed 1966, compiled by K. Schlebusch and A. Schleicher). Gaetano Milanesi also incorrectly linked Piero's father to the painter Lorenzo di Piero Chimenti (see citation in the German edition of J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavalcaselle, *Geschichte der italienischen Malerei*, IV, pt. 2 [Leipzig, 1872], p. 433, n. 55).
[7] Lorenzo's younger brother, Giovanni, worked a short distance away in the bottega of Antonio di Dato, a dyer, that was located two streets to the west, at S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini, on via Faenza.
[8] ASF, Decima Repubblicana 28 (Quartiere di S. Giovanni, Gonfalone Leon d'Oro, 1498), fol. 252 r-v. Piero's declaration begins: 'Quartiere di San Giovanni / Ghonfalone Lione d'Oro / *Piero di Lorenzo di Piero dipintore e fratelli abitano in Firenze nel popolo di Santa Maria Novella disse la gravezza dell'anno 1481 in Lorenzo di Piero d'Antonio succhiellinaio* [emphasis added] e di poi nostra madre doppo la morte di Lorenzo suo marito prese per la sua dota et per vighore d'uno lascio fattogli uno suo fratello che non fecie il piato al palazio dal podestà ser Mazzotto di...e di poi circha di 18 mesi fa morì detta nostra madre e per tanto gli infraschritti boni sono pervenuti in noi...'
[9] A listing of the various parishes and their corresponding *gonfalone* (and *quartiere*) is found in Samuel K. Cohn Jr., *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (NY, 1980), p. 32.
[10] For the later 1534 tax declarations of Piero's two younger brothers see: Bastiano di Lorenzo di Piero *calzaiolo* in ASF, Decima Granducale 3628 (Quartiere di S. Giovanni, Gonfalone Leon d'Oro, 1534), fol. 351r-v; and Raffaello di Lorenzo di Piero *calzaiolo* in ASF, Dec. Gran. 3632 (Quartiere di S. Giovanni, Gonfalone Leon d'Oro, 1534), fols. 163r-164r.
[11] Two occasions on which Piero is documented in the company are published in Geronimus, 2000, p. 165; and Waldman, 2000, p. 171 of the same *Art Bulletin* issue.
[12] Most recently: Fermor, 1993, pp. 14-15; Tempesti-Capretti, 1996, p. 149; and D. Arasse, *Le Sujet Dans Le Tableau* (Paris, 1997), pp. 55-6. Arasse strangely offers two pieces of evidence in support of Piero as an 'homme sauvage': the drafting of Piero's 1498 *decima* by a notary's hand (according to Arasse, a sign of Piero's lack of reading and writing skills), although such a practice was always the rule with *decime* rather than the exception; and Piero's late entry into the Guild in 1504.

[13] S. Levine, 'The Location of Michelangelo's David: The Meeting of January 25, 1504', *Art Bulletin*, LVI (Mar. 1974), pp. 31-49.
[14] S. Craven, 'Three Dates for Piero di Cosimo', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXVII (Sept. 1975), p. 572.
[15] L. Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze* (Milan, 1977), p. 12. The document is transcribed in full in L. Cavazzini, 'Un documento ritrovato e qualche osservazione sul percorso di Piero di Cosimo', *Prospettiva*, no. 87-8 (July-Oct. 1997), pp. 131-2.
[16] F. Melis, 'Un'opera di Piero di Cosimo per Napoli', *Commentari*, XIX (Jan.-June 1968), p. 154.
[17] For both Strozzi documents, see Craven, 1975, pp. 572-6.
[18] For discussions of *trionfi* and carnivals see: A. Cecchi, ed., *L'Officina della maniera*, exh. cat., Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 1996 (Florence, 1996), pp. 36-40; G. Carandente, *I Trionfi del primo Rinascimento* (Naples, 1963); and W. Weisbach, *I Trionfi* (Berlin, 1919). For Pope Leo X's Triumph of 1515 see: I. Ciseri, *L'ingresso trionfale di Leone X in Firenze nel 1515* (Florence, 1990).
[19] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 63-5. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 652-4.
[20] J. Shearman, 'The Florentine Entrata of Leo X, 1515', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXXVIII (1975), p. 147, n. 34.
[21] Geronimus, 2000, p. 165-6.
[22] The witnesses of the 21 September 1491 contract, discovered by Louis A. Waldman, also mention a Zanobi di Lorenzo, who was most likely a bookseller and miniaturist, active at the end of the fifteenth century, and Giovanni di Michele di Lorenzo, called Il Graffione (1468-*c*.1521), a pupil of Piero di Lorenzo Zuccheri and assistant of Alesso Baldovinetti. For Il Graffione, see D.E. Colnaghi, *Colnaghi's Dictionary of Florentine Painters, from the 13th to the 17th Centuries* (Florence, 1986), pp. 138-9. Colnaghi noted Zanobi di Piero Randegli (1468-1527) as a painter and gilder. See Ibid., p. 227; and Paolo D'Ancona and Erhard Aeschlimann, *Dictionnaire des Miniaturistes du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance* (Nendeln, 1969), p. 217.
[23] The only other Florentine artist with the name of Piero di Lorenzo di Piero documented at these dates was Piero di Lorenzo di Piero Randegli. Born in 1475, this Piero would have been only sixteen years of age in 1491 and eighteen in 1493. Like his father Lorenzo, also a painter, Piero di Lorenzo Randegli would have resided in the quarter of S. Spirito, *gonfalone* Ferza. See Colnaghi, 1986, pp. 227-8.
[24] These technical elements are visible in *The Hunting Scene* and *The Return from the Hunt spalliere*, for example, and the *Pala Del Pugliese*. In the *Lives*, Vasari praised Piero's book of animal drawings, in the guardaroba of Duke Cosimo de'Medici, as 'tratteggiati di penna diligentissimamente, e con una pazienza inestimabile condotti' (Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 66).
[25] Although Florence included many illumination specialists in the second half of the fifteenth century—such as Gherardo and Monte di Giovanni, Attavante, Boccardino il Vecchio and il Giovane, and Francesco Rosselli—there also existed a number of well-known painters who practiced the second craft. This latter group included Apollonio di Giovanni, Sandro Botticelli, Pietro Perugino, Domenico and Benedetto Ghirlandaio, and Francesco Botticini (a frequent visitor to the Cosimo Rosselli workshop), their illustrations ranging from choir books and other liturgical texts to literary works. The most helpful general sources on Florentine illuminations include: *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450-1550*, cat. ed. Jonathan J. G. Alexander (London, 1994); A. Garzelli, *Miniatura Fiorentina del Rinascimento 1440-1525*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1985); *La Miniatura Italiana tra Gotico e Rinascimento*, II Congresso di Storia della Miniatura Italiana (1982), 2 vols. ed. E. Sesti (Florence, 1985); Jonathan J. G. Alexander, *Italian Renaissance Illuminations* (London, 1977); M. Levi D'Ancona, *Miniatura e miniatori a Firenze dal XIV al XVI secolo* (Florence, 1962); and M. Salmi, *Italian Miniatures* (NY, 1954).
[26] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 71: 'una matina fu trovato morto appiè d'una scala...' Trans. de Vere, I, p. 659

[27] Waldman, 'Fact, Fiction, and Hearsay'..., 2000, pp. 171-2. The documents of 1518-22 mentioned here, in notes 27-8, 32-5, were discovered by Waldman and published in the same article. The Italian hours are explained briefly in E.H. Ramsden, *The Letters of Michelangelo*, 2 vols. (London, 1963), I, p. 237. Sunset marked the beginning of the day, meaning that the first hour varied from day to day; the same hour, therefore, represented a different time in each of the seasons.
[28] Ibid., pp. 172-3.
[29] Ibid., p. 173. Piero's wish to repay a debt of 45 lire, 19 soldi to Giovan Simone from his holdings only after his death ('rather than sell off the income-producing property, which afforded him a degree of security') shows financial prudence on his part.
[30] E. Casalini, 'La Santissima Annunziata nella storia e nella civiltà fiorentina', in E. Casalini et al. (eds.) *Tesori d'arte dell'Annunziata di Firence* (Florence, 1987), p. 95, n. 97.
[31] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 71. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 659. Andrea del Sarto's apprenticeship with Piero has been thought to run until 1506 (Shearman) or 1508 (Freedberg), the latter year marking Del Sarto's marticulation in the *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* and his rental of a bottega with Franciabigio. See J. Shearman, *Andrea del Sarto*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1965), I, pp. 2, 20; and S.J. Freedberg, *Andrea del Sarto*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1963), p. 100. Pontormo's studies with Piero most likely lasted from 1507-9 (Cox Rearick) or 1508-10 (Clapp), thus beginning at the age of either fourteen or fifteen. See J. Cox Rearick, *The Drawings of Pontormo*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), I, pp. 22-4; and F Clapp, *Jacopo Carucci da Pontormo. His Life and Work* (New Haven, 1916), p. 269.
[32] Piero's career as a *tondaio* and his influential innovations in the genre have recently been studied in R. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (NY, 2000), pp. 203-6, 251-3.
[33] It is unclear whether Piero actually had anything built on the site, although the document describes it as 'suitable for building houses'. See Waldman, 2000, p. 172. The document of 4 April 1505 (ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano 3694 [Bonaventura di Leonardo, 1503-9], fol. 76) is transcribed by Waldman in note 19, pp. 178-9. This transaction may be related to a document of 1505 from the Archivio degli Innocenti, also noting the involvement of a Piero di Lorenzo in the sale of two houses. See citation in Colnaghi, 1986, p. 213.
[34] Waldman, 2000, p. 172, n. 20. Piero's lease, recorded 9 January 1506, is found in the testament of Lorenzo di Niccolò di Neri Macigni, in ASF, Not. Antecos. 1973 (Bastiano di Cenni, 1487-1525), insert 5, no. 35.
[35] Ibid., pp. 173-4.
[36] Vasari specifically mentions Pontormo's 'fulfillment of a desire that he had long had' in purchasing his own house, 'opposite to the Nuns of S. Maria degli Angeli', in his biography of the painter. For Pontormo's 1534 tax declaration, mentioning this acquisition, see Clapp, 1916, p. 57, n. 27 and p. 280 (App., doc. 21).
[37] Pontormo's annual payment of thirteen florins for Piero's house suggests some degree of growing financial stability, when compared to the ten florins annual rent that he previously paid for a 28 month period for a house in Borgo Pinti a year before. Ibid., note above.
[38] The didactic rhetoric of Vasari's biography and its exaggerated focus on Piero's supposed eccentricities are treated in Fermor, 1993, pp. 22-4; and P.L. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 22-8.
[39] Vasari's youth at the time of Piero's death did not prevent Langton Douglas from commenting: 'Being a highly respectable citizen and careerist, he [Vasari] takes care to condemn the moral conduct of this outrageous artist. But it is easy to see that Vasari admires Piero di Cosimo, and even likes him. The typical bourgeois often cherishes a secret affection for a more daring personality than his own. This, indeed, is one of the reasons why Vasari writes an excellent biography of Piero. For it is not possible to be a good biographer or historian without sympathy—clear-eyed sympathy with erring and straying men. Vasari had peculiar opportunities for obtaining information about the man whose works he admired. A very precocious lad of twelve, he had arrived in Florence but two years after the

death of this "lone ranger" of art. Piero's rebellious personality was just of the kind to interest a boy...' L. Douglas, *Piero di Cosimo* (Chicago, 1946), p. 7.

[40] Paul Barolsky ventured to the other extreme, invalidating Vasari's biography by claiming that 'Vasari invented Piero's life and personality'. Barolsky, 'The Trick of Art', in P. Jacks (ed.), *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 23-9.

[41] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 61-2. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 651-2.

[42] Il Sodoma, Uccello and Rosso in particular shared the distinction of supposedly having kept houses teeming with odd pets. Using the early example of Uccello, Vasari described him as a shy man, 'solitario, strano, malinconico, e povero' ('solitary, strange, melancholy and poor'), his house always full of painted representations of 'uccelli, gatti, e cani, e d'ogni sorta di animali strani che potette aver in disegno, non potendo tenerne de' vivi per esser povero' ('birds, cats, dogs, and every sort of strange animal of which he could get drawings, as he was too poor to have the living creatures themselves'). Perspective is repeatedly invoked as his sole obsession, to the detriment of his artistic potential. For an accurate response to Vasari's misunderstanding of Uccello, see J. Pope-Hennessy, *The Complete Works of Paolo Uccello* (London, 1950), p. 30.

[43] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 62-3. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 652.

[44] In a much earlier account, Vasari's mentions of Piero's eccentricities dominate the biography in N. Gabburi, *Vite di pittori* in BNF, MS palatine E. B. 9.5., voce Francesco, IV, fol. 2083r-v.

[45] R. and M. Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn* (London, 1963), p. 71.

[46] E. Panofsky, 'The Early History of Man in Two Cycles of Paintings by Piero di Cosimo', in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (NY, 1967), pp. 65-7.

[47] E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (NY, 1972), pp. 179-82.

[48] Piero's patrons also included the Bucceti and possibly the Guicciardini (serving as the oldest provenance for the London *Death of a Nymph*) and the Pitti. The latter family was mentioned by Borghini: 'In casa Carlo Pitti, gentilhuomo di quella riputatione, & honore, che è noto à ciascuno, è di sua mano un quadro d'una Vergine con altre figure lavorata gentilmente'. R. Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1584; reprinted Hildesheim, 1969), III, p. 378.

[49] Of the Medusa head in oils, Vasari wrote: 'come opera che portava tempo, e come quasi interviene in tutte le cose sue, rimase imperfetta'. Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 23. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 630. Vasari on the Mona Lisa: 'e quattrco anni penatovi, lo lasciò imperfetto' Ibid., B-B, IV, p. 30. Trans. de Vere, I., p. 635.

[50] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 19. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 627-8. Continuing with his justifications, Vasari explained the unfinished bronze horse project for Ludovico il Moro—claiming that it was Leonardo's vast and most excellent mind was hampered through being too full of desire, and that his wish ever to seek out perfection was the reason behind the project's unfinished state. See Ibid., B-B, IV, p. 27. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 633. Also see Gasparo Visconti's satirical sonnet entitled 'Against a Bad Painter', composed when Leonardo was in the Milanese court and thinly veiled in its allusions. G. Visconti, *I Canzonieri per Beatrice d'Este e per Bianca Maria Sforza*, ed. P. Bongrani (Milan, 1979), CLXVIII, pp. 117-18. Quoted in Kemp, 'Leonardo da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse', *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, CXXXIII (Feb. 1985), p. 199 and n. 19.

[51] Quoted from G. Dalli Regoli, M. Bacci, *Piero di Cosimo* (1966) [book review], *Critica d'arte*, XIV (1967), pp. 70-72.

[52] B. Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1938), I, pp. 150-54.

[53] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 67-8. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 656-7.

[54] See, for example, Alison Wright's discussion of originality and issues of transmission in the diverse artistic projects of Antonio Pollaiuolo and Maso Finiguerra in her 'Maestro di disegno', in E. Cropper, ed., *Florentine Drawing at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Bologna and Baltimore, 1994), pp. 131-46.

[55] Such issues of borrowing and influence were clarified for me in a discussion with David Franklin (May 1996).

[56] Leonardo's trip to Milan and final interruption on the Battle prompted Gonfaloniere Pietro Soderini to complain on 9 October 1506 that Leonardo 'had not comported himself as he ought to have towards this Republic, because he has taken a good sum of money and given a small beginning to a great work that he ought to have made'. See L. Beltrami, *Documenti e memorie riguardanti la vita e le opere di Leonardo da Vinci* (Milan, 1919), p. 112, no. 180.

[57] M. Kemp, 'Leonardo da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse', *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, CXXXIII (Feb. 1985), p. 196.

[58] Ibid., p. 209. Leonardo often wrote about the elements in terms of human 'longings' and 'desires'; for his passage on the animate nature of the earth as organism, see Leonardo da Vinci, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. J.P Richter, 2 vols. (NY, 1970), II, Leic. 34a, p. 178, no. 1000.

[59] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 29. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 635.

[60] Ibid., B-B, IV, p. 62. Trans. de Vere I, p. 652.

[61] In a letter of 9 February 1498, Fra Luca Pacioli wrote to Duke Lodovico Sforza that Leonardo had completed a book on painting and the movements of the human figure ('Havendo gia con tutta diligentia al degno libro de pictura e movimenti humani posto fine'). The passage from the *Trattato* reads: '...se tu riguarderai in alcuni muri inbrattati di varie machie o pietre di vari misti, se avrai a inventionare qualche sito potrai lì vedere similitudine di diversi paesi, ornate di montagnie, fiumi, sassi, albori, pianure, grandi valli e colli in diversi modi, ancora vi portrai vedere diverse battaglie e atti pronti di figure, strange arie di volti e abiti e infinite cose, le quail potrai ridurre in integra e bona forma e interviene in simili muri e misti come del suono di canpane che ne` loro tochi vi troverai ogni nome e vocabolo che tu imaginerai' See Leonardo da Vinci, *The Literary Works...*, 1970, I, B.N. 2038, 22b, pp. 311-12, no. 508. For the Philostratus passage: *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, II. 22.

[62] Vasari, 1568, B-B, *Della Pittura* section, I, p. 115: 'E da ciò nasce l'invenzione, la quale fa mettere insieme in istoria le figure a quattro, a sei, a dieci, a venti, talmente ch'e`si viene a formare le battaglie e l'altre cose grandi dell'arte. Questa invenzione vuol in sé una convenevolezza formata di concordanza e d'obedienza, che, s'una figura si muove per salutare un'altra, no si faccia la salutata voltarsi indietro avendo a rispondere: e con questa similitudine tutto il resto'

[63] Ibid., IV, p. 60: 'fare suoi castelli in aria' Trans. de Vere, I, p. 650.

[64] Ibid., IV, p. 61: 'la stranezza del suo cervello et il cercare che e' faceva de le cose difficili...' Trans. de Vere, I, p. 651.

[65] Ibid., IV, p. 65: 'un paese biz[z]arro e per gli alberi strain e per alcune grotte'. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 655.

[66] Ibid., IV, p. 66: 'per la deformità sua è tanto stravagante, biz[z]arro e fantastico' Trans. de Vere, I, p. 655.

[67] Ibid., IV, p. 63. Ttrans. de Vere, I, p. 652. A pictorial example of the Triumph of Death can be seen in Maestro delle Nozze Adimari's painting of the subject in the Museo di Palazzo Davanzati, Florence.

[68] M. Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci. The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (London, 1989), pp. 167-9.

[69] On the notion of *fantasia*, see M. Kemp, 'From "mimesis" to "fantasia": The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts', *Viator*, VIII (1977), pp. 366 ff. For the most thorough discussion of Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo, in particular Vasari's use of descriptive terminology such as *fantasia* and *invenzione*, see Fermor, 1993, Chapter I (esp. pp. 20-40), 108, 112-16.

[70] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 65. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 655.

[71] Ibid., IV, p. 67. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 656.

[72] Ibid., IV, p. 62. Trans. De Vere, I, p. 652.

[73] For all of these quotes from the Life, see Ibid., IV, pp. 65-7. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 655-6.

[74] Borghini, 1584, III, pp. 376-7.

[75] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 67. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 656.

## Chapter II. Piero di Cosimo's Portraits and Images of Saints

'There died ... in our city a woman who moved to compassion all the Florentine people. It is no great wonder, for she was truly endowed with as much human beauty and *gentilezza* as anyone who had ever lived.... Among them [mourners], those who had known her felt not only pity but also wonder, for in death she had surpassed that beauty which, while she lived, seemed unsurpassable.... In her was truly realized what Petrarch said, "Death itself seemed beautiful in her lovely face"'
– Lorenzo de' Medici, *Commento* (1473-8)[1]

Describing the earliest stage of Piero di Cosimo's career and his prodigious start in the Cosimo Rosselli bottega, Vasari began with the young pupil's participation in the Sistine Chapel frescoes. Noting Piero's role in executing the landscape in *Christ's Sermon on the Mount* and *The Healing of the Leper* (fig. 3), the Aretine specifically mentions the portraits within the composition, together with another separate portrait commission in Rome.

> E perché egli ritraeva di naturale molto eccellentemente, fece in Roma dimolti ritratti di persone segnalate, e particularmente quello di Verginio Orsino e di Ruberto Sanseverino, i quali misse in quelle istorie. Ritrasse ancora poi il duca Valentino, figliuolo di papa Alessandro Sesto, la qual pittura oggi, che io sappia, non si trova: ma bene il cartone di sua manto, et è appresso al reverendo e virtuoso messer Cosimo Bartoli proposto di San Giovanni.[2]

Despite the unknown fate of the portrait of Duke Valentino, Piero's early aptitude for portrait painting can be measured by six images that do remain, all datable on stylistic evidence to his early to middle periods. Within this small corpus exists a startling range of types that can be divided into three groupings: idealised images of saints such as *The Young St. John the Baptist* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and the separate companion pair of *St. Mary Magdalen* and *St. John the Evangelist* (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome, and The Academy of Fine Arts, Honolulu, respectively); the highly descriptive, lifelike portraits of Giuliano da Sangallo and his father, Francesco Giamberti (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); and the imaginary and lyrical *Portrait of a Lady (Simonetta Vespucci?)* in the Musée Condé, Chantilly. Piero's variety of representation within this aggregate is best exhibited in the comparison between the iconographic artifice of the Chantilly beauty and the Amsterdam double portraits, depicted with a scrupulous fidelity to physical reality that could be paralleled with that of Northern portraitists such as Petrus Christus or Hans Memling.

It is necessary to first elucidate the definition of 'portrait' in light of Piero's religious half-lengths and to qualify the terms of their inclusion. In stark contrast to the Rijksmuseum pair, the painted saints discussed would not be considered as 'ritratti' in either Renaissance or modern terms. Notwithstanding the Chantilly fantasy portrait, based on a real life personage yet not on a live model, it is highly unlikely that images such as the somewhat androgynous *St. John the Evangelist* hide the

features of living sitters or were done from nature—thus failing the basic 'mimetic' requirement of portraiture. Instead, Piero's images of saints are all supernaturally refined, the beauty of St. John the Baptist's golden curls and St. Mary Magdalen's radiant features acting as mirrors of their inner goodness. While degrees of seeming verisimilitude and sensitivity of representation vary among the group, extremely similar facial types and expressions reappear in a number of Piero's altarpieces, particularly in the case of the female images, confirming the belief that the individual devotional images embody idealised conceptions of beauty. It is, therefore, more accurate to refer to such works as either isolated bust or half-length images or private devotional images of single saints. Keeping this clarification in mind, the paintings in question do conform to the portrait composition and are subject to many of the same formal conventions and naturalistic ideals, and it is for this reason that they have been classified here.

Piero occupied a vital place in the curious curvilinear trajectory of the Florentine portrait, acting as one of the catalysts for the change brought about between the art of Antonio Pollaiuolo and Domenico Ghirlandaio on one hand, and that of Leonardo, Andrea del Sarto and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio on the other. As for Piero specifically, his advances in oil painting by the turn of the sixteenth century again point to the influence exerted by Northern art and, to some degree, the visually explorational style of Leonardo. Certainly in his Chantilly portrait, Piero created an image of the greatest symbolic and pictorial artifice, the like of which can only be found in the similar efforts of such contemporaries as Leonardo, Pontormo and Lorenzo Lotto.

Stylistic differences and iconographic complexities set Piero's Chantilly fantasy portrait distinctly apart from the preceding female profiles of Piero della Francesca, Filippo Lippi, Alesso Baldovinetti and even the elsewhere dynamic Antonio Pollaiuolo on several counts. Crystallised, unchanging and perfectly stabilised, earlier female representations most often appeared before a flattened background, the sitter as immobile as a pinned butterfly: beautiful and open to the closest scrutiny. Some lingering similarities between Piero's revolutionary image and his predecessors do persist, however, particularly in the shared profile form; often posthumous and executed from *maschere funebre*, such images were in a sense 'memory pictures' of once living and mobile entities, now viewed more as abstract ornament in rarefied isolation.[3] Again largely based upon literary conceits and courtly etiquette rather than only matters of practicality of painting practice, a key justification behind the convention of the female profile portrait, and its averted gaze, is found in numerous examples of vernacular love poetry. In such examples as Poliziano's *Stanze*—to be discussed in reference to the Chantilly portrait—hardly a glance could be expected from the beloved. Poliziano describes Lucrezia Donati's harsh treatment of Lorenzo, as she withholds her love: 'Né mai degnò mostrar di Lauro agli occhi / se non tutta superba e suo' begli occhi'[4] This treatment is no less painful than Giuliano's fate,

as Simonetta shoots an arrow from her eyes, conquering the defenseless duke: 'Tosto Cupido entro a' begli occhi ascoso, / al nervo adatta del suo stral la coca, / poi tira quell col braccio poderoso / ... né pria per l'aer ronzando esce 'l quadrello, / che Iulio drento al cor sentito ha quello'.[5] This expressive potency of the eyes—as also expressed in Dante's *Convivio*[6]—and, moreover, the recurring *topos* of the power of light emanating from a woman's eyes and its seduction over an enraptured viewer was also extended to the audience of a painted portrait.

As I shall argue, it is largely Piero's use of light and the placement of the sitter in landscape that proved to be among the painter's greatest innovations in both his Amsterdam and Chantilly images, in essence assuming the unifying and descriptive role formerly played by line during the last quarter of the 1400s.[7] Piero's great interest in the play of light upon the features similarly is evident in his few surviving drawings of head studies. In his *Head of a Girl (Youth?) in Profile*, Louvre, tantalisingly similar in appearance to the Chantilly portrait, Piero applies a white wash over the pen and ink drawing to indicate the fall of light on the strands of hair and the eye, along with the notable surface-breaking areas of the face: the high forehead, nose, upper lip, chin and cheekbone (fig. 13).[8] Similar execution and reliance on white heightening are evident in two large-scale metalpoint studies of female heads by Filippino Lippi in the Uffizi.[9] Piero bestows equal attention to the sheen on the hair of his half-length saints. The Metropolitan Museum Giovannino, with his thick curls, shares the same lustre with the Rome Mary Magdalen and her braided coiffure, cascading in loose strands down her breast, the light reflecting in delicate filaments against the dark ground.

Finally nature is also treated as environment by Piero, not as mere backdrop. Unlike the rest of the female portraits during this time, Piero's Chantilly figure is liberated from the safe confines of her palatial apartments, rejecting the domestic window seat for her own independent place within the landscape itself. It is here that Piero and Leonardo made the largest strides, using Nature and atmosphere as an expressive force, full of suggestive overtones in relation to the sitter. Such vanguard treatments of a sitter's surrounding space, serving almost as living attributes of the beings they surround, can be seen in the softened luminosity and wistfulness of the Chantilly panel and in both of Piero's Amsterdam settings, quasi-narrative in feeling and matching Fra Bartolomeo's pen and ink landscape sketches in their fineness of detail.

The sense of depth and gentle light found in all three of Piero's portraits set in landscapes found its near perfection in Leonardo's placement of his sitters in two of his painted Florentine portraits, the *Ginevra de' Benci* (National Gallery of Art, Washington) of the mid-1470s and the *Mona Lisa* (Louvre) from Leonardo's final Florentine stay. Despite the intensity of gaze and obsessive technical quality separating the *Ginevra* from Piero's Chantilly image, both involve themselves with the contrast of surface textures and the modulation of light, producing a sensuality of two kinds: one

direct and concentrated, the other at once sincere (despite its profile view) and mysteriously mellifluous. Echoed in the water-like movements of the sitter's curls, drapery and veil, Leonardo's surrounding landscape in the *Mona Lisa* takes the form of a living organism in a state of flux. Though placed within the discernible setting of a balcony, La Gioconda is no less unusual in her spatial relationship to the surrounding valley than Piero's ambiguously placed *Simonetta*. The spatial fluency and general formal flexibility of both painters was expressed not only by the animating quality of light but also by the move away from the decorative and wiry contouring line, that 'surrounds, defines, and fixes the mass', to a more organic and expressive line, producing a vibrating effect imbuing the figure with a sense of life through the potentiality of movement.[10]

Along with so many of his larger works, Piero's portraits reach almost meteorological effects in their manipulations of light and atmosphere. Piero's range in this regard is quite remarkable, yielding contrasts such as those between the bright clarity and strongly cast shadows of the Dresden *Holy Family* tondo (fig. 85)[11] or Capponi *Visitation* (fig. 54) and the stormy, brooding skies of the Metropolitan Museum's *Return from the Hunt* (fig. 37) or the Chantilly image. Several other compositions also seem to show the varying intensity of light and colour during different times of day, from the height of the noonday sun of the *Pala Del Pugliese* in St. Louis (fig. 53) to what appears to be dawn (or dusk) in the Museo Horne *St. Jerome in Penitence* tondo (fig. 86).[12]

**I. Images of saints: The Young St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdalen, and St. John the Evangelist**

It is probably safe to place *The Young St. John the Baptist* in the Metropolitan Museum as Piero's earliest portrait-type image based on stylistic grounds and the tempera technique (fig. 5).[13] The most probable dating is *c.*1480-85. The influences upon the image appear to be distinctly Florentine in nature. In fact, the work had been ascribed to the Pollaiuoli, as revealed by an ink inscription written at a later date on the back of the cradling: 'Pollaioli / Dalla Casa Bentivoglio a Firenze. Pollaiolo nato a Firenze morto 1489' [14]

Piero's Giovannino is as convincing a young boy as he is a holy figure, a quality borne out by the similarity to a sculptural example, a Florentine marble relief of a *Head of a Boy*, *c.*1470, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art. Yet in Piero's case, the inspiration is likely to have come from the small sculptural busts of the city's patron saint in Florentine homes.[15] Used for private devotion, such busts most likely served the same devotional function as a common feature in domestic interiors, and have survived in numerous examples, revealing their various forms and media, ranging from bronze and polychrome wood to glazed *terra cotta*. The best examples include a *pietra serena* profile relief (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) (fig. 6a) and marble tondo profile (Museo Horne,

Florence), both attributed to the shop of Desiderio da Settignano; Antonio Rossellino's marble busts (Bargello, Florence; Pinacoteca Comunale, Faenza; and National Gallery of Art, Washington) (figs. 6b-c); and Santi Buglioni's *Adolescent St. John* glazed *terra cotta* bust (Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld).[16]

At first glance, one of the most striking things about the New York panel is its small size, measuring only 28.5 x 23.5 cm. It could be said that Piero's preference for modest formats, as seen here with portraiture, confirms Vasari's focus on the particular rather than over-all visual effects in Piero's Life, while also finding a way around the criticism. Like many of his Northern contemporaries, Piero was at his most comfortable when dealing with a restricted painting surface, for it allowed him to employ his greatest strengths, namely fine detail and close observation of form and texture. His pleasure derived above all from compositions residing in a small and private, rather than a vastly monumental, universe. Most important, Piero managed to infuse his small compositions with an extraordinary expressiveness, preserving the poetry of the image in all of its individualism and vitality. This ability is brilliantly demonstrated in the small St. John.

As in earlier profile images of the period, the head of St. John monopolises the picture space, sharply silhouetted against a dark ground. Yet for a profile, the image is surprisingly warm in both expression and execution. Even in the boy's youthful features, the immediate impression is resonant with the saint's tireless message: one of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah and his Kingdom. With an animal skin draped over his right shoulder, the saint focuses all of his attention upon a foreshortened reed cross with a neutral, contemplative gaze.

Piero's love for the minute is seen in the delicate rendering of the eye and eyelashes; the hair is treated with vibrancy, as are the boldly painted crucifix and tufts of the animal fur. The lighting effects add to the sense of naturalism but have suffered through over zealous restoration and have become stark in areas.[17] Even though the picture in its earlier state was likely to have been covered with a film of dirt, it was these varnish layers, now largely gone, that preserved the soft and gradated play of light along the profile: the forehead, nose and neck. The remnants of such effects now can be made out only partially.

Issues of influence in this work, as in the other five images, are thorny ones and should be approached with great care, particularly with such a small domestic panel depicting Florence's ubiquitous saint. The most frequently mentioned model is Filippino Lippi's kneeling Angel Gabriel in the *Annunciation* of *c.*1483-4 in San Gimignano's Museo Civico.[18] Seen in profile from the other side, Lippi's angel does introduce several similarities in terms of the delicate handling of paint, the fine detail, and general impression of gentleness and quiet piety. Yet if Piero was indeed impacted by another peer's work, the most likely source may have been Leonardo and his mark upon the Uffizi

*The Baptism of Christ* (*c.*1473-5), a Verrocchio commission for Florence's monastery church of San Salvi.[19]

Piero's use of the oil medium in his Rijksmuseum portraits continued with the *St. Mary Magdalen* in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Palazzo Barberini, Rome, and the *St. John the Evangelist* in the Honolulu Academy of Fine Arts, Honolulu—images that also bear resemblance to Leonardo not only in Piero's growing mastery of oil but also the facial types and bearing of the figures (figs. 7-8). The two panels are pendant pieces based on their similar style, the oblique placement and directions of the figures and their window settings. It is conceivable that the two panels once formed an expanded cycle of Biblical figures, set in a domestic interior.[20] In execution, the Magdalen appears later than the Stockholm *Madonna and Child* of *c.*1487-90 (fig. 46) and more securely dated Innocenti altarpiece of 1493 (fig. 56) and—based on the oil technique, use of light and the physiognomy—could be placed somewhere between the Virgin of the *Adoration of the Child* (*c.*1495-1500) in Toledo (fig. 84)[21] and the Virgin in the *Madonna and Child with Two Musician Angels* (*c.*1505-7) in the Galleria di Palazzo Cini, Venice (fig. 57). A date of 1500-6 thus seems most probable.

The Rome image, for its realism, had been called *A Portrait of a Florentine Lady as Mary Magdalen* by previous writers.[22] Nevertheless, it is more likely that like the *Simonetta Vespucci* and the Honolulu companion panel, the saint is represented as an idealised figure, evoking the causes she embodied as the patron saint of repentant sinners and, as made palpable here, the contemplative life. The *Mary Magdalen* is perhaps the most striking of the master's creations in its dramatic effects of light, the nature of which is much different than that found in the *Simonetta Vespucci*. While the latter is bathed in the sunlight of the outdoors, the Magdalen appears illuminated in a spiritual sense, her face glowing with divine radiance against the black ground. The bright, concentrated light enters from the left, revealing not only Mary's placid features but also the bright colours of her clothing: the ochre-yellow dress, green velvet robe and bright red mantle with its blue lining. The colours are laden with religious significance, yellow signifying dignity, green referring to penitence, red alluding to love and charity and blue to heaven.[23] Piero includes captivating details like the string of pearls adorning her braided hair, a pink ribbon upon the shoulder and the practically legible open book held open upon the ledge (note the detail of the small finger of the left hand). The jar of ointment with which Mary is so often represented, having anointed Christ's feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke VII. 36 ff), rests in the corner of the composition. The plain black background remains somewhat puzzling, especially in the occasionally free *pentimenti* in the figure's contour, as seen around the outer edge of the yellow sleeve. It is not inconceivable that this background was changed or overpainted at a later date.

The *St. John the Evangelist* is the largest of Piero's extant half-lengths.[24] Only slightly bigger than its sister piece in Rome, the Honolulu panel shares the same beaming purity of features. While the Evangelist has long been associated with a duality of character, Piero chooses to show his gentler aspect. Far from resembling one of the two punishing Boanerges brothers ('sons of thunder') or the writer of the chilling visions of the Apocalypse, St. John appears as the gentle disciple whom Jesus loved and to whom he bequeathed the care of his Blessed Mother. Piero's youthful representation is that of the disciple who preached the importance of charitable deeds and urged the drinking of the cup of suffering to the Samaritans.

As the most recent restoration report of 1988 records, the 'removal of old overpaint has revealed this panel to be an excellent example of this somewhat rare artist. Although the painting has suffered, the state is better than historically recorded'.[25] The panel's underpaint is largely intact and the original semi-transparent ultramarine glaze is still present in certain areas. The losses endured by overly aggressive cleanings in the past remain lamentable, resulting in paint loss in the turned over hem of the red drape on the shoulder and the blue sleeve, with its hardened folds that bear little semblance to flexible fabric. Other portions of the image, such as the left hand, which has been rendered swollen, also appear uncharacteristically awkward.[26] The intervention of an assistant is not the most plausible explanation for such defects, however, and past overcleaning appears to be the main culprit.

Several passages certainly still remain to vindicate Piero's hand. There is the wriggling serpent that forms a dynamic knot in an otherwise restrained composition, the drapery of the right side of the sleeve, and the chalice and the reflections seen in the inlaid precious stones at its throat.[27] The effect of this last display is not unlike that created by the reflecting golden balls of charity, held by St. Nicholas in the *Pala Del Pugliese*. Light is used marvellously in the modelling of the blessing hand as well as the lower half of the face, although to a softer, more diffused effect than with the Magdalen.

## II. Double-portraits of Giuliano da Sangallo and Francesco Giamberti

Piero's double-portraits of Francesco di Bartolo Giamberti (1405-80/82) and Giuliano da Sangallo (1445-1516) were not mentioned by Vasari until the 1568 edition of the *Lives*,[28] where he ended Piero's biography with:

> Il suo [di Piero] ritratto s'è avuto da Francesco da S. Gallo che lo fece mentre Piero [era] vecchio, come molto suo amico e domestico; il qual Francesco ancora ha di mano di Piero (che non la debbo passare) una testa bellissima di Cleopatra con uno aspido avvolto al collo, e due ritratti, l'uno di Giuliano suo padre, l'altro di Francesco Giamberti suo avolo, che paion vivi.[29]

It is telling that Piero's portraits of the father and son were first catalogued as 'in the manner of Lucas van Leyden' and, later, as by Dürer.[30] Such a case of misattribution was undoubtedly a result of the

painter's elaborate analysis of the sitters' features and their surrounding landscape, studied and transmitted with the kind of Northern realism rarely matched in contemporary Florentine images (figs. 9-10).[31] The attribution was finally corrected to Piero in 1879 by Frizzoni, who was struck by the obvious similarity between Piero's image of Giuliano and the woodcut print representing him in Vasari's Life of the architect, practically an exact reproduction of the Piero painting, reversed in the process of the printing method.[32] The dating of the woodcut illustrations, probably executed by a Northerner from Nuremberg named Cristoforo Coriolano or Lederer, therefore can be narrowed down to a time between Vasari's two publications.[33]

Although an early cinquecento dating has been accepted by most scholars and considered largely reliable primarily due to Giuliano's known stays in Florence and his supposedly advanced age in the picture, any unqualified confidence in such a late dating would appear misplaced. The most convincing argument for such an early cinquecento dating was reconstructed by Bacci, who proposed that the portrait was executed during the architect's prolonged stay in Florence from 1500-1505, probably earlier rather than later.[34] It was during this time that Giuliano is thought to have formed a tighter bond with Piero, a friendship that was already developing in 1490 when the two worked together for patrons of the church of Santo Spirito. Bacci's dating leads us to wonder, however, why Giuliano would have commissioned—or received as a gift—the memorialising image of his deceased father twenty or more years after his passing. When considered together and subjected to criteria both biographical and stylistic, the father and son diptych instead dates more convincingly to *c.*1482-3, shortly following Francesco's death.[35] Gauging the age of the represented Giuliano is no simple task here. Born in 1445, Giuliano therefore would have been in his late thirties according to my proposed dating, significantly younger than the fifty-five to sixty age range suggested by Bacci.

No less so than the initial years of the following century, the 1480s marked a period of permanence for Giuliano in Florence. Of greatest relevance is Giuliano's first documented work: the design for a new junction between the nave and the Michelozzo and Alberti-conceived *tribuna* in Santissima Annunziata from 1480-83.[36] In 1481, Giuliano also made a wooden crucifix for the high altar of the Servite church, of which Piero was an active member. Nor can we easily brush aside the extremely compelling similarities between Piero's depiction of Francesco and Filippino Lippi's profile representation of St. Fredianus in his slender *Saints Paul and Fredianus* panel from an altarpiece in the church of San Ponziano, Lucca, now in the Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, California (fig. 11). Securely dated 1483, Filippino's commission would therefore have been contemporaneous with Piero's portrait pair if the latter's earlier dating is to be accepted.[37] While it is possible that both Piero's portrait and Filippino's twin saint were based on an identical death mask or sketch, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the older master's St. Fredianus was based on a

slightly earlier treatment by Piero, with both painters commemorating a colleague's deceased father and member of the Medici employ but in two distinctly different ways. The final thread of evidence for assigning Piero's Rijksmuseum pair to the early 1480s is stylistic and relies on his *Pala Del Pugliese*, executed for the small town of Lecceto in the first half of the same decade. Also strongly marked by a Netherlandish influence, the Pugliese Altarpiece reveals the same clarity of vision, meticulous attention to detail and saturation of colour as the vividly characterised heads of father and son.

The tiniest of details are visible in the lively landscape of the Francesco portrait. On the right, we see a church, with an arriving procession at its entrance. Even the altar and organ can be made out, as well as the choir boys, two kneeling women in habit and a pair of other kneeling figures. This depicted celebration of mass is most likely funereal, a further hint that the commission was inspired by Francesco's passing. Piero is at his most inventive in the representation of the ornamental parapet in front of both sitters.[38] In the past, the parapet or ledge device had been shown as a mere strip, at times with an inscription. The effect was more alienating than unifying, functioning as a kind of base for a bust and thus separating the sitter's image from the beholder by merging with the panel surface itself. Personal attributes lie upon the ledges of both figures in Piero's panels, adding a narrative quality. Francesco is accompanied by a folded sheet of music, complete with legible notation, since besides being a carpenter by trade he also played music for the Medici; the exclusive presence of the notes is understandable in that it also raises his status from that of an artisan to a musician in the company of Florence's most powerful family.

Appropriately, a compass and goose quill are placed in front of the son, the renowned architect.[39] Giuliano, shown in the more advanced three-quarter pose, wears a black tunic with white collar, lending him not only grace and a dignified air but also an elevated status enhanced by the serene, detached gaze. The landscape is most likely imagined rather than observed (in both cases) and cannot be farther removed from Leonardo's use of graduated tone and atmospheric effects in its total clarity and execution. The villages and their settings are as distinct as the sitters themselves, with little or no trace of atmospheric perspective. In Giuliano's case, there is a sense of detachment from the rustic countryside and mountains behind him. Again, the details do not fail to astonish in the careful modelling of the strong but slightly sagging neck, the flecks of highlights in the greying hair, the freckles around the edge of the eyes, the pink heightenings of the flesh and the floral black-on-black brocade pattern on the right sleeve.

There are a few slightly awkward passages, such as the thickness and uniformity of the shadow cast by Francesco's hat or the far and shadowed side of Giuliano's face. However, the works more than make up for such areas (possibly results of repainting) by their vitality, detail and striking effects

of colour. Technically and compositionally, the Amsterdam panels stand as probably Piero's most sophisticated existing portrait-images. Instantly, the pair is also set apart from the other examples by virtue of the fact that they are undeniably portraits in the true sense of the word, while much ambiguity surrounds the nature of the other images, which could just as easily be interpreted as idealised representations.[40] As the only non-religious or—in the case of the *Simonetta*—contemporary portrayals, the pair reveals a great deal of variety and close observation that has apparently sacrificed any imposed idealisation. Piero's brand of visual truth in this case can even be called unforgiving. Examples of the magnifying glass naturalism, certainly by Florentine standards, are most marked in the posthumous commemoration of the cabinet maker and musician. Piero is at his most scrutinising as he includes the light white stubble and, most perceptively, shows Francesco's ear bent down by the weight of his red hat. This last addition recalls a much earlier but equally wonderful detail in Masaccio's familiar portrait of Lorenzo Lenzi in the Santa Maria Novella *Trinità*. Old age is accentuated by the seemingly toothless and sagging mouth, the sunken yet lively eye and prominent swollen vein on the temple. Such close fidelity to Francesco's features, however unflattering, is certainly not intended as mockery or caricature.[41] The somewhat enervated images of the mid-quattrocento have now given way to an almost exaggerated search for visual truth. For Piero, it was a matter of portraying a sitter's vigour, or realness.

Along with the increasing confidence of handling the oil medium and the realisation of its potential for a new luminosity and subtlety of transitions came another influence of the North: a growing interest in the psychological life and its painted expression, resulting in a close characterisation of the sitter.[42] Although the interest in the Antique and demands for idealised portrayals remained, there arose in the late quattrocento a keener desire for the portrayal of the sitter's inner nature, invested with greater emotional immediacy. Philosophic and (pseudo-) scientific approaches attempted to solve psychological questions throughout the second half of the century. The two areas of greatest interest were gesture and physiognomy and the manners in which they could express thoughts and motivations, leading to the early production of physiognomic handbooks, designed for use by merchants and men of politics and preparing them for signs of fraudulent dealings.[43] Such a new fascination with the inner workings of the mind and their outward expression would not have left Piero's sensibilities untouched.

The early attribution of Piero's two works to an artist north of the Alps is most telling, for Piero by this time would have been widely exposed to Flemish works brought into Florence, including examples of portraiture.[44] The artistic exchange between North and South and its modes of transmission and reception have attracted much scholarly attention in the past, and although Piero's

case can only be briefly touched upon here, the relationship deserves a separate in-depth study in its own right.[45]

The growing interest in the landscape 'alla fiamminga' that was first fully embraced in Tuscany by Perugino and that came to captivate painters like Fra Bartolomeo—whose landscape in the right window of his Metropolitan Museum *Madonna and Child with the Young St. John the Baptist* was directly borrowed from a Memling panel now in the Uffizi—likewise affected Piero and his younger contemporaries, albeit in less obvious ways. Furthermore, only Leonardo could be considered Piero's equal in creating such fantastic chimeras as the latter's marine monster in the *Liberation of Andromeda* to compete with Northern examples like the 'Temptation of St. Anthony', a subject famously copied in the workshop of Domenico Ghirlandaio from an early engraving by Martin Schongauer.[46]

The formal influence of Hugo van der Goes' Portinari triptych in particular is visible not only in the carefully observed foreground details of Piero's earlier altarpieces, but also his manipulation of the oil medium and high degree of finish. Yet Northern influence cannot be attributed to the impact of the Portinari Altarpiece alone and there were numerous other less public models available for Piero's study in late quattrocento Florence. Despite the difficulties in tracing particular Netherlandish works after the dispersal of the Medici collection following the expulsion of 1494, the family's inventory of 1492 upon the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico, for example, listed forty-two (or one-third) of the 142 paintings in the Medici palace, Careggi villa and other properites as Netherlandish.[47] It can also be argued that it was Memling who left the deepest mark during this period. This link, like that of Van Eyck and others, was established through the importation of many of Memling's works by Florentine merchants and bankers sustaining business or political ties in Bruges[48]; this Italian community included not only Tommaso Portinari but also his predecessor as the head of the Medici bank in Bruges, Angelo Tani, along with other wealthy families living in the St. James parish of Bruges, a list containing the Cavalcanti and the Arnolfini from Lucca.[49]

With the addition of Northern artists' journeys to Italy, agents of transmission for cultural exchange were, therefore, widely available.[50] More specifically, it was prints that must have formed perhaps the most accessible channel of Northern influence.[51] Although it may have been produced too late to influence Piero's image, Lucas van Leyden's *Boy with a Trumpet* (Musée du Petit Palais, Paris) of 1508 is, in fact, rather close in pose to Piero's figure of St. John the Baptist in his late *Madonna and Child with Young St. John* in the Palazzo Cini, Venice (fig. 96).[52]

## III. Portrait of a Lady as Simonetta Vespucci

Along with Francesco da Sangallo's two ancestral portraits, Vasari mentioned a painting that has puzzled so many: 'il qualo Francesco ancora ha di mano di Piero (che non la debbo passare) *una testa bellissima di Cleopatra con uno aspido avvolto al collo* ... [own emphasis]'.[53] With the exception of the so-called 'Early History of Man' panels and the *Death of Procris*, it is this 'testa bellissima' now in the Musée Condé, Chantilly, that has proven the most problematic iconographical case for scholars (fig. 12). Many writers have been suspicious of Vasari's title of the painting, instead imposing their own interpretations upon the mysterious lady, and why she is depicted in the way she is seen. Seeming fairly plausible from certain angles, most of the alternative interpretations—such as that of Proserpina, Boccaccio's Fiammetta or Gianfrancesco Straparola's Biancabella—collapse under a closer scrutiny of the image's iconography and context.[54] The identification of the picture as an idealised portrait of Simonetta Vespucci, on the other hand, does deserve the most careful attention and ultimately proves the most compelling.

Only one generally accepted likeness of Simonetta exists, placed among the portraits of the Vespucci family chapel in the church of Ognissanti. Dated *c.*1480, Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco was painted after Simonetta's death, meaning that there too her image was executed posthumously. It is relatively clear that the Chantilly panel is a portrayal of an idealised figure, remarkably similar in type to other female images in Piero's works, which include the kneeling SS. Catherine and Margaret in the Tedaldi *Incarnation*, the Virgin in the Capponi *Visitation*, the profile image of Catherine in the Innocenti Altarpiece and even one of the nymphs of Lemnos (on the far left) in *The Finding of Vulcan* in Hartford. This said, details such as the woman's plucked brow in the fashion of the time and the sensitive handling of the mouth create a more personalised impression than that found in Piero's later *St. Mary Magdalen*, not to mention many other artists' contemporary portraits of 'real' sitters.

The dating of Piero's work has fluctuated wildly, ranging from his younger years (as proposed by Knapp, Venturi, Van Marle, Gamba, Zeri, Bacci and Fermor) to the year before his death (Ragghianti). On the grounds of style and technique, I believe the work to be from the first years of the 1480s, an early achievement made all the more impressive by the image's complex iconography and enchanting air. In terms of its original location, the most probable answer would be an *anticamera* or *studiolo*.

Beginning with Vasari's original identification of Cleopatra, there are three factors worth considering. The first question concerns Vasari's failure to mention Simonetta, when he had presumably seen the work and its prominent inscription at bottom, reading 'SIMONETTA IANVENSIS VESPUCCIA' (Simonetta Vespucci of Genoa). It is most odd that Vasari would have

passed up the opportunity to link the image with Simonetta, a figure so celebrated, if the inscription was present at that time. Why does Vasari seize such a chance in the Life of Botticelli, where he mentioned two portraits by him in the collection of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici: 'Nella Guardaroba del S. Duca Cosimo sono di sua mano due teste di femmina in profile bellisime; Una delle quali si dice, che fu l'inamorata di Giuliano de' Medici fratello di Lorenzo, e l'altra Madonna Lucrezia de' Tornabuoni moglie di detto Lorenzo'?[55] This profile portrait of 'the beloved of Giuliano' was almost certainly a reference to Simonetta.

The incongruity largely hinges on the dating of the inscription itself. Hermann Ulmann was the first to publish that traces of the figure's drapery appear beneath the inscribed strip, signifying a later addition.[56] Yet to the contrary, a 1971 technical examination consisting of raking light photography and ultraviolet and infrared radiography determined that the execution of the inscription band was indeed contemporary in execution with the rest of the panel, a conclusion supported by the *craquelure* pattern, continuous and homogenous with the rest of the paint surface. Nor did the analyses indicate that the woman's body extended beneath the inscription.[57] Certainly, the band upon which the inscription is written would not make any visual sense without it. Despite these conclusive findings, the original existence of the inscription was still contradicted by Elizabeth de Boissard, who insisted that it was added after Vasari's 1568 description, probably at the end of the cinquecento.[58] Boissard's hypothesis was elaborated to suit the known provenance, which places the panel in the collection of Francesco da Sangallo in 1568, based on Vasari's account, before being acquired by the Vespucci family around 1586, upon the death of Francesco's son Clemente, who died childless. But again, this circumstantial logic is completely undermined by the technical findings. In the end, assuming that Vasari saw the work rather than relying on a second-hand account, it remains equally plausible that he either missed the inscription (could it have been obscured, as will be later proposed?) or simply forgot it.

After Vasari's description and the questions surrounding the dating of the inscription, the next subject of greatest debate is the issue of *luxuria*. The greatest flaw in the Simonetta Vespucci identification has been argued to be the figure's provocative nudity. In the Chantilly catalogue, Boissard admitted that the representation of a woman's nude bust is astonishing in the context of the quattrocento portrait tradition. Anne Derbes,[59] Sharon Fermor[60] and Patricia Simons[61] all concluded that the sensuality and lack of decorum are extremely difficult to explain, mitigating against the Simonetta interpretation. The woman's nudity notwithstanding, the most arresting element is Cleopatra's coiffure, elaborately braided and bejeweled with pearls large and small and rubies in the shape of berries. The same handling of the hair is frequently seen in representations of Venus and, in this respect, the image is akin to Michelangelo's *teste divine* and a drawing in the Fogg Art Museum,

Cambridge, Mass., by Rosso Fiorentino: a *Head of a Woman*, with a complicated coiffure of winding braids and shell volutes. There, however, the woman glances back at the viewer over her shoulder, further enhancing the image's alluring effect. Taking such attributes in isolation, it could be said that the opulence and sensuality of Piero's image are as befitting of Cleopatra as they are inappropriate for the chaste perception of Simonetta, as Piero chooses to highlight her sin of *luxuria* in the combination of overwrought hairstyle, the double necklace of gleaming metal and organic reptile, the patterned fabric of her loose garment and the seminude pose.

Contrary to such findings, Piero's image exhibits a kind of license that is not at all condemnable and outside the bounds of propriety. With regard to the elaborate coiffure worn by Piero's lady, it certainly need not be seen as indecorous. As demonstrated in Pollaiuolo's *Portrait of a Young Woman* in the Museo Poldi-Pezzoli, Milan, pearls and ribbon decorations, together with knotted and plaited hair patterns, were not uncommon and often appeared in representations of the Madonna.[62] Of greater relevance, a woman's hair would have been so extravagantly arranged as a type of ceremonial styling, for special festival occasions such as the joust.[63] In addition, the strung net of pearls woven through the woman's hair is an adornment called a *vespaio*, due to its resemblance to a wasp's nest.[64] This, in turn, could have served as a pun on the Vespucci surname of Simonetta's husband.

The woman's pearls are especially striking and, though associated with Venus, were often shown to adorn 'abiti e capelli dell donne fiorentine' in examples of quattrocento portraiture and were also particular to the Virgin, signifying *purezza*.[65] Eugenio Battisti suggested that Simonetta's pearls, in conjunction with the serpent, allude to the *misteri della morte* as a 'typum mortis' and the blurring between the Christian and pagan traditions.[66] The latter point is certainly viable, for I would claim that the pearl adorned *vespaio* functions more as a contemporary example of a ceremonial hairstyle, richly adorned but not unbefitting considering not only the pragmatic context—the joust which made Simonetta's name famous—but, of equal importance, the subsequent deification of the young woman and the mythologising of her beauty and purity.

It can be said that Simonetta's nudity is most possible, if not *only* possible, in a posthumous image, in which she could become almost marmoreal. In a broader context, it should be remembered that nude images of Venus, albeit alluring, were also hardly judged indecorous, as seen in Botticelli's famous decorations for the young Lorenzo Pierfrancesco de' Medici (*c.*1460-1503). The possible interpretation of the image as a warning aid to moral instruction (Fermor) is further belied by the expression and modelling of the face, and the gentle innocence in its features and soft contour. It would not seem inconceivable that Piero, who is known for rarely withholding sympathy for all punished, whether it be Prometheus, a dying nymph or centaur, has chosen to depict Cleopatra as both *femme fatale* and tragic heroine, but inevitably siding towards the latter. Yet there is a strong sense

that the image's 'eroticism' has been argued in too one-sided a fashion and can be read as purity and beauty that are meant to attract more than to repel. Therein may lie its inherent paradox, only further supporting the Simonetta identification.

It must also not be forgotten that a great number of Biblical and literary heroines were represented as at least partially nude. The list includes Dido, Lucretia, Judith, Susanna, Griselda and the allegorical figures of *Fortuna* and even *Castità*[67], certainly proving that the ideal of decorum need not be violated by nudity but rather can be seen as a sign of superior virtue. Domestic paintings, whether as cassoni or *spalliere*, contain numerous examples of morally instructive narratives containing such figures—mythological, religious or allegorical. Perhaps the best pictorial example of such a nude moral exemplar is found in Botticelli's *Nastagio degli Onesti* series.[68] A sculptural image analogous to the Chantilly panel in type is seen in a *Bust of a Woman* (Bargello, Florence), formerly given to the workshop of Bernardo Rossellino but more likely a Northern Italian example.[69]

The contradiction grows stronger when Piero's image is compared to those unquestionably portraying the Egyptian queen. Piero's panel would have been one of the earliest representations of Cleopatra, if so identified, and yet stands apart radically on several important counts from all succeeding portrayals.[70] Piero's young woman is shown neither with the languorous withdrawal of Rosso's version (1524-7) in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick—seemingly asleep, like Ariadne on the island of Naxos, but in reality her life slowly ebbing[71]—nor as the violently agitated examples embodied in the verso of Michelangelo's Casa Buonarroti drawing or prints by Domenico del Barbiere and Agostino Veneziano. Piero's representation instead appears much more concerned with the image's visual immediacy rather than its correlation to a specific narrative, such as Plutarch's famous description in his *Lives*.[72] Missing are the servants, the queen's crown and the basket of figs, as well as the conventional indoor setting that is still adhered to by Rosso. Nor is the sitter shown as a full-length nude, standing or reclining, within a maritime or classicised landscape, accompanied by stile or sarcophagi, as seen in the prints. And, most glaring, Piero's snake seems harmless—of a decorative and symbolic nature—and resembles an attribute, far from the threatening serpents shown with bared fangs or already striking in the later cinquencento Cleopatra examples. The difference can be said to be one of 'image' versus 'storia'

The Chantilly panel is much closer in type to a small number of works that can also be classified as imaginary or ideal portraits. All portray the sitter with one or both breasts bared. Many functioned as composite portrait-images, combining a real-life sitter with qualities or attributes of a mythical, allegorical or Biblical figure. The most widespread and familiar examples of such idealised women occur the sixteenth century and can be traced to maiolica work and Michelangelo's series of *teste divine*. The refined profiles and elaborate coiffures of the latter drawings further influenced the

idealised female helf-lengths of artists such as Francesco d'Ubertino Verdi, nicknamed 'Il Bachiacca' [73] More particular illustrations include Giorgione's so-called *Laura* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna),[74] Raphael's *'La Fornarina'* (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome) and Bartolomeo da Veneto's *Portrait of a Young Woman (Flora?)* of *c.*1507-10 (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt) (fig. 14).[75] How marked the difference is between 'La Fornarina' and the same artist's highly decorous portrayal of apparently the same sitter in the *Donna Velata, c.*1513 (Galleria Palatina, Florence).[76] Nevertheless, none of these portraits can be said to be inappropriate or lewd in their original contexts. While many such images undoubtedly depicted mistresses, it must be remembered that Simonetta Vespucci also was one, but guiltless of the transgression of *castitas*. Simonetta's role as mistress is better equated with that of a poetic muse, or 'donna ispiratrice'

Such a comparative grouping of Piero's *Simonetta Vespucci* among examples by Raphael and Giorgione remains open to question in light of its substantially earlier dating. Furthermore, what clearly separates these half-nudes from Piero's lady is the latter's lack of direct address. In this sense, Piero's chosen profile form associates his image with a much more homogenous set of portraits identified as idealised portrayals of Simonetta Vespucci, dated on stylistic grounds from the late 1470s to the mid-1480s and attributed to the school of Botticelli.[77] The Chantilly portrait notwithstanding, the group of remaining so-called Simonetta likenesses has been agreed to consist of five panels in: The National Gallery (London), Marubeni Corporation (Tokyo), the Kisters collection (Kreuzlingen), the Gemäldegalerie (Berlin) and the Städelsches Künstinstitut (Frankfurt) (fig. 15).[78] With the exception of the Kreuzlingen example—dramatically variant in showing the figure exposing a lactating breast—all of the women are fully clothed, wearing gowns current in late quattrocento fashions and in some cases billowing drapery. All of the sitters, except those depicted in the Berlin and Richmond works, face right. The portraits are united not only by their uniform profile form but, more arresting, by the their extravagantly arranged hair and other quasi-fantastical, if not mythological, adornments. The Frankfurt version in particular is marked by its lavish hairstyle and is complete with complex braids and strings of pearls and topped by feathers, similar to the quattrocento descriptions of nymphs wearing feathers in pageants, processions and jousts. As will later be shown, Piero's Chantilly portrait shares many of the same qualities: as a highly attractive image, yet not one at variance from the decorum of female beauty when viewed in light of ceremonial styling and, more important, confirming Simonetta Vespucci's much larger posthumous status as an altogether mythologised otherworldly being.

The unsuitability of choosing Cleopatra, an image symbolising waywardness and lack of virtue, or even 'Simonetta as Cleopatra' as a subject for a domestic commission is made even clearer when contextualised within the contemporary literature concerning Cleopatra. Before the much later arrival

of more forgiving narratives, Boccaccio's 'Life of Cleopatra' in Chapter LXXXVI of his *De claris mulieribus* (*Delle donne famose*) created a starkly darker impression[79]. Boccaccio's text was the most influential of the time on the subject and takes a strong moralising, derisory view of the queen. Here, Cleopatra is shown as 'avaricious, cruel, and vain', known more for her luxury and wastefulness than any productive achievements. Boccaccio described her as 'splendid in her beauty and capable of ensnaring whoever she desired by the fascination of her sparkling eyes and the seduction of her speech' and as 'the whore of the Kings of the Orient, insatiable in her lust for gold and jewels, [for] not only did she despoil her lovers of such riches, but she also robbed temples and holy places of vases, statues, and other treasures' [80] Although slightly more tempered, in the 1481 edition of his Commentary on Canto V of Dante's *Inferno*, Landino wrote of 'Cleopatra lussuriosa', a 'femmina di grande animo e molto prudente, ma non meno lasciva' [81] How poorly these descriptions fit the charm of the Chantilly image.

Negative portrayals of Cleopatra similar to Boccaccio's were the unvarying norm in Antiquity. According to Plutarch's 'Life of Anthony', the crowning evil of the general's weakness was his love for Cleopatra, which 'roused and drove to frenzy many of the passions that were still hidden and quiescent in him, and dissipated and destroyed whatever good and saving qualities still offered resistance'.[82] In Anthony's debacle versus the Parthinian army, 'He was not master of his faculties, but, as if he were under the influence of certain drugs or of magic rites, was ever looking eagerly towards her, and thinking more of his speedy return than of conquering the enemy' [83] In the *Aeneid* (VIII. 688), Virgil wrote that her association with Anthony provoked terrible shame[84]; Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars* described Cleopatra as most famous of several queens that were Julius Caesar's mistresses, with whom he feasted until dawn [85]; Horace went as far as referring to the queen as a monster in his *Odes* (I. 37); and Propercius, in the *Elegies* (III. 11) saw her as the kind of woman that ruins lives, dragging men after herself and then subduing them.

Thus, the contrast between the appearance of Piero's lady and the actual literature surrounding Cleopatra seems far too great. It is difficult, if not impossible, to look upon the portrait image as a Clytemnestra or Pandora-like figure, a parasitic seductress and destroyer of men's wills in the classical vein. By contrast, as will be shown, the chorus of poetic descriptions of Simonetta Vespucci was wholly panegyric in the late quattrocento and proves much more fitting when studied alongside Piero's representation.

First retracing the life of the real Simonetta Cattaneo, rather than her mythical legacy, she was born in or near Genoa around 1453. Her father, Gaspare Cattaneo, and her mother, Chateroccia di Marco Spinola, descended from distinguished families of genoese nobility. In an arranged marriage of 1468, Simonetta married Marco Vespucci, cousin to the family's great explorer Amerigo. Marco's

father, Piero Vespucci, had became a friend and business partner with Lorenzo de' Medici and through Simonetta's brother-in-law (Jacopo III d'Appiano), the Vespucci could now offer the Medici a lucrative link to the d'Appiano family, lords of Piombino, who controlled the iron mines of Elba. The marriage thus ensured an important alliance for both families. It was, in fact, Simonetta's niece, Semiramide d'Appiano, that married Lorenzo's cousin and active Botticelli patron, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, in 1482.[86]

Famously known as Giuliano de' Medici's mistress, as the object of a sublimated, non-illicit passion in accord with Petrarchan poetic convention, Simonetta died a tragically premature death—probably from tuberculosis—at the age of twenty-three on 26 April 1476, Easter Sunday. This was the exact day of Giuliano's assassination by the Pazzi two years later, likewise at the age of twenty-three, although it remains possible that this coincidence was a form of symbolic conceit, not unlike Petrarch's claim regarding the death of his Laura. Simonetta was immortalised on 29 January 1475, during a jousting tournament in Piazza Santa Croce, arranged by Il Magnifico to honour his younger brother, Giuliano, while also celebrating the concluded alliance between Florence, Venice and Milan. Detailed contemporary descriptions of the spectacular event included that of Giuliano's standard designed by Botticelli, in the center of which appeared a white-gowned figure of Pallas[87]: a near-exact description of the white-gowned Simonetta, clad in Pallas' armour, from the last octaves of Poliziano's *Stanze*.

Simonetta inspired numerous poems in her memory within the Medici circle.[88] A great public funeral was made, consisting of a procession of mourners that followed a path from her house to her resting place in Ognissanti. The young woman's enduring loveliness, as glimpsed through the open casket, inspired many poets to compose elegiac pieces.[89] Lamenting 'the bitterness of this death', Lorenzo de' Medici mourned her loss in the four sonnets that begin his *Commento* and in its preface. Bernardo Pulci also composed an elegy and a sonnet about Giuliano's beloved[90], along with a lengthy poem by Francesco Nursio Timideo [91], four Latin epigrams by Naldo Naldi [92] and a eulogy by Lorenzo's *cancelliere*, Francesco Dovizi da Bibbiena[93]. Pulci bestows the greatest encomium, writing that Simonetta had entered Jove's realm to join Laura and Beatrice, 'like a new phoenix flown into heaven', as the 'only person from our times (there)'.[94] Pulci refers to Simonetta as Daphne, while comparing Giuliano to Apollo, and in the last stanza describes her as a nymph.

> Nympha, che in terra un freddo saxo copre,
> Benigna stella hor su nel ciel gradita,
> Quando la luce tua vie più si scorpe,
> Torna a veder la mia patria smarrita.[95]

Yet no literary work on the subject matches the delicacy of Angelo Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra del Magnifico Giuliano*, begun in 1475 and broken off in 1478, upon Giuliano's death. Holding true

to a medieval chivalrous ideal of the unattainable beloved, Poliziano's representation of Simonetta before her death is—like Pulci's—that of a Venus-like nymph who gained the love of Giuliano while remaining impervious to his love.[96] At one point, Poliziano likens Giuliano to a hunter, in futile pursuit of a deer that transforms into the 'nymph' Simonetta.[97] When Simonetta appears, she is described as 'fair-skinned, unblemished white' and 'in her movement she is regally mild, her glance alone could quiet a tempest' Poliziano proceeds to describe 'her face, sweetly painted with privet and roses' and 'divine speech'.[98] The qualities of Thalia, Minerva and Diana all dwell within her.[99] 'Do not marvel at my young beauty', Simonetta says after revealing herself, 'for I was born in the lap of Venus' [100]

The ambiguous relationship between chastity and beauty is illustrated in Sigismondo della Stufa's letter of 1466 to Lorenzo il Magnifico in which he describes a penitent woman fresh from confession, who had 'no fire at all, such that you never saw a thing so beautiful, with her black clothing and her head veiled, with such soft steps ... I do not want to go on saying more, lest you fall into sin in these holy days' [101] This blurring that has caused many modern scholars to doubt the Simonetta identification can, therefore, be traced to its own time and its literary sources. In the case of Simonetta, familiarity with this dichotomy is seen specifically in Bernardo Pulci's 1476 elegy upon her death, when he refers to 'pudica e bella ... due gran nemiche'.[102] Aretino's sonnet on Titian's portrait of Eleanora Gonzaga later likewise praised it for possessing both 'chastity and beauty, eternal enemies' [103]

This Renaissance reconciliation between the traditional counterweights of chastity and beauty also can be extended to the real and the ideal. The two often worked together rather than in opposition. Perhaps the best illustration of another intellectualised image, both idealised and specific, and thus similar to the Chantilly panel, albeit commissioned for Milan, is Leonardo's *Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani* (*c.*1483-5), Czartoryski Museum, Cracow.[104] The remoteness and the inaccessibility of the woman again has been sublimated and cloaked in symbolism, making the seductive attraction that much greater and that much safer.[105] Indeed, Renaissance portraits should be recognised as 'complex and mediated' creations and not merely mirror substitutes for the sitter that presented his or her personality with all of its unique individual traits.[106] Much earlier Alberti, in praising the painter's ability to make a kind of visual resurrection, also noted that true and altered representations could become blurred and take on different appearances without forfeiting the power to revive them and their memory. Michelangelo's San Lorenzo effigies of the Medici Dukes are one example of such male representations. Yet it was mostly female portraits that embodied the most complex tensions and seeming contradictions.[107]

The idea of rejuvenation is vital to the reading of Piero's allegorical image. The context of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco's possible patronage may be at the root of the panel's mystery. Lorenzo il Magnifico was Lorenzo's second cousin and his legal guardian since the death of the youngster's father. Serving as a marriage broker on behalf of the Appiani family, Il Magnifico was an integral intermediary figure in the marriage between his ward and Semiramide d'Appiani, the niece of Simonetta, on 19 July 1482.[108] As proposed by Jennifer Craven-Madani, a new union between a Cattaneo and a Medici after the deaths of Giuliano and Simonetta must have been perceived by both families as a symbolic rejuvenation of the earlier pair's unrequited love.[109] It is then possible that the Chantilly panel was commissioned in 1482 by Lorenzo de' Medici, to commemorate the wedding that he arranged as a guardian figure for both Semiramide and young Lorenzo. Following Craven-Madani's hypothesis, I would also agree that the marriage union between the Medici and Cattaneo families may be symbolically represented by the image of Lorenzo's serpent 'eternally' entwined around a gold chain, *catena* in Italian, and thus a pun on the Cattaneo lineage.[110]

Snake iconography is of great complexity given the creature's twin function of destroyer and preserver.[111] The former symbolism may be our most familiar, from both Hebrew and Christian iconography, connoting evil, destruction, craftiness and temptation (the serpent of the Tree of Knowledge) and the damned (Dante's *Inferno*). Nonetheless, the serpent's beneficent aspect connects it to another tree, that of Life. In ancient Greece, the creature represented the life principle (*agathos daimon*) and the positive qualities of wisdom, the renewal of life and healing. In Roman mythology, the snake likewise became linked to saviour divinities and those symbolising fertility, healing (Salus) and, significantly, wisdom (Minerva).[112] The latter interpretation of wisdom and prudence later took on a Biblical meaning. In Matthew X. 16, Christ instructs, 'See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves'

Most important in relation to Piero's particular use of the snake, however, is its funerary and temporal significance. When shown in its circular form, as a girdle or bracelet, it was the universal symbol of time or *aeternitas*, the eternal revolution and succession of the ages, as ancient as the Egyptian *uroboros*. As this circular form and the shedding of its own skin suggest, the snake therefore embodies renewal and resurrection. The chalice of St. John the Evangelist carries with it the similar meaning of healing and salvation. Capable of killing or healing, it is the perfect funerary symbol and, suitably, in Greek mythology represented death and dead heroes, whose souls departed their bodies in the shape of a snake.

It is most doubtful that the snake in the Chantilly image only served a purely ornamental function in its serpentine beauty and was of merely secondary importance to its wearer. Piero's painted serpent, while highly enigmatic, only partly alludes to the disease that snatched away the beautiful

Simonetta in her youth. More plausibly, the serpent fulfills the symbolic function of renewal. The symbol, though tinged with death, acts paradoxically to transcend it as a kind of apotropaic device through Simonetta's frozen and now mythologised beauty, celebrated even after her passing from the world. As Claudia Cieri Via notes, Piero's combination of the snake with the idealised profile is akin to a coin or medal, except here the symbolic serpentine attribute (or would-be verso image) is wed with the physical depiction itself.[113] The idea that the serpent could allude to Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici's *impresa* was proposed by Eve Borsook in 1966 but rarely supported, although the snake device was found on three portrait medals bearing identifying inscriptions.[114] The symbol is also found in two well known early sources on emblematics and in its circular shape represented the concept of rebirth and continuity.[115] The embellishing and decorative quality of the snake-necklace only adds to this polyvalence of meaning, remaining part symbol, part beautifying jewellery piece that almost supersedes the symbolic import in its sinuous rather than strictly circular shape.

The symbolic import of the threatening sky (*Stanze*, II. 33-4), against which the profile is silhouetted, and the withered tree in the left background also have been called into question. Taking each image separately, such a symbolic reading is not entirely conclusive. The gloomy cloud behind the sitter's profile, for instance, can be explained as a tonal foil to the profile's clarity. Yet when viewed together, along with the serpent, ledge and the memorial connotations of the woman's profile form, such background elements as the dark cloud and the dead tree at left begin to form what appears as an interrelated group of signs prefiguring or mourning Simonetta's untimely end.[116] The dead tree, paired with healthy, green ones on the opposite side of the composition, have traditionally signified the idea of death and rebirth, as demonstrated so often in Christ imagery.

The mythologising qualities of Piero's portrait are made all the more effective by the precision of execution seen such passages of the landscape, the serpentine necklace and the details of the woman's headdress, itself highly fanciful. Suddenly, the mythical presence before the beholder would thus transform herself into a young lady dressed in a costume for festival or the joust's *trionfi*. In the next moment, there is her nudity to remind once more that it is but an ideal vision. It is this recurring tug between the real and the imagined, the precise and the nebulous, that no doubt created the *frisson* that the viewer would have experienced at the time. It was precisely this dichotomy that was often noted in contemporary references to Florentine young women resembling nymphs and commented upon with both positive and negative connotations.[117]

As the poetry commemorating her recent death attests, Simonetta quickly came to represent the idea of the beloved, becoming a part of the Florentine community's collective, acculturated memory much in the same way as Dante's Beatrice Portinari or Petrarch's Laura. Simonetta herself likewise grew into a composite image: both a real-life mistress—who really did live and, more famously,

die—and an ideal lady. The ambiguities that such fusions created became clad in an otherworldly elegance and grace. Yet it must be remembered that the myths that grew to surround Simonetta's memory, as evident in the writings of Poliziano, Lorenzo il Magnifico and others, originated out of real-life events, and just as such sonnets and elegies set her figure into a poetic framework, so did the paintings that ensued.[118]

The intentions of the patron and the painter in producing such as a work as the Chantilly panel or Botticelli's mythologies for the Medici relied on the understanding of the contexts in which the interpretative decorum functioned. These contexts were extremely refined.[119] All of the multiple planes probably seemed equally viable, however, and integral to the meanings behind such pictures; these levels included the social and historical background of Florence at the time (in this case, the public grief over Simonetta's death), some of the shared concepts and fashions, familiarity with and influence of contemporary vernacular poetry, the motives of the possible patron and the execution of these intentions by the painter with the possibility of his own interpretations, a quality so frequently borne out in Piero's secular works.

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Finally, a study of the Chantilly panel remains incomplete without an object that may have served as the pictorial equivalent of a medallion's verso and its allegorical imagery. The referred to image is Piero di Cosimo's *Allegory* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, that stylistically dates very close to the Chantilly panel (fig. 16). Though previously linked to the Trivulzio monument and the *Battle of Anghiari* and given the date of 1505 by Grassi, the work appears to have been conceived independently of both Leonardo commissions. Piero's rearing horse certainly bears no resemblance to the *Battle*'s closely studied, dynamic beasts.

In its general design and execution, the work dates to the last fifteen or twenty years of the quattrocento and is closer in style to the Vulcan canvases and two Metropolitan Museum *spalliere*. The panel's physical state is extremely precarious.[120] The analyzed construction of paint is quite similar to that found in the Simonetta Vespucci, however, consisting of a 'moderately rich oil type'.[121] Its application ranges from thin and sketchy to moderately heavy but tends towards the former in most areas, save for some *impasto* in the foreground sea and middleground grass. This predominantly thin application may correspond in part to the panel's potential function as a portrait cover, thus serving more of a utilitarian, protective function while the portrait within would have demanded the greater share of careful execution.

The Chantilly and Washington works are nearly identical in size. The former measures 57 x 42 cm; the latter is 56 x 44 cm. The slight difference in dimension certainly is not sufficient reason to dismiss a possible union between the two panels, as other examples of portraits and their accompanying covers of varying size demonstrate.[122] It is quite possible that this difference would have been made up by a framing device. There is no evidence of hinge marks on either panel. The *Allegory* has a barb present along the edges of the paint film, indicating that this picture was painted, typically, in an engaged frame of some kind. Though it has been suggested that the barb may indicate a setting at an end of a cassone, it is probably more likely that the image was painted into an already assembled portrait and frame fixture.[123]

Angelica Dülberg's conclusion that the Washington picture, which she identifies as the 'Triumph of Chastity over Luxury', served as either the cover or backing for a portrait is certainly the most plausible and complete.[124] As Bacci noted much earlier (1966), the portrait that may have adorned the other side of the Washington panel was most likely that of a virtuous heroine. Capretti made the more specific connection with the Chantilly image, citing their near-identical dimensions. Surprisingly, the two panels still have never before been studied together in depth, as a complementary set, or satisfactorily examined in the possible allusions contained within this matching.

Only a few portrait covers have survived together with their companion portraits, and even less is known about the manner in which they were mounted. Some were hinged like a book, creating the appearance of a diptych; others slid across the portrait. The best example of the latter is Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's Uffizi panels: the *Portrait of a Woman (La Monacha)* and its cover, decorated with grotesques and a mask with the motto SVA CVIQVE PERSONA ('To each his own persona'). Another preserved pair is Lorenzo Lotto's 1505 portrait of *Bernardo de' Rossi* (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples) and its allegorical cover showing a satyr holding a wine jug and a cupid working with instruments, signifying indolence versus industry (or virtue versus vice), in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.[125] A final and most famous example is Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier (Francesco Guardi)* (Getty Museum, Los Angeles) and its *Pygmalion and Galatea* cover by Bronzino (Uffizi, Florence).[126]

In the past, the subject of the Washington panel was variously identified as an *Allegory of Aurora*; a propagandistic political allegory (the triumph of Medicean wisdom over lawlessness) as suggested by Douglas; and the *Propagation of Coral*, inspired by the *Metamorphoses* (Book IV, 745-50).[127] The absence of coral, for which it is difficult to mistake the craggy branches on the island, makes the latter interpretation highly unlikely. Furthermore, the wings on the female figure instead would have to belong on the horse if it is to be viewed as Pegasus, who, like the coral, sprung from the beheaded Medusa. Technical analysis, on the other hand, supports the present location of the

wings on the female figure. The impossibility of the horse being Pegasus also precludes the *Allegory of Aurora* identification, since it was this mythical beast that led the *carro dell'Aurora*. Nor does the woman wear the multicoloured garments typical of the goddess.

The peculiar awkwardness of the figures, particularly the oddly proportioned and buck-toothed horse, can be explained by the image's allegorical purpose, aiming more at an intellectual or moral statement than fluency of composition.[128] In her nudity, Simonetta embodies supreme purity and simplicity. In the *Allegory* we also encounter another nude figure, and I am in complete support of the iconographic interpretation that the female holding the gossamer-like rein functions as an allegorical figure: that of Chastity or Temperance. The male horse represents her antithesis, *Luxuria*. In this sense, then, the meaning of Piero's emblematic composition is rather close to one of the numerous interpretations of Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* (Uffizi, Florence) of *c.*1482-3, signifying the reconciliation of wisdom and instinct with the human soul or wisdom's direct supremacy over the volatility of the instincts inherent in the centaur's split-personality. Just as Pallas quiets the tempestuous passions of the centaur by a mere touch of his hair, Piero's Chastity tames the rearing horse with the most delicate of restraints. Reason and temperance achieve their means through the subtlest of persuasions.

The horse is not unlike serpent imagery in its ambivalence. In both the Greek and Roman traditions, the white horse was associated with heroes and had funerary meanings, serving as a psychopomp into the next world.[129] While the horse evoked positive Antique and Christian symbolism, the initial Renaissance perception of the image as an iconographic *topos* was negative. Associated with the intemperate deities Pluto and Neptune, the horse came to represent the base instincts, specifically male sexual desire.[130] A pictorial example of a myth in which a (metamorphosed) horse plays such a part is found in Caraglio's print of Saturn and Philyra, from Rosso's series of *The Loves of the Gods*.[131] *Luxuria* was the supreme deadly sin for women in the medieval church—as avarice was for men—although a transition did begin to occur in the writings of Florentine humanists, who blurred the sensuality associated with *luxuria*, and even *voluptas*, with the virtuous pursuit of love. Nonetheless, the rearing horse in Piero's panel, when viewed in conjunction with its restraining winged mistress, most likely represents the earlier medieval reading.

The prominence of the winged woman's brilliant red robe may allude to the colour's connections with faith and love in Christian imagery. However, the main key to the identity of the winged woman lies in the thin string with which she curbs the animal.[132] The cardinal virtue of Temperance was often shown holding a bridle and, in accordance with the Ciceronian tradition, was frequently interchangeable with the personification of Chastity, one of the monastic virtues. The appearance of Temperance underwent the greatest mutability among all the Virtues. Merged with Chastity, she can

be seen as Venus Pudica, as portrayed by Giovanni Pisano, who modelled his version on the ancient statue of Venus de' Medici for the pulpit (1301) in the Duomo in Pisa.[133] In other instances, she appears as Diana, seen in the tomb of Pope Pius II (1473) in San Andrea della Valle, Rome. Apart from a bridle, she is also shown with a sheathed sword or an hourglass.[134] Piero del Pollaiuolo's Mercanzia *Prudence* in the Uffizi holds a mirror in one hand and a serpent in the other. The latter proves significant in the present context.

Two symbols, neglected or possibly misinterpreted in the past, may convincingly bind the Washington *Allegory* with the Simonetta Vespucci panel. The first is the snake emblem, already addressed, as a symbol of *prudentia*, another cardinal virtue.[135] If the two panels are to be 'read' together, the snake adorning the lady's neck thus could allude to this most highly regarded of Humanist virtues, and not only to Simonetta's death. I would favour a double meaning, as seen in Luca della Robbia's enameled *terra cotta* image of *Prudence*, depicted holding a snake, together with a mirror, on the ceiling of the Chapel of the Cardinal of Portugal in San Miniato al Monte, Florence.[136]

Yet perhaps the most telling clue is the branch held in the winged figure's left hand. In the past the branch has been misidentified as either laurel or juniper. The former would seem appropriate iconographically, as its evergreen nature refers to eternity and immortality. Instead, the appearance of the plant most closely matches that of yew.[137] The sprigs of the branch painted by Piero contain small red berries. This fruit is the most distinguishing feature of the genus, consisting of a red, fleshy cup that nearly incloses the bony seed inside it. Most significant, the plant was known in Christian times not only to be a symbol of immortality but also that of mourning and sadness. This dual funerary/immortalising meaning appears extremely suitable as an accompanying symbol to the Chantilly portrait.

The significance of the mermaid or nereid that swims in the foreground remains puzzling. Though identified by past scholars as a siren, signifying lust, the creature differs from one in appearance. It is possible that the mermaid functions as an artistic embellishment, a whimsical creative addition on the part of Piero. It is most telling, however, that an allegorical figure such as that represented in Washington appears on the reverse of the *Portrait of a Woman (as Simonetta?)*, from the Botticelli workshop of *c.*1485-90, in The National Gallery, London (fig. 17).[138] The image shows a winged *Allegorical Figure*, holding an armillary sphere (hope and eternity) in one hand and in the other raises heavenward what appears to be a clump of moss (rebirth). It has been suggested that the portrait on the recto was a posthumous one and that the allegorical figure, with its attributes, alludes to the sitter's immortality.[139] Both the armillary and moss therefore function much in the same way as does the branch of yew. Through additional allegorical symbols—such as the restrained horse, the

yew's funerary function and the unthreatening serpent in the Chantilly image—Piero proceeds to add additional layers of meaning of chastity/prudence and the mourning of their exemplar s passing to the promise of immortality.

In keeping with Poliziano's verse, a second plausible interpretation to the *Allegory* centres around Simonetta as the personification of Fortuna. The decoding again is based on a close reading of the *Stanze*, in which Sleep sends a dream to Giuliano on the orders of Venus: 'He seems to see his lady, harsh and unbending in aspect' and 'over her white gown she wears armour which protects her chaste bosom with its gorgon breastplate'.[140] Giuliano is then told that only the highest honours at the joust will win her. Yet, after finally capturing the 'nymph' and in the process of his crowning, Giuliano's beloved is enveloped in a cloud and soon his prize is lost—before Simonetta is reborn as a personification of Fortune.

> L'aier tutta parea divenir bruna, / e tremar tutto dello abisso il fondo; / parea sanguigno el ciel farsi e la luna, / e cader giù le stelle nel profondo. / Poi vede lieta *in forma di Fortuna* [own emphasis] / surger suo ninfa, e rabbellirsi il mondo, / e prender lei di sua vita governo, / e lui con seco far per fama eterno.[141]

Giuliano is shown the different courses of his fate through the dream's signs and then awakes, 'burning with love and a desire for glory' Simonetta thus becomes the young man's inspiration, spurring him on to rise 'so excellent among the others that I may beat my wings with you to heaven' as her champion.[142]

As opposed to the medieval representation of Dame Fortune turning her wheel, the second aspect of Fortune as the Antique goddess of inconstancy governing men's lives is a highly relevant possibility in this case. The figure enjoyed a strong revival in Renaissance allegory, usually depicted as naked, sometimes with a billowing veil, and winged.[143] Although she was most often represented balancing on a globe, a sign of her inconstancy, it is possible that the island upon which Piero's figure stands may have been substituted to suggest the opposite aspect, that of stability, thus linking Fortune to Virtue. As seen in Horace's *Odes* (1. 35), Fortune was also the mistress of the sea, which could explain Piero's maritime setting. The bridle was one of the lesser attributes of Fortune, and in the context of the Washington *Allegory*, alludes to another figure often linked or confused with Fortune: Nemesis, the Roman *Fortuna*, who punished those guilty of *hubris*.[144] Piero's white horse would then represent not the sin of lust but rather that of pride.[145]

In conclusion, Piero's Simonetta is a mixture of reality and a transcendent ideal. Elements of fantasy and desire cloud the plausibility of her identity, and yet enough clues remain to preclude it from falling into complete obscurity. In this, the painted image is no different from the idealisation of the young noblewoman as a literary persona in the Petrarchan mode. Both art and literature sought to create a suggestive 'fantasy portrait' of an upper-class young woman whose stature grew to near

mythical proportions. This conflation of sexually circumscribed female virtue on one hand and sensuality on the other resulted in many comparisons to a nymph, and in this sense it is interesting to make a connection with the proud and chaste and yet erotically charged Diana, a deity that was also associated with the snake. Pulci in fact wrote that Simonetta possessed the intelligence of Athena, the eloquence of Mercury, the beauty of Venus and the chastity of Diana.[146] Timideo likewise found no contradictions in describing the chaste Simonetta in sensual terms, writing of her coral-lips, rose-colored cheeks, white neck and 'alabaster breast and the resplendent fruit growing there'[147] So reminiscent of Piero's Virgins and nymphs, the image is hence consistent with the painter's own personal ideals of beauty—as well as embodying those in the Medici humanist circle.

As expected, Piero therefore once again bends the rules, creating even more ambiguities in his portraiture—some still unresolved—and muddying whatever theories and definitions that were to emerge in the late cinquecento. It could be argued that Piero's *Simonetta Vespucci* is a more 'intellectual' portrait in relation to the more 'natural' images of Giuliano da Sangallo and his father. However, it would be much more accurate to view both types as equally inventive in their own right. Piero proves extraordinary in that he seems to achieve a rare fusion of external and internal verisimilitude, harmonising both the imaginary and the observed.

[1] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. J. Thiem (University Park, Pa., 1991), pp. 114-16. The last quotation is from Petrarch's 'Trionfo della Morte', I. 72.

[2] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 60-61. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 651. The Rome portraits go unmentioned in the early 1550 edition. In identifying Piero's authentic portraiture passages in the Rosselli frescoes, the most convincing figures by the young apprentice are a young woman in profile on the left side of the *Sermon on the Mount*, together with two nearby men—one directly above the woman and the other below her and to her right—facing the opposite direction (left). The same qualities can be spotted in an older, gaunt-faced man, wearing a brown cap, at the right side of the *Healing of the Leper*. Meller identified the portrait of Virginio Orsini with the second figure from the extreme left in the *Last Supper* fresco. P Meller, 'Two Drawings of the Quattrocento in the Uffizi: a Study in Stylistic Change', *Master Drawings*, XII (1974), pp. 261-79.

[3] On the subject of the memory picture, Leonardo's described a 'recipe' for keeping in mind the form of a face and then reproducing it in a composite image made from a range of 'types' in his *Trattato*. The passage is in the section on 'Portrait and Figure Painting', no. 572, in *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. J.P. Richter, 2 vols. (London, 1970), I, pp. 338-9.

[4] Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze cominciate per la giostra del Magnifico Giuliano di Piero de' Medici* II. 4, in *Poesie italiane*, ed. S. Orlando (Milan, 1976), p. 88. Trans.: *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, trans. D. Quint (Amherst, 1979), p. 69.

[5] Ibid., I. 40, ed. Orlando, 1976, p. 51. Trans. Quint, p. 21.

[6] For Dante's mention of the eyes and mouth—as 'balconi de la donna, che nel dificio del corpo abita... ('the balconies of the lady who dwells in the architecture of the body')—see Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio*, III. 8, line 9, ed. M. Simonelli (Bologna, 1966), p. 97.

[7] For J.H. Lipman's reference to Piero's earlier Chantilly panel and its 'further evolution of the Baldovinetti luminism', giving 'entirely new meaning for the profile ... [now] neither primarily a low relief not a flat silhouette, but a simple *valeur* [with] no linear contour', see Lipman, 'The Profile Portrait', *Art Bulletin*, XVIII (1936), p. 80. Lipman also mentions Northern examples such as Jan van Eyck's two images in The National Gallery, London: *Portrait of a Man* (1432) and *Man with a Red Turban* (1433). In both, extremely close attention is paid to the modelling of the face and its muscles and structure through nuances of lighting.

[8] Recto: *Head of a Girl (Youth?) in Profile to the Left*, pen and brown ink, brown wash and white heightening over preliminary indications in black chalk on yellow-brown tinted paper, 24 x 17.7 cm. Verso: *Head of a Bearded Old Man, Wearing a Cap, Facing Three Quarters to the Left*, point of the brush, brown ink, brown wash and white heightening over preliminary indications in black chalk on yellow-brown tinted paper. 23.9 x 17.8 cm. Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, RF 1870/1439. For an extensive discussion: W.M. Griswold, *The Drawings of Piero di Cosimo* (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1988), pp. 264-6.

[9] *Head of a Young Woman* and *Head of a Young Woman in a Cap with Downcast Eyes*, both in metalpoint, heightened with white gouache, on paper rubbed lightly with reddish chalk. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, 1156 E and 1153 E. See the cat. entries by Carmen Bambach in G. Goldner and C. Bambach, eds., *The Drawings of Filippino Lippi and His Circle*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997-8 (NY, 1997), pp. 106-9.

[10] Quotation is from Lipman, 1936, p. 76—in reference to Piero della Francesca's Uffizi portrait diptych of Federigo da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza. Likewise typical of Leonardo's searching, energetic use of line is his *Isabella d'Este* black and red chalk with pastel drawing of 1500 (Louvre, Paris), executed in Mantua for yet another unfulfilled commission. L. Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits* (New Haven, 1990), p. 84.

[11] Oil on panel, diameter 165 cm. Oldest provenance: Venerosi Collection, Pisa. Formerly given to Signorelli (1893 exh.), Piero's largest tondo is one of his most compositionally integrated and dates from the last decade of the 1400s. Joseph's appearance and sharp illumination of his features finds uncanny resemblances in both St. Nicholas of the *Visitation* and St. Peter of the Innocenti Altarpiece.

Piero adds his idiosyncratic details in both the foreground—the wicker flask, bread crust and cherries—and background passages, such as the grazing donkey at right and the shepherd tending his sheep in front of a town at left. Some paint loss/repainting is visible in the Virgin's blue mantle and Joseph's shoulder. There is also some loss of modelling in the right angel's right leg. Thickly applied, the paint is creamy in texture. See Bacci, 1966, pp. 73-4; Bacci, 1976, p. 88; Fermor, 1993, p. 151; Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 118-19; and R. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (NY, 2000), pp. 205-6. Olson's text is especially thorough in its discussion of religious symbolism, so often revealed through naturalistic details.

[12] Tempera and oil (?) on panel, diameter 74 cm. This small image was once roughly overpainted with a *Visitation* of 1700; it was Herbert Horne's suspicions after its purchase in 1906, based on the picture's Renaissance frame, that instigated the uncovering of Piero's painting beneath, revealed in a restoration by Luigi Cavenaghi. The work has been recently cleaned; however, the state of the painting remains precarious, with many infilled lacunae. Dark tones, particularly browns and ochres, dominate the composition. Piero pays great attention to the vegetation (such as the tall weeds at left) and the central rock formation. Tremendous detail is also seen in Jerome's books in the cave's opening, the white flower in front of the saint and the skull and crucifix placed on the tree stump, in front of which the saint contemplates. In his right hand, Jerome holds the stone with which he beats his chest. Surprisingly, Piero passes on the opportunity to paint the saint's lion. The work is datable stylistically to 1495-1500. Its patronage remains unknown, although it should be noted that the Pugliese family chapel in S.M. del Carmine had St. Jerome as its (adopted) titular saint. Such a devotional subject for a small tondo was common in Florence, however. See Bacci, 1966, pp. 72-3; Bacci, 1976, p. 88; and Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 114. For museum catalogue entries, see F. Rossi, *Il Museo Horne a Firenze* (Milan, 1967), pp. 142-3; and L. Bertani et al., *Il Museo Horne a Firenze* (Florence, 1990), pp. 32-3.

[13] Tempera on wood panel, 28.5 x 23.5 cm. For provenance summary: F. Zeri, *Italian Paintings. A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Florentine School* (NY, 1971), pp. 95-6, and in Bacci, 1966, pp. 65-6. The provenance can be traced back as far as the Bentivoglio Collection, Florence (before 1833). It entered the Metropolitan Museum in 1921, at the behest of Michael Dreiser.

[14] A similar type of effort can be seen in the naturalism of Pollaiuolo's *Portrait of a Lady* in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum, Milan, and its sure-handed modelling of the face, delicate eyelashes, glimmer of the eye and slight parting of the lips. This comparison to the Milan image was also noted earlier by Émile Bertaux, Aynard Sale Cat. (1913), p. 75, no. 60. Piero's *St. John* had been compared to a similarly posed *Young St. John the Baptist* in profile in the Louvre. The latter version, lacking a secure attribution, is much cruder in execution and certainly is not by Piero. See F. Knapp, *Piero di Cosimo* (Halle, 1899), p. 99; and A. Brejon de Lavergnée and D. Thiébaut, eds., *Catalogue sommaire illustré des peintures du musée du Louvre. Italie, Espagne, Allemagne, Grande-Bretagne et* divers, 5 vols. (Paris, 1981), II, p. 218.

[15] Two drawn studies by Leonardo in the Royal Library, Windsor (inv. 12519 and 12567)—the first showing an infant's torso from the front and back and the second depicting the boy's head and torso in profile—were likely done for such a bust of a young St. John. See M. Kemp, *The Marvellous Works of Nature and Man* (London, 1989), pp. 63-4, fig. 18.

[16] The image's relationship with contemporary sculture is also mentioned by Elena Capretti in K. Weil-Garris Brandt (ed.), *Giovinezza di Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Palazzo Vecchio and Casa Buonarotti, Florence, 1999-2000 (Florence, 1999), pp. 234-5.

[17] Judging by older photographs of the work, subsequent cleanings have created cruder light effect by eliminating original varnishes.

[18] K.B. Neilson believed the *St. John* to have been painted under the influence of Filippino, noting his Angel Gabriel in the S. Gimignano *Annunciation* tondi of 1483-4 (*Filippino Lippi*, 1938, p. 129); R. van der Male also noted Filippino's influence (*Italian Schools XIII*, 1931, p. 350), as did L. Grassi,

who dated the Piero work at 1490, in *Piero di Cosimo e il problema della conversione al cinquecento nella pittura fiorentina ed emiliana* (Rome, 1963), p. 37 ff.

[19] It is also tempting to mention Leonardo's Uffizi *Annunciation* (*c.*1473-5) and the close similarity of Leonardo's Angel Gabriel to Piero's *St. John*. Such a connection would be a rather impetuous one, as we know very little about the *Annunciation*'s dating or even its function, due to its curious shape. The panel was placed in the Monte Oliveto Monastery outside of Florence, and it remains speculative as to whether Piero really saw the work.

[20] The panels bear some similarity in composition and execution to Piero's *Madonna and Child with a Pigeon* (Louvre, Paris), likewise datable to the first years of the 1500s (fig. 90). Still, in its style and pose, there are not enough commonalities to include the Louvre image as part of a larger series. More likely, the work was executed as an independent commission.

[21] Oil on panel, diameter 160 cm, six-plank construction. Like the Dresden tondo, this earlier panel also dates from the 1490s and was attributed to Signorelli (1893). Attesting to Piero's powers of minute observation, the scene's foreground springs to life with numerous plants and flowers, including the symbolically rich dandelion (Passion), and a spring of water emerging from the altar-like rock upon which Christ sleeps in a *pietà* pose. Piero adds further 'nature symbolism' in the goldfinch or coal-tit at bottom right (symbolising the soul) and in the miniscule tadpoles swimming in the pool below, alluding to life and fertility. The open prayerbook's inscription is legible, referring to Psalm 101. 26-7 of the Vulgate ('Et tu in princi / pio terram fun / dasti et opera / manuum tu / arum sunt ce / li psi peribu / nt tu autem / permanebis / et omnes sicut / vestimentum / veterascent'). The panel was last cleaned in May 1995. For the full treatment record, see Mark Tucker's reports in the Toledo Museum of Art conservation files. See Bacci, 1966, p. 72; Bacci, 1976, p. 88; Fermor, 1993, p. 151; Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 108-9; and Olson, 2000, pp. 203-5. Also: O. Wittman (ed.), *The Toledo Museum of Art. European Paintings* (University Park, Pa., 1976), pp. 126-7.

[22] Oil on panel, 72.4 x 53.4 cm. Inexplicably given to Mantegna in the past, the *St. Mary Magdalen* was attributed to Piero by Morelli in 1874. The work found its way to the Monte di Pieta of Rome before passing to Naples and the Collection of Baron Barocco. In 1907, it entered the Galleria Nazionale in Rome. Bacci, 1966, p. 85-6; and Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 117-8.

[23] The theological code for colours was formulated by St. Antoninus among others and was commented upon in Renaissance writings. For a discussion see M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 81-5, esp. 81.

[24] Dimensions: 83 x 59 cm. The work was probably the same one found in the collection of J.A. Brentano of Amsterdam in the early 19th century, bought in 1822. It was then in London, the Humphrey Ward Collection, followed by the Sedelmeyer Gallery in Paris and then New York's Pratt Collection. It entered the Kress Collection in 1937 and was transferred to Honolulu. Bacci, 1966, p. 86. A drapery study—one of three studies pasted onto one sheet and inscribed by Padre Sebastiano Resta—in the Duke of Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, has been identified as a preparatory drawing for the left arm and shoulder of the Honolulu *St. John*. See G. Dalli Regoli, 'Considerations on an Attribution to Piero di Cosimo by Padre Resta', *Master Drawings*, XXXIII (1995), pp. 30-35. The sheet was independently noted as a study for the *St. John* by Griswold, 1988, p. 165.

[25] Conservation report on the *St. John*, prepared by Dianne Dwyer-Modestini, August 1988, based on an inspection made in March, 1988. Dwyer-Modestini also mentioned the presence of opaque retouching, concealing the undermodelling of passages retaining the original glaze. The 16th century walnut and gold frame, probably Florentine, had been completely regilded. An earlier report of 27 October 1981 (see museum conservation files), recording a restoration carried out by Clements Robertson, found both the support and paint structures and ground to be sound at that date. It was noted: 'Painting executed on a white ground. Flesh tones created with very dark underpainting then lighter flesh tones scumbled over to arrive at cool, opalescent half tones. Clothing created by typical underpainting in monochrome and glazing'. In the panel's surface coating, the pre-1981 restoration involved significant repainting. Both restoration paint and discoloured, semi-opaque varnish were

then removed in an acetone solution. Compensation then consisted of a final varnish and inpainting; over all, 'this [1981] restoration was based on the preferability of too little rather than too much'.

[26] Previous to the 1981 restoration, Bacci observed that the lines of the face had tightened as the result of past intervention, and that the stripping of the remnants of glazes and varnish rendered the areas around the lips and eyelids rather crude. Bacci, 1966, p. 86.

[27] The cup with the twisting viper seen at the lower left corner of the composition is one of St. John's attributes, referring to the challenge given to him by a high priest of Diana at Ephesus to drink from a poisoned cup.

[28] The two Rijksmuseum portraits are a part of several projects that did not receive a mention in Vasari's 1550 edition. Other additions included the lost Rome portraits, the lengthy description of the Triumphs, Vasari's owned *Venus, Cupid and Mars*, and the Chantilly portrait. The precise location of the Innocenti altarpiece within the church also was not provided until 1568.

[29] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 71. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 659.

[30] The pair came into Dutch possession in the second half of the 17th century and then passed into the hands of William III of England, Johan William Frisco at Het Loo (where they were listed as 'in the manner of Lucas van Leyden') and Willem V, whose catalogue identified the sitters as 'Laurens Jansz Coster' and 'Gui d'Arezzo', the inventor of modern musical notation. Upon arriving in the Rijksmuseum in 1948, the works were given to van Leyden and then to Dürer. See Aaf Edinga's entry in H.W. van Os and M. Prakhen, *The Florentine Paintings in Holland, 1300-1500* (Maarssen, 1974), pp. 97-9.

[31] Both panels measure 47.5 x 33.5 cm and remain in good condition. Both are on original supports, with modern frames. In the portrait of Giuliano, there is some retouching in the sky, the garments and the face (where original yellow passages have been repainted in light pink). Francesco's portrait shows fairly extensive retouchings in the garments and is rubbed in spots. Both images are covered by a thick layer of varnish. For this technical information see Ibid., p. 97.

[32] The works were considered lost by Cavalcaselle when they migrated north. For their rediscovery and Piero attribution see Frizzoni, 'L'arte italiana nella Galleria Nazionale di Londra', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, IV (1879), pp. 257 ff.

[33] The woodcut portraits for Vasari's 1550 publication are mentioned in a letter of Paolo Giovio (March 1548), which alluded to the edition appearing without illustrations even though some images were already gathered. Portraits were still being collected in 1563, as Vasari asked Giovanni Caccini in Pisa in a letter if he could inquire from Simone Mosca about a portrait of his father. In fact, Vasari provided his own portrait as late as 1567. I thank David Franklin for providing me with the background of the illustrations and the identity of the cutter. As for the painted portrait of Piero, it is now lost but remains preserved in the profile print in Vasari's second edition.

[34] This chronological reasoning is laid out in Bacci, 1966, p. 83. From 1490-1500 Giuliano was constantly far from Florence, teaching and working in Milan, Naples, France, Savone and Loreto, where in 1500 he finished the cupola of the Santuario. On 25 January 1504, Piero and Giuliano served on the thirty-person committee selected to choose a location for Michelangelo's *David*. By 1505 Giuliano was again called away from Florence, this time by Julius II in Rome, and did not return to Florence until 1509.

[35] My dating in the early 1480s matches that of Edinga in Van Os and Prakhen, 1974, p. 98. Laura Cavazzini also proposed an earlier dating of the panels, but closer to that of Bacci, in the final years of the 1490s, when Giuliano was again present in Florence, employed by the Dieci di Balia in 1497 for the building of the city's fortifications and consulted for the consolidation of S. Salvatore al Monte in 1499. Cavazzini, 'Un documento ritrovato e qualche osservazione sul percorso di Piero di Cosimo', *Prospettiva*, LXXXVII-III (July-Oct. 1997), p. 128.

[36] Giuliano also completed the Palazzo Scala commission in 1480 and, after his work in SS. Annunziata, remained close to Florence while designing the villa at Poggio a Caiano in the mid-

1480s; he began work at the church of S. Gallo in 1488. For his chronology see Caroline Elam's entry in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. Turner, 34 vols. (1996), XXVII, pp. 733-9.

[37] See Griswold's entry in Goldner and Bambach, eds., 1997, p. 353. The S. Ponziano contract was signed 29 September 1482, with the final payment dating 23 September 1483.

[38] On Piero's revolutionary use of a true foreshortened ledge in connection with a profile, see Lipman, 1936, p. 92.

[39] Another portrait, in the Lanckoroński Palace, Switzerland, shows a sitter holding the compass as an attribute in his left hand; the inscription near the upper edge of the panel similarly identifies the man as an architect: 'Bernardo di Francesco Ganbera[r—?], architetto', with an inscribed date of 1459. The panel had been given to Franciabigio, although the painter was not born until 1482/3. I would like to thank David Franklin for informing me of this image.

[40] On the tension between the real and the ideal in Renaissance portraiture, see J. Woods-Marsden, '"Ritratto al Naturale": Questions of Realism and Idealism in Early Renaissance Portraits', Art Journal, XXXXVI (1987), pp. 209-16. In a famous example, Isabella d'Este told Francia, the executor of her favourite portrait, that he had made her more beautiful than nature and, twenty-five years later, had Titian use the same image as a model when she commissioned a 'likeness' from the Venetian. For other mentions of the realism/idealism dichotomy, see C. Cieri Via, 'L'imagine del ritratto. Considerazione sull'origine del genere e sulla sua evoluzione dal Quattrocento al Cinquecento', in A. Gentili (ed.), *Il ritratto e la memoria*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1989), I, pp. 45-91.

[41] In referring to Piero's 'History of Early Man' *spalliere*, Panofsky wrote: 'That his renderings of classical subjects ... contain an element of parody and humor cannot be questioned ... In contrast to his medieval forerunners, Piero was not naive: his humor is intentional and must have been perceptible to his contemporaries as to ourselves. In contrast to his nineteenth-century successors [Daumier], Piero was not a satirist: his humor is entirely without malice'. E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences* (NY, 1972), p. 181.

[42] 'The signs of faces show in part the nature of the men, their vices and their complexions', wrote Leonardo (Codex Urbinas 109 r-v). For Leonardo and his interest in physiognomy and expression see Kemp, 1989, pp. 158-9.

[43] N. Schneider, *The Art of the Portrait. Masterpieces of European Portrait-Painting 1460-1670* (Cologne, 1994), p. 170, n. 18-19.

[44] Flemish portraits of prominent Italian patrons present in the Low Countries include Jan van Eyck's *Giovanni Arnolfini* of *c.*1437-9 (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) and *Cardinale Nicola Albergati* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna); Rogier van der Weyden's *Francesco d'Este* (Metropolitan Museum, NY) and *Alessandro Sforza* of *Pesaro* of *c.*1458 (lost); and Memling's *Portraits of Tommaso di Folco Portinari and Maria Maddalena Baroncelli* of *c.*1470-72 (Metropolitan Museum, NY).

[45] For lack of space, I will only cite a number of the most salient texts focusing on the relationship of Northern art to Italy (and Florence specifically). M. Rohlmann, 'Flanders and Italy, Flanders and Florence. Early Netherlandish painting in Italy and its particular influence on Florentine art: an overview', in *Italy and the Low Countries—Artistic relations. The fifteenth century*, proceedings from symposium held at Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, 14 March 1994 (Florence, 1999), pp. 39-67; G. Befani Canfield, 'The Reception of Flemish Art in Renaissance Florence and Naples', in M.W Ainsworth (ed.), *Petrus Christus in Renaissance Bruges. An Interdisciplinary Approach* (NY, 1995), pp. 35-42 (see p. 43, n. 54 for additional sources); P Nuttall, 'The Medici and Netherlandish Painting', in F. Ames-Lewis (ed.), *The Early Medici and their Artists* (Birbeck College, University of London, 1995), pp. 135-152; and B. Strens, *Il Trittico Portinari e l'influsso fiammingo* (tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Istituto di Storia dell'Arte, 1972).

[46] Schongauer's print (*c.*1470-5) was probably on sale at an early date in Italy, as both Vasari and Condivi stated that the young Michelangelo owned and coloured an impression. See Bartsch, VIII, Commentary, pp. 172-3. Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Temptation* is also dominated by ghouls holding

up the air-borne saint, with a minutely observed Northern landscape below (see Bartsch, VII, p. 374 [no. 56]).

[47] See Nuttall, 1995, pp. 135-52. This inventory included a spectacularly priced Petrus Christus female portrait and Van Eyck *St. Jerome*, as well as often overlooked French tapestries.

[48] Memling's commissions included a *Last Judgment* (Marienkirche, Danzig) of 1470-73 for Angelo Tani and intended for a Florentine church; a diptych for Benedetto Portinari (now in the Uffizi); a *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Two Angels* (Uffizi); a *Passion* for the Portinari (Galleria Sabauda, Turin); and the abovementioned double portrait of Tommaso Portinari and his wife. See *The Uffizi Gallery* cat. (Florence, 1992), p. 124.

[49] Culturally ambitious patrons of artists like Van Eyck also included genoese merchants such as the Lomellini and Giustiniani. For the role played by Italian merchants and politicians in Flanders (particularly Bruges) and matters of art patronage, see Hans J. van Miegroet, *Gerard David* (Antwerp, 1989), pp. 96, 105-6, 210-12.

[50] These visits include Dürer's two journeys in 1494-5 and 1505-7, as well as possible trips by Roger van der Weyden to Rome in 1450 (recorded by Fazio in 1456), Gerard David between 1503-7 to Genoa (undocumented) and Quentin Massys between 1514-19 (undocumented).

[51] Characteristic examples of landscape models would have included those in Albrecht Dürer's *St. Jerome Penitent in the Wilderness* (*c.*1496) and *The Sea Monster* (*c.*1498), together with Lucas van Leyden's *The Agony in the Garden* (1509) and *The Conversion of St. Paul* (1509) and Altdorfer's landscape etchings now in London's British Museum and Vienna's Albertina. For the Dürer examples, see Bartsch, X, pp. 55, 62 (nos. 61 and 71); for Lucas van Leyden: Ibid., XII, pp. 189, 240 (nos. 57 and 107-I); and for Altdorfer: Ibid., XIV, pp. 78-82 (nos. 70-74).

[52] See reproduction in F.W.H. Hollstein, *The Graphic Art of Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533)* (Amsterdam, 1968), p. 116.

[53] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 71. Tran. de Vere, I, p. 651. The Chantilly panel is painted in tempera on poplar panel, measuring 57 x 42 cm. Provenance: collection of Francesco da Sangallo and then his son Clemente until 1586. Thereupon it was acquired by the Vespucci family. In 1841, the work passed into the hands of Federico Reiset (Director of the Louvre) and remained in Paris until 1879, when it was acquired in a sale by the Duke d'Aumale. The painting was once attributed to Botticelli and Pollaiuolo, but was restored to Piero by Frizzoni in 1879. See E. de Boissard, *Chantilly, Musée Condé: Peintures de l'Ecole italienne* (Paris, 1988), p. 118; and Bacci, 1966, p. 67. The conservation record of 1971 (M. Hours) noted two vertical clefts that appeared in the UV and infrared examinations, but were clearest in raking light. The rest of the work was in satisfactory condition. In the same year, Germain Bazin, chief conservator in the Palais du Louvre, supervised Mlle. Chocqueel's removal of two repaints (most notably in the hair and chest of the woman), the reduction of the covering mastic and the setting down of raised, peeling paint around the face.

[54] P. Watson linked the image to Boccaccio's *Elogia di Madonna Fiammetta* in 'The Subject of Piero di Cosimo's So-Called *Cleopatra*,' *Abstracts of Papers Delivered in Art History Sessions at the College Art Association's 68th Annual Conference* (New Orleans, 1980), p. 59. Boccaccio's heroine falls asleep in a meadow and is bitten by a snake as a warning omen against adultery. Gloom gathers and thunder and lightning fall. Yet Piero has omitted most of the details. There is no lightning. The figure is placed in an open landscape that is far from Boccaccio's flowered, shady meadow. But most important, Piero's snake has not bitten the woman, nor does it threaten to do so. The Proserpina hypothesis was proposed in E. Battisti, *L'antirinascimento* (Milan, 1962), pp. 62, 75, 389 n. 20. According to this view of the woman as the melancholic Queen of the Underworld, the snake would take on an antithetical meaning to that of eternity, instead symbolising the 'non-hope in immortality' and thus functioning as an eschatological motif. However, just as in Watson's proposal, the snake seems hardly threatening, instead appearing decorative and/or symbolic. It is also highly unlikely—and unprecedented—that Proserpina would be shown with a snake around her neck. Finally, the myth of Biancabella, wife of King Ferdinando of Naples, was proposed by Vilmos Tatrai in 'Mesefigura

egy Piero di Cosimo Festményeu?' ('A Folk Tale Figure in a Piero di Cosimo Painting?'), in *A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Évkönyve* (*Annales de la Galerie Nationale Hongroise*) (Budapest, 1991), pp. 63-8. Chronological incongruities conspire against this hypothesis, as Straparola was not born until *c.*1480 and his *Le piacevoli notti*, thematically based on the storytelling nights of the *Decameron*, was not published until 1550 (Venice). Even if the folktale was spread orally before that date, the dissemination could not have occurred until well after the turn of the century, contrary to the early stylistic qualities of our picture.

[55] Vasari, 1568, B-B, III, p. 519. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 541.

[56] H. Ulmann, 'Piero di Cosimo', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstammlungen*, XVII (1896), pp. 136-7.

[57] Madaleine Hours, the conservator in charge of the examination conducted by the Laboratoire de Recherche des Musées de France, wrote: 'L'inscription apparaît à la partie inférieure du tableau sur l'image radiographique. Elle est parfaitement intégrée à la composition. Le support de cette inscription est incontestablement d'origine. Il est à noter que la bande qui supporte l'inscription ne descend pas jusqu'au bas du tableau'. M. Hours, 'A propos de quelques radiographies effectuées en 1971...', *Annales du Laboratoire de Recherche des Musées de France* (1972), pp. 84-5. The scientific evidence substantiating the original presence of the ledge is supported by a letter of 30 March 1972 from Mme. S. Delbourgo of the Research Laboratory for French Galleries, Palais du Louvre (to Mr. John Graham) and a letter dated 5 August 1998 to me from Mme. Nicole Garnier, Conservateur en chef du Patrimoine Chargée du Musée Condé. The findings are also noted in M. Schmitter, 'Botticelli's Images of Simonetta Vespucci: Between Portrait and Idea', *Rutgers Art Review*, XV (1995), pp. 43-4, n. 47.

[58] De Boissard, 1988, p. 118.

[59] A. Derbes, 'Piero di Cosimo, Simonetta Vespucci and Cleopatra', *Italian Renaissance Studies in Arizona* (River Forest, Illinois, 1989), pp. 113-29; and P. Simons, 'Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization: Ambiguous Individualism in Representations of Renaissance Women', in *Language and Images of Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 263-311, esp. p. 303.

[60] Fermor, 1993, pp. 93-101. Fermor writes that the woman's nude representation would be indecorous for a 'well-bred woman ... who was known for her chastity' and that the landscape's 'untamed, uncultivated aspect adds to the sense of the sitter herself [being] free from restraint, and the bounds of decorous female behavior' (p. 94).

[61] Simons is also wary of the notion of the panel's eroticism, concluding that like quattrocento portraits of women, this 'Cleopatra is feminized by her status as ornamentation, as well as by her accouterments and profile placement, as the object of a voyeuristic masculine gaze' Simons, 1995, p. 305.

[62] Complex, braided hair designs often appeared in 1470-80 representations of the Madonna, seen in Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with a Vase of Flowers* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) and *The 'Benois Madonna'* (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg). Their prototype exists in Verrocchio's *Study of a Lady's Head with Elaborate Coiffure* (British Museum, London).

[63] A. Warburg, *La Rinascita del paganesimo antico*, trans. E. Cantimori (Florence, 1966), pp. 50-51.

[64] R. Levi Pisetzky, *Storia del Costume in Italia*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1964), II, pp. 265-99.

[65] For a discussion of pearl iconography and those of other precious gems and talismans see Section VI ('Le virtù delle gemme...') in P Castelli et al., eds., *L'Oreficeria nella Firenze del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1977), pp. 314, 337-47. Pearls often adorned the ring in the Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine, the clasp of the Virgin's cloak and rosaries of female saints (as in Francesco Botticini's *Pala di Santa Monica* in S. Spirito, Florence).

[66] Battisti, 1962, p. 62.

[67] The allegorical figure of Chastity and several of her female warriors appear completely or half nude in Perugino's *Combat of Love and Chastity* canvas (Louvre, Paris).

[68] In contrast to the negative portrayal in the Nastagio degli Onesti story, pictorial examples of nude (or partially nude) Biblical heroines or virtuous personifications include Raphael's *Study of Judith* drawing of 1510 (Albertina, Vienna) and Jacopo de' Barbari's *Victory and Fame* print of the 1490s (British Museum, London). For the latter, see L. Servolini, *Jacopo de' Barbari* (Padua, 1944), pp. 193-4, fig. LXXX.

[69] A marble relief of a *Head of a Girl* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London) was formerly attributed to the school of Verrocchio by J. Pope-Hennessy, in *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 3 vols. (London, 1964), I, p. 168, n. 142. Although linked to Piero's Simonetta in the past, the relief has been judged to be a 19th century fake. See C. Strehlke, 'Renaissance Florence: the Art of the 1470s' [exh. review], *The Burlington Magazine*, CXLII (Jan., 2000), pp. 46-7. Andrew Butterfield is of the same opinion in his 'Renaissance Florence in the 1470s' [exh. Review], *Apollo*, CLI (Mar. 2000), p. 60.

[70] These include Michelangelo's double-sided black chalk drawing (*c.*1533-4) in the Casa Buonnaroti, in which the verso sketch (uncovered from its mount in 1988) counters the dreamy serenity of the recto with an image of profound anguish; engravings by Nicoletto da Modena and Agostino Veneziano (*Amor Crying at the Death of Cleopatra*, 1528), both peaceful representations, placed in an outdoor setting; another reclining version by Holbein, used by Froben in Bale for the title page of a 1523 Cologne edition of commentaries by Erasmus, *Hegesippus, De rebus a Judeorum gestis*, showing a half-nude Cleopatra lying in front of an arch and holding one asp to each breast, her head inclined back to the approaching ship, probably Caesar's, in the seascape beyond; a classicised, nude Cleopatra being bitten on her breast by an asp, set in an open landscape setting, appears in a print by Jacopo Francia; and two much more violent interpretations by Domenico del Barbiere (*c.*1545) and Veneziano (1515), the latter after Bandinelli. The serpent figures threateningly in both latter examples. The best discussion of Michelangelo's *Cleopatra* is offered in M. Hirst, *Michelangelo and his Drawings* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 56, 111, 116-7. Also see M. Hirst, in P. Barocchi and Hirst (eds.), 'Le due Cleopatre e le 'teste divine' di Michelangelo' (Florence, 1988), pp. 6-8. For the Francia work: Hind V, II, no. 813; for the Nicoletto print, see Hind, V, no. 78; for the Agostino print see *The Illustrated Bartsch*, XXVI (NY, 1978), p. 194 (no. 198). Both images—together with other Cleopatra prints mentioned here—are discussed in J. Guillaume, 'Cleopatra Nova Pandora', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXX (Oct. 1972), pp. 185-93. Veneziano engraving: Bartsch, XXVI, p. 190 (no. 193).

[71] D. Franklin, *Rosso in Italy* (New Haven, 1994), pp. 148-153. The role played by the ancient statue of the *Sleeping Ariadne* (a Roman 2nd century AD copy of a Hellenistic Pergamene original), now in the Galleria delle Statue of the Musei Vaticani, in influencing subsequent representations of Cleopatra in the 1520s and onwards was of tremendous significance. Placed in the Belvedere Gardens in 1512, the image was first identified as Cleopatra due to the figure's serpentine armband. Also see P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources* (London, 1986), pp. 78-9.

[72] Rosso's subdued portrayal of the asp's lethal effects is analogous to Plutarch's passage in the *Lives*, trans. B. Perrin, 11 vols. (London, 1920), IX, p. 303.

[73] See, for example, L. Nikolenko, *Francesco Ubertini called Il Bachiacca* (NY, 1966), figs. 49 (*Luxury* or *Liberality*, also called *Venus and Cupid*, University Galleries, USC); 50 (*Woman with a Cat*, priv. coll., Italy); 66 (*Madonna and Child*, Baltimore Museum of Art); and 76 (*Portrait of a Lady*, Springfield Museum of Fine Art). Fig. 49 is an almost exact reproduction of a Michelangelo drawing (Uffizi, 598E). I would also like to thank Robert LaFrance for his expertise on this subject.

[74] A. Junkerman, 'The Lady and the Laurel: Gender and Meaning in Giorgione's Laura', *Oxford Art Journal*, XVI (1993), pp. 49-58. While Junkerman ultimately interprets Giorgione's woman as a courtesan, she focuses the most attention on the image's raised moral questions and sexual associations and tensions. Junkerman's interpretation is echoed and further developed in J. Anderson, *Giorgione: the painter of 'poetic brevity'* (Paris and NY, 1994), pp. 208-17 and 299-300 (cat.

Raisonné). Anderson also points to the formal and intellectual relationship between Giorgione's portrait and Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*: perhaps the closest link—elsewhere underscored by the author—between the two painters (see p. 208).

[75] Bartolomeo Veneto's sitter has been linked to Flora, Simonetta and even Lucrezia Borgia. For the Flora identification and the image's composite mythological and Christian meanings, see B. Aikema and B. Louise Brown, eds., *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*, exh. cat., Palazzo Grassi, Venice 1999-2000 (Milan, 1999), pp. 368-9. Schneider argues that it is unlikely that Bartolomeo represented a mistress, as she is wearing a veil (like Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*). Schneider, 1994, p. 59. Most of the cited portraits, together with two others by Marco d'Oggio and Francesco Melzi, are included in G. de Logu and G. Marinelli, *Il Ritratto nella Pittura Italiana*, 2 vols. (Bergamo, 1973), I, pp. 231, 234, 256-7, 313.

[76] Raphael's beloved, the so-called 'La Fornarina', seems to reappear in the figures of Psyche and the Galatea in the Farnesina, as well as in his *S. Cecilia*. The *Donna Velata* and *La Fornarina* certainly appear to be based on an identical model. It has been suggested that the mysterious young woman may have been Margarita, daughter of Francesco Luti from Siena, who entered the Conservatorio di Sant'Apollonia on 18 August 1520 and curiously was noted as a 'widow' For the Rome painting's provenance and the Fornarina myth, see Vincenzo Golzio's 'Raphael and the Fornarina, the Inspiration for his Sonnets', *The Complete Work of Raphael* (NY, 1969), pp. 600-601; and also G. Muratore et al., eds., *Raphael Urbinas: il mito della Fornarina*, exh. cat., Palazzo Barberini, Galleria Nazionale, Rome, 1983 (Milan, 1983).

[77] Another relevant example is the *Profile Portrait of a Woman* (Collection of Baron Edouard de Rothschild, Paris), attributed to Raffaellino del Garbo.

[78] A silverpoint head study (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) was possibly a study for the Frankfurt panel. The panel in Tokyo is extremely close to that in London. For extensive discussion of this group of 'fantasy portraits' see: R. Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli. Life and Work*, 2 vols. (London, 1978), II, pp.116-19; Schmitter, 1995, pp. 34-40; and J. Craven-Madani, *A New Historical View of the Independent Female Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Painting* (University of Pittsburg Ph.D. thesis, 1997), p. 271 ff.

[79] More sympathetic accounts of Cleopatra's death appear well after Piero's death. Only in later texts such as those by G.B. Giraldi (*Cleopatra*, 1543), Sceve (*Delie*, 1544) and Jodelle (*Cleopatre Captive*, 1552) is she shown as a heroine with a tragic destiny, her romantic amours treated with a mix of compassion and admiration rather than disdain.

[80] Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*, as quoted in Fermor, 1993, p. 96. For the Italian version, see: Boccaccio, *Delle donne famose*, 3rd ed. trans. D. Albanzani (Bologna, 1881), pp. 286-97. The text was first published in Latin in 1473, with the first Italian edition not coming out until 1506.

[81] Landino's Commentary to Canto V of Dante's *Inferno* (1481 edition), verse 63, is quoted from Franklin, 1994, p. 151, n. 112.

[82] Plutarch, *Lives*, 1920, IX, p. 191. Known for her honey tongued 'subtlety and cleverness in conversation', more so than her beauty, the queen is said to have yielded an intoxicating power over the Roman leader. Plutarch writes that 'her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her; but converse with her had an irresistible charm, and her presence, combined with the persuasiveness of her discourse and the character which was somehow diffused about her behavior towards others, had something stimulating about it' Their meetings in Egypt were set to great revelry of legendary proportions, full of gold, incense, tremendous ornaments and pomp—'And a rumour spread on every hand that Venus was come to revel with Bacchus for the good of Asia' (p. 195).

[83] Ibid., pp. 221-3.

[84] Virgil, *Aeneid* VIII. 685-88, trans. H.R. Fairclough, 2 vols. (London, reprinted 1996), p. 107. 'But Anthony, with outland force and arms wrought diversely, / Victorious from the morning-folks and

ruddy-stranded sea, / Bore Egypt and the Eastland might and Bactria's outer ends; / And after him—O shame to tell!—a wife of Egypt wends'

[85] Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (NY, 1979), pp. 29, 36, 63. He writes: 'Among his mistresses were several queens.... The most famous of these queens was Cleopatra of Egypt. He often feasted with her until dawn; and they would have sailed together in her state barge nearly to Ethiopia had his soldiers consented to follow him...(p. 36)'

[86] Lightbown, 1978, I, p. 42.

[87] The manuscript describing the joust was discovered in BNF, Magl.-Strozz. II, 4, 324, and first published in Poggi, *L'Arte*, V (1902), pp. 71-7. For the transcribed description of Giuliano's standard, see Lightbown, 1978, I, p. 42. For possible sketches by Botticelli for the standard, see Ibid., II, pp. 166-7.

[88] As Elizabeth Cropper observes, highly ambiguous, suggestive portraits by an artist such as Botticelli—and surely Piero's Chantilly panel can be included—are much closer in kind to the more allusive evocations of female beauty found in Poliziano than later sixteenth-century writers such as Agnolo Firenzuola and his exhaustively detailed, literal exposition of female beauty, in the *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* (1542). E. Cropper, 'On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, Petrarchismo, and the Vernacular Style', *Art Bulletin*, LVIII (1976), pp. 374-94. Cropper traces the panegyric of female beauty in vernacular poetry from Boccaccio (and his praise of Emilia in *Teseida*) and Poliziano's Simonetta to Luigi Pulci's Antea and Ariosto's Alcina, noting: 'The *beltà*, *leggiadria*, and *gentilezza* of the lovely nymph Simonetta in the Stanze are presented through suggestion rather than through definition, and it is her manner that is emphasized, her humble pride, delicate, and graceful step, her serenity, and especially her joyful smile' (p. 388).

[89] Lorenzo il Magnifico described: 'Essendo adunque questa tale così morta, tutti i fiorentini ingegni, come si conveniva in tale pubblica iattura, diversamente e' si dolsono, chi in versi e chi in prosa dell'acerbità di questa morte, e si sforzorono laudarla secondo la facultà del suo ingegno, tra li quali io ancora vòlsi essere, ed accompagnare io ancora le lacrime loro con gl'infrascritti sonetti, de' quali il primo comincia: "O chiara stella, che co' razzi tuoi"...'. Lorenzo de' Medici, 'Com[m]ento del Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici sopra alcuni de' suoi sonetti', *Tutte le opere*, ed. G. Cavalli, 3 vols. (Milan, 1958), II, p. 118. Trans. S. Sturm, *Lorenzo de' Medici* (NY, 1974), p. 69.

[90] The first edition of Pulci's poetry is *Bucoliche elegantissime composte da Bernardo Pulci fiorentino et da Francesco de Azzochi senese et da Hieronimo Benivieni fiorentino et da Iacopo Fiorino de Boninsegni senese* (Florence, 1494).

[91] Timideo's poem is found in BNF, Cod. Magliabecchiana, II, 2, 75, fols. 192v-202r.

[92] Naldus Naldius, *Epigrammaton Liber*, ed. A. Perosa (Budapest, 1943), pp. 12-13; and BNF, Cod. Magliabecchiana, VII, 9, 1057, fol. 13.

[93] Accademia dei Lincei (Rome), Cod. Corsiniano 582, fols. 80r-81r.

[94] A. Neri, 'La Simonetta', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 5 (1885), pp. 145-6.

[95] Ibid., 1885, p. 142. 'Nymph, whom in the earth a cold stone covers, / Beneficent star is now received into heaven, / When your light is more discovered, / Return to see my wayward country'.

[96] Poliziano, *Stanze* I. 51-4, ed. Orlando (Milan, 1976), pp. 56-8. Trans. Quint, 1979, p. 27.

[97] Ibid., I. 36, 1976, p. 50. Trans. Quint, 1979, p. 20: 'Quanto più segue invan la vana effigie, / tanto più di seguirla invan s'accende; / tuttavia preme sue stanche vestigie, / sempre la giunge, e pur mai non la prende'.

[98] Ibid., I. 43-4, 1976, p. 53.

[99] Ibid., I. 46, 1976, p. 54: 'Sembra Talia, se in man prende la cetra, / sembra Minerva se in man prende l'asta; / se l'arco ha in mano, al fianco la faretra, / giurar potrai che sia Diana casta. / Ira dal volto suo trista s'arretra, / e poco, avanti a lei, Superba basta; / ogni dolce virtù l'è in compagnia: / Biltà la mostra a dito e Leggiadria'.

[100] Simonetta is mentioned by name only twice: *Stanze*, I. 52 and II. 10.

[101] Quoted from C. Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton, 1992), p. 98. At a much later date, Firenzuola defined charm as 'a beauty that attracts and sparks the desire to contemplate it and enjoy it ... we speak of a woman who has a certain sensual air [un certo lascivetto] and a certain desirability, mingled with virtue [onestà]'. Agnolo Firenzuola, *Opere*, ed. A. Seroni (Florence, 1958), p. 564.
[102] Neri, 1885, p. 144.
[103] Quoted in M. Rogers, 'Sonnets on Female Portraits from Renaissance North Italy', *Word and Image*, II (1986), p. 304; and Simons, 1995, p. 276.
[104] For a discussion of the Leonardo portrait in this context, see Simons, 1995, p. 277-83. For more specific Milanese poetic links, also see M. Kemp, 'Leonardo: da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse', *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, CXXXIII (Feb. 1985), pp. 196-213.
[105] Simons, 1995, pp. 283-4. Simons writes: 'As a figure who stands for something other than her own self, Cecilia is subsumed by cultural poetics and social conventions. A canonical portrait of an upright woman can for Renaissance viewers also evoke intellectualized generalizations and erotic fantasies, yet it is no less a portrait for that. Between the polarities of the mundane and the ideal, the chaste and the erotic, there lies a vast number of images which belong to a spectrum of composites'
[106] Ibid., pp. 264-6.
[107] On this multivalence, Simons explains: 'Any portrait of a woman is a representation of femininity imbued by social and poetic norms (Ibid., p. 310)'; and that 'The images were often associative rather than definitive; performative and communicative rather than static (Ibid., p. 311)'
[108] R. Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 122. According to documentary sources, Lorenzo il Magnifico paid the enormous dowry of 2000 florins to secure the marriage—and gain its political advantages. Lorenzo appeared eager for an alliance with Simonetta's relatives and very likely used the connections between Giuliano and Simonetta for political means. For this connection, see Schmitter, 1995, p. 53, n. 32; and M. Levi d'Ancona, *Botticelli's Primavera* (Florence, 1983), p. 27, n. 10.
[109] Craven-Madani, 1997, p. 269, n. 11. For Craven-Madani's entire entry on the Chantilly panel, see pp. 265-71. In response to the image's proposed 'anti-heroine' casting, she answers, 'If this image was intended to be a negative exemplum of female behavior, it would seem to glamorize rather than moralize the sin of adultery (p. 269, n. 11)'
[110] Ibid., pp. 266-7. More definite and well known examples of a portrait's onomastic function are Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*, which includes branches of 'ginepro' both within the portrait and on its reverse, and Lotto's *Portrait of Lucina Brembati*, with its verbal hieroglyph of 'lu –ci - na'. For the Leonardo portrait see J. Fletcher, 'Bernardo Bembo and Leonardo's Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXI (1989), pp. 811-16. Elizabeth Cropper discusses Pontormo's various onomastic references in Cropper, *Portrait of a Halberdier* (Los Angeles, 1997), pp. 80-81.
[111] For surveys of snake iconography, see J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (London, 1978), pp. 147-51; and P. and L. Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture* (Oxford, 1996), p. 485.
[112] In his letter of 15 May 1565 to Fra Onofrio Panvini, carefully outlining an iconographic programme for a room in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola, Annibal Caro described that one of six round pictures should 'show a snake, signifying astuteness, diligence, and prudence in contemplation, which for reason was attributed to Minerva' R. Klein and H. Zerner, *Italian Art 1500-1600. Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 159.
[113] C. Cieri Via, 'L'immagine dietro al ritratto', in Gentili (ed.), 1993, III, p. 14.
[114] For Borsook's verbal communication to M. Bacci, see Bacci, 1966, p. 67. Also: Boissard, 1988, p. 120. For Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco's portrait medals see G. Hill, *A Corpus of Italian Medals of the Renaissance Before Cellini*, 2 vols. (London, 1930), I, p.273; II, figs. 1054-6.
[115] E.H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (London, 1972), pp. 158-9.

[116] The stark landscape, ominous cloud and desiccated tree and their relationship to the snake are noted in A. Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte Italiana*, 25 vols. (Milan, 1911), VII/I, p. 701; Lipman, 1936, p. 91; and Grassi, 1963, p. 52.

[117] A. Warburg, 'L'ingresso dello stile ideale anticheggiante nella pittura del primo rinascimento', in G. Bing (ed.), *La rinascita del paganesimo antico: contributi alla storia della cultura* (Florence, 1966), pp. 283-307. The sharp criticism of the 'Florentine nymph' and what she represented famously came from Fra Savonarola's Sermon for the Saturday after the second Sunday of Lent. G. Savonarola, *Prediche e scritti*, ed. M. Ferrara (Milan, 1930), p. 387. For these references, see Dempsey, 1992, pp. 71, 113.

[118] As Pierre Francastel reminded, the same blurrings of real and ideal occurred before: in examples such as Ilaria del Carretto in Lucca (for whom Jacopo della Quercia designed a marble tomb in the city's Cathedral) and Albiera degli Albizzi, the young fiancée of Sigismondo della Stufa, who also died in her youth in 1473. Francastel, 'La fête mythologique au Quattrocento: Expression litteraire et visualisation plastique' in *Oeuvres II: La realité figurative: Élements structurels de sociologie et de l'art* (Paris, 1965), p. 247 ff., as quoted in Dempsey, 1992, p. 53.

[119] For the private and public spheres of original reception and recognition, see Dempsey, 1992, p. 13. Dempsey refers specifically to Francastel, 1965, pp. 229-52 and pp. 253-66. Francastel explains that Botticelli and Poliziano were responding in their works to real experiences and events, on a number of various cultural planes.

[120] The National Gallery of Art's Condition and Restoration Records state that despite cleanings and restorations in 1935-6 (S. Pichetto) and 1955 (M. Modestini), the panel remains in poor condition. This is mostly due to bad worm damage. Although the worm holes have been filled and retouched these areas are unstable and vulnerable to collapse. Loss from tiny chips (as revealed by X-rays) is also considerable. The most recent examination report summary reads: 'The painting is in extremely fragile condition. The panel has been badly damaged by insects so that it no longer provides adequate support for the paint film. Previous treatments to correct this condition are no longer proving successful. Old retouchings along with original paint are in the process of collapsing into worm tunnels' It is estimated that one third to one half of the wood support has been destroyed; up to half of the paint film likewise has been lost or repainted.

[121] Writing on the Chantilly panel's paint surface, M. Hours (1970) described it as 'a very beautiful substance of rather thickly ground pigments suspended in a very coherent binding agent'

[122] See Cropper, 1997, p. 9. Cropper points out that far too few examples of portraits together with their covers have come down to us, and that the difference in size is not enough to deny a relationship outright. Examples: *Francesco Guardi* (92 x 72 cm) and *Pygmalion and Galatea* (81 x 63 cm); *Bernardo de' Rossi* (34.4 x 42 cm) and *Allegory* (56 x 43 cm); and a Dürer image, the cover for which is also larger (see n. 126).

[123] The *cassone* hypothesis was proposed in F.R. Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols. (The National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1979), I, pp. 368-9.

[124] A. Dülberg, *Privatsportrats: Geschichte und Ikonologie einer Gattung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1990).

[125] Unlike in Piero's *Misfortunes of Silenus* (see Chap. III), the landscape in the Washington cover does function symbolically, corresponding to the allegory itself (with an illuminated mountainside on the left and the dark, ominous area, with a sinking ship in the background, on the right). For more on this panel, see Aikema and Brown, *Renaissance Venice and the North...*, 1999, pp. 400-401, cat. no. 99.

[126] All of these portraits and their covers are described in Cropper, 1997, pp. 92-3. Cropper also mentions two Northern examples: Dürer's *Portrait of Hieronymus Holzschuher*, 1526 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin), with a larger sliding cover; and Jan Gossaert's portrait of 1534, showing a finely dressed man on the obverse and a *grisaille* image of Lucretia killing herself on the reverse (see Dülberg, 1990, p. 234, no. 179).

[127] *The Propogation of Coral* title was proposed in G. de Tervarent, *Les Énigmes de l'art*, 4 vols. (1947), IV, pp. 21 ff. Also see Shapley, 1979, pp. 368-9.
[128] The 'visual joking' inherent in Piero's horse is mentioned in P. Barolsky, *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art* (London, 1978), p. 105.
[129] One of a series of canvas *spalliere* (*c.*1520-21) by Dosso Dossi, illustrating a passage from the *Aeneid* (VI. 635-705), shows four white horses of the dead in the landscape of *Aeneas in the Elysian Fields* (The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa). For a description of the panel see P. Humfrey and M. Lucco, eds., *Dosso Dossi, Painter in the Court of Renaissance Ferrara* (NY, 1998), pp. 147-50. For a more in-depth discussion of Dossi's original ten-part *spalliere* programme (five of which survive), including matters of narrative and new technical evidence, see K. Christiansen, 'Dosso Dossi's Aeneas frieze for Alfonso d'Este's *Camerino*', *Apollo*, CLI (Jan. 2000), pp. 36-45.
[130] Cooper, 1978, pp. 85-6. In practical rather than symbolic terms, the horse was viewed as an object of luxury, its 'high status amply reflected in the history of art'. See H.E. Roberts (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Comparative Iconography. Themes Depicted in Works of Art*, 2 vols. (Chicago and London, 1998), I, pp. 532-3. In Mantua's Palazzo del Tè, Federico Gonzaga's favourite horses even merited their own portrait gallery in the Sala dei Cavalli (1525-35).
[131] In his *Georgics* (III. 266 ff.), Virgil claimed: 'In very truth, the frenzy of mares is wilder than the frenzy of all things else! It was Venus herself who endowed them with their passion ... Love leads them over Gargarus and over the roaring Ascanius: they scale mountains and they swim rivers...'. For a late example, see Giulio Bonasone's illustration to Achille Bocchi, *Symbolicarum quaestionum ... libri quinque* (Bologna, 1555), CXVII, with inscription 'Temper libidini imperat prudentia' (Bartsch, XXIX, no. 294). *Amorini* are depicted reigning in a horse in the sarcophagus relief in Titian's early *Bride of Niccolò Aurelio (Laura Bagarotto) at the Fountain of Venus*, formerly known as the *Allegory of Sacred and Profane Love*, in the Galleria Borghese, Rome (see C. Hope, *Titian* [London, 1980], pp. 34-7). The unrestrained, intemperate qualities of the horse also exist in Northern examples, such as Hans Baldung Grien's groups of mad-eyed horses in his prints of 1534 (Bartsch, XII, pp. 60-61, no. 56-7).
[132] In most representations of Chastity, the horse is replaced by a tamed unicorn. Examples include Leonardo's *Lady with a Unicorn* pen and ink drawing in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (K.T. Parker, *Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum. Italian Schools*, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1972], II, 15), and a medal of 1447 by Pisanello, showing Cecilia Gonzaga as a model of learning (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). The reverse shows Chastity as a half-nude woman with the mythical beast kneeling at her feet. See D. Chambers and J. Martineau, eds., *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, exh. cat., Victoria and Albert, London, 1981-2 (London, 1981), no. 16.
[133] See R. Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1989), fig. 3.
[134] Temperance is likewise often represented nude or with one breast bared and pouring water from one vessel to another. One example is Raphael's representation of the Virtue in the Stanza della Segnatura.
[135] A serpent entwines the mirrored staff of Perugino's *Prudentia* in the Collegio del Cambio fresco, Perugia. Gaspar Reverdino's sixteenth-century print of *Prudentia* (British Museum, London) shows her standing with one breast bared, looking into a mirror and holding a compass. A serpent emerges from a column at right. For the latter, see Bartsch, XXXI, p. 329, no. 28.
[136] In Andrea della Robbia's similar tondo, now at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the serpent at the virtue's feet serves as both a cautionary sign of danger and a dispenser of wisdom.
[137] The identification of the plant as yew is supported by the previous opinion of Conrad Morton (of the Division of Plants), who upon seeing the work in 1944 judged the plant to be either fir or yew. This is recorded by John Walker in a letter to Frederick Douglas in the National Gallery of Art curatorial records.
[138] J. Dunkerton et al., eds., *Giotto to Dürer. Early Renaissance Painting in The National Gallery* (London, 1991), p. 101.

[139] Dülberg, 1990, pp. 237-8. Dülberg linked the background forest with earthly life and the rocky mountain with virtue and purity. The image is noted in Schmitter, 1995, p. 48, n. 78; and Craven-Madani, 1997, p. 278.
[140] Poliziano, *Stanze*, II. 28, 1976, p. 97. Trans. Quint, 1979, p. 81.
[141] Ibid., II. 33-4, 1976, pp. 99-100. Quint, 1979, p. 85.
[142] Ibid., II. 43, 1976, p. 103. Quint, 1979, p. 89. A reference to Giuliano's standard (of Simonetta) that he will carry into the field is contained in the final verse 46 (Orlando, p. 105; Quint, p. 91).
[143] Bober and Rubinstein, 1986, p. 87. The authors offer as an example Giovanni Rucellai's emblem of the billowing sail that catches the winds of change.
[144] For the iconography of Fortune (and Nemesis) see the entry by P.G. Kuntz and L. Braver, in Roberts, 1998, pp. 338-45.
[145] Pictorial examples of *Fortuna* include Vasari's Chamber of Fortune frescoes of 1548 in the Casa Vasari, Arezzo. Nemesis appears most often in Northern imagery, such as Dürer's engraving of 1501 and Heinrich Aldegrever's late version of 1555. An early small gouache painting on vellum showing the *Allegory of Rome* (*c.*1448) by Pesellino in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, is extremely close to Piero's figure in various respects. See I. Grigorieva's entry in *Master Drawings from the Hermitage and Pushkin Museums*, exh. cat., Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (NY, 1998), pp. 2-5.
[146] Neri, 1885, p. 141.
[147] Ibid., p. 140.

## Chapter III. Piero di Cosimo's Use of Visual Narrative in His *Favole*

'The *invenzione* for the composition which, as your Excellency writes, should be suggested by me, will have to be left to his [Giovanni Bellini's] own imagination. He dislikes having precise terms imposed on him, preferring, as he says, to let his thoughts wander in his pictures at pleasure; according to him, they will then satisfy the beholder' – Pietro Bembo, in a letter of January 1506 to Isabella d'Este [1]

A more sober and conservative treatment of Piero has emerged in the recent critical writing on the painter, reflecting a cautiousness born in response to Vasari's portrayal of Piero's alleged eccentricities and past scholarship that seemed concerned less with the works than their recalcitrant master. It thus becomes important to recapture our sense of Piero's exceptional originality and strangeness in his handling of equally original subjects. Nowhere are signs of Piero's creative sensibility and sense of play more pronounced than in his mythological *spalliera* panels and their *bizarrie*, not only in subject but also in their style and structure.

Piero has also been called 'primarily an artist, not an "intellectual" like Leonardo ... he did not write about [the principle of "Divine Proportion"]: he put it into practice in his works'.[2] Like Leonardo, in fact, Piero would not have received a formal Humanist education. Despite such limitations, labelling Piero as non-intellectual must be challenged as overly reductive in light of the baffling complexity of his mythological iconography and the continuing search for literary sources behind his *favole*. Defined rather broadly, a 'favola' could have been understood in a variety of ways: as a fable; a play or drama; a triviality or idle tale; or a fiction, invention or myth.[3] It is this final definition, used by Renaissance writers, particularly Boccaccio, to describe the subject of a painting or poem based on ancient myth, that suits Piero's inventions best.[4]

While great strides have been made in answering the always beguiling 'what' question of Piero's enigmatic mythologies and their plausible literary sources, most notably by Panofsky, significantly less attention has been focused on the 'how' and the 'why'. Exactly how did Piero choose to relate a written myth in a painted image? How did Piero structure the visual narrative? And how do his narrative formulations relate to the more conventional ones of the domestic *spalliera* tradition? Finally, why is it that Piero, in conjunction with his patrons, settled on the highly original myths that they did? While still attempting to clarify iconographical issues, it is also these pressing questions that I seek to address.

Ten of Piero's mythological works will be examined in detail in this chapter. In large part, these particular images have been grouped together as they most effectively reveal Piero's diverse use of pictorial narrative techniques and handling of literary sources. The selection also best charts Piero's

development in the *spalliera* genre, comparing early and late works in terms of narrative structure, interpretation and style.[5] Piero's painting practice was somewhat unusual in his avoidance of fresco painting following his participation in the execution of the Sistine Chapel side murals of 1481-2.[6] Afterwards, Piero most often confined himself to small-scale commissions, such as *spalliere* and tondi, eventually becoming a major, if not foremost, innovator in the *spalliera* tradition. This is not a surprising development considering that Piero's outstanding strengths lay not in monumental composition, but rather in his sensitive attention to detail, vivid and unexpected colour and highly imaginative landscapes. All of these gifts are put on best display in Piero's mythological narratives. In ordering a *spalliera* panel, the house-holding patrician enjoyed much more liberty in indulging personal preferences for original types of subject matter than in a commission for a formal public setting within a church chapel. The same creative flexibility applied to the chosen artist. Piero appears to have derived special pleasure in at least partially devising his own narrative programmes, which were unrivaled during the late quattrocento and early cinquecento in their startling departures from the domestic secular paintings of the past.

As decorations for patrician homes, *spalliere*—or 'favole da poeti', as described by Vasari[7]—were first placed directly above or perpendicular to the backs of furniture, such as *armadi* (cupboards), cassoni (wedding chests), or *lettucci* (high-backed benches with a chest below the seat which also served as a narrow day bed) before making the upward migration from the top of chests and beds to the walls of a room.[8] This shift towards the spectator's approximate eye-level led to the introduction of *spalliere* that were set either within the middle registers of wall masonry or wainscotting, between the cassoni and the cornice, or placed directly above the wall's cornice. In this later form, wall *spalliera* functioned as an integral individual unit in the overall visual scheme composed of the furniture, narrative paintings, wainscotting and ceiling. As revealed in recent studies of Renaissance palaces and the planning and function of their interior ambients, the in situ settings of *spalliere*—namely the large *sala* (formal living/dining room), *camera* (bedchamber) and *anticamera* on the *piano nobile*—were by no means as private as often previously assumed.[9] As Brenda Preyer notes in a study combining reconstructed paths of entry into Florentine palaces with related written sources, the resulting evidence shows 'pervasive patterns of activity, often involving many people', with social custom treating such rooms, including the *camera*, 'not merely [as] habitations but [as] theatres of social interaction'.[10] While larger spaces such as *sale* and *logge* are known to have hosted dinner banquets and celebrations ranging from weddings to the granting of knighthoods—all involving not only family members but acquaintances, politicians and merchants—documents have shown that the *camera* was also often used publicly for the writing of legal acts and political meetings.[11] All of this to say that Piero's mythological panels were not necessarily exclusively limited

to a select few but were also occasionally exposed to a wider audience: a fact that did not, however, preclude the painter's innovative and often baffling interpretation of subject matter. To the contrary, the panels' function as images for public exhibition and approving scrutiny would have undoubtedly only encouraged such elaborate pictorial treatment from the patron.

The types of scenes in *spalliere* decorations ranged from purely diverting scenes to didactic ones, such as Botticelli's story of *Nastagio degli Onesti*. In his 'criteria for paintings', Lorenzo de' Medici described a diverse range of suitable domestic scenes for such expensive nuptial gifts:

> ... la cose dipinte sieno di lor natura grate e piacevoli agli occhi: perchè, ancora la pittura fussi perfetta, potrebbe essere di qualità quello che è dipinto, che non sarebbe secondo la natura di chi debbe vedere. Con ciò sia che alcuni si dilettano di cose allegre, com'è [come] animali, verzure, balli e feste simili; altri vorrebbono vedere battaglie o terrestri o marittime e simili cose marziali e fere; altri paesi, casamenti e scorci e proporzioni di prospettiva ...[12]

Precedents for such pictorial criteria are seen in the writings of Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius. Commenting on the pastoral landscapes and mythologies on panels and in frescoes (the former praised more highly) in the bedchambers of Roman homes and noting the taste for pastoral pictures, Pliny mentioned the same subjects that proved so popular in the Renaissance: 'country houses', 'landscapes', 'bacchants', 'satyrs', and 'sileni at their revels'[13] Vitruvius earlier recorded that in domestic pastorals the ancients painted 'harbors, headlands, shores, rivers ... groves, hills, cattle, shepherds.... In places, some have also the anatomy of statues, the images of the gods, or the representations of legends...with other subjects taken in like manner from Nature'[14] As in ancient Roman times, the main purpose of a *spalliera*, therefore, was to function as an illusory window into an entertaining and often fantastic world, a most appropriate function considering their usual eye-level placement. The panels tended to be linked to their surroundings by wooden entablatures, pilasters, sashes and rails, which further accentuated their illusionistic nature.[15]

Many clues as to Piero's use of popular literary texts in his own works could only be revealed through precise documentation concerning the books he read and the people with whom he could have discussed them. The question of how ideas expressed in both contemporary and classical literature become transmitted and disseminated down through the years and possibly enter Piero's hands remains most pointful. Ultimately, this leads into the realm of Reception Theory which, in Piero's case, still leaves us with few or no answers as to the texts that could have been directly available to him for use in the secular works. Piero's 1518 bequest to the Compagnia di SS. Annunziata noted some of the contents of the painter's residence, authorising his three executors to sell all of his household goods 'and in particular the personal belongings, furnishings, used linen and woolen items and other movables which they shall find in his home at the time of his death' (App., doc. 21).[16] Unfortunately, any mention of Piero's actual artworks, working materials or books was

absent from the record, indicating that Piero most likely worked in a studio outside of his home. A hypothetical list of Piero's reading materials could be compiled, including texts by Ovid, Virgil and Boccaccio, and yet their implementation still remains speculative, especially in light of Piero's divergence from literary motifs.

What should prove convincing beyond much doubt is Piero's familiarity with the seminal quattrocento art treatise on theory and practice, Alberti's *Della Pittura* manuscript of 1436 in the vernacular.[17] In applying Albertian theories to Piero's mythological panels, the most relevant area is that of *istoria* contained in Book II. The term remains undefined and multivalent throughout Alberti's text, but can best be synopsised as 'affective humanist painting'. As Alberti wrote: 'The greatest work of the painter is not a colossus, but an *istoria*. *Istoria* gives greater renown to the intellect than any colossus' [18] In his notes concerning posture, expression and decorum, Leonardo echoed Alberti and praised the image made by a painter of great discernment that reflects the inner states of the mind and the soul.[19]

A discussion of *istoria* from Antiquity to the early Renaissance, together with Alberti's implementation of the term, has recently been provided by Jack Greenstein.[20] Lew Andrews has also investigated the use of continuous narrative in the Renaissance, largely through the lens of multiscenic painting and its tight bonds to temporality.[21] An in-depth analysis of these interrelated topics, while critical to understanding Piero's myths, will therefore be treated succinctly here. Above all, it is necessary to stress that Piero interprets Albertian principles and geometrical consistency rather loosely. In reshuffling the order in which events occur, as will be shown in the Fogg Museum *Bacchanal*, legibility and focus are undermined to some extent. Instead, Piero invites the viewer to use his knowledge of the story told and his imagination to piece together the visual tale and enjoy the process of recognition in the work's iconography, narrative ordering and details that may deviate from the customary telling. A degree of indeterminacy follows, but as a desirable rather than frustrating trait in a work intended for a privileged 'conoscento' and his house guests, willing to engage in playful games and appreciate a latitude of interpretation in Piero's visual ambiguities and manipulations. In the case of the *Bacchanals*, for example, Giovanni Vespucci, described as 'letterato e latinista',[22] would have doubtlessly appreciated the band of maenads and satyrs clanging their incongruous pots and pans—a divine troupe transformed into a band of country gypsies—as well as the second panel's altered temporality and the ribaldry of its telling.

An essential factor in viewing Piero's myths is the lack of many, if any, pictorial precedents in the Renaissance for his represented narratives. While the potential pool of inspiration may have been great, there is little former repertory for the *Death of a Nymph*, *Misfortunes of Silenus* or 'Early History of Man' panels and their reformulation of imagery, little subject matter to replicate or

rework.[23] Piero is most pioneering in this regard, not to mention in his methods of provoking the viewer's curiosity once he approached the highly original subject. In effect, Piero created 'twisted tales', in which narrative lacks a center or legibly constructed spaces and is often disrupted and rearranged, all the while remaining a narrative nonetheless. To use one of Baxandall's terms, many of Piero's mythological works encourage the viewer to use 'an eye with legs', that is to say a mobile rather than a predetermined way of looking.[24]

The presence of an implied spectator has been explored by John Shearman, who approached representation from the angle of artistic intention and the implied Renaissance viewer's elicited response.[25] Using Shearman's description, myths such as this were designed with a 'slow fuse', referring to 'the slow release of its [the image's] complexities, yielding to admiration of its multiple emulation only on repeated recourse by the viewer, and as if inexhaustibly, gives rather the impression of a functionality calculated for a certain kind of viewer and certain kind of viewing'.[26] Certain images, particularly engaging secular subjects, were made for a domestic space 'where much leisure time is spent perambulating, and in which you may come and go...[where] decorations should be invented that...are structurally complex in self-reference, and wide-ranging, memory-challenging in external reference and imitation—decorations, in other words, with very slow fuses'.[27] Vision thus becomes a contemplative rather than a brief, mechanical process in which only an active participation of one's mind can perceive the resulting harmonies[28]; such a 'protracted, dynamic process' of leisurely scrutiny is not unlike the careful, step by step act of viewing a continuous narrative, such as Piero's *The Misfortunes of Silenus*.[29]

Predictably, the rules of linear perspective are relaxed in Piero's mythologies. *The Forest Fire* is centralised by the burning grove of trees. Orthogonals are reinforced in details such as the lines of trees and a prone corpse on the right side of *The Hunt*. One notable exception occurs in the organisation of *The Construction of a Palace* (John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida). What perspective does allow for in some of Piero's *favole* is the illusory deepening of space, a feature complimentary to the use of continuous narrative, taking up the formal role of directing the order of telling. However, as a whole, Piero foregoes a rigid implementation of perspective for a looser approach.[30] As Leonardo prescribed, the scene closest to the center and at the picture plane is usually the initial or the most important one.[31] Yet as Piero demonstrates in the spatial improvisations of *The Misfortunes of Silenus* or the *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs*, this is not always a given.

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Piero's *Death of a Nymph* (also known as the *Death of Procris*) in The National Gallery, London, allows us to focus first on Piero's strangely conceived iconography.[32] On stylistic grounds and a possible literary source, this most curious of narrative transfigurations bears a wide-ranging date of 1498-1509 (fig. 18). The work is a single panel, and it remains unknown whether it was intended to be viewed together with a companion piece—with an image of Cephalus perhaps—which may have helped clarify the narrative.

The viewer is first struck by the bright clarity of colour, typical of Piero's earlier works. The red mantle wrapped around the dying maiden's hips, its colour of clear symbolic import, is matched by the red flowers to either side of the limp body.[33] The flowers seem to bow in mournful audience, along with the faun and onlooking dog. As is his trademark, Piero includes a tremendous richness of detail in the foreground: the blanket of tiny white and red flowers, the nymph's gauzy veil and ornamented sandals and the texture of the faun's goat legs. Piero further exhibits his skill in showing the dying girl's face from its foreshortened angle. The distant milky blue landscape stretching beyond the casual trio of dogs on the beach provides a serene foil to the gemlike colours and lucid detail pressed so close to the picture plane.

Much has been learned about Piero's working methods through in-depth analyses of the paint media, carried out at The National Gallery in 1995, on both London *spalliere* and the Ashmolean Museum's *Forest Fire*.[34] As seen in paint samples, such as the opaque green of the foliage (at the lower right-hand edge) in the *Death of a Nymph*, Piero used a heat-bodied walnut oil.[35] As The National Gallery's Technical Bulletin reports, the heat-prepolymerised oil in The *Death of a Nymph* and *The Forest Fire* raised the paint's refractive index, producing a 'slightly richer, more saturated colour' Even when added in small quantities to paint containing ordinary oil, a heat-bodied oil produces a smooth glossy film, without brush marks[36]; this certainly explains the smooth finish visible in both the *Death of a Nymph* and *The Forest Fire*, while directly revealing the conscious choices made by Piero in his working methods to achieve such pleasing over-all visual effects.

As discovered in the uppermost glaze layers in the brownish-green areas of landscape in all three of the examined panels, Piero also utilised pine resin as a minor constituent of the binding medium. These small additions of resin yielded a richer, more transparent glaze, adding strength and freshness to the colours upon drying, and created a glossier effect, likewise as a result of the raised refractive index of the paint medium.

The paint has grown transparent in parts of the London work, revealing several interesting *pentimenti*.[37] The large-scale dog, presumably Laelaps, was originally intended to be shown with an open mouth. The poses of the other dogs were also revised, as can be seen most clearly with the middle one, first depicted standing. Strands of the faun's hair originally dropped below his left eye

and over the hilly landscape on the opposite shore, while his left hand was in a slightly different position. In the upper body of the nymph, the underdrawing reveals that she originally wore some kind of a headdress with a bow at the back. The position of the head appears to have been lower down. There appears to have been some kind of an object behind her neck, with something emerging from it, somewhat resembling a quiver.

A close investigation reveals that much of the milky blue sky in the seascape has been worked with the artist's fingers in the wet paint, producing a mottled effect. Fingerprints similarly smother parts of the paint surface in Piero's early *Madonna and Child with Saints Lazarus and Sebastian* in the church of SS. Michele Arcangelo e Lorenzo Martire in Montevettolini (fig. 45), the *Pala Del Pugliese* in the St. Louis Art Museum (fig. 53), the *Construction of a Palace*, now in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota (fig. 42) and a *Portrait of a Young Man*, cautiously attributed to Piero, in the Dulwich Picture Gallery, Dulwich (fig. 98). Piero's tendency to manipulate the paint with his fingers reveals a method rarely detected in surviving Florentine paintings, and yet serves as one of the most distinctive similarities uniting the master with Leonardo. In Leonardo's works, prints have been discovered in both the London *Madonna of the Rocks* and his portrait of *Ginevra de' Benci*, producing a subtle blurring in the area where juniper bush meets distant landscape.

The *Death of a Nymph* is dominated by a sense of the tender and the ephemeral. As opposed to *The Forest Fire* and its sense of commotion, the mourning scene is conspicuous in its calm. The style of the panel seems later than secular works such as the *Allegory*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, in the atmospheric handling of the receding background. While the main scene retains great clarity and detail, there is a marked softening in the distance and even in the flesh surfaces of the young woman and the faun, much in contrast to the harder and slightly metallic treatment of flesh in *The Hunt* and *The Return from the Hunt* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). This fusion of clear form with aerial perspective in the gradations of earth, water and sky points to a more advanced development in Piero's technique and lyrical sensibility.

The image's narrative had been almost unanimously linked by art historians to the story of Cephalus and Procris.[38] The myth was first told by Hesiod, Nicander of Colophon in his Hellenestic *Heteroioumena* (2nd century BC) and later by Antoninus Liberalis, a mythographer of Antonine times (1st century BC), in his *Fabulae*.[39] The myth was then famously retold in greater detail and colour by Ovid, in both the *Metamophoses* (1-17 AD) and *Ars Amatoria*, one of Ovid's earliest works of uncertain dating between *c.*15 BC to 2 AD. In *Metamorphoses* VII (664-865), Ovid uses the story-within-a story 'chinese box' technique to tell the story of Cephalus and Procris, which is in turn framed within the context of Cephalus' personal storytelling of the tragedy in the court of Aeacus and

his sons. United in marriage, the couple lives in perfect happiness until Cephalus is abducted by the lustful Aurora.[40] Cephalus spurns her advances, proclaiming his great love for his wife and as a result suffers the goddess' revenge, resulting in the well-known misunderstanding between husband and wife and Procris' accidental death. The conclusion to the ill-omened story is perhaps the most touching in the *Metamorphoses*, ending with Cephalus cradling his wife in his arms, grieving over the realisation of his loss as he hears his love's dying words.[41]

Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, generally a more lighthearted and amusing work than the *Metamophoses*, presents a slightly varied ending to the Procris story. In Book III, Ovid's earlier version reveals Procris' acknowledgment of her error in suspecting infidelity upon being struck with her fatal blow.[42] In the consoling resolution, Procris speaks: 'Alas! thou has pierced a friendly breast: this sport hath ever a wound from Cephalus. Untimely I die, yet injured by no rival: this will make thee, earth, lie lightly on my bones'.[43] Both versions of the tragic myth carry with them an inherent didactic warning with regard to matrimonial trust. The conjugal moral clearly guards against rash jealousy, an appropriate subject when considering a *spalliera*'s frequent placement inside a *camera*, almost certainly as a nuptial commission or gift. In fact, in the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid used the tale as a part of a woman's lesson on how to act and not to act in a situation of suspected infidelity. In prefacing his recounting of the myth, Ovid wrote: 'But, however he wrongs you, let it disturb you but little, nor be put out when you hear of a rival. Nor be quick to believe: what harm quick belief can do, Procris will be to you a weighty warning' [44]

Despite some of the consistencies shared by the two Ovidian accounts of the story and Piero's London *spalliera*, many puzzling alterations immediately come to our attention and raise doubts as to the precise connection between the literary sources and pictorial image. The inconsistencies begin with the most glaring absence of Cephalus. In an extreme switch of protagonists, the viewer instead finds a kneeling faun, sad and tender in his attentions to the dying girl—drastically obscuring the identification of the subject. Next, upon examination it becomes clear that the young girl has been wounded not in her breast, as described by Ovid, but in her throat. There also appears a second and more superficial wound upon her hand. There are traces of blood upon her right palm, indicating that she had tried to staunch her bleeding, and it appears that the girl is either about to die or has just expired, since the blood still flows lightly, while the faun looks helplessly on. No javelin is to be found in the picture, while the dog looking upon the scene at right could not plausibly be Cephalus' trusty hunting hound, Laelaps, for he was turned to marble, together with the hunted beast, by the gods during the chase earlier in the tale.[45] Finally, the wooded setting described by Ovid has been replaced by one on the shore. The similarities seem eclipsed by the mounting inconsistencies: the

absence of Cephalus or the javelin, the presence of the faun, the changed location of the wound (now wounds) and the transformed landscape.

As has been pointed out, support for the Procris and Cephalus subject is found in a play entitled *La Fabula de Cefalo*, written by Niccolò da Correggio (1450-1508) and performed on 21 January 1487 in honour of a wedding between two members of the Ferrarese aristocracy, the Cavaliere Giulio Tassoni and Ippolita, a daughter of Niccolò Contrari.[46] The play, commissioned by Duke Ercole d'Este for the newlyweds, was only the second written on an antique subject in the Renaissance (after Poliziano's *Fabula di Orfeo* of 1479) and was very influential. More important, the play explains some of the inconsistencies found in Piero's work. Above all, Correggio's play could account for the strange appearance of the faun, mentioned by Correggio in Act III of his five act play.[47] As a substitute for Ovid's busybody who conveys the news of Cephalus' mistress to Procris, the faun acts as the fatal meddler. Himself enamoured by the nymph, the faun arouses Procris' suspicion by implicating Cephalus in an affair, ultimately sending Procris to her spying mission in the woods. The ending to Correggio's play is dramatically different as well, however. The story ends happily, as Diana restores her former follower to life and the lovers are reunited in their love. The play also contains an extended mourning scene, which could clarify Piero's choice of capturing this particular moment.[48]

As the telling of the Cephalus and Procris story passed on from classical to medieval times, the import of the tale did not go unmodified. The Christianised refashionings of the Middle Ages were most evident in such texts as Pierre Bersuire's *Ovidius Moralizatus* (first half of the fourteenth century) and the *Ovide Moralisé* of 1305, attributed to Phillipe de Vitry. It was Boccaccio who, soon after Bersuire's work, eliminated Christianisation of pagan myths in his highly scholarly *Genealogia deorum gentilium* (first printed in the *vulgare* in 1472 by Vindelino da Spira, Venice; three publications later, illustrated Venetian editions were introduced by Beneto Locatello, 1494, and Manfredo Bonelli, 1497)[49]. Yet even Boccaccio oscillated between maintaining the integrity of the classical tradition and falling back on medieval moralising, as seen in *De claribus mulieribus* and its inclusion of the Procris myth. The classisising potentiality of myths introduced by Boccaccio was taken up again by Niccolò da Correggio, but again with mixed results. While striving for a classicist resonance, the play remains analogous to the medieval interpretations, as well as to Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* passage, in its implicit moral intentions.[50] The message once again warns of immoderate love and jealousy aroused by excessive passion. As with other *spalliera* paintings intended for the home, such as Botticelli's *Nastagio degli Onesti* series (three in the Prado, the other in a private collection) and his *Death of Lucretia* (Isabella Gardner Museum, Boston), the reading of the images was intended to edify the female viewer as *exempla pudicitia* by illustrating appropriate behaviour

befitting a virtuous and temperate wife. In the end, Cephalus stands exonerated of his own violent sin, together with the original error of testing his wife's faithfulness. In Ovid's two accounts of the myths, the two are reconciled even in the maiden's death, and Cephalus is still pardoned; in Correggio's version, however, Diana brings Procris back to life, with the admonition that Procris should never be jealous again and that Cefalo should remain faithful. Such an optimistic Christianised ending to a classical tragedy was typical at the time that Correggio was writing, illustrating a salvation—here, a resurrection—following the repentance of sin.[51]

Correggio's play was a popular novelty in humanist circles, and it is possible that the as yet unknown patron of Piero's panel or Piero himself may have read the play, published in nine editions, with the earliest in 1507 and 1509, in Venice, or seen or heard of it performed in 1497, thus explaining the enigmatic iconographic programme for the work. Such hypotheses are problematic, however, on the basis of dating and possible transmission. The earliest publication dates may be too late for the panel's execution, which resembles that of earlier panels like the Berlin *Venus, Cupid and Mars*. Second, a question arises concerning the possible intermediary between the performance of the play in 1487 and Piero's studio. It must be remembered that Piero himself is not known to have departed from Florence, with the exception of his lone trip to Rome. On a thematic note, it is also important to notice that the didactic element consistently found in literary accounts of the Procris myth—from Ovid to Correggio—is absent from Piero's image, pointing to a different intent.

The painting therefore can be interpreted with equal validity as a highly personal and original creation of Piero—possibly in collaboration with a learned.[52] There is no reason, however, to presuppose that Piero could not have heard various literary tales, in all of their detail, second-hand, from various acquaintances with a humanist background and subsequently implemented them in his painted works. Yet Piero's imaginative improvisation of the original myth in the London panel, if the representation is indeed of the same text, renders the dogged search for identifiable connections with literary sources nearly futile. If Correggio's play is a source, Piero incorporates it in the same way as with Ovid: freely. In the background of the picture wander a pelican and several herons, symbols of sacrifice and innocence respectively. The dog is a well-known symbol of fidelity. And yet in this case, the image of the dogs lying lazily or carelessly roaming the shore is more compelling as a wonderful detail of naturalism. An implied sense of humanity is infused into both the faun and the dog in the foreground. Most telling, the scene of the faun mourning over the girl actually never takes place in Correggio's play. Piero chooses to invent the moment. The faun's gesture, lightly brushing away the maiden's hair and resting his other hand upon her shoulder as if to gently wake her, is in strong contrast to the general perception of fauns and satyrs in both classical and Renaissance times, particularly in the revival of interest in the second half of the quattrocento. As so many Renaissance

*bronzetti* by such masters as Riccio and Bertoldo demonstrate, the faun and satyr were notorious for their lewd behaviour. Piero instead sensitively reveals another side to the creature. In conclusion, it may be most accurate to see Piero's image as a part of the on-going variation of the original Ovid myth. Piero seems to have derived special joy from his improvisations and his innovative approach to myth is not unlike that of Ovid himself, a master of digressions, his narratives full of constant flashbacks and foreshadowings, changes of narrators and switches of tone from tragedy to comedy.

As is the case with the majority of his mythical narratives, Piero's treatment of the Procris myth, if that is its subject, has no large-scale precedents despite superficially similar compositions depicting a sleeping female nude in a landscape, attended by a male figure(s)—a pose for which the ancients had the specific term, *anapauomenai*.[53] A fifteenth-century Florentine *Death of Procris* panel painting does exist in the Musée at Lille and is probably the only surviving quattrocento Italian version of the myth prior to Piero. There is, however, no pertinent connection between the anonymous artist's pictorial narrative and that of Piero.[54] Neither are there any plausible connections between The National Gallery panel and late Gothic miniatures, such as Christine de Pisan's series of scenes in Erlangen. An illustration of the myth is absent from the important 1497 edition of the *Metamorphoses* by Zoane Rosso in Venice, the first illustrated edition of the book in the Renaissance classical revival style,[55] and it was only in the wake of Piero's panel that a sizable number of other versions of the myth followed.[56]

The most valuable example is by Piero's own hand: a curious drawing in the British Museum, London, composed of three sections, the central one showing a sleeping woman by a water's edge (fig. 19).[57] As discussed by Griswold, the two figures now attached to either side of the recumbent female figure were originally located on the verso of the sheet; the disparate handling of the three fragments, as well as the lack of a psychological connection between the figures, lead to the conclusion that the three nudes were most likely cut out (from the verso) by a collector who wished to preserve them in a pasted page of an album.[58] The sleeping woman has been identified as Ariadne in nearly all of the literature and, in pose, is similar to that of Rhea Silvia in a Uffizi sheet attributed in the past to Piero and more recently to Filippino Lippi (fig. 23).[59] The appearance of a ship in the distance in the London drawing, recalling Theseus' flight from Naxos, certainly supports the Ariadne association. In the final analysis, the pose of the drawn woman is similar to that of the dying nymph, but not identical. The meticulousness of the finished central drawing was 'unique in the artist's surviving graphic *oeuvre*', Griswold notes, and therefore suggests its possible purpose as a *modello* or even a presentation drawing. Revealingly, both of the male figures flanking the recumbent half nude also suggest other images: the left figure carrying a lamb or kid on his shoulders recalls the shepherds in Piero's much later post-1510 studies for an *Adoration of the Shepherds* and the *Expulsion of*

*Joachim from the Temple* sketches (figs. 20-21),[60] while the right contrapposto figure—also seemingly an antique reference, like the sleeping woman[61]—is comparable to the statue of the first man in Piero's Munich 'Prometheus' *spalliera*.

Although not offering the same wealth of narrative possibilities as the *Death of a Nymph*, another monoscenic mythological panel, the *Venus, Cupid and Mars* in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, does provide an important stylistic kinship (fig. 22).[62] The panel was once thought to correspond to Vasari's description of Piero's decorations for Francesco del Pugliese, which included 'un quadro di Marte e Venere con i suoi Amori e Vulcano, fatto con una grande arte e con una pazienza incredibile'.[63] This seems highly unlikely, however, since the Berlin picture became a prized addition to Vasari's own private collection after 1550, and was mentioned independently slightly later in the Life:

> Dipinse ancora un quadro dov'è una Venere ignuda con un Marte parimente che spogliato nudo dorme sopra un prato pien di fiori, et attorno son diversi Amori, che chi in qua chi in là trasportano la celata, i bracciali e l'altre arme di Marte; èvvi un bosco di mirto, et un Cupido che ha paura d'un coniglio; così vi sono le colombe di Venere e l'altre cose di Amore.[64]

Despite wide discrepancies in the work's past dating, the panel most likely belongs to the last years of the 1490s or the initial years of the 1500s, and thus close to the *Death of a Nymph*.[65] Probably commissioned as a wedding gift and intended to serve as a luxurious headboard, the panel represents a combination of opposites—a *discordia concors*—so esteemed by ancient writers and later the Neoplatonists in particular. The harmonious union between the two deities representing peace and war, love and strife, was described in ancient times by Lucretius and Reposianus (in his third-century *De Concubitu Martis et Veneris*)[66] and popularised again in the cinquecento by Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503) and his *Eridanus* poem, Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano and Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), who described the gods' relationship in astrological terms, likening them to planets and proclaiming that Venus watches over the planet Mars and tames his destructive powers.[67]

Obvious similarities arise with Botticelli's *Mars and Venus* of 1483 for the Vespucci, now in The National Gallery, London. The reclining poses of the facing pairs were most likely derived from a *Bacchus and Ariadne* sarcophagus of the 2nd century AD in the Vatican, its upper left-hand relief showing a clothed Venus and half-nude Mars, flanking two *amorini*.[68] Both Botticelli and Piero situated their figures within a lush landscape, reclining near bushes of myrtle, a plant consecrated by Venus and known for its aphrodisiac qualities.

Several divergences are striking, however, as Piero has now added the figure of Cupid, wrapped in his mother's transparent veil, and replaced Botticelli's fauns playing with the weapons of Mars—a motif repeated in the Uffizi drawing of *Mars and Rhea Silvia*, mentioned above, and echoing a passage from Lucian's *Herodotus*[69]—with a group of *amorini*. In contrast to Botticelli's flattened

background, Piero's scene is set within a more spacious meadow that recedes to the sea and bluish mountains beyond. Like Mars, Venus is represented as largely nude and seems less intensely vigilant of her slumbering partner in the Berlin panel, enhancing the relaxed, if not deliberately ironic, treatment of the subject in comparison to the more restrained interpretation by Botticelli as expressed by his fully clothed and self-possessed Venus.[70] Piero's couple illustrates less a triumph of the goddess of love, and the pacifying effects of her powers on the most martial spirits, than a reciprocal relationship in which both figures repose after making love. While the rather feminine Mars has fallen into sleep, his pronated wrist resting limply upon his chest, Venus appears no less languid, perhaps kept awake only by the excited gesturing of Amor.

Piero's inclusion of naturalistic details lends a peaceful air and charm to the composition, as expressed by the cooing doves in the right foreground and another amorous allusion in Venus' white rabbit, nuzzling Cupid's hand.[71] Equally captivating passages include the carpet of foreground flora, the light reflecting upon Mars' discarded arm guard, the trompe l'oeil fly upon his red pillow and the butterfly that has alighted upon Venus' right leg, further confirming the tranquility of the goddess' repose.

The sense of intimacy in Piero's *Death of a Nymph* was passed on to a remarkable passage in another painting executed around the same time in the first decade of the cinquecento and fortunately among the painter's best preserved creations.[72] A mourning scene likewise occupies the central foreground of the *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* (The National Gallery, London), a markedly violent subject for a *spalliera* painting in comparison to its gallery counterpart (fig. 24).[73] However, the central elegiac scene, at the focus of the viewer's attention, is exceedingly delicate and touching.[74] Here, Piero has chosen to place the centaur Hylonome grieving over her dying lover, the golden-haired Cyllarus. Laying her hand delicately upon Cyllarus' wound, Hylonome kisses him.[75] The two creatures form a scene of melancholy calm amid the slaughter sweeping the countryside all around them. The handsome Cyllarus and his love for Hylonome are described at great length by Ovid in Book XII.[76] Ovid proceeds to give an account of their love bond, how Hylonome took care to look her best for her mate, combing her glossy hair, twining her curls with flowers, bathing in the forest brook and wearing only the choicest animal skins. Their love affair ends tragically in the 'primitive' *pietà* depicted by Piero, as Cyllarus lies fatally wounded in his collar bone by a javelin.

> . . .when the point was pulled away, / Cold grew his damaged heart and cold his limbs. / Hylonome embraced him as he died, / Caressed the wound and, putting lips to lips, / She tried to stay his spirit as it fled. / And when she saw him lifeless, she moaned words / That in that uproar failed to reach my ears; / And fell upon the spear that pierced her love, / And, dying, held her husband in her arms.[77]

Despite its prominence in the central foreground, the scene is countered with equal insistence by the surrounding bloodshed.[78] Ovid's setting for the carnage is the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodame, soon thrown into chaos by the drunken four-legged guests. The story, which takes place on Pelion, is narrated by old Nestor, who recalls every victim and gruesome wound with relish. The originally peaceful setting becomes a battleground at the instigation of Eurytus, 'the fiercest of the fierce centaurs, [who] was fired by wine and by the sight of that fair girl, and was in command, doubled by lust'. Soon the 'goblets and fragile jars and bowls and dishes meant for banqueting, were turned to war and carnage'. Such details are carefully recorded by Piero, as are the multitude of clashing pairs of combatants so painstakingly listed by Ovid.

Both Theseus and the enraged groom, Pirithous, are shown in two different places by Piero. Theseus' most spectacular appearance occurs in the foreground at the extreme right of the picture, where the hero sits astride Bienor's back, crashing down blows upon the centaur's face with his knotted club. Directly behind this scene, Pirithous appears, aiming the lance that will soon pierce the centaur Petraeus' ribs, pinning him to the oak that he attempts to uproot. The second place where we see Pirithous is in a small detail in the background of the upper left side of the panel, where Dictys slips and falls headlong from a precipice and is impaled on a mountain-ash as a result of Pirithous' relentless pursuit. In the middle ground at right, Theseus resurfaces in the middle ground at right, shown hurling an antique wine-bowl down upon Eurytus, the violator of the peace. Behind and to the left of Theseus, Amycus crashes down 'a great candlestick with clustered lights' upon the Lapith Celadon, while to the right of this group Gryneus lifts a smoking altar, about to crush two Lapiths with his throw. In the distant background at right, Caeneus, the Lapith blessed with an indestructible body (*kainos* = 'new') through a change of sex, as also mentioned by Hesiod and Virgil, is pinned down underneath timber and debris showered upon him by a crowd of Centaurs, led by Monychus. Under the giant pile, the Lapith was soon deprived of air yet it was said that he escaped to freedom by changing into a bird. In the foreground at far right stands a figure appearing to be Hercules, about to deliver a deathblow with his club. Although this most famous of heroes was never mentioned in Ovid's version of the conflict, he was added by Piero.[79]

Ovid's narrative seems excessively violent, similar in its grotesque detail to the battle between Perseus and Phineus at the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda in Book V (1-263). By contrast, antique visual representations tended towards the idealised, as exemplified by a number of Roman sarcophagi.[80] Piero's depiction is more along Ovidian lines in its brutality. The most challenging scenes from Ovid's tale are taken up by Piero in his representations of the figures—human and equine—in complex action poses. In this boldness, Piero's handling of the myth is close to that of the young Michelangelo in his *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* marble relief of 1491-2 in the Casa

Buonarroti. Despite the uncertain prospects of Piero having seen the relief, glimpses of potential figural models in Michelangelo's muscular tangle of bodies can be found in Piero's later version.[81] Michelangelo's two figures at the lower right hand corner of the relief, for instance, are mirrored by Theseus mounted on the back of Bienor; Michelangelo's bearded Lapith preparing to launch a rock at the extreme left finds his reflection in Piero's figure of Theseus, who is about to dash a wine jug against his foe; and finally, the relief's off-center figure, his left arm wrapped around a captive Lapith and his right cocked back in readiness to strike reappears in the image as Eurytus, with his left hand clutching the hair of the Lapith bride. A rather convincing factor in such comparisons is the analogous placement of the matching poses. Piero's positioning of the three figures/groups just mentioned, on the right side of his narrative painting, are in accord with Michelangelo's insertion of the similar figures in his composition.[82] It is quite possible that Piero could have recorded the relief's dramatic poses in a drawing, if not in memory.

As discussed in Chapter I, many parallels can be made between Piero's work and Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* and the latter's projected composition of three episodic scenes, interrelated both formally and thematically and giving the illusion of movement.[83] This type of narrative and formal integration within a static image can be applied successfully to Piero's attempts in his own *Battle*. The connection with Michelangelo and his relief appears to be no less significant in the subject matter, composition and even isolated figural poses. Nonetheless, as with the *Death of a Nymph* panel, Piero's treatment of the Ovidian myth remains very much his own.[84] Unlike Michelangelo, who focuses exclusively on the corporeality of the combatants and their forceful actions, Piero directs and sustains our attention to the mourning scene at center with great clarity and insistence. As with the faun in the *Death of a Nymph*, the centaur is not depicted in his untamed aspect—a bestial side of Ixion's violent descendants illustrated implicitly in Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur*. Piero brings this paradox of the centaurs' nature literally to the forefront of the painting, showing the woodland dwellers with both their highest and lowest instincts. Piero includes two clashing motifs—action and high epic versus tragedy and love elegy—and in this desire for multiplicity, Piero again has much in common with Ovid.

In his emphasis on the young centaur couple, Piero not only reasserts his ability to infuse creatures long associated with wild intemperateness with a deep-felt sensitivity and human emotion, but he also subtly contradicts Albertian sense of narrative. While dramatically realised, the *Battle* as a whole shows a preference for symmetry of composition and is generally more coherently organised than the New York hunting scenes that came before. Despite these isolated signs of an Albertian organisation of narrative, Piero ultimately departs from such a model.[85] In Piero's scene, it is the subsidiary peripheral action of Ovid's myth that is now thrust into the central foreground space, while

the story's main action of the mêlée takes place all around the tragic couple. The secondary scene now ascends to prominence, inverting the spatial hierarchy of organisation based on importance of subject matter. Even the fighting scenes are often divided into smaller groupings, revealing a new complexity of rhythm and depth and further diluting the battle and diverting the viewer's attentions, thus inviting his eye to wander continuously over the panel without a fixed point of focus.

The London centauromachy also signals the arrival of continuous narrative, previously undeveloped in Piero's works, as Pirithous and Theseus are each portrayed twice in different locations in the same overall space. The *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* thus becomes an important transitional panel. While the *Death of a Nymph* is iconographically challenging, leaving us in constant search for a direct literary source, Piero's later *spalliere* present new challenges in their formal and structural presentations of narrative and their narrative focus. It is the potentialities of pictorial manipulation in continuous narrative that held the greatest interest for Piero and his patrons in his later compositions. Two of the most notable examples of this method of storytelling are a pair of *Bacchanals*, most likely executed *c.*1500 (figs. 25-6).[86]

Of secure Vespucci origin, the *Bacchanals* companion pair was most likely painted for Giovanni di Guidantonio Vespucci[87] and the family's palace facing the church of San Michele Visdomini on via dei Servi, purchased by Giovanni's father on 5 March 1499.[88] It is most plausible that the panels were commissioned as a nuptial gift, specifically for Giovanni's marriage to Namiciana di Benedetto Nerli in 1500, just before his father's death in 1501, and therefore decorated the newlywed's bridal chamber.[89] The bees and hornets, which are the central feature of the second two panels, are a visual pun on *vespa* (wasps) and hence the Vespucci name and the family symbol: a nest of wasps.[90] The Palazzo Vespucci was later sold to Piero Salviati in 1533[91], and it was in the Salviati-owned residence that Vasari must have seen Piero's works by 1550, referring enthusiastically to

> alcune storie baccanarie che sono intorno a una camera, nelle quali fece sì strani fauni, satiri e silvani, e putti e baccanti, che è una maraviglia a vedere la diversità de' zaini e delle vesti, e la varietà delle cere caprine, con una grazia et imitazione verissima. Èvvi in una storia Sileno a cavallo su uno asino con molti fanciulli, chi lo regge e chi gli dà bere, e si vede una letizia al vivo, fatta con grande ingegno.[92]

Sixteen years later, when the palace and its contents had passed to Giovanni de' Bardi di Vernio, the Vespucci pictures likewise prompted high praise in Borghini's brief biography of Piero, where they were described as an 'opera certo bella, e lodevole, e dal Signor Giovanni tenuta cara'.[93]

The condition of the two paintings, both executed in tempera with some oil glazes, varies fairly dramatically. The Worcester panel is the more intact survivor, having suffered less abrasion and loss of surface paint.[94] The Fogg Museum panel, on the other hand, has not proven as fortunate, lacking the finer modelling of its companion. Once judged to be largely unfinished, the panel's present state

instead can be attributed to an aggressive over-cleaning in the past.[95] Indeed, it would appear odd for the panels to have been exhibited in the palace, as seen and described in detail by Vasari, in an unfinished state. In addition, the Fogg picture presents a well-preserved, detailed tree at center and landscape to either side of the main scene as a stark contrast to the damaged foreground figures. A number of very significant overpaintings have also been recently discovered, contributing perhaps the strongest evidence in support of interpreting the *Bacchanals*, and *The Misfortunes of Silenus* especially, as entertaining and highly mischievous images rather than evolutionist ones. As will be shown, they certainly have little to do with love, or at least its purer aspects.

While technical analysis of the Worcester Bacchanal uncovered few over painted sections of distinction, 1994 infrared reflectography images of the Fogg panel showed some startling results.[96] Along with other less surprising changes in the earlier paint layer, the study revealed the covered up ithyphallic features of some of the satyrs, such as those in the right foreground. Similar changes made to decorously cover sexual elements also included a painted-over satyr approaching a donkey from behind in the middle background, to the right of the central tree (fig. 26b). The tentative conclusion made by Ron Spronk of the Fogg's Conservation Department is that the painting was seriously damaged by expurgations, as all lewd sexual matter was scraped off or painted over. Numerous flesh areas have lost their surface modelling as a result, rendering figures such as Bacchus sketchy and nearly transparent.[97] It is most likely that this attempt to 'dignify' the figures was done by a later hand, since the wasp's nest was painted over as well; the strange absence of the *vespe* and their nest—not only integral to the story but also to the pun associated with the Vespucci family—is likewise explained by infrared reflectography imagery, showing a cone-like object originally located directly below Silenus' hand in the underdrawing (fig. 26a). The alterations thus must then have taken place after the work changed hands from the Vespucci family to a new owner. Regardless of its unfortunate state, *The Misfortunes of Silenus* is one of Piero's most daring, and originally lewd, images. Consequently, Piero preserves the integrity of Ovid's myth and its intended spirit and humour in the panels' original state, while adding his own facetious touches.

Amid their expression of 'lively joy', the Bacchanals are a product of a sophisticated interpretative approach. Ovid's *Fasti* is the most convincing literary source for the work, and Piero follows the text very faithfully.[98] In Book III, Ovid described the celebration of Bacchus in the month of April and the first finding of honey:

> Attended by the satyrs he was going from sandy Hebrus (my tale includes a pleasant jest), and had come to Rhodope and flowery Pangaeus, when the cymbals in the hands of his companions clashed. Lo, drawn by the tinkle, winged things, as yet unknown, assemble, and the bees follow the sounding brass. Liber collected the stragglers and shut them up in a hollow tree; and he was rewarded by the discovery of honey.[99]

This passage satisfactorily accounts for Piero's *Discovery of Honey* (Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Mass.), together with one of the scenes in the Vulcan-crafted reliefs adorning the palace of Venus in Poliziano's *Stanze*.

> Sovra l'asin Silen, di ber sempre avido, / con vene grosse nere e di mosto umide, / marcido sembra sonnacchioso e gravido, / le luci ha di vin rosse infiate e fumide; / l'ardite ninfe l'asinel suo pavido / pugon col tirso, e lui con le man tumide / a' crin s'appiglia; e mentre sì l'aizono, / casca nel collo, e' satiri lo rizono.[100]

Unlike most of Piero's mythologies of post-1500, which unfold in three to four episodes, the Worcester panel is shown as one single moment in time. Still, the composition is divided into three main areas: at the left and center, the merrymaking band of satyrs and Bacchantes make their way to the hollow tree, trying to drive the bees into its trunk by means of clanging instruments. At right of center, Silenus—later to reappear in a more compromising position in the Cambridge panel—rides upon an ass, surrounded by Bacchantes and satyrs that support him and give him drink. Finally, Bacchus and Ariadne appear at the far right, presiding over the merriment while acknowledging the presence of the observer. Despite its logically constructed narrative sequence, the scene is far from ordinary in its highly satiric mode. Again, it is *how* Piero's chooses to tell the narrative that bewilders the viewer.[101]

Piero produces a parody of the ancient myth, treating it in a most jocular manner. Bacchus' train of ecstatic votaries is transformed into a nomadic tribe, banging not their ceremonial cymbals but rather an odd assortment of household utensils: pots and pans, jugs, ladles, graters and shovels. Bones and deer-hoofs are used on pans and kettles as drumsticks by the motley bunch.[102] As in nearly all of his mythological works, the spectator's eyes are constantly distracted by engaging side scenes, such as the breast-feeding satyress and her baby at the left foreground and the splayed out figure of grinning Pan, who holds up three onions.[103] Some of the wanderers stretch out lazily on the grass, others climb trees in search of grapes while one satyr gives another a ride in the background. At center, a baby satyr has perched himself inside the foot of the hollow tree. In effect, Piero extracts a mischievous pastoral image from a classical and divine ritual.

The significance of the Worcester Bacchanal has been explored in great detail by Panofsky, for whom the image was a part of man's civilising process.[104] Panofsky accounts for the subject by referring to the rites of the Feast of Bacchus, which, as Ovid observed, included the offering and eating of sweet cakes: 'Libations (*libamina*) derive their name from their author, and so do cakes (*liba*), because part of them is offered on the hallowed hearths. Cakes are made for the god, because he delights in sweet juices, and they say that honey was discovered by Bacchus'.[105] Panofsky, therefore, sees Bacchus' modest discoveries such as spices, honey and wine, together with his introduction of libations, as a reflection of man's own progress in his evolution, through his own

faculties and talents. 'The general conception underlying all these representations', Panofsky argues, 'is the Epicurean evolutionism laid down by such classical authors as Lucretius and Vitruvius...[and] popularised in the Renaissance by Boccaccio [*Genealogia deorum*]'

There are several strong reservations concerning the treatment of the Vespucci *Bacchanals* as illustrations of evolutionist theories—beginning with Panofsky's use of the term 'paysage moralisé'.[106] In posing a duality between the 'innocent happiness of pastoral civilization' on the left side of the landscape and the 'merciless hardships of unmitigated wildness' on the right, Panofsky posits an anachronistic reading, one also predominantly based on the religious genre. Panofsky's delineated contrast between the primitive and the civilised is largely divorced from the image itself, in which the woods, 'threatening clouds' and 'terrifying rock' on the right function more as formal elements and examples of variegated terrain, while the castle on Panofsky's 'pastoral civilization' side of the picture includes washing hanging from its window.

Furthermore, how convincing is it to see the discovery of honey as a meaningful advance towards a civilised way of life? It certainly is not as important as that of Prometheus' theft of fire. The appropriateness is therefore questionable, as is the precise connection of honey, which is never mentioned in this context in Epicurean evolutionism, or by authors such as Lucretius or Vitruvius. For Lucretius, primitive times were anything but carefree and easy, though still preferable to civilised life and its vices of greed and violence.[107] Thomas Mathews proposes his own variation on Piero's theme for the work: love and fertility. As he concludes: 'On this level the *Discovery of Honey* would be immediately seen as a very gracious wish that the bride and groom for whom it was painted should discover in their married life a love abundantly fruitful, and as sweet as honey'.[108] His evidence includes: the prominent placement of the devilish looking Pan, holding the aphrodisiac onions, and his well-known seductive nature; the double-personalities of both Bacchus and Pan—part civilised, part untamed—and Piero's stressing of the latter quality; the inclusion of Ariadne along with several nymphs, the guardians of marriage; and the hollow tree as a womb metaphor and honey as a traditional part of the classical vocabulary of love. All of these associations, Mathews states, point to a deeper meaning for the panels, other than just the evolutionary one.

Both interpretations, however, grow increasingly removed from Piero's painting itself, to which I now return. First, Ovid's main intention in the *Fasti* was to describe different rituals and feasts during the Roman calendar year, together with their rustic origins. In portraying the merriments of Bacchus in the particular ritual of the *Liberalia* festival, Piero's main focus appears to be the wit and humour of the act of discovering honey in the context of the festival—and not in underlying theories or allegories.[109] Again, the amusing and rivetting parts of the image are found in the details of costume or gesture: the codpiece, in the shape of an owl-like mustached face, of the satyr with a grater to the

left of the tree, or the seashell codpiece of the satyr holding a young one to the right of the tree. The head of the satyr banging on a jug in front of the tree and the pink-green giant ears of the satyr kneeling atop the trunk are truly outlandish. The landscape is treated with the same deft touch as we have come to expect from Piero; the outcrop of forest at right, containing a wonderful monkey amid its vines, is matched by the jutting hillock behind it, with its windy path along which strolls a lion. The tree standing at the center of the composition instantly captivates our attention, almost anthropomorphic in its complex system of knots, growths and offshoots. Then there is of course Silenus' charming and extremely naturalistic donkey. It is little wonder that Berenson, in a private letter referred to the picture as a masterpiece, 'in which Piero di Cosimo reveals himself entirely'.[110]

Focusing briefly on Piero's inventive depiction of landscape, it is ironic to note that passages such as the seemingly fantastic tree at the center of the Bacchanal compositions—invoked in past scholarship to mirror Piero's own overgrown garden, and by extension his wild character, in Vasari's text—are not as untamed as initially believed. The spiky offshoots of the trees in works such as the *Bacchanals* and Tedaldi *Incarnation* have, in fact, been shown as pollarded, trimmed to produce bushier growth. Nonetheless, the teeming landscapes in the *Bacchanals* and the Metropolitan Museum's hunting scenes tend toward the un-Florentine in type. Piero's treatment of nature in such images is in distinct contrast to examples by other contemporary yet older masters of landscapes, namely Botticelli and Domenico Ghirlandaio, and their more serenely ordered variations.[111]

As Mathews readily points out, Pan and Bacchus have always been recognised for their immoderate instincts. It is for this very reason that I am more tempted to view the image of Bacchus and his intoxicated troupe as indicative more of lust rather than love, playful mischief rather than evolutionism. Narrative in Piero's invocations of ancient myths therefore becomes extended not only to 'high' or heroic narrative, but also to unglorified—or at times even indecent—moments, as often spotted in particular side vignettes. A good textual example is found in an earlier part of the *Fasti*: the month of January and the slaying of an ass as a sacrifice for the feast of Bacchus.

> Thither came, too, the gods who wait upon Lyaeus and all the jocund crew, Pans and young amorous Satyrs, and goddesses that haunt rivers and lonely wilds. Thither, too, came old Silenus on an ass with hollow back, and the Crimson One who by his lewd image scares the tame birds. They lit upon a dingle meet for joyous wassails, and there they laid them down on grassy beds. Liber bestowed the wine: each had brought his garland: a stream supplied water in plenty to dilute the wine. Naiads were there, some with flowing locks uncombed, others with tresses neatly bound. One waits upon the revellers with tunic tucked above the knee; another through her ripped robe reveals her breast; another bares her shoulder; one trails her skirt along the grass; no shoes cumber their dainty feet. So some in Satyrs kindle amorous fires, and some in thee, whose brows are wreathed with pine. Thou too, Silenus, burnest for the nymphs, insatiate lecher! 'Tis wantonness alone forbids thee to grow old.[112]

Very appropriately this passage is followed by the tale of a humorously foiled rape of Lotis by Priapus.

The promised 'pleasant jest' that immediately follows in Ovid's narrative on the April ritual provides the inspiration for *The Misfortunes of Silenus* (Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass.). This panel is never accounted for by Mathews in his love-related theory, yet is crucial to understanding the meaning and purpose of *both* companion images. Ovid took up the story:

> Once the satyrs and the bald-pated ancient [Silenus] had tasted it [honey], they sought for the yellow combs in every grove. In a hollow elm the old fellow heard the humming of a swarm; he spied the combs and kept his counsel. And sitting lazily on the back of an ass, that bent beneath his weight, he rode the beast up to the elm, where the bark was hollow. There he stood on the ass, and leaning upon a branching stump he greedily reached at the honey stored in the bole. Thousands of hornets gathered, and thrust their stings into his bald pate, and left their mark on his snub-nosed face. Headlong he fell, and the ass kicked him, while he called to his comrades and implored their help. The satyrs ran to the spot and laughed at their parent's swollen face: he limped on his hurt knee. Bacchus himself laughed and taught him to smear mud on his wounds; Silenus took the hint and smudged his face with mire.[113]

Silenus is prone to losing his balance with painful consequences, as seen in another passage from *Ars Amatoria*, unconnected to honey but describing a drunken tumble.[114] This accident is followed by a description of Bacchus' taking of Ariadne on the island of Naxos, supporting the claim that Bacchus and his followers know less about love than about passion and abduction. The god does not fall in love; he seizes.

While the Worcester panel of *The Discovery of Honey* is monoscenic, its Cambridge pendant is of the continuous narrative variety, depicted in three incidents. Yet the order of the telling has been altered from the expected one. Instead of moving from left to right—as in other more traditional mythological *spalliere* such as Bartolomeo di Giovanni's double-panel *Story of Io* (*c.*1488) or Jacopo del Sellaio's three paneled *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice* (*c.*1490-93)—the first incident is shown at center, the second at bottom right, and the last at left. Giving in to his greed, coupled with laziness and ignorance, Silenus tries to copy his master Bacchus in plundering a bee hive for its honey, but he is instead greeted by a hornets' nest. Stung by the disturbed inhabitants of the hollow tree, he falls from the ass. At right, satyrs use a lever to lift their unlucky leader to his feet while at the far left, Silenus' wounds are soothed with mud, a cure devised by Bacchus. Read from left to right, as the viewer is usually accustomed, the order of occurrence is thus 3, 1, 2. The last event, if viewed first in the left to right movement, becomes a 'foreflash' of the action to follow. Nor are the three incidents on the same line or fictive picture plane with one another.[115] The viewing of the image takes time and is therefore episodic and transient; Piero is deliberately obstructive, however, and refuses to make the reading of the action at all straightforward, instead relying on the viewer to work in the recognition of the myth and its events.

Next, it has already been convincingly argued that the *Bacchanals* were once joined by another pair of mythological images within the Vespucci household: the *Tritons and Nereids* panels in two private collections (Pesaro, Italy[116] and formerly Sands Point, New York) (figs. 27-28).[117] This one-time union between the *Tritons and Nereids* and the *Bacchanals* was first proposed by Everett Fahy in 1965.[118] An inscription on the back of the Pesaro panel likewise confirms a Salviati provenance: 'De Piero di Cosimo provennant [*sic*] de la maison Salviati et cité dans la nouvelle édition de Vasari'. The smaller dimensions of the two *Tritons and Nereids* panels, both measuring 37 x 158 cm, point to a more secondary placement within the decorative arrangement. Both pictures' high levels of abrasion are very similar to that of the Fogg Museum panel. The damage to the *Tritons and Nereids* has spared many charming details, however, including the Tritons' strange goat ears and fantastic head decorations, attributes found in the terrestrial Bacchants in Worcester and Cambridge. As pointed out by Fahy,[119] when viewed together in their combination of the marine and pastoral *thiasos* (procession), Piero's four *spalliere* form a thematic parallel with Mantegna's monumental Antique-inspired *Bacchanals* and *Battle of the Sea Gods* prints (the latter marine print most likely executed slightly later, after the mid-1470s), perhaps the most well known contemporary treatment of the subjects, although most likely not intended as a unified series.[120]

Despite the difficulties in establishing any secure provenance-grounded relationship between Piero's *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* and the *Tritons and Nereids*, and, by extension, the *Bacchanals*, some tenable evidence linking the *Battle* to a possible extended Vespucci cycle can be found in points of congruence based on certain figures and shared motifs. Comparing the Pesaro *Tritons and Nereids* to the London composition, the female captive in a red robe at center is immediately striking in her near-identical pose to that of one of the fleeing Lapith women, at the upper left hand corner of the spread picnic sheet, in the central middleground of the *Battle*. The same pose is echoed a second time in another female figure in the London *spalliera*, this time in the right part of the composition, beneath the rearing body of the centaur Amycus, whirling his 'great candlestick with clustered lights'. Furthermore, numerous similarities can be spotted among the twisting torsos of Tritons and the combatants in the Ovidean battle scene. The most conspicuous examples in the Pesaro panel include the horn-blowing Triton at extreme left and the figure of the centaur Bienor, together with the third Triton from the left and Amycus. In its much more war-like companion panel formerly in the Rabinowitz Collection, the Triton preparing to deliver a blow upon the head of a cowering sea-centaur at left is nearly identical to the pose of Hercules and his victim at the extreme left of the London picture, while the Triton (second from the right) swinging a weapon across his body in order to strike his rival at left is extremely similar to the centaur Eurytus in the right foreground.[121] Still, while the connection between the *Bacchanals* and *Tritons and Nereids*

*spalliere* rests on firm ground, the potential inclusion of the London panel within this group as its largest member is certainly the most insecure and must be addressed further.

In the *Tritons and Nereids*, Piero vivifies a classical motif that became matched in popularity by the tastes of the Renaissance. Here, as in numerous classical written sources, Triton is portrayed collectively rather than as the original single deity, the son of Poseidon and Amphitrite.[122] Iconographically, Tritons were commonly shown blowing on a conch shell and riding among the waves, either in the train of Poseidon or with Nereids, the fifty daughters of the sea-god Nereus and the Oceanid Doris.[123] Piero reinvents the marine *thiasos* by including centaurs and small satyrs among the Tritons' number—a strange addition, considering that both creatures were exclusively land dwelling. Such an inclusion may point to a further iconographic link with not only the *Bacchanals* but also the London *Battle*. Above all, Piero succeeds in once again inventing an image of personal, variegated solutions in the striking sensuality of the image together with its originality of poses and spirited movement. The throngs of marine deities, often grouped in pairs, weave across the panels in a frieze-like pattern, as the Tritons and sea-centaurs in the Long Island panel battle furiously with one another for their trophies and, in the more peaceful second scene in Pesaro, proceed to blow their giant conch horns in triumph, accompanied by their half-struggling captives and *amoretti* upon their backs. The swirling water around the dynamic figures, reminiscent of Leonardo's obsessive studies of hydrodynamic turbulence,[124] likewise captures Piero's imagination and later finds another outlet in the foreground seascape of the Strozzi *Liberation of Andromeda* and the water torrents spiralling around the sea monster.

The *spalliere* pair is equally engaging in its details and traces of what originally must have been extremely lively colour. Abraded in many areas, the Pesaro panel is in irregular states of condition. The uppermost paint layers have worn so thin as to reveal the underdrawing and its various *pentimenti*, particularly in the torsos of the Tritons. Together with the acrobatic difficulty of the poses, several better preserved details still impress, seen in such peculiarities such as the figures' lower fishtailed bodies and foreground shells and other marine curiosities. Original oil glazes can be made out in certain areas, creating glimmering effects in the fish scales of the Tritons' fins. Only studied in photographs, the accompanying panel formerly in the Rabinowitz Collection appears to be in a graver state, the sky and flesh areas worn to an even greater extent, down to the underdrawing and even the gesso of the ground. Nonetheless, the complexity of the figures' contortions is taken to another level in this second scene, their anatomical details and martial attributes combining to baffle the imagination.

The possibility of Piero's recourse to Antique models such as sarcophagi frontals with similar marine scenes can be considered in light of the numerous known derivations surfacing in other

Renaissance works.[125] Three sculptural examples appear to have played a particularly influential role in the transmission of classical representations of the marine *thiasos* in the Renaissance. The most popular model may have been a Roman sarcophagus high relief showing *Nereids and Tritons with the Triumph of Neptune* (second half of the second century AD), now in two fragments, in the Schloß Klein-Blienicke (Berlin) and the Villa Medici (Rome). Although already in a fragmentary state during the Renaissance, the relief, or its portions, still appeared in numerous late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century copies and adaptations by such artists as Mantegna (and his school), Giuliano da Sangallo and possibly Giulio Romano.[126] The second example, a Roman sarcophagus front from early third century AD (Giardino della Pigna, Vatican), depicts *Nereids and Tritons and the Marriage of Neptune and Amphitrite* (?). Located at Santa Maria in Aracoeli at the end of the quattrocento, the sarcophagus was copied in a drawing by Aspertini in the Codex Wolfegg. In all, there were five Nereid sarcophagi in the Campo Santo, including that in the Giardino della Pigna; other copies exist in a drawing by Mantegna, as well as possibly the zephyrs in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*.[127] The last important surviving ancient Roman example was the *Nereids and Sea-Centaurs with Sea-Creatures* sarcophagus frontal of the mid 2nd century AD (Louvre, Paris). Its presence documented in the late fourteenth century in the church of San Francesco a Ripa in Trastevere, the sarcophagus appeared in images by both Domenico Ghirlandaio and Aspertini.[128]

While attracting Mantegna[129] and numerous other artists such as Aspertini, Jacopo de' Barbari, Giulio Romano[130] and Signorelli, who incorporated a scene with Tritons and hippocamps in a frieze running along the Cappella di San Brizio, Orvieto,[131] perhaps the most pertinent contact with the Tritons and Nereids motif for Piero was the narrative cycle of the same subject appearing in Giuliano da Sangallo's decorative frieze design for the monumental fireplace executed *c.*1501-3 for the banker Giuliano Gondi in the Sala Grande of the Palazzo Gondi.[132] As Piero's acquaintance, Giuliano must have enjoyed rather sustained contact with the painter and in his frieze demonstrates a similar fascination with the Antique, and with Roman sarcophagi decorations in particular and their depictions of Poseidon and his conch-blowing retinue.

Moving on to the Piero's late mythologies, the Uffizi *Liberation of Andromeda* presents not only perhaps Piero's most adventurous use of the nonsequential multiscenic narrative but a markedly different approach in technical execution (fig. 29). The panel remains one of the best conserved of all Piero's works,[133] retaining all of its tonal subtleties and vividness of detail. Its softening of contours tellingly led the work to be listed in the 1589 inventory of the Tribuna degli Uffizi as designed by Leonardo but executed ('coloured in') by Piero.[134] In fact, it was not until 1825 that the work was restored fully to Piero.

The work was described by Vasari in glowing terms, calling attention to its 'harmony and gradation of the colours':

> Dipinse Piero per Filippo Strozzi vecchio un quadro di figure piccole, quando Perseo libera Andromeda dal mostro, che v'è dentro certe cose bellissime; il qual è oggi in casa il signor Sforza Almeni, primo cameriere del duca Cosimo, donatogli da messer Giovàni Batista di Lorenzo Strozzi, conoscendo quanto quel signore si diletti della pittura e scoltura; e egli ne tien conto grande, perché non fece mai Piero la più vaga pitture né la meglio finita di questa, attesoché non è possibile veder la più bizzar(r)a orca marina né la più capricciosa di quella che si immaginò di dipingere Piero, con la più fiera attitudine di Perseo che in aria la percuote con la spada. Quivi fra 'l timore e la speranza si vede legata Andromeda, di volto bellissima, e qua inanzi molte genti con diversi abiti strani sonando e cantando, ove sono certe teste che ridano e si rallegrano di vedere liberata Andromeda, che sono divine; il paese è bellissimo et un colorito dolce e grazioso: e quanto si può unire e sfumare colori, condusse questa opera con estrema diligenzia.[135]

Vasari's claim that the work was commissioned by Filippo Strozzi il Vecchio is an unlikely one as Filippo died in 1491, much too early a *terminus ante quem* for a work with distinctly late stylistic traits. The most likely patron is the prosperous banker's third and youngest son, Giovan Battista Strozzi, more commonly referred to as Filippo Strozzi il Giovane (1488-1538).[136] Filippo's change of allegiance from the Medici to the Florentine Republic and famous suicide note 'echoing the words of Cato' in Duke Cosimo I's prison after his defeat at Montemurlo (1537) resulted in a great of deal of 'romantic historiography' that has been redressed by Melissa Bullard in her work on this fascinating figure.[137] Although a staunch supporter of the Medici in Florence and Rome for most of his life, supporting Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici in his desire to become ruler of Florence, Filippo spent the last four years of his life as an exile and political prisoner.[138] These dramatic turns had largely overshadowed his earlier career and public life as a tremendously successful merchant-banker and speculator.[139]

Piero executed at least two earlier commissions for the younger Filippo, as documented in two *regesto* statements, recorded in 1507 and 1510.[140] While the 1507 project related to a decoration for a triumphal cart (the *mummeria de morti*), the latter recorded distributed payments 'A Piero di Cosimo dipintore f[iorini] sei d'oro, per parte del lavoro di camera mia..:'. (App., docs. 18 and 19). The precise identification remains ambiguous, as we do not know whether this pertains precisely to the *Liberation of Andromeda* or another commission; nor are we given complete payments, to either Piero or the woodcarver, Baccio d'Agnolo. However, biographical circumstances offer convincing proof that the 1510 payment does indeed refer to Piero's Uffizi panel. In 1508, Filippo il Giovane married Clarice de' Medici (1493-1528), daughter of Piero de' Medici and grand-daughter of Lorenzo il Magnifico. The newlyweds moved into the still-unfinished family palace in 1510, when Filippo returned to the city after a brief exile prompted by his politically suspicious marriage.[141] In 1513,

Filippo left for Rome to accompany his close friend Giulio de' Medici for the funeral of Julius II (before departing there again, for good, in 1523 with the election of Clement VII), thus placing the likeliest date of the *Liberation* at *c.*1510-13.[142] Such a suggestion is certainly in keeping with the panel's late style.

While the work's original destination can generally be determined to have been the *sala*, *camera* or *anticamera*, it is tempting to speculate on a more specific setting. On the occasion of the 1508 grand wedding between Filippo and Clarice, the Medici presented the magnificent gift of a richly carved, gilded and inlaid walnut *trono* (throne-bench), now in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota (fig. 30).[143] This monumental furniture piece has been attributed to Baccio d'Agnolo's hand; the working relationship between Piero and Baccio—both of whom were mentioned in the 1510 Carte Strozzi document referred to earlier—has been broached most recently by Alessandro Cecchi.[144] The woodwork of the high panelled back of the *trono* measures 70.48 x 195.58 cm, and a small possibility remains that Piero's *spalliera* (71 x 123 cm) may have been placed—albeit not permanently—within this space.[145] In what may have been a prescient decision, former director Chick Austin had, in fact, earlier hung the Ringling Museum's own Piero *spalliera*, the much larger *Construction of a Palace* (82.6 x 196.9 cm), onto the throne's backrest and had the throne and panel thus displayed in the museum's exhibition gallery.

The Uffizi *spalliera* presents a fairly coherent narrative scheme despite its non-linear telling of the tale. Even the emotional responses shown by the characters are compartmentalised and sharply contrasted in the two corner groupings. The main scene is no longer a peripheral one, such as Hylonome grieving over Cyllarus, but the primary one of the myth. In this case, it is Perseus shown in the process of slaying the sea monster to rescue his prize. The heroic rescue of the Ethiopian princess is described in the *Metamorphoses*, Book IV (659-764). At dawn, Perseus departs from the Hesperian shore on his airborne voyage that takes him over Ethiopia. It is then that he spots Andromeda, who is pinioned to a rock on the seashore as punishment for her mother's boasts.[146] Upon seeing the chained girl, Perseus immediately falls in love: 'With trembling tears, he imagined her / A marble statue. Love, before he knew, / Kindled; he gazed entranced; and overcome / By loveliness so exquisite, so rare, / Almost forgot to hover in the air'. After first securing a promise of Andromeda's hand in marriage from Cepheus and Cassiope, Perseus proceeds to carry out the liberation. The sea monster looms up from the water as the hero begins his descent.

> ... As a galley with its pointed prow / Furrows the sea when rowers sweat and strain, / The beast breasts on and rolls the waves aside. / And now it was no further from the cliff / Than Spanish slings can hurl the flying lead / Across the sky, when Perseus suddenly / Sprang from the ground and soared into the clouds. / The monster saw his shadow on the sea / And savaged what it saw. And as Jove's bird / Spies in some empty field a dusky snake / Sunning itself and strikes it from behind, / And, lest it turn its deadly fangs, secures / With eager claws its writhing

> scaly neck, / So Perseus, swooping headlong through the void, / Attacked the monster's back and, as it reared, / Deep in its shoulder sank his crescent blade.[147]

The beast eventually succumbs, and Andromeda steps forth unfettered to the loud cheers of the crowds. It is this sequence, from start to finish, that Piero chooses to represent.

Despite the nonlinear depiction of events, the viewer has little trouble in following the action in the neatly organised space. In its discontinuous telling, Piero's narrative in some ways reflects the similar continuous narrative illustrations of the princess' rescue in more primitive contemporary woodcuts in late quattrocento and early cinquecento editions of Ovid's text (figs. 31a-b).[148] In the Uffizi picture, the scene chronologically begins in the upper right hand corner, as Perseus is shown in flight, gliding in the direction of the imminent sacrifice while propelled by his 'rustling pinions through the balmy air'. Meanwhile, King Cepheus, his wife and their attendants stand or lie huddled in a distressed group at the lower left corner, all shielding their eyes from the spectacle. The scene at center then shows Perseus standing upon the sea-monster's back, delivering what may be the decisive blow of his *harpe*, as evidenced by the multiple wounds already visible. The third scene moves back to the right side of the panel, at the lower corner, where Perseus and his soon to be bride are shown together in front of Cepheus and the ecstatic retinue, while two musicians play on fantastically exotic instruments. Piero closely follows Ovid's narrative in the final scene shown in the distant background at right, representing the three altars erected by Perseus to his three patron gods. Mercury's left altar is offered a calf, Jove's middle altar is given a bull, while Minerva receives a slaughtered cow at right. The local worshippers approach the scene of the offering from behind a hill, wearing Scythian-type headpieces which—in typical Piero fashion—are mirrored in the comparably shaped white mountain rising in the distance. Not unlike Mantegna's discernible human faces in clouds, the *Liberation*'s landscape is another perfect example of Piero's singularly imaginative working process in which rock formations, paths and even tree shapes are made to appear as if endowed with a kind of human spirit, somehow responding to the deeds enacted in front of them.

Piero adheres to Ovid in even the smallest details, with only the exception of Perseus' downward swoop. Andromeda's white drapery could refer to her purity and, if chosen for the stylistic motive of contrast, is akin to Ovid's recommendation in Book III of *Ars Amatoria* for women with dark complexions such as Andromeda's. Ovid advised: 'Snow-white skins like grey colours, dark grey became Briseis; even when she was carried off was her robe dark grey. Those dark of hue like white; in white didst thou please Cepheis: for thee thus clad was Seriphos oppressed'.[149]

The Uffizi portrayal still retains all of Piero's unique trademarks. The landscape is treated with a hyper-lucid precision as seen in the sacrifice in a town clearing at right, the ship in front of the harbour, and the strange houses and bridges in the background at left. Both the clarity and the

invention of landscape, in its transcendence of the rational in the otherworldly mountains are analogous to the treatment seen in the earlier Tedaldi *Incarnation*. Piero's great interest in costume, particularly in its exotic forms, finds its satisfaction in the two musicians, together with Phineus, the figure at the extreme right, dressed in a red turban and what appear to be red wings upon his back, which are especially marvellous in their fantasy.

One heavily scrutinised detail has been the sprouting tree stump placed in the painting's central foreground. Although historically rivals, the Strozzi supported the Medici prior to the latter's exile in 1494, a relationship briefly secured by Filippo's marriage to Clarice fourteen years later. The Medici's triumphant return in 1512 must have provided a sense of security to the Strozzi, until then understandably wary of the Republic's ascendance.[150] The painting's true subject for authors such as Luciano Berti hinged on the detail of the trunk and its flowering on the right side, interpreted as a hopeful sign of the Medicean restoration. In a sense, the return of the Medici thus would have served as a 'Liberation' for the Strozzi, with Perseus then assuming the symbolic guise of Lorenzo de' Medici. Such connections are conjectural, however, and overlook the most obvious reason for the stump's appearance. The dead side of the trunk could, for example, allude to Andromeda's bleak fate before her rescuer's appearance, with the flowering half reflecting the joyous turn of events, celebrated on the right. More convincing, the answer may lie with the origin of coral. Red coral clusters are a part of the stump's growth and later reappear in more prominent fashion in Vasari's sensual *Perseus and Andromeda* of 1570-72 (Studiolo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence). According to Ovid's myth, Perseus protected Medusa's head in a wrapping of soft seaweed. The seaweed absorbed the Gorgon's power and at its touch hardened into red coral: 'Coral still keeps that nature; in the air / It hardens; what beneath the sea has grown / A swaying plant, above it, turns to stone'.[151] Although it may be interesting to speculate, numerous explanations appear viable. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind that—unlike mythological images commissioned for public festivities—small-scale works like the *Liberation* were intended for domestic enjoyment, and it remains doubtful that a patron would have specified that a political allusion was to be included in the work.[152]

Traditionally, it is precisely the domestic paintings of the Renaissance that have raised the most difficult iconographic questions.[153] Some works for such settings apparently did carry secondary levels of meanings, such as Filippino Lippi's *Allegory of Discord c.*1494-8 (Uffizi, Florence), with its message of familial harmony, or Filippino's *Erato* (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) in which the muse functions as an allegorical agent of marital harmony.[154] The story of Joseph, depicted in the Borgherini panels to be mentioned later, may have also carried a message about the unity of kin and the importance of family loyalty and legacy.[155] However, while scenes such as these may illustrate certain desired virtues, whether civic or familial (particularly patriarchal), they do not tend to be

political statements in an overt, calculated sense. While often didactic in their social import, most domestic works may have been political only in general and tangential terms. The *Liberation* is much less likely to have been a vessel for a specific Medicean political allusion than as a subject chosen to mark a marriage and showcase Piero's strengths as a painter: his imaginative flair and unique eye for detail. Any allusion to the triumphant resurrection of the Medici in the *Liberation* is eclipsed by Piero's attention to dramatic costume and gesture, fantastic landscape and the exoticism of the Ovidian myth. On grounds of appropriateness, the paramount purpose of such a *favola* was to entertain and intellectually stimulate and was not political in essence.

Above all, mythological stories remained stories, and the Perseus tale was a popular one.[156] It is true that allegorical (mainly Christian moralising) meanings had been grafted on to the *Metamorphoses* since the time in which it was written.[157] Yet as Lodovico Dolce noted in the early editions of his translation of Ovid, first appearing in 1568, a myth such as that about Callisto 'has more to do with pleasure than morality' [158] Religious or political meaning in such works is either extremely implicit or entirely absent.[159] As Charles Hope writes, the assumption that a myth also had to be an allegory, with multi-layered moralising or politically coded messages, is predominantly a modern attitude at looking at Renaissance works.[160] Instead, political messages are more commonly found in works composed of personifications, such as Mantegna's *Minerva Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles* or Bronzino's later *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time*. Another more suitable genre in which it is fruitful to look for such philosophical or political allusions would be medals, emblems and occasionally portraits.[161]

Curiously, it is at least four years after Leonardo's final departure from Florence that traces of the older master can be detected in Piero's mythological works. It is ultimately the *Liberation* that best reflects Leonardo's interests and technical advances. Despite Piero's much less scientific approach to tonal unity, the Uffizi panel clearly shows an increasingly atmospheric quality, softening of contours and transparency of colour. It is here that Piero's mastery of oil glazes closest approaches the technique of Leonardo as well as Netherlandish examples. In turn, the slightly blurred colour and softened contours of the *Liberation of Andromeda*—despite the absence of any significant attempts at atmospheric perspective—can be said to prefigure the technique of Andrea del Sarto, and the latter's mingling of gem-like colour with a smoky veil.

It was, however, the curious Master of Serumido that proved the most direct recipient of the *Liberation*'s lessons, producing a series of three 'Story of Perseus' *spallerie* of *c.*1515 or later, now housed in the Palazzo Davanzati, Florence (fig. 32a).[162] In the absence of documentary evidence, the Master's true identity remains a mystery; although both Aristotile da Sangallo and Ruberto Lippi have been proposed in the past, both prove problematic. Nonetheless, his corpus of attributed works

has grown to include over fifteen works. The Master's faithful adaptation of Piero's *Liberation of Andromeda*, albeit set in a sparer landscape and showing a less integrated disposition of figures, and despite his personal continuation of the Ovidean story in two additional scenes, establishes the painter as Piero's most obvious heir. The Master's characteristic inclusions of complex architectural structures, also seen in his *Judgement of Solomon* (Galleria Borghese, Rome) and *The Death of Laocoön* (Scharf Collection, London), likewise echo Piero's sole effort of such perspectival precision: the *Construction of a Palace* in Sarasota.[163] In his eclectic and often awkwardly naïve mixture of styles, the Master of Serumido combined Piero's *bizarria* with a number of other tendencies taken from Filippino Lippi (as exhibited in the Master's *Laocoön* copy of Filippino's Poggio a Caiano partially destroyed fresco) and the *cangianti* colours of Granacci, Foschi and Bachiacca.

An analogous stylistic treatment in Piero's *Liberation* reappears in what was probably Piero's final *spalliera* commission, the two *Story of Prometheus* panels of *c.*1515-18 (figs. 33-34). These works retain the same slightly indeterminate shapes, but with more understated light and colour. While the *Liberation* contains more frequent flashes of unexpectedly luminous colors—particularly in the reds—the Prometheus pair is now more subdued in tonality, dominated by earth tones. Both panels are in fair condition.[164] A more careful finish and a higher degree of detail appear in the Munich panel, seen in the clarity of the village in the far distance, allowing for every beam, chimney and window to be made out. The foreground encourages the viewer to look just as closely, to study the minute flowers, the scattered sculptor's tools and the spilled basket of mushrooms of the mysterious crushed figure in the lower right side of the picture. The Strasbourg image, on the other hand, presents a much sparer landscape, not unlike that in the late Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpiece, and is devoid of its companion's profusion of foreground detail, while experimenting to a greater extent with different planes of action and dynamism of poses. Retaining the continuous narrative form from his earlier efforts such as the *Bacchanals* and the *Liberation*, Piero has favoured a more balanced and symmetrical composition. And even though certain parts of the two paintings appear rather awkward—when compared with the *Liberation of Andromeda*, for instance—both the design and execution of the panels are surely Piero's own.

It is plausible that the comparatively hushed colours of the Prometheus panels have acquired their out-of-focus quality due to damaged top paint layers, as a result of old restorations and the ageing process. Bearing in mind that fading and darkening could have therefore been part of the suffered damage, the panels—executed in what originally must have been brighter tonalities—may have played an important role in the contemporary creation of the Renaissance's most brilliant, late *spalliera* project: the Borgherini panels of 1515-19. Yet even with these physical factors taken into account, the contrast with the earlier lapidary approach to colour and light in the vivid *Battle of*

*Lapiths and Centaurs* and *Death of a Nymph* is clear. It was such late, cloudier visions—together with Piero's simplicity of landscape at this time—that, again, were to influence Andrea del Sarto to a large degree.

The narrative in both panels is fairly linear, and yet includes several puzzling iconographic details. Misidentifications have plagued past studies of the narrative's participants in the pair's first panel, *The Creation of the First Man*, Bayersiche Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.[165] Beginning at the left, a Christ-like figure in a red robe and blue mantle moulds a man from clay, while a kneeling figure, holding a sculpting tool in his right hand, watches the act in horrified astonishment. This kneeling man in the hair-shirt with red sash is Epimetheus, who originally executed this first seated statue of man, and not Prometheus, based on the latter's consistent representation in later scenes. As has recently been established, the second and more majestic figure is Jove, and not Epimetheus, as he has been identified previously.[166] Behind this scene Piero has placed the odd form of a man transformed into a tree-climbing monkey, which still retains its quasi-human guise (including a red sash). This is almost certainly a reference to Jove's punishment of Epimetheus, in scorn of his audacious creation from clay, which the god proceeds to destroy. At center stands a second and exceedingly more glorious and classicisised statue of man, now created by Prometheus.[167] In the right foreground, Minerva, in green tunic and red mantle, stands in admiration of the skyward pointing statue and converses with its humbly dressed creator, probably announcing that the statue lacks only life, an absence rectified in the accompanying panel. Finally, in the upper right corner the goddess is shown taking to the skies with Prometheus at her side, heading for the source of fire. Two chariots punctuate the cloud formations at the top of the skyscape, the one at left showing Cupid accompanying its rider and thus identifying her as Venus, while the right-hand chariot appears to be pulled by two creatures resembling dragons (and thus belonging to Ceres or Saturn).

The second panel, *The Theft of Fire and the Punishment of Prometheus* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg), is slightly nonlinear, beginning at the upper center with Prometheus stealing fire from the chariot of the Sun.[168] The narrative then moves to the left foreground and proceeds in a regular left to right progression. First, Prometheus activates his clay figure with the torch's spark of life. Prometheus' courageous but brazen theft incurs the wrath of the sky god, who orders the Titan to be bound, as shown at the extreme right. Mercury secures the powerfully depicted figure of Prometheus—wrenched in pain—to a tree, while the eagle destined daily to peck out the captive's liver sits perched atop the trunk. Not sufficiently appeased, Jove then punishes mankind as a whole for Prometheus' transgression with the cursed gift of Pandora and her charms, inflicting man with 'infirmity, sadness, and women' (Boccaccio). Pandora, who was to become the wife of Epimetheus, may be the pointing red-clad female figure depicted in the central group of the Strasbourg panel,

while the seated bearded figure in red robe and blue mantle is strikingly similar to that of Jove.[169] While the identification of the central conversing characters remains unclear, several details may foreshadow the descending evils: the man fending off a snake that has wrapped itself around his right leg at the left background of the Strasbourg work, and the rescue of the drowning woman and the mysterious man struggling under the weight of a giant stone in the Munich panel. The puzzling latter image is most likely a personification of ignorance and foolishness, serving as the antithesis to the awakening potential of the first man.[170]

Didactic and allegorical readings of the Prometheus creation myth were widespread but contained varying implications.[171] Whether remembered with sadness and longing for the lost primitive state of innocence (as by the Cynic Diogenes), with pessimism (Hesiod) or interpreted beneficially (Aeschylus),[172] with the Titan shown as defiant hero and benefactor leading man out of his previous state of dark ignorance, the myth's messages differed widely for writers and comprise a subject tangentially connected with the subsequent chapter, focusing on the matter of primitivism. However, it is important to note that out of all of Piero's mythological subjects, it is perhaps the Prometheus cycle that contains the strongest Neoplatonic content. The growing fusion of Bible and myth came to reflect God in the figure of Prometheus and Adam in the first man—a fluidity of interpretation consistently employed in earlier illustrated editions of the *Metamorphoses*. While earlier readings were more Christianised in nature, Boccaccio's *Genealogia* served as a direct descendent of allegorical literature—most prominently mythological handbooks—that reinvested Prometheus with philosophical and moral aspects, thereby returning to attitudes of Antiquity. For Boccaccio, Prometheus acted as the catalyst leading mankind towards civilisation. As Olga Raggio writes: 'Prometheus is the homo doctus who sees the imperfection of the homo naturalis and by instructing and educating him wishes to bring him to real life, the life of the homo civilis, capable of social intercourse, science and virtue'.[173] Both Boccaccio and Ficino saw the heavenly fire as divine wisdom and virtue. Ficino's *Quaestiones Quinque de Mente* (1476-7) also lent the myth a deeply philosophical and mystical dimension, with a decidedly pessimistic tone, symbolising the soul striving for truth but tormented by reason and man ultimately made unhappy for his inquiry. Boccaccio and Ficino consequently influenced the Neoplatonic work of Charles de Bouelles (*Liber de Sapiente*, 1509), who wrote of the *sapiens Prometheus*, the highest stage of man's contemplative powers and an immortal soul.[174]

Piero's panels are likely to have been influenced most by the *Genealogia* in its details.[175] As with Ficino, for Boccaccio the theft of fire proved a dubious boon with a heavy price, as mankind's gained knowledge came at the expense of peace of mind. However, Piero's particular invocation of the myth once more finds few or no parallels in past depictions. The similarities present in the illustrated

edition of the *Metamorphoses* (Venice, 1497), for instance, are superficial and unconvincing (fig. 35). What is more important for the present discussion is that if the two Piero panels were intended to be read allegorically, it was accomplished in a most covert way. Once more, Piero succeeds in creating a painted representation of a subject that had numerous written sources but largely remained unexplored in narratively advanced visual terms.[176]

Parallels have been noted between the Prometheus *spalliere* and antique sources such as the *Tazza Farnese* (reflected in the flying pair of Prometheus and Minerva) and the *Spinario* (likened to Epimetheus' slumped statue), placed in the Palazzo della Conservatoria sul Campidoglio in Rome in 1471.[177] The tense figure of the bound Prometheus has also been related to the *Laocoön*, discovered in Rome at the beginning of the 1500s. Few such comparisons are any more convincing than the literary ones as templates for Piero's images, however. Just as Piero deviates widely from Boccaccio's *Genealogia*, so does he depart from any visual precedents. Certain passages such as the secondary background scenes, the strangely shaped cloud formations, the tree-bound monkey figure of Epimetheus, the man pinned under a boulder and the variety of sculpture instruments spread around the foreground of the first panel are all examples of Piero's idiosyncratic imagination and proclivity for original readings.

The traits that have become associated with Mannerism—and the works of Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo in particular—were already anticipated in Piero's mythologies. Piero's narrative is rarely direct and compact, instead gravitating towards elaborate and involved rearrangements. Composition is often conflicting rather than carefully and harmoniously integrated, further accented by a play of shifting spatial planes. Piero deliberately seeks out the complex poses and gestures introduced in the works of Leonardo, a closer link between the two artists than the stylistic one that has often been implied. Colour is at times veiled, with less crisp outlines, and at others surprising, as it was soon to become in Pontormo's Borgherini panels. There are few signs of idealisation. In content Piero seemed to relished commissions involving strange subjects, allowing him the artistic license to challenge written sources. In this sense, Piero is striking in his seeming independence and could be said to have cultivated the section of the art market that suited his strengths. It remains possible that Piero enjoyed great flexibility in terms of interpreting—if not choosing—his secular subjects. Frequently, as we have seen, literary sources from Ovid to Boccaccio can really be a matrix for a personal interpretation.

Piero seems to have taken great pleasure in creating a lack of certainty, repeatedly foregoing a straight translation of the written source to the visual form. Indulging in deviations, whether spatial/temporal or iconographic, Piero succeeds in hampering immediate recognition and manages to have pictorial fun with not only the subject but also the audience's expectations. To this degree, the

relationship between Piero and his patronage for secular domestic panels is by no means one-sided; despite having his works constantly on view, Piero can be said to go as far as exploiting patronage—within certain bounds—to produce works that are closest to his own sensibility and artistic skills. This deliberately defiant approach in the creative process is likely to be a sign of the artist's competitive nature, for a highly original painting is certain to invite comparison and hopefully the sought for superiority when placed among other works by contemporary masters in the same collection (for example, that of the Pugliese or Vespucci in Piero's case).

It has often been assumed that Renaissance artists painted myths strictly based upon a 'programme' or 'basic text' that had been handed down by either a patron or perhaps a well-versed Humanist advisor. This passive adoption of such a template for the part of the painter vastly underestimates the artist's own interpretive role.[178] Piero does not merely illustrate a story from Ovid in his *favole* but engages with the subject and releases his powers of invention to fashion independent manifestations, often drawn from a mixture of his own mythopoetic imagination and textual material.

How appropriate it was for Vincenzo Cartari in his later *Immagini de i Dei de gli Antichi* (1556) to note a similarity between Prometheus and the inventive, restless spirit of an artist: 'in tutte le arti due cose facciano di bisogno. L'una e l'industria, e la inventione, l'altra il porre in opera, e fare quello, che lo ingegno ha disegnato. Quella s'intende per Minerva e questo per Volcano, chio pel fuoco...' [179] Like Mercury, Atlas, Minerva and above all Jove, Prometheus was considered as one of the 'inventor gods'—and, in a sense, the archetypal artist.[180] Described as the founding artificer, representing man's aspiration toward divine ideas, the Titan can be said to also reflect the personal aspirations of an artist like Piero, who in his two late panels perhaps would have felt a special kinship to this omnipotent creator of the highest rank and his tireless labours.

[1] For Bembo's letter to the Marchioness, tactfully asserting Bellini's predilection to create a *fantasia* of his own type, see G. Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1840), II, pp. 71-3 (quoted in R. and M. Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn* [London, 1963], pp. 35-6).

[2] R.L. Douglas, *Piero di Cosimo* (Chicago, 1946), p. 112, n. 7.

[3] The *favola*'s Latin equivalent, or *fabula*, carried a similar multivalency, having both a general meaning—that of tale or story (as in the writings of Livy and Horace)—and more particular interpretations. The latter included: idle talk (comedic writings of Terentius); fiction or myth (Pliny, Cicero, Ovid); dramatic poem (Cicero, Homer); or apologue or fable (Cicero, Quintilian, Phaedrus).

[4] See C. Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton, 1992), p. 25. Also: M. Kemp, 'From "mimesis" to "fantasia": The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts', *Viator*, VIII (1977), p. 358, n. 56. The other origins and uses of the *favola* can, of course, be traced to the literature of the time. Such tales were placed predominantly in a pastoral or sylvan setting, as in Poliziano's *Fabula di Orfeo* (1479), an example of one of the most popular contemporary *favole* subjects.

[5] The *Story of Vulcan* canvases are contextually more appropriate for the study of Piero's 'Early History of Man' images in the following chapter.

[6] Upon the completion of the Sistine Chapel frescoes commission, nearly all of the participating artists—most prominently Cosimo Rosselli and Piero, Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Biagio di Antonio and Bartolommeo di Giovanni—returned to Florence to execute narrative cycles for secular, domestic settings. A revealing connection could be made between the multi-episodic Sistine Chapel images and the developing *spalliera* tradition.

[7] Vasari developed a common and consistent vocabulary out of the storehouse of *spalliera* imagery in his *Lives*, as he must have seen numerous such paintings in situ. His visual vocabulary in referring to this genre is reflected in his descriptions of Piero di Cosimo's 'Early History of Man', *Bacchanals* and *Liberation of Andromeda* panels. The repeated terms are 'molte figure piccole', 'casamenti in prospettive', 'fantasie' and 'capricci'—used in various combinations to produce 'pitture molte vaghe e belle'

[8] A. Barriault, *Spalliera Paintings of Renaissance Tuscany: Fables of Poets for Patrician Homes* (University Park, Pa., 1994), p. 2. Barriault's text offers a wide overview of the *spalliera* tradition, ranging from its functional to narrative aspects. Ellen Callmann studied the beginnings of *spalliera* painting and early Renaissance domestic decoration in 'Apollonio di Giovanni and Painting for the Early Renaissance Room', *Antichità viva*, XXVII (1988), pp. 5-18. Another good general introduction to art produced for the private sphere, identifying the nature of domestic patronage, Italian trade and the purpose and setting of various domestic objects, is found in Callmann, *Beyond Nobility: Art for the Private Citizen in the Early Renaissance*, exh. cat., Allentown Art Museum, Pa., 1980-81 (Allentown, 1980). Finally, also see: C. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1998).

[9] For palaces as spaces open to public life, see F.W. Kent, 'Palaces, politics, and society in fifteenth-century Florence', in *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Canberra and Oxford, 1987); B. Preyer, 'Planning for visitors at Florentine palaces', *Renaissance Studies*, XII (1998), pp. 357-74; and K. Lydecker, *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence* (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Ph.D. thesis, 1987). Alternatively, palaces are treated as private spaces in R. Goldthwaite, 'The Florentine palace as domestic architecture', *American Historical Review*, LXXVII (1972), pp. 977-1012; and Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore and London, 1980), esp. pp. 102-11. For general studies of domestic interiors, also consult: P. Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400-1600* (London, 1991); and A. Schiaparelli, *La casa fiorentina e i suoi arredi nei secoli xiv e xv* (Florence, 1983).

[10] Preyer, 1998, pp. 357-8.

[11] Ibid., pp. 362-3, 370-73.

[12] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere*, ed. A. Simioni, 2 vols. (Bari, 1913), I, p. 68. Trans. in C. Gilbert, *Italian Art, 1400-1500: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1980), p. 128-9.
[13] Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV. 3, 5, 26, 118, trans. H. Rackham, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., reprint 1984), IX, pp. 261, 263, 279-81, 349.
[14] Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, trans. F. Granger, 2 vols. (NY, 1934), II, pp. 103-5.
[15] Barriault, 1994, p. 19. Callmann noted that the faint traces of a drawing on the back of Piero di Cosimo's *Simonetta Vespucci* is likely to have been a sketch for the painting's flanking element or a baluster or vase which may have served as the supporting structure. Callmann, 1988, p. 10.
[16] See L.A. Waldman, 'Fact, Fiction, and Hearsay: Notes on Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo, alias Piero di Lorenzo Ubaldini', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), p. 173.
[17] For a brief description of *Della Pittura*'s adoption in Florentine art circles, see John Spencer's introduction, in Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. Spencer (New Haven, 1966), pp. 29-32.
[18] *Historia* is also defined in Dempsey, 1992, p. 29.
[19] Ibid., pp. 144-6. For Leonardo's thoughts on invention and composition of narratives and the viewer's involvement see Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo On Painting*, ed. M. Kemp (New Haven, 1989), p. 220.
[20] J. Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative* (Chicago, 1992), esp. pp. 14-58.
[21] L. Andrews, *Story and Space in Renaissance Art: The Rebirth of Continuous Narrative* (Cambridge, 1995). Multiscenic sense of time created by such a method is of a narrational rather than scientific kind. While the latter is constant and absolute, the narrational sense of time is open-ended, showing the unfolding of action, and, therefore, much more relative. In *The Misfortunes of Silenus*, the ungainly god is shown in the process of falling off his donkey; in the *Liberation*, Perseus is painted in the act of descending upon the monster. Both images demonstrate a rather sophisticated 'snapshot' suspension of transitive action in time. Also see Greenstein, 1992, pp. 59-85. Greenstein uses the example of Mantegna's *St. Sebastian* (*c.*1465-70) in Vienna. Linear and nonlinear narrative in *spalliera* painting are treated in Barriualt, 1994, pp. 82-6.
[22] ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 5454 a, b. The Vespucci family boasted many intellectuals, perhaps the most distinguished being the aforementioned Giorgio Antonio Vespucci. The Dominican's will of 1499 included the division of a most impressive library that—among books of vespers and Masses, scriptures and the writings of St. Augustine—included a volume of Pliny. For this document, also including Giorgio's bequest for Botticelli's now destroyed fresco in Ognissanti, showing St. Paul the Apostle with his Athenian convert, St. Dionysius the Areopagite, along with scenes of the latter's conversion, baptism and martyrdom, see ASF, Not. Antecos. 10094 (Paolo di Antonio Grassi, 1495-1510), fols. 346r ff.
[23] These could include ancient objects in the collections of patrons or friends in the form of gems, cameos, bronzes and reliefs; various public spectacles that helped disseminate myths and their classical sources to the public; and texts such as Boccaccio's pastoral narrative poems, Ovid's creation stories in the *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Georgics*.
[24] The term was used to capture Tiepolo's flexible field of control, his de-narrativisation (or 'scherzification') and mobile visual play, in S. Alpers and M. Baxandall, *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence* (New Haven, 1994). The most useful source for the perceptual skills brought to bear by Renaissance artists and viewers in response to works of art remains M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 29-109.
[25] J. Shearman, *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance*, A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1988 (Princeton, 1992), pp. 233-61. Using Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*—intended for Alfonso d'Este's *camerino d'alabastro*—as an example, Shearman states that the work 'is conceived and designed in a style ensuring that its embedded secrets are released over time'.
[26] Ibid., p. 258.
[27] Ibid., pp. 258-9.

[28] Citing an early example, Ghiberti in his *Third Commentary* stated that vision depends just as much on the functions of the mind as it does on the eye. Andrews draws the contrast between active and passive perception, and the Renaissance artists' acceptance of the former, in Andrews, 1995, pp. 49-59. In *Della Pittura*, Alberti commented: 'Sarà la storia qual tu possa lodare et maravigliare tale che non sue piacevolezze si porgierà si ornata et grata che ella terrà con diletto et dotto o indotto la miri' ('An "istoria" you can justifiably praise and admire will be one that reveals itself to be so charming and attractive as to hold the eye of the learned and unlearned spectator for a long while with a certain sense of pleasure and emotion'). See Alberti, *Della Pittura*, ed. L. Malle (Florence, 1950), p. 91.

[29] H.A. Shapiro explains the four methods of narration—the monoscenic, synoptic, cyclic and continuous—in Greek and Roman art in Shapiro, *Myth into Art* (London, 1994), pp. 8-9. Anthony Snodgrass introduced the groupings in 'Narration and Allusion in Archaic Greek Art', The 11th J.L. Myses Memorial Lecture, 29 May 1981 (London, 1982). The terminology continues to be applied to art following the Antique and remains highly useful for this discussion.

[30] Leonardo was particularly preoccupied to place the viewer in a position of greater freedom, as evidenced by his writings of around 1513-14. Rather than having the viewer stand in a single, prescribed position without any potential for movement, Leonardo sought to produce 'simple', rather than 'complex', perspective with a narrow angled view and correspondingly long distance that would allow for motion. An illustration of Leonardo's goals can be seen his *Last Supper* and its viewing positions. See Andrews, 1995, pp. 35-44.

[31] Leonardo da Vinci, ed. Kemp, 1989, p. 218. Leonardo writes on this spatial organisation of events and their importance: '... and upon this plane [foreground] represent the more important part of the story, and then, diminishing by degrees the figures, and the buildings on various hills and open spaces, you can represent all the events of the history'.

[32] The *Death of a Nymph* was executed in walnut oil on poplar panel, 65.4 x 184.2 cm. Provenance: acquired by the National Gallery in 1862 from Francesco Lombardi, Florence. As indicated by the coat of arms of the Guicciardini on a card and seal on the back of the panel, the work came from the Collection of Conte Ferdinando Guicciardini (1782-1833), before passing to his son, Carlo (1825-62). While these are the panel's earliest traces, it is far from certain that it had an original Guicciardini provenance. As stated by Paolo Guicciardini in a letter to Mr. Davies of 11 September 1948, the painting was not mentioned in the family's inventory of 1807. Sig. Guicciardini thus deduced that either the inventory was incomplete or that the work arrived later as a part of the dowry for one of Conte Ferdinando's marriages (to Margherita Paglicci di Arezzo or Veronica del conte Dionigi Naldi di Faenza) or that of Conte Carlo to Giulia del Marchese Orazio Pucci. Also see M. Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Earlier Italian Schools* (London, 1961), pp. 421-2.

[33] The large red flowers do not appear to exist in nature. Only one or two of the smaller plants are actually identifiable; the rest are probably all fanciful creations.

[34] R. White, J. Pilc, and J. Kirby, 'Analyses of Paint Media', *The National Gallery Technical Bulletin*, XIX (London, 1998), pp. 74-95. The technical examinations illuminate the intended (rather than presently altered, in some cases) appearance of examined works such as the *Death of a Nymph*, revealing 'subtle but deliberate modifications to the material used' (such as a heat-bodied oil) that 'may have made a marked difference to the artist's handling of the paint, to its drying time, or to its final appearance' The examiners used sophisticated methods of analysis—gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and Fourier transform infra-red (FTIR)-microscopy—making it possible 'to characterize minor constituents of the medium and thereby greatly to enhance our understanding of the painter's practice' (Ibid., p. 75). Finally, the back of the panel reveals a drawing of some kind of a decorative banister or column—perhaps a side decoration for the panel's framing device?

[35] For a table of analysis results as taken from a selection of samples from the three Piero panels, see Ibid., p. 87.

[36] Ibid., p. 75

[37] The painting also shows an unusual drying fault, as the liquid underdrawing material used to sketch out the composition in his broad, fluid strokes has affected the surface paint, causing it to crack. This craquelure is most noticeable in the nymph's flesh area. For more on the composition of the underdrawing medium and the possible ways in which such an ink could have affected the paint above, see Ibid., p. 75-6.

[38] The Procris identification received the support of Panofsky: 'The subject was of such extreme rarity at the time that no representational type was established. Every artist who tackled the theme had to work out his own interpretation, and Luini, in his series of frescoes in the National Gallery at Washington, obviously basing himself upon the Play of Niccolò da Correggio, dealt with it so freely that the individual members of the series could hardly be identified had they not been preserved in context'. Excerpt from a letter dated 20 November 1951 from Panofsky to Mr. Davies (The National Gallery curatorial files). Panofsky dismissed the story of Coronis (due to the presence of the faun and the dog) and ends by noting the appropriateness of such a subject, as a warning against unfounded marital jealousy, if the panel was intended as a cassone.

[39] Other versions of the Procris and Cephalus myth were related by Servius, Hyginus (*Fabulae*) and Lactantius Placidus (*Narrationes*, VII).

[40] As M.L. West writes on Hesiod, *Theogeny*, 986-91: 'She [Dawn] was one of the most predatory goddesses; besides Tithonus and Cephalus she also carried off Orion and Cleitus'

[41] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII. 842-61, trans. A.D. Melville (Oxford, 1986), p. 170.

[42] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, III. 680-746, trans. J.H. Mozley (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 167-71. 'Anxiously, Procris, thou liest hid: he rests on the wonted grass, and cries, "Come, breeze, come tender Zephyrs!" When the name's pleasing error was manifest to the hapless woman, her reason returned, and the true colour to her face. She rises, speeding to her lover's embrace stirred with her hurrying frame the leaves that were in her way: he thinking he saw a quarry leapt up with youthful ardour, and his weapon was in his hand. What does thou, hapless one? 'tis no beast: drop thy bow...'

[43] Ibid., p. 171.

[44] Ibid., p. 167.

[45] Ovid, *Metamophoses*, VII. 790-95 (Melville, p. 168): '...I glanced aside. / And when I looked again—amazing sight! — / There in the open plain below I saw / Two marble statues, one of them, you'd swear, / In flight, the other pouncing on its prey. / Some god, if gods were watching, must have willed / That both should be unbeaten in that chase'.

[46] The connection between the play and Piero's panel was first noted by P. Schubring, *Cassoni, Truhen und Truhenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance* (Leipzig, 1915), p. 52 ff. Textual and pictorial traditions for the Procris and Cephalus myth are treated in great detail in Irving Lavin, 'Cephalus and Procris: Transformation of an Ovidian Myth', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVII (1954), pp. 260 ff. The play's performance is described in two Ferrarese chronicles (Ibid., p. 267, n. 3).

[47] Lavin, 1954, p. 268. Correggio added several new characters to the original tale: the 'fameglio' (Cefalo's companion in Act I), Procris' maid, an old shepherd, the meddling faun and a number of other pagan characters, including satyrs, nymphs, fauns and divinities such as Callisto and Galatea.

[48] Niccolò da Correggio, *Opere*, ed. A. Tissoni Benvenuti (Bari, 1969), pp. 39-40.

[49] *Indice generale degli incunaboli delle biblioteche d'Italia*, eds. Centro nazionale d'informazioni bibliografiche, Teresa Maria Guarnaschelli et al., 6 vols. (Rome, 1943-81), p. 231, cat. 76.

[50] Ibid., p. 279. The moralising of the myth, beginning in the Middle Ages, did not come to an end until Gabriello Chiabrera's play, *Il Rapimento di Cefalo* (first published by Mareschotti, Florence, 1600), free of such didactic tendencies. The play centers on Aurora's abduction of Cephalus and the misfortunes that are brought on by the power of Love.

[51] Ibid., p. 269.

[52] Capretti suggests another source, noting the possibility that the image may have been partly reconstructed from archeological reportage, such as a Roman sarcophagus with what was originally a

Hellenistic theme—although a semi-clad woman probably would have been intended for a carnal subject (Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 116). This is conjectural, however, as no classical sarcophagus bearing such a subject has come down to us. As Capretti then adds, Piero creates a very personal interpretation, well-known in the quattrocento and cinquecento, especially in Venice, where such an image would have been reproduced in prints.

[53] Pliny, *Natural History*, XXXV. 99 (Rackham, IX, pp. 334-5). Pictorial examples include the famous woodcut illustration showing a sleeping maiden with two fauns and a satyr pulling aside her curtain from the *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* (Venice, 1499); Sodoma's series of four canvases after Ovid, including a *Pan and the Sleeping Nymph* (see A. Hayum, *Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, 'Il Sodoma'* [NY, 1976], fig. 34); *A Sleeping Couple with Cupid and Two Satyrs* from the school of Mantegna, *c.*1497 (British Museum, London); Girolamo Mocetto's *Amymone* of *c.*1504-6 (British Museum); and an octagonal panel from the Venetian school, similar to Lotto's *Allegory*, showing *A Sleeping Nymph with Satyrs* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington (see G. Tervarent, *Attributes et Symboles dans l'Art Profane 1450-1600* [Geneva, 1959], fig. 73).

[54] In the fifteenth-century Musée Lille version, Cephalus is shown at center, drawing his bow, while Aurora waits patiently by his side in profile. A muzzled Laelaps stands at the other side at right; Procris hides behind the bushes in the distance, her breast already pierced by the arrow.

[55] Lavin, 1954, p. 271. The *Ovide Moralisé* illustration of *Cephalus Killing Procris* (Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris) was also popular, providing the basis for Colard Mansion's 1484 Bruges edition.

[56] In 1520-21, Bernardino Luini illustrated the myth in nine frescoes in the Casa Rabia (now on canvas in the Samuel Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington). Woodcut illustrations appeared in various later editions of the *Metamorphoses*, such as Bernard Salomon's image in the 1557 Lyons edition and Virgil Solis' work (after Salomon) in the 1563 Frankfurt edition.

[57] *Recumbent Woman in a Landscape and Two Nude Figures*, pen and ink with brown wash, heightened with white, 14.1 x 24.8 cm. British Museum, 1902-8-22-6. Catalogued in A.E. Popham and P. Pouncey, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. The 14th and 15th Centuries*, 2 vols. (London, 1950), I, pp. 129, no. 212; fig. in II, plate CLXXXII. For the most comprehensive discussion and bibliography, see W.M. Griswold, *The Drawings of Piero di Cosimo* (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1988), pp. 244-8.

[58] Griswold, 1988, p. 245.

[59] The Ariadne on Naxos identification was first made in S. Colvin, *Vasari Society*, I (1905-6), 7-8, no. 5. Second drawing: *Mars and Rhea Silvia*, pen and brown ink and light brown wash over preliminary indication in black chalk, partially retouched in pen and brown ink, 15.8 x 37.2 cm. Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. 1257 E. In delicate condition, the sheet contains two separate narratives. The slumbering figure of Mars and a group of putti carrying off his armour appear at right; at left, Mars reaches out to touch the shoulder of half-nude Rhea Silvia, asleep on a sloping rock, in a moment most likely preceding her rape by the war god. The male figure has also been identified as Theseus, taking leave of a sleeping Ariadne to return to Athens and claim his crown. A ship appears faintly in the middle distance to support this second proposal. See Griswold, 1988, pp. 215-18. I am grateful to Jonathan Nelson for sharing his conclusions on the drawing, which he identifies as a *Mars and Ariadne* by Filippino Lippi, from his forthcoming *Filippino Lippi e i contesti della pittura à Firenze e Roma (1488-1504)* (Milan, in press).

[60] *Adoration of the Shepherds*, pen and brown ink, 10.1 x 19.9 cm. Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe, 170 E. The figure holding an animal in the British Museum drawing is mirrored here by the man holding a lamb on his shoulders at right. Stylistically—exhibiting the same scratchy, sharp line, 'hooked' endings and planar, sketchily indicated heads—170 E is almost identical to the *Expulsion of Joachim from the Temple*, pen and brown ink, 9.8 x 14.6 cm. Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe, 169 E. The same animal-carrying figure is repeated on the left side of the pen and wash *Expulsion* in Lille. Of similar composition, this sheet was probably the latest study for the series, executed in brown wash, the point of a brush and brown ink, and white heightening over extensive preliminary indications in black chalk

on rose tinted paper, 19.5 x 23.3 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, inv. 269. All three sheets reveal an affinity to the drawing style of Fra Bartolomeo.

[61] For the possibility of an antique prototype, such as a Roman sarcophagus lid or other piece of Antique sculpture, see Griswold, 1988, pp. 245-6. Griswold cites similar female nude figures in works by artists such as Lorenzo di Credi and Aspertini, leading him to conclude that the motif was probably 'disseminated through sketchbooks of drawings after the Antique' (p. 246).

[62] Oil on poplar panel, 72 x 182 cm. The panel passed from the Gaddi estate to the Casa Nerli on Borgo S. Niccolò, Florence, before being acquired from Rumohr in 1828. Technical analysis has revealed no surprising findings. As noted in a letter from Curator Hannelore Nützmann (18 August 1998), recent restoration has consisted of cleaning and consolidation of paint, according to Head Restorer Gisela Helmkampf. The work's present state is fair. Retouching is visible along the panel joints, Venus' white garment and pillow, and Mars' ear. There is some depletion of the top paint layers, as seen in Cupid's chest. *Pentimenti* are more marked in the sky and middleground rather than the foreground figures. For the most informative museum catalogue entries, see: *Catalogue of Paintings: 13th-18th Century*, trans. L. Parshall, 2nd revised ed. (Berlin-Dahlem, 1978), pp. 326-7; and *The Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. A History of the Collection and Selected Masterworks* (London, 1986), pp. 302-3.

[63] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 67. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 656.

[64] Ibid., IV, p. 67. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 656.

[65] Bacci, citing similarities with the *Death of a Nymph* and the *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* (1966, p. 87): *c.*1505; Fermor (1993): 1500-5; Capretti, citing the *Visitation* and the Vulcan canvases (1996, pp. 101-2): 1490s.

[66] In the Codex Salmasianus, Paris, Reposiano's poem reads: 'Martem respiciens deponit lumina sommo, sedgraciosa decens, pro lucis fonte Cupido Martis tela gerit; quae postquam singula sumpsit...' See Bacci, 1966, p. 87. Panofsky proposed Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* as inspiration in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (NY, 1967), p. 63. Lucretius wrote: 'Cause meanwhile the savage works of war to sleep and be still over sea and land. For you [Venus] alone can delight mortals with quiet peace, since Mars, mighty in battle rules the savage works of war, who often casts himself upon your lap wholly vanquished by the ever-living wound of love, and thus looking upward, with shapely neck thrown back, feeds his eager eyes with love, gaping upon you, goddess, and, as he lies back, his breath hangs upon your lips. There as he reclines, goddess, upon your sacred body, do you, bending around him from above, pour from your lips your sweet coaxings, and for your Romans, illustrious one, crave quiet peace' (Book I. 29-40).

[67] Lorenzo's descriptions occur in his *Gli amori di Venere e Marte*. For Poliziano's passage see *Stanze*, I. 122 (in *Poesie italiane*, ed. S. Orlando [Milan, 1976], p. 85): 'Trovolla assisa in letto fuor del limbo, / pur mo' di Marte sciolta dale braccia, / il qual roverso li giacea nel grembo, / pascendo gli occhi pur della sua faccia'. Yet both Lucretius' and Poliziano's passages describe Mars as lying with his head in Venus' lap. For Ficino's desciption of Venus taming Mars in the *Commentary on the Symposium: De Amore*, from Oration V, Chap. VIII, see: *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, trans. D. Quint (Amherst, 1979), p. 101. Also: E.H. Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies. A Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of His Circle', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, VIII (1945), pp. 46-50. For other moral and cosmological interpretations of the myth by Neoplatonist thinkers, see E. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London, 1958), pp. 81 ff.

[68] E. Tietze-Conrat, 'Botticelli and the Antique', *The Burlington Magazine*, XLVII (Sept. 1925), pp. 124-9, fig. B. The sarcophagus is reproduced in Gombrich, 1945, p. 47, plate 13b.

[69] In *Herodotus*, 4-6, Lucian describes putti playing with discarded arms in a description of Aetion's painting, *The Marriage of Alexander and Roxana*.

[70] Such differences prompted Panofsky to describe Piero's panel as an 'enchantingly primitivist pastoral' and Botticelli's as a 'solemnly classicisizing allegory' and to suggest that Piero's version

may have been a parody of the latter picture on some level. Panofsky, 1967, p. 63. Also see Fermor, 1993, pp. 46-8.

[71] Piero's rabbit is, in fact, a domestic hare, as seen by the long ears, and thus easier to study and sketch. Symbolising love and luxury, it was described as an attribute of Venus in Philostratus the Younger, *Imagines*, I. 6; and Pliny, *Natural History*, VIII. 55. See Tervarent, 1959, p. 242.

[72] *The Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* (The National Gallery, London) was also among the three Piero panels examined in detail in *The National Gallery Technical Bulletin* entry by R. White et al., 1998, pp. 74-95. In contrast to the *Death of a Nymph* and *The Forest Fire*, analysis of the *Battle* indicated that Piero did not employ a heat-bodied walnut oil in this case. See Table of Results, p. 87. The detailed, extensive underdrawing appears looser and more confident than in the *Death of a Nymph* and reveals numerous departures in the final, painted version. IRR images show, for example, that Bienor's hand originally grasped Pirithous' face rather than the end of the club, while an entire group figures (somewhat out of scale) sketched at the left, including a Lapith attempting to escape a centaur, was never executed. Other alterations included a kneeling form (fleeing female Lapith?) at the bottom-left edge of the blanket in the central abduction scene, a spear that once lay at the feet of Hippodame, pointing in the same direction as the one at the feet of Cyllarus, and minor changes in pose to a number of figures. See The National Gallery Conservation Records.

[73] The *Battle* was executed in walnut oil on panel, 71 x 260 cm. The work was first exhibited in London's Burlington Fine Arts Club (1893) as a Signorelli. The work's earliest provenance was the Florence household of the antiquarian Gagliardi, at least by 1885. It was then in the J. Burke Collection (London) and with a London dealer *c.*1902, followed by the Collection of Ricketts-Shannon by 1905. The panel was deposited at The National Gallery in 1933, two years following Ricketts' death, and was bequeathed to the museum by Shannon in 1937. See Davies, 1961, pp. 422-4. For an early interpretation of the subject, see H. Horne, 'Pier di Cosimo's "Battle of Centaurs and Lapithae,"' *Architectural Review*, XII (1902), p. 61 ff. Horne noted the panel's Dantesque spirit in its figures 'of blood and rage', while also citing the influence of Antonio Pollaiuolo and his explorations of the male nude.

[74] Piero's mourning scenes in *Death of a Nymph* and *Battle* are mentioned as explicit examples of elegiac visual narrative in P. Barolsky and A. Barriault, 'Botticelli's Primavera and the Origins of the Elegiac in Italian Renaissance Painting', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, CXXVIII (Sept. 1996), pp. 66-7.

[75] The tenderness of the scene and Piero's sympathetic rendering of the creatures recalls the description of female centaurs and their delicate infants by Philostratus in *Imagines*, Book II, trans. A. Fairbanks (London, 1960).

[76] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XII. 394-418 (Melville, p. 287).

[77] Ibid., XII. 422-430 (Melville, p. 287).

[78] A.D. Melville notes, with reference to the story: 'Ovid is stimulated to fresh excesses by the opportunities offered by the use of unconventional weapons and half-animal nature of the centaurs' Ibid., p. 444.

[79] For a mention of Hercules' place in the Humanist tradition and his association with centaurs in particular, see E. Capretti, in K. Weil-Garris Brandt, ed., *Giovinezza di Michelangelo*, exh. cat. Palazzo Vecchio and Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 1999-2000 (Florence, 1999), pp. 210-12.

[80] Several examples are found in P.P. Bober and R. Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 180-82, figs. 144-6. *The Battle of Bacchus and Retinue with Indians and an Amazon* (*c.*160 AD) was formerly in the Cathedral in Cortona and was much admired by Brunelleschi and Donatello, who supposedly made pilgrimages to see it. The Sala delle Muse in the Vatican housed the *Centaurs and Satyrs in Wrestling Matches and Centauromachy Motifs* (2nd cent. AD); representations of the sarcophagus were made by Raphael, Filippino Lippi, Bandinelli and others. Finally, the lost della Valle sarcophagus showing the *Battle of*

*Centaurs and Greeks* (2nd cent. AD), which disappeared after the 1584 sale to the Medici, was represented by Aspertini, Falconetto, Perino del Vaga (?) and Mazzoni among others.

[81] The same exploration of anatomy and movement was prefigured in Bertoldo di Giovanni's vigorous *Equestrian Battle in the Ancient Manner* bronze relief of *c.*1485-90 (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) and in Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Battle of the Nudes* engraving of *c.*1465. See M. Kemp, in J. Levenson (ed.), *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, exh. cat., The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1991-2 (New Haven, 1991), pp. 261-2, 264-5.

[82] Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 111, Capretti takes a further step, comparing the prone centaur with his back to the viewer at bottom center in Michelangelo's relief to Cyllarus and Hylonome, who are found in the same location in Piero's work. There remains too strong a discrepancy in pose and content to make this credible.

[83] C. Farago, 'Leonardo's "Battle of Anghiari": A Study in the Exchange between Theory and Practice', *Art Bulletin*, LXXVI (June 1994), p. 302.

[84] The battle at Pirithous' wedding was a popular story in Florentine literature between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, told by Petrarch, Boccaccio, Salutati, Bassi, Filarete and Landino (Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 111). Such tales may have influenced subsequent visual representations; yet there were few visual precedents. Bartolomeo di Giovanni's double *spalliera* of the *Marriage Feast of Pirithous and Hippodamia* and the *Battle Between Lapiths and Centaurs* (formerly Horsmonden, Kent; now private collection, NY) is the most notable surviving, contemporary representation, along with Michelangelo's relief.

[85] Leonardo largely followed such guidelines for harmony in his own work, such as his *Adoration of the Magi*, in which the main scene occupies the central position, which in turn is surrounded by secondary and less prominent parts of the subject off to the side or the background. For Leonardo's thoughts on the composition of a (religious) narrative and its organisation of planes, see *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Richter, no. 542 (MS Ashl. 19b).

[86] The *Bacchanals* have been dated everywhere between 1490-1501 (Douglas, 1946) and 1515-16 (see L. Grassi, 'Piero di Cosimo e il problema della conversione al Cinquecento nella pittura fiorentina ed emiliana' [1963], p. 103 – on the basis of supposed similarities with Pontormo). Most proposed dates range more accurately between 1499-1510. Panofsky: *c.*1499; Fahy: 1500; Frankfurter and Pudelko: 1500-1502; Zeri:1505-7; and Bacci: 1505-10.

[87] The Giovanni Vespucci (1476-1549) mentioned by Vasari must be the son of Guidantonio di Giovanni di Simone Vespucci (1436-1501), and a gentleman in the retinue of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, in France. See ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 5454 a,b. Giovanni was one of three sons of Guidantonio, one of the most illustrious of the Vespucci, who represented the Republic with distinction, served in the war against Pisa, and held the post of *gonfaloniere di Giustizia* (one of the three that the family produced from 1350-1524) in 1487 and 1498. In 1478 he was the *ambasciatore straordinario* to Sixtus IV and Louis XI of France; in 1484, he served as envoy to Rome, meeting with the new Pope Innocent VIII; in 1494, he met with Charles VIII of France and resided in Paris for a year before moving to the Milanese court in 1495-6 as Charles' ambassador. Horne believed Guidantonio to have been the paintings' actual patron (see Horne, 1980, p. 282). Although this is possible, it is somewhat less likely due to his death, only two years after purchasing the palace on via de' Servi, and a year after his son's wedding. The Vespucci family, which arrived in Florence from Peretola in the 13th century, was most famous for the celebrated navigator, Amerigo, and Giorgio Antonio Vespucci (d. 1514), canon of S. Maria del Fiore (1482), Dominican of S. Marco (1487), renowned tutor and translator of Greek works, and Botticelli's patron for the Ognissanti frescoes. For the family's genealogy and history, consult: BNF, MSS Passerini 158 bis: *Notizie storiche intorno alla famiglia Vespucci*; and MSS Passerini 176, *Memorie storico-genealogiche della fam. Vespucci*; also B. Elliker, ed., *La famiglie di Firenze: testi e ricerche araldiche di Roberto Ciabini* (Florence, 1992), III, pp. 672-4; and G. B. Crollalanza, *Dizionario Storico-Blasonico delle Famiglie Nobili e Notabili Italiane Estine e Fiorenti* (Pisa, 1890), III, p. 86. For the complete Vespucci family tree:

ASF, MSS 603, Carte Pucci, 'Vespucci', scatola XII, no. 28; and A.M. Bandini, *Vita e lettere di Amerigo Vespucci* (1898).

[88] This date is established in a note appended to a Portata alla Decima filed by Guidantonio Vespucci (ASF, Decima Repubblicana 1498, no. 73 [Quartiere S.M. Novella, Gonfalone Unicorno], fol. 548r). This is first mentioned by Horne, 1902, p. 62 (also: Horne, 1980, p. 362). The house had earlier belonged to the Medici: Piero il Gottoso in 1469 and, later, Lorenzo il Magnifico. Lorenzo then sold it to the Arte del Cambio, at an unspecified date, from which the house was acquired by Guidantonio. For this history, see 'Il Palazzo Piccolellis gia Incontri fra Via de' Pucci e Via de' Servi', in G. Carocci (ed.), *L'Illustratore Fiorentino*, new ser., IV (1907), pp. 109 ff.

[89] An in situ reconstruction of the *camera* and/or *anticamera* would include Botticelli's legends of Lucretia and Virginia panels, both of which were known to have been commissioned by Giovanni Vespucci and almost certainly adorned the same (or adjacent) space as Piero's *Bacchanals*. In his Life of Botticelli, Vasari mentioned the painter's decoration for the Vespucci household, in a 'room with many paintings', consisting of 'ornamenti di noce per ricignimento e spalliera, con molte figure e vivissime e belle' Vasari, 1568, B-B, III, p. 514.

[90] In relation to the *Misfortunes of Silenus*, Ovid's *Fasti* mentioned *crabrones* (hornets) rather than *vespae*, yet Renaissance commentaries cited both.

[91] As Rafaello Borghini wrote in *Il Riposo* (1584), the house and its contents had passed to Giovanni de' Bardi di Vernio by that date; Borghini notes that the Piero di Cosimo room was highly esteemed, as an 'opera certo bella, e lodevole, e dal Signore Giovanni tenuta cara' Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 1584 (Hildesheim, 1969), p. 377. Filippo Baldinucci later mentioned that the palace was bought and remodeled Lodovico Incontri in the seventeenth century. See Baldinucci, 'Life of Giulio Parigi', *Notizie de' Professori del Disegno da Cimabue...*, ed. Manni, XIII (Florence, 1772), pp. 34-5. Also: E. Fahy, 'Some Later Works of Piero di Cosimo' in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, LXV (Apr. 1965), p. 203 and n. 12.

[92] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 68-9. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 657. The connection of this passage to the actual panels in Massachusetts was first made in G. Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain* (London, 1857), p. 327. From the Vespucci, the two panels passed to the Salviati (1533) and then to his widow, Ginevra Bartolini Salimbeni before becoming inherited at her death (1573) by her daughter Maddalena Ridolfi, in whose household they remained until the end of the 17th century. The palace was sold by Piero Ridolfi's son, Cosimo, to the Baglioni, from whom it passed in 1676 to Lodovico Incontri through the Monte Comune. It was at this time that the original palace was rebuilt, transformed with some adjoining houses into the present Palazzo Incontri. The panels remained in the Sebright Collection at Beechwood, England, until 1935. For a complete provenance, see M. Davies, *European Paintings in the Collection of the Worcester Art Museum* (Worcester, 1974), pp. 437-8.

[93] Borghini, 1969, pp. 377-8.

[94] The Worcester *spalliera* (79.2 x 128.5 cm) is recorded as most recently treated in 1985, with previous treatments consisting mostly of the setting down of cleavage with gelatine and some inpainting. Most of the abrasion occurred at the far right and left-side groups, particularly serious in the body of the satyr with his back to us at the extreme right and the coarsened face of the maenad handling Silenus' wine flask. IRR photos from 1937 and 1963 show that a jug originally lay in front of the reclining, pointing satyr (around knee level) with his back to us at left. Few other visible alterations in Piero's working process appeared. See Worcester Museum Conservation Notes, 1937-85.

[95] The oil and tempera (?) Fogg panel (80 x 129.7 cm) is thinly painted, much of this due to extensive areas of abrasion. In a Fogg Museum technical examination on 25 January 1940 George Stout (Fogg Conservation Files) noted: 'The extremely good conservation of the ground indicates that the description of the painting as unfinished is a valid one. Had there been extensive loss of the paint, some must have shown in the ground film'. Stout also observes, however, that former treatment of the paint film, especially as revealed by UV light, consisted of 'The removal of surface films and

overpainting, especially in the naked figures. This is in thin, uneven scumbles combined with drawing' The final note additionally states: 'The claim that the painting is unfinished is probably accurate, but does not fully explain the discrepancies in the present state. Parts, especially the naked figures, have been scumbled over and re-drawn to a slight extent. Removal of this later paint might improve the appearance of the work but might also lead to an evidence of loss which can not be had from means now available...'. Stout's report identified a number of pigments: the blue as real ultramarine with white lead; green as copper resinate (with scattered particles of azurite); and brown as an earth pigment, probably raw sienna.

[96] Spronk's observations are published in *Harvard's Art Museums: 100 Years of Collecting* (Cambridge, Mass., and New York, 1996), pp. 166-7. The infrared reflectography images are most useful for detecting underdrawings, overpaintings and damage such as scratches. In a broader scope, as in this case, such images can be extremely significant in determining iconography and the use (or absence) of literary sources for the work's visual programme. There are several underdrawn *pentimenti*, the most prominent being the round object most likely to have been intended as the hornets' nest.

[97] The position of Bacchus' legs has become indeterminate with the emergence of the underdrawing. The figure holding the mud bowl is very damaged, as is the adjacent figure; both were added by Piero on top of the background and have grown transparent. Having lost much of its surface paint, the ass at center has also become more schematic than in the Worcester version.

[98] Published in Venice in 1497, the *Fasti* became a popular text with the Florentine humanists of the time. Panofsky wrote: 'Angelo Poliziano lectured on them in public and seems to have made them the object of a commentary in Latin verse'. See Panofsky, 'The "Discovery of Honey" by Piero di Cosimo', *Worcester Art Museum Annual Report*, II (1936-7), p. 43, n. 6.

[99] Ovid, *Fasti*, III. 737-44, trans. J. Frazer, 5 vols. (London, 1929), p. 165.

[100] A. Poliziano, *Stanze*, I. 112, ed. Orlando, 1976, p. 81. Trans. Quint, 1979, p. 57.

[101] Few painted representations of Silenus have survived from Florence. Far more examples are found in the north, most notably in Manegna's *Bacchanals* of the 1470s, Jacopo de' Barbari's *Battle of Men and Satyrs* print from the late 1490s and paintings by artists like Cima da Conegliano and Niccolò Giolfino. Piero's treatment differs greatly, however.

[102] Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* IX. 40 and Virgil's *Georgics* IV. 64-6 have been mentioned as the most likely literary sources for the bee-catching ploy of rattling noise and sounds of bronze.

[103] Panofsky comments on the onion's aphrodisiac qualities in Panofsky, 1967, p. 63, n. 78.

[104] Ibid., pp. 63-4. Panofsky: 'Bacchus, not unlike Vulcan, was a civilizing influence. To the wild, rough, and barren country of Thrace he introduced those values which complement man's purely technical achievements, as represented by Vulcan, and surround the primitive life of shepherds and peasants with a halo of dignity and unsophisticated joy: the simple rituals of pastoral religion, that is the offering of firstlings and spices, and the modest amenities of pastoral life—wine and honey'

[105] Ovid, *Fasti*, III. 733-7 (Frazer, I, p. 165).

[106] Panofsky introduces the term in his 1936-7 article (see n. 98). Panofsky's conception is disputed convincingly in P Emison, 'The paysage moralisé', *Artibus et historiae*, XVI (1995), pp. 125-37 (for Piero's Worcester panel, see p. 131).

[107] See, for example, Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, V. 999-1010.

[108] T. Mathews, 'Piero di Cosimo's Discovery of Honey', *Art Bulletin*, XLV (Dec. 1963), p. 360 of pp. 357-60. As Mathews also emphasises, 'the most serious disadvantage of the evolutionary interpretation is that it accounts for so little in the painting Piero has given us'

[109] For a treatment of humour in the Renaissance, including the boisterous and lively type of the *Bacchanals* ('lascivum et hilare' as described by Quintilian in *Institutio Oratioria*), see P. Barolsky, *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in Italian Renaissance Art* (London, 1978), esp. pp. 46-50. For the sometimes vulgar character of marriage celebrations in particular, see J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1995), p. 109.

[110] Worcester Museum curatorial files.
[111] In this sense, one of the figures closest to Piero and the bizarre elements in his landscapes may have been Giovanni Larciani, formerly known as the Master of the Kress Landscapes. See L.A. Waldman's discovery of the Master's true identity in 'The "Master of the Kress Landscapes" Unmasked: Giovanni Larciani and the Fucecchio Altar-piece', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXL (1998), pp. 456-69.
[112] Ovid, *Fasti*, I. 395-414 (Frazer, I, p. 27).
[113] Ibid., III. 745-60 (Frazer, I, pp. 165-7).
[114] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, I. 540-48, trans. J.H. Mozley (Cambridge, 1979), p. 51. 'Lo! Bacchanals with tresses streaming behind them, lo! wanton Satyrs, the god's forerunning band; lo! drunken old Silenus scarce sits his crookedbacked ass, and leaning clings to the mane before him. While he pursues the Bacchanals, and the Bacchanals flee and again attack, and while the unskillful horseman urges his beast with a rod, he falls off the long-eared ass and topples head-foremost and the Satyrs cry, "Come, get up, father, get up"'
[115] Piero's *Misfortunes of Silenus* and its narrative sequence are used as an example in N. Goodman, 'Twisted Tales; or, Story, Study, and Symphony', in M.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 99-115. Goodman concludes that 'what nullifies narrative is not the order of telling itself but the resultant alignment with certain categories that are—or are to be made—highly relevant in the context and for the purpose at hand. World structure is heavily dependent on order of elements and on comparative weight of kinds; and reordering and weight shifting are among the most powerful processes used in making and remaking facts and worlds' (p. 115).
[116] Previously in the collection of S.J. Freedberg in Cambridge (Mass.) in 1950, the panel now in Pesaro was first sold at Sotheby's (London) in 1970. It was then shown in 1991 at the 17th Biennale dell'Antiquariato in the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (by Altomani & Co.). The attribution to Piero was confirmed by Zeri during an examination after cleaning. See: *17ª Biennale Mostra Mercato Internazionale dell'Antiquariato*, Palazzo Strozzi (Florence: 1991), pp. 128-9. Also see F. Zeri's lyrical 'Memoria mescolata' essay in *Orto aperto* (Milan, 1990), pp. 257-61.
[117] Acquired in Boston in 1948, the two panels were separated soon after, one entering the collection of Sidney Freedberg (see previous note) and the other that of Hannah Rabinowitz in Sands-Point, Port Washington (New York). However, the latter's present whereabouts are uncertain.
[118] Fahy, 1965, pp. 201-12. The connection between the *Bacchanals* and *Tritons and Nereids* was repeated by Freedberg (March 1984 conversation with A. Barriault), in Barriault, 1994, Checklist of Primary Cycles, p. 152; and Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 124. Bacci was not convinced by this reconstruction, however, instead linking the *Tritons and Nereids* with the *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* (Bacci, 1966, pp. 92-3).
[119] Fahy, 1965, p. 204.
[120] For a thorough discussion of the two halves of the *Battle* prints: David Landau, in J. Martineau (ed.), *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (NY, 1992), pp. 285-7, cat. 79; and, for the *Bacchanal*, B. Aikema and B. Louise Brown (eds.), *Renaissance Venice and the North: Crosscurrents in the Time of Bellini, Dürer, and Titian*, exh. cat., Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1999-2000 (Milan, 1999), pp. 260-61, cat. no. 35. For past attributions of Mantegna's prints by Bartsch and Hind (Bartsch, 239.17 and 18; Hind, 1948, V, nos. 5-6) see Landau in Martineau, 1992 p. 65. A sketchbook containing copies after Antique sculpture was described in a letter of 1476 from the agent Angelo Tovaglia to the Marchese Ludovico Gonzaga and was evidently once in Mantegna's possession. As Landau notes, it is possible that the Rome Villa Medici relief was illustrated in this sketchbook and may have influenced the prints. Ibid., pp. 274, 286. For the two *Bacchanal* prints, see Hind, 1948, V, nos. 3-4.
[121] For a noted connection between the figures in the *Tritons and Nereids* and the *Battle*, see Fahy, 1965, p. 202. Bacci went further, suggesting that the panels originally belonged together (Bacci, 1976, p. 91).

[122] Little mythology appears to have existed on Triton. Pausanias referred to several Tritons, as kinds of hybrid sea monsters. For classical authors and sources mentioning Tritons (including Hesiod, Pindar, Herodotus, Euripides, Virgil, Ovid and Lucian) see J.D. Reid, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1993), II, p. 1038.

[123] Although their number included Thetis, Galatea and Amphitrite, Nereids occupied a minor position and, in many stories, the differences between the deities remained vague. If not appearing with Tritons, sea-centaurs or Poseidon himself, Nereids were most often depicted in sea-triumphs associated with the birth of Aphrodite. Ibid., pp. 720-21. Also: J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York, 1962), p. 238. While their significance was ambivalent by virtue of their association with water—and its deeper, double-meaning of birth and fertility versus dissolution and death—Piero's posing of the creatures appears much more decorative in function.

[124] For example: Leonardo's *Studies of Hydrodynamic Turbulence* of *c.*1508-9, pen and ink, Royal Library, Windsor (12660v). Such studies were probably not directly consulted, however, as most appear to date to Leonardo's last stay in Milan.

[125] In his Slade lectures, Kenneth Clark suggested that many of Piero's figures were derived from a classical sarcophogus. Also: K. Clark, 'Transformations of Nereids in the Renaissance', *The Burlington Magazine*, XCVII (July 1955), pp. 214-17. Here, Clark identified two types of Nereid poses in the Antique: the decorous (as in the Louvre sacrophagus) and the abandoned (Vatican sarcophagus). With time, the Nereid figure—a highly desirable 'part of a universal currency of decoration' from the 1st century BC to the 4th century AD—also became frequently used in ornamental designs of the Renaissance. Clark noted that the Nereid-type became reformulated not only in sensual, decorative figures but also as a Christian symbol of the liberated soul, particularly as seen in the ascension of the Blessed in Last Judgment scenes or in the figure of Eve as she is created out of the side of Adam (Ghirberti's *Creation of Eve*, Florence Baptistry).

[126] The sarcophagus' 16th century appearance was documented in the Codex Coburgensis. Among their list of representations deriving from the sarcophagus, Bober and Rubenstein include several contemporary examples ranging from a miniature by Attavante di Attavanti (1483) in a Missal for Bishop James of Dol (Bibl. Mun., Lyons) to Mantegna's *Battle of the Tritons* engraving. Bober and Rubenstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 131-2 and figs. 100i-100b.

[127] See G. Paolo Lasinio, *Raccolta di sarcofagi...* (Pisa, 1814), LXIV (as model for Ghiberti's Eve), CXXXI and LXXII (drawn by Mantegna during his visit and banquet in Rome in 1466), LXI (with its figures reappearing in Mantegna's Muses of Parnassus), and CXXXIII (possible model for Botticelli's zephyrs). See Clark, 1955, p. 217.

[128] Bober and Rubinstein, 1986, p. 134 and fig. 103. In the background of his *Judith* (Staatl. Mus., Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), Ghirlandaio reproduced the central group of the sarcophagus in *grisaille*.

[129] His graphic examples notwithstanding, a *Tritons and Satyrs grisaille* panel formerly in the Foresti Collection (Carpi) also appears to have been executed by Mantegna's studio *c.*1506. B. Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central Italian and North Italian Schools*, 2 vols. (London, 1968), II, fig. 711.

[130] Examples: Jacopo de' Barbari: *A Nereid with an Old Triton* engraving, *c.*1504 (?), British Museum (Bartsch, XIII, 24 [527], p. 278); workshop, after design by Giulio Romano: *Battle of Nereids and Tritons* fresco, 1527-8, Sala delle Aquile, Palazzo del Te.

[131] P Scarpellini, *Luca Signorelli* (Florence, 1964), fig. 69.

[132] For a discussion of the entire fireplace design and its dating, see Giancarlo Genilini, in P Barocchi (ed.), *Il Giardino di S. Marco. Maestri e compagni del giovane Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 1992 (Florence, 1992), pp. 45-7.

[133] Opificio delle Pietre Dure di Firenze restoration files. The oil on panel work measures 71 x 123 cm. The last restoration was concluded in March 1980 by Ornella Casazza, who confirmed the panel's favourable condition. Notes on a previous restoration cited a thick yellowed varnish and some

repainting in the upper-right part of the landscape and a number of the figures. The technical procedures (1980) were limited to a cleaning and removal of old layers of crystallised varnish and a selective intervention in particular painted areas. The panel was then re-varnished.

[134] 'Un simile in tavola ritrattovi un Perseo sul mostro marino e più diverse figure attentia detta storia, con cornice di noce tocche d'oro, alto braccia uno 5/8 e largho braccia 2 0/2, di mano il disegno di Lionardo da Vinci e colorito da Piero di Cosimo, n. 1'. Galleria degli Uffizi curatorial file; and G. Gaeta Bertelà, *La Tribuna di Ferdinando I de' Medici. Inventari 1589-1631* (Modena, 1997), p. 42, no. 492 and n. 341-2. The proposal that the image was designed by Leonardo and painted by Piero was supported by Schubring (1915, p. 316), who surprisingly judged the panel to have been a part of the Pugliese series and painted before 1506. In 1635-8 the Tribuna inventory (inv. no. 473) listed the work as a Fra Filippo Lippi. The 1666 Inventario del Cardinale de' Medici (same source for proceeding years) left the work unattributed. In 1769 and 1784, the panel was noted as a Pontormo (or in his style).

[135] Vasari, 1568, IV, B-B, p. 67. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 656.

[136] Having come to Florence from Fiesole in the 11th century, the Strozzi family grew from old *popolano* stock to become one of the oldest, most powerful and celebrated *ottimati* families in the city, giving the Florentine Republic sixteen *gonfaloniere* from 1283-1527. The family palace (quartiere S.M. Novella, gonfalone Lion Rosso) remains one of the city's most impressive. The family patronised the quarter's churches of S.M. Novella (tombs of Antonio and Filippo Strozzi), S. Trinita (tomb of Onofrio Strozzi) and S. Maria a Ughi. Peripheral sites of patronage included Santuccio, Le Selve and Lecceto (see Chap. V). For more on the Strozzi family and Filippo il Giovane's biography specifically, consult: ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 5083 a, b, c, d; BNF, MSS Passerini, 'Strozzi', carte 212 and 228; G.B. Crollanza, II, 1890, p. 567. An excellent account of the family also is offered in R. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence: A Study of Four Families* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 31-107, with selective genealogy on p. 30.

[137] M. Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favor and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Rome* (Cambridge, 1980). A biography of Filippo was also written by his brother, Lorenzo di Filippo, *Le vite degli uomini illustri della Casa Strozzi*, ed. P. Stromboli (Florence, 1892), p. 86 ff.

[138] Filippo's shift of allegiance resulted from his openly antagonistic relationship with Duke Alessandro, who grew hostile to Filippo (for his friendship with Clement, his wealth and suspicions of political ambitions) and even ordered an attempt on Filippo's life in Rome (1534). The conflict's complex intrigue is discussed in Goldthwaite, 1968, pp. 99-101.

[139] Although his political activities and final legacy as great patriot ultimately eclipsed his career as a financier, Rabelais called Filippo the richest man in Christendom after Jacob Fugger (*Les letters éscrites pendant son voyage d'Italie* [Brussels, 1710], p. 6). Segni also called him the richest man in Italy (estate: 300,000 *scudi*; jewels, property, income: 200,000 *scudi*). See Segni, *Storie*..., II, p. 246 (cited in Goldthwaite, 1968, p. 98, n. 51).

[140] The documented evidence for Filippo Strozzi il Giovane's commissions of 1507 and 1510 was first published in S. Craven, 'Three Dates for Piero di Cosimo', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXVII (Sept. 1975), pp. 572-6. Craven considers the nature of the commissioned decoration in Filippo's *anticamera* and issues of dating.

[141] For the origins of the Palazzo Strozzi (begun in 1489), its unprecedented scale and its much-interrupted construction see L. Ginori Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence*, trans. J. Grillo (Florence, 1985), p. 200; and Goldthwaite, 1968, p. 68. Following Filippo il Vecchio's death in 1491, the 'new great house' was divided between his heirs: one half to Alfonso and the other to Lorenzo and Filippo il Giovane (sons by his second marriage). Alfonso and Lorenzo had already moved into the palace with their respective wives in 1505 when the roof was completed.

[142] After Filippo was declared a rebel in 1536, his part of the Strozzi palace was confiscated and the furnishings sold to the *Arte dei Rigattieri* (Junk Dealers Guild). In 1568, Messer Giovanni Battista di

Lorenzo Strozzi presented the *Liberation* panel to Signor Sforza Almeni, *primo condottiere* of Duke Cosimo, and it remained in the Medici collection since that time.

[143] The *trono*'s gilded columns are carved with the families' arms, and the Medici *palle* and Strozzi *lune* appear elsewhere through the design; other familial devices include carvings of a lamb, broken rose branch and falcon. The rest of its surface—the colonettes, pilasters and frieze—teems with decorative griffins, ram heads, sphinxes, hippocamps and other *all'antica* forms. For its provenance and decorative elements, see: *The Holford Collection, Dorchester House*, 2 vols. (Oxford and London, 1927), II, p. 26, plate 185; and C. Duval, *500 Years of Decorative Arts from the Ringling Collections 1350-1850*, exh. cat., The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 1981-2 (1981), p. 141. For Filippo Strozzi's late quattrocento commissions of other large pieces of furniture with fine carving from the workshop of another great master, Benedetto da Maiano—including a *cassapanca* (chest) with *spalliera*—see M. Trionfi Honorati, 'A proposito del "lettuccio"', Antichità viva, XX, no. 3 (1981), pp. 40-41, fig. 9.

[144] For mention of Piero's possible intervention in Baccio's decorative designs see A. Cecchi, ed., *L'Officina della Maniera*, exh. cat. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, 1996 (Florence, 1996), pp. 136-7 (Baccio d'Agnolo's *Frieze with Imprese of Filippo Strozzi il Vecchio*, Casa Buonarroti). Cecchi also mentions Piero's *Ornamental Study of Two Columns* verso drawing (pen and brown ink over traces of black chalk, 14.4 x 8.1 cm, Uffizi), connected to the Capponi *Visitation* and possibly related to the altarpiece's lost frame, carved by Chimento del Tasso, in Cecchi, 'Filippino and His Circle. Designers for the Decorative Arts', in G. Goldner and C. Bambach, (eds., *The Drawings of Filippino Lippi and His Circle*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997-8 (NY, 1997), p. 39.

[145] The inner frame inlay of the throne's backing measures 58.42 x 184.15 cm.

[146] Queen Cassiope had incurred the scorn of the Nereids, who prompted Neptune to curse the land with a flood. The oracle of Jupiter Ammon then revealed that the devastation could only to be relieved by the sacrifice of the queen's daughter.

[147] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, IV. 706-721 (Melville, p. 96).

[148] For my two chosen illustrations (in Venetian editions of 1509 and 1513) see C. Cieri Via, ed., *Immagini degli Dei*, exh. cat. Fondazione Memmo, Lecce 1996-7 (Lecce, 1997), no. 81. I-II, figs. on pp. 288-9.

[149] Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, III. 189-192 (Mozley, p. 131). Cepheis refers to Andromeda, for whose beauty the jealous gods oppressed the island of Seriphos.

[150] L. Berti et al. (eds.), *Il Primato del Disegno*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence (Florence, 1980), pp. 161-4. Such a pro-Medicean exegesis of the painting would suggest a date around 1513, following the Medici return to power. Berti's interpretation also notes the Medici association with the Compagnia del Brancone (laurel branch), which may be hinted by the flowering side of the trunk. By extension, Berti associates Cepheus with a portrait of Filippo Strozzi, Phineus unflatteringly with Guiliano de' Medici and Perseus with Lorenzo. However, all of this seems too speculative to carry much weight.

[151] Ovid, *Metamophoses*, IV. 740-753 (Melville, p. 97).

[152] The subject of intended significance is examined in C. Hope, 'Artists, Patrons and Advisers', in G. Fytch Lytle and S. Orgel (eds.), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 292-344. Also: Fermor, 1993, p. 61.

[153] Hope writes about private commissions: 'We think that the process of understanding [Renaissance pictures] is somehow analogous to that of understanding a text. But when paintings are produced it is not always assumed that they will enter the public domain, as texts do when they are published; and so the artist may not provide the information for them to be understood'. Hope, 'Aspects of criticism in art and literature in sixteenth-century Italy', *Word and Image*, IV (Jan.-Mar. 1988), p. 4.

[154] Jonathan Nelson investigates Filippino Lippi's allegorical panels and their messages and warnings, with social and political implications, in Nelson, 'Filippino Lippi's "Allegory of Discord": A Warning About Families and Politics', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, CXXVIII (Dec. 1996), pp. 237-52.

[155] In the Borgherini panels, Barriault reads a statement on the family—perceived as the foundation of society—thus creating an interconnectedness of family and state, as the emulation of forefathers becomes proudly linked with the dedication of works to the *patria*. Barriault, 1994, p. 97.

[156] The Perseus and Andromeda story was a popular one in the Renaissance, existing in various mediums and settings, as seen in later versions by Niccolò Pellipario (a maiolica plate of *c*.1520, Victoria and Albert Museum, London); Perino Del Vaga, 1545-6 (a three-scene fresco in the Sala di Perseo, Castel' Sant'Angelo, Rome); Benvenuto Cellini, 1545-54 (pedestal relief scene on his bronze *Perseus*, Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence); and Titian, 1556 (large canvas in The Wallace Collection, London). For some of these illustrations, see P. Morel, 'La chair d'Andromède e le sang de Méduse: mythologie e rhétorique dans le Persée et Andromède de Vasari', in *Andromède ou le héros à l'épreuve de la beauté*, international conference, Musée du Louvre, 1995 (Paris, 1996), pp. 78-9, 81.

[157] It could be said that the four (possibly five) panels that I propose as having been in the Vespucci household formed a large cycle representing the vices: *Bacchanals* (drunkenness, lust, sloth), *Tritons and Nereids* (envy) and *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* (wrath, drunkenness). Yet, again, such an exegesis is highly speculative and the more straightforward mythological reading remains most tenable.

[158] Lodovico Dolce, *Le trasformationi* (1568) as quoted by C. Hope, 1998, p. 8. In his article, Hope argues that meaning and invention were less important to Renaissance artists and viewers than the story told. Nor did the former stir much interest in contemporary art criticism.

[159] C. Cieri Via argues for a socio-political interpretation of the 'Early History of Man' panels in 'Per una revisione della tema del primitivismo nell'opera di Piero di Cosimo', *Storia dell'arte*, XXIX (1977), pp. 5-14. Cieri Via unites the New York panels with Piero's London *Battle* (suggested as the middle panel in a series because of its centralised composition), alluding to the latter triumph of the Lapiths as the end of the prehistoric world, with its central *pietà* scene showing not only the death of an individual centaur but the 'end of an era' (p. 9). Dating the group to *c*.1491-2, Cieri Via refers to Piero's primitivism as a symbol of Saturn's Golden Age. While acknowledging Piero's possible connection to 'Medicean culture' and, specifically, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici in the painter's *Simonetta Vespucci* in Chantilly—with its circular snake emblem, matching that of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco—along with a possible stylistic rapport with the Medicean favourite Botticelli in an example such as the Vulcan canvas in Hartford (pp. 12-13), the author describes Piero's scenes as a departure from past humanist images, symptomatic of the Florentine political and social turbulence in the early 1490s, around the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Painted at this time, according to Cieri Via, Piero's panels offer an antithesis to the *vita contemplativa* of the 1480s, providing 'momenti di evasione e di alternativa ad una situazione di crisi dei valori strorici' (p. 13). For Francesco del Pugliese, a spirited Savonarola follower, the fatalistic character of the images would have defined Florence's disorder and decadence, while also aspiring to social and moral renewal—a return expressed in mythical terms. In contrast, for a short discussion of art intended solely for pleasure: P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Princeton, 1999), pp. 139-42.

[160] Hope, 1988, p. 8. Hope writes that such layered meanings are 'usually justified on the grounds that people in the Renaissance customarily regarded the Ovidian myths as allegorical. It is certainly true that since late antiquity various allegorical meanings had been applied to the myths, either to explain their origin or to make them acceptable to pious Christian readers; and such meanings were regularly included in scholarly commentaries to the *Metamorphoses*. But it is unlikely that people in the sixteenth century normally read Ovid because of these allegories, or supposed that they had any bearing on his achievement as a poet. Indeed, the greatest mythographer of the century, Giraldi, dismissed such allegories as childish.' Hope adds: 'When Titian called his Ovidian paintings *poesie*, it does not therefore mean that he wanted them to be regarded as allegories. Instead, he was claiming to be emulating Ovid, telling the same poetic stories in his own poetic way'

[161] Ibid., p. 9. At the conclusion of his article, Hope writes: 'If we want to find Renaissance works of art which fit modern preconceptions, which are multi-levelled in their meaning and which resist

immediate understanding, the place to look for them is in combinations of picture and text—in emblems and *imprese*. But here, as almost everywhere else, the picture is supposed to be comprehensible' For appropriate examples of often complex allegorical meanings, see John Pope-Hennessy's chapter on Humanist-inspired portrait medallions in *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (London, 1966), pp. 64-101.

[162] The panels were given to Piero in Uffizi inventories as late as 1890. Although all slightly longer, the Master of Serumido's three panels conform to the same height of 66 cm. as Piero's *Liberation*. The Perseus series was attributed to Piero by Milanesi, Ulmann and Schubring, before Zeri grouped the myths in the small corpus of the Master's works in 1959. F. Zeri, 'Rivedendo Piero di Cosimo', *Paragone*, X (1959), p. 49, n.2; F. Zeri, 'Eccentrici fiorentini—II', *Bollettino d'Arte*, ser. 4, XLVII (1962), pp. 318-26; and L. Berti, *Il Museo di Palazzo Davanzati à Firenze* (Florence, 1971), pp. 216-17. Also see the chapter on Piero di Cosimo in D. Franklin, *Painting in Florence from 1500 to 1550* (provisional title; forthcoming).

[163] Zeri's suggestion of Aristotile da Sangallo as the Master was partly based on Aristotile's experience in perspective and stage scenery design. Zeri, 1962, pp. 324-6.

[164] The Munich panel includes some overpainting, presumably by Piero himself. The *pentimenti* are mostly visible to the naked eye and exist primarily in the drapery of three figures: the blue mantle of Jove (at left) originally extended lower; Prometheus (at right) originally had drapery falling below his right arm; and the sculpture of Man likewise was shown with drapery falling below his upward pointing right arm. For the latest technical results, I am indebted to Dr. Cornelia Syre (Alte Pinakothek Oberkonservatorin), who added that neither the restoration report of 1949 nor the lab report of 1964 yielded any special findings. No IRR images have been made as of Sept. 1998. The Strasbourg panel was last treated in 1982 (by M. Péquignot, Report of Examination and Treatment). The treatment consisted of the setting down of raised paint, surface cleaning, removal of old darkened overpainting, retouching and revarnishing.

[165] *Prometheus Fashioning the First Man* (Bayerische Staatsgemaldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich), oil on panel, 66 x 118.7 cm. Provenance: The work was purchased by the museum in 1918, from the Kauffmann Collection in Berlin, initially listed in the museum catalogue as a Franciabigio (1920). The panel was first published by Ulmann (1896) and Knapp (1898); the first connection between the companion pair was made by Salomon Reinach (*Répertoire des peintures...*, 6 vols. [Paris, 1910], III, p. 758). The iconography has been investigated by Habich (1920), Borinski (1920), Panofsky (1937) and Oertel (1960) among others. For a full bibliography: *Alte Pinakothek München. Katalog v. Italienische Malerie* (Munich, 1975), pp. 85-7.

[166] The confusion between the two figures is made in D. Arasse, 'Après Panofsky: Piero di Cosimo, peintre' in *Pour Un Temps / Erwin Panofsky* (Paris, 1983), pp. 137-8; Bacci, 1966, p. 100; and Fermor, 1993, p. 87. Much light was shed on the iconography by R. Steiner, *Prometheus: Ikonologische und anthropologische Aspekte der bildenden Kunst von 14. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1991), esp. pp. 103-65. The characters also are identified correctly in Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 138-40.

[167] Piero's triumphant figure of Man finds resonance in Ovid's description: '... man was made to hold his head / erect in majesty and see the sky, / and raise his eyes to the bright stars above. / Thus the earth, once crude and featureless, now changed / put on the unknown form of humankind' Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I. 83-7 (Melville, p. 3).

[168] *The Theft of Fire and the Punishment of Prometheus* (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg), oil on panel, 64 x 116 cm. Provenance: The panel was first acquired by the museum in 1896 from the Collection of Sir Charles Robinson, England. For a full bibliography: E. Moench, *Les Primitifs Italiens du Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg, 1993), p. 58.

[169] It is possible that the central group shows an attempt of the gods to soften the mind of Jove in his punishment of Prometheus (and of mankind, in the form of Pandora). The two standing figures may, therefore, refer to Mars and Venus. The figures have also been interpreted allegorically, as love, the

active and the contemplative life (Loeser, 1896), or the three ages of *man (Lorenzo il Magnifico e le Arti*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 1949 [Florence, 1949], no. 6). Schubring identifies the group's members as Pandora, Epimetheus, Vulcan, Venus, Mercury and Minerva (Schubring, 1915, pp. 129, 317 n. 413).

[170] The allegorical meaning of the figure crushed by the boulder was explored by Steiner (1991). It appears that Erasmus in fact referred to stupidity with the term 'fungus'. Iconographically, a full basket was often equated not only with fruition but also immortality; the figure's spilled basket may therefore refer to loss in general or perhaps death specifically. Stones were often associated with both Saturn and Hermes, the god of stones (see J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* [London, 1978], p. 161). However, the most convincing reading of the crushed figure remains that of ignorance and man's mentally oppressed state prior to enlightenment.

[171] The Prometheus story is told in *Metamorphoses*, l. 78 ff; Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (1178); and Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum* IV. 42-4. The myth was retold as an allegorical cycle imbued with Christianized meaning in late quattrocento and early cinquecento Italy. Ficino, for example, lamented the inherent end of the *vita priscorum* after the discovery of fire. Critics such as Habich (1920) and Borinski (1921) viewed the works from a Christianized angle, equating Prometheus with Christ, as did most medieval writers. With good reason, subsequent scholars have not agreed with this theory for Piero's panels.

[172] See Hesiod, *Works and Days*, V. 42-89; and Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, V 436-506.

[173] O. Raggio, 'The Myth of Prometheus: Its survival and metamorphoses up to the eighteenth century', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld*, XXI (1958), p. 54. Consult this text for the most complete iconographic discussion of Prometheus imagery (pp. 44-62).

[174] The literature of Boccaccio, Ficino and Charles de Bouelles—along with other Florentine Neoplatonists—is dealt with in Ibid., pp. 53-5. For Prometheus in *Genalogiae deorum* see: L. Marino, 'Prometheus, or the Mythographer's Self-Image in Boccaccio's 'Genealogie', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, XII (1980), pp. 263-73.

[175] Raggio, 1958, p. 56 and n. 68.

[176] Filippino Lippi treated the subject in a *Prometheus Stealing the Celestial Fire* fresco of *c.*1490-1 (destroyed) for Lorenzo il Magnifico's villa at Spedaletto, as well as a surviving drawing of the same subject, dated 1495-1500 (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, n. 1170 E). See I.H. Shoemaker 'Filippino Lippi as a Draughtsman' [Columbia University, New York, Ph.D. thesis, 1975], p. 349, n. 104; and J. Nelson's entry in *Il Giardino...*, 1992, pp. 134-5, cat. no. 29. Three later examples—two of them non-Florentine—include those by Rosso and assistants (1535-40 in Fountainbleau), Beccafumi (*c.*1530 in Siena), and Parmigianino (a drawing of *c.*1540, Pierpont Morgan Library, NY). For these and other examples: J. Davidson Reid, ed., *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1993), II, pp. 923-37.

[177] For the comparison between the two flying figures in the *Creation of Man* and *Tazza Farnese* see T.E.S. Yuen's article, 'The Tazza Farnese as a source for Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" and Piero di Cosimo's "Myth of Prometheus"', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, LXXIV (Apr. 1969), pp. 175-8.

[178] Dempsey cautions the scholar against making such an 'unexamined assumption' in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love*, 1992, p. 6.

[179] V. Cartari, *Le imagini...degli dei degli antichi* (Venice, 1580), p. 11 ff, as quoted in Raggio, 1958, p. 59.

[180] The draughtsman of the Florentine *Picture Chronicle* (British Museum) in fact depicted Prometheus as a kind of sculptor-sorcerer, holding aloft a statuette of a man. See Raggio, 1958, p. 52, fig. 7d.

# Chapter IV. A Return to Piero di Cosimo's 'Early History of Man' Panels

'Many people express many opinions; nobody agrees with anyone else well, all this is even more beautiful than the images painted' — Giovanni Aurelio Augurelli, describing the standard borne by Giuliano de' Medici during the *giostra* of 1475[1]

To a degree unmatched by any other of his artist contemporaries, Piero was absorbed by the life of early man and Nature's earliest creations of extraordinary, and often incongruous, species. While adding an unmistakable tincture of fantasy to the grim reality of mankind's necessity and struggle in its prehistory, Piero's interest in recapturing the ancient age shows itself as both anthropological and archaeological in its depth. For both scholar and casual observer alike, none of Piero's works have proven as cryptic or captivating as his so-called 'Early History of Man' or 'Early Civilisation' panels. These images most probably correspond to a Vasari passage which relates:

> Fece parimente in casa di Francesco del Pugliese intorno a una camera diverse storie di figure piccole, né si può esprimere la diversità de le cose fantastiche che egli in tutte quelle si dilettò, e di casamenti e d'animali e di abiti e strumenti diversi, et altre fantasie che gli sovennono per essere storie di favole. Queste istorie doppo la morte di Francesco del Pugliese e de' figliuoli sono state levate, né so ove sieno capitate; e così un quadro di Marte e Venere con i suoi Amori e Vulcano, fatto con una grande arte e con una pazienza incredibile.[2]

In comparing this description with Vasari's detailed, evocative summary of Piero's mythological panels for the Vespucci, there grows a strong suspicion as to whether or not Vasari really did see for himself the 'fantastic things' painted for Francesco del Pugliese. This doubt is based on the segment's relative vagueness and pedestrianism, especially in light of Piero's extremely imaginative pictorial handling of the subjects and their intrinsic strangeness. Such a cautious reading of Vasari's passage warns against taking its description too literally and searching for a perfect match in every motif. As shall be discussed, this latitude may be most useful in attempting to place the *Story of Vulcan* canvases, which have been traditionally bound strictly within the same Pugliese patronage and series context because of the Life.

Francesco di Filippo di Francesco del Pugliese (1458-1519) was the nephew of Piero di Francesco del Pugliese (1430-*c.*1498), under whose care the youth was living by 1469.[3] Piero del Pugliese himself was the agent of a great number of important artistic commissions, which will be treated later in relation to his patronage of Piero's devotional panels.[4] Francesco followed suit, growing into one of the wealthiest wool-merchants of the time. He joined the Arte della Lana on 8 January 1463 and held the title of *priore* of the quarter of Santo Spirito for two terms, in 1490-91 and again in 1497-8.[5] It is during this last decade of the quattrocento that Francesco became a most

faithful follower of Savonarola. In 1513, his life took a bad turn, when he was exiled from Florence for a period of eight years shortly following the Medici's return for publicly insulting the name of Lorenzo de' Medici the Younger, Duke of Urbino, with the epithet of 'Il Magnifico merda' Francesco was 'senza figliuoli d'età 45' in the year of his expulsion.[6] This is supported by his will of 28 February 1503, first published by Herbert Horne, in which he left his property to his cousins Filippo and Niccolò, sons of Piero del Pugliese.[7] They too died without leaving a male heir. It is in this will of 1503 that Francesco's high ambitions in artistic patronage come to light.

Francesco's list of artistic commissions marks him as one of the most active patrons in late-quattrocento, early-cinquecento Florence. In his 1503 will (later annulled by another of 27 June 1519, in which there is no mention of art works and his cousin Niccolò is appointed as his heir), Francesco left much of his property to the convent of San Marco. The bequest included the Castello di Sommaia, acquired in 1488, on the western slope of Monte Morello, with the provision that it be consecrated as a Dominican convent. To the chapel and church of Sant'Andrea di Sommaia, Francesco left five pictures on panel by artists such as Filippino Lippi and Botticelli.[8] Francesco, who incidentally served as a witness during the drafting of Filippino's will, likewise owned works by Antonio Pollaiuolo, Raffaellino del Garbo, Domenico Ghirlandaio and Donatello.[9] As Vasari added, the wall at the top of the staircase in Franceso's apartments was covered by a Fra Bartolomeo mural in oil, depicting *St.George and the Dragon*, the emblem of the Arte della Lana. Francesco's choice of artist seems most appropriate in this case, as Fra Bartolomeo came directly under the influence of Savonarola.

In 1485, Francesco married Alessandra di Domenico Bonsi, and, despite the images' violent aspects, it is possible that Piero's *spalliere* were commissioned for the bedroom of the newlyweds, if not the *sala*, to mark the occasion. The house in which they lived remains in place, albeit with extensive changes, as the present Palazzo Ferroni (via dei Serragli, 8), bought by Marchese Giuseppe Ferroni in 1778. In the early part of the quattrocento, the family already possessed a house in the same Santo Spirito quarter, which was to become a construction of great distinction in the area. In 1418, the Pugliese amplified their property by acquiring eight *casette* (small homes) that belonged at the time to Niccolò Serragli. As stated in a note of the *portata catastale*, the *casette* were then reunited, with Piero del Pugliese stating in 1469 that 'di dette case ne ho fatte una', with the enlargements resulting in the first house of such grand proportions on the street.[10] The house became widened and then subdivided in 1480 into two adjacent apartments; Francesco occupied the part on Borgo Stella, while his uncle lived on the side along the Arno. The *denunzia* (declaration to the fiscal authorities of the Republic) of that year stated that the *chasetta* in the rear of the house had been pulled down, together with a *chasetta* acquired in 1475, in order to build a new habitation in their place. The end of the restructuring was recorded in the *denunzia* of 1498. In fact, the building was

probably finished in 1486, when Piero and Francesco made the division of their property, which previously had been held in common.[11] In 1561, half of the property was owned by heirs of Filippo di Piero del Pugliese while Francesco's southern half had been sold to Matteo Botti, a distinguished art collector in his own right. It is believed that the art objects contained in Francesco's half had already become dispersed by this point. Returning to Vasari's suspiciously bland passage describing Piero's panels, it is important to remember that the Aretine was still a child of eight when Francesco died in 1519 and the dispersal of his possessions began.

The generally accepted interpretation of Piero's works commissioned by Francesco was introduced by Erwin Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology* (1939). Panofsky proposed that two *spalliere* in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (*Hunting Scene* and *The Return from the Hunt*), along with a third panel in the Oxford's Ashmolean Museum (*The Forest Fire*) serve as an illustration of the age before Vulcan ('ante vulcanum'), when man's knowledge remained primitive and fire still raged unharnessed. In *The Return from the Hunt*, Panofsky traced a cultural advance in which man begins to form families and build boats. Finally, Panofsky suggested two other works on canvas in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, and the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, as a second part of the same 'Early History of Man' series, illustrating life after Vulcan ('sub vulcanum').[12]

Panofsky projected these works into a five part decorative scheme. According to his layout, the two Metropolitan panels and the Oxford work would have belonged in an anteroom, while the two canvases depicting the *sub vulcanum* stages of civilisation would have hung in a larger adjoining room. Panofsky uses this hypothetical two room arrangement to explain the variations in size and support and, going a step further, to explain the iconographic program. For instance, the longer *Forest Fire* would have been placed above the doorway, serving as 'a transition from the unmitigated bestiality [of the Metropolitan panels] to a comparatively human life'. However, even though room dimensions certainly did play an important role in determining the final appearance of art commissions for domestic spaces, Panofsky's scheme is strained and ultimately unconvincing. The objections are based not only on physical, or 'practical', evidence but also on conspicuous thematic discrepancies.

Beginning with the two panels that certainly formed a pair, if not a part of an extended series, the *Hunting Scene* and *The Return from the Hunt* are the most likely candidates as the two pictures described by Vasari as adorning the Palazzo Pugliese (figs. 36-7).[13] Francesco's wedding of 1485 and the division of the Palazzo del Pugliese in 1486 form a convincing *terminus post quem*. Stylistically, the panels do not seem later than the turn of the century, most likely executed between 1485-1500, and in the highly developed landscape, light effects and meticulous brushwork are closest to the *Visitation* altarpiece (1489-90) that adorned the Capponi chapel in Santo Spirito (fig. 54).[14] The

unsettled asymmetry and feeling of 'anxiety' in the images seem to indicate an earlier (late-quattrocento) rather than later dating.[15] Only the diagonal orthogonals indicated in the *Hunting Scene* by the trees at right, reinforced by the cadaver and white horse, hint at any imposed geometrical order. While the subject's treatment remains remarkably original, scenes of animal combats were not unprecedented in the Renaissance, with perhaps the most famous written real-life account offered by the Florentine diarist Luca Landucci in 1514.[16] Such combats found their way into the graphic arts, as seen in two quattrocento prints in the British Museum (figs. 38a-b), as well as sculptural friezes, such as the bas-reliefs of fighting animals designed by Giuliano da Sangallo in the courtyard of Palazzo della Gherardesca in Florence.[17] Vasari wrote ecstatically about Piero's own lost *Libro d'animali*, executed for Giuliano de' Medici[18]—an object that would have been fascinating to compare with Paolo Uccello's surviving ink drawings of animals in their ferocious moods.[19] Even though much more organically organised than the rehearsed *Battle of San Romano spalliere* and their carousel-like horses, Piero's panels also bring to mind Uccello's perished *Battle of Dragons and Lions* in the Palazzo Medici.[20]

The writer-philosopher Lucretius (*c.*94-55 BC) is commonly referred to as the main source of Piero's Metropolitan Museum *fantasie* and, indeed, his didactic poem *De Rerum Natura* must have been widely known during Piero's time. There is little doubt that Piero would have been in wonder of this writer, whose inquiries ranged from the motion of atoms to that of heavenly bodies and who dwelled on the formations of clouds and rainbows, the changing colours of a dove's plumage and a peacock's tail when struck by bright sunlight, and the nature of meteors and shooting stars ('night-wandering torches and flying flames'). In a testament to his intellectual sophistication, Filippo Strozzi il Giovane, an enthusiastic patron of Piero's secular commissions, is known to have owned a copy of the text, as did the *condottiere* Michele Marullo Tarcaniota (1453-1500).[21] The first edition of the Latin work, in the *vulgare*, was printed in Brescia by Tommaso Ferrando in *c.*1471-3.[22] Three other *incunabulae* were printed by 1500 in Verona (Paul Fridenperger, 1486) and Venice (Teodoro Ragazzoni, 1495 and Aldo Manuzio, 1500), the latter both in the *vulgare* and Latin.[23] Though far from literal, the influence of Lucretius' text on Piero's panels does not seem unlikely and, if not used in its original form, could have been transmitted through Book XII of Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium*. However, the New York and Oxford images are by no means explicit representations of Lucretius' successive stages of civilisation, as supposed by Panofsky and subsequent scholars. One of the chief reasons for this argument is that the viewing of the two Metropolitan panels together—as two depictions of the same single narrative—is much more in accord with their apparent status as an autonomous pair, stylistically and, more important, thematically.

Other than Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus has been the most mentioned source for Piero's scenes. Writing in the first century BC, Diodorus Siculus' account of primeval life in Book I of his *Bibliotheca historica* (the final version of this work has not been dated with certainty in relation to the near-contemporary arrival of *De Rerum Natura*) is akin to that of Lucretius but treated in a much more cursory manner. According to Diodorus, 'the first men ... led a wretched existence, having no clothing to cover them, knowing not the use of dwelling and fire, and also being totally ignorant of cultivated food' [24] Gradually, however, man began to make strides, for 'it was necessity that was man's teacher'. Refuge was found in caves, fruits were stored, fire was discovered, and the arts and social life flourished.

The more elaborate version of man's beginnings expressed by Lucretius is a much more convincing textual inspiration and appears to contain the only description of hunting as part of man's civilising process among other classical authors mentioned as possible sources.[25] Again, it is not the gods but experience through necessity that propels man towards new discoveries. Even though it is Lucretius' first stage of civilisation that is almost always evoked to explain Piero's first of two New York panels, it is the beginnings of the second stage that seems most appropriate for *both*. Looking at Piero's two scenes, it is clear that man has progressed past the most undisciplined stage in his genesis, even though he has not yet reached the age of metal. The hunters already wear animal skin coverings, hunt and live in groups, and in the *Hunting Scene* most likely used fire to their advantage in flushing out the game in an ambush tactic. True, the pursuers in the *Hunting Scene* still cling to the most archaic fighting methods, subduing 'the woodland tribes of beasts with volleys of stones and ponderous clubs, overpowering many, shunning but a few in hiding-places' [26] This vestige of brute force is to be expected, however, for as Lucretius later asserts: 'hunting with pit and fire came up before fencing about a glade with nets and putting up game with dogs' (a much more advanced stage).[27] Most other elements in the paintings show a marked step forward, however. Lucretius wrote of man's second age: 'Next, when they had got themselves huts and skins and fire, and woman mated with man moved into one [home, and the laws of wedlock] became known, and they saw offspring born of them, then the human race began to grow soft'.[28] Later in this stage, friendship and covenants came into being, and language developed to express the names of things within the growing communities. It is this onset of the second stage which is depicted not only in *The Return from the Hunt* but also in the *Hunting Scene*, although its combatants can hardly be described as 'soft'. Men wear the same types of crude skins in both images. In fact, it is the *Hunting Scene* that includes the figure wearing the most sophisticated costume: a warrior putting a death-lock on a black bear in the left foreground is complete with fur shin greaves and Hercules-like lion hood. Identical basic loin

cloths are seen on the male figures in both panels, while in *The Return from the Hunt* the women are draped in more concealing skins which cover their upper bodies.

In surveying the landscape in *The Return from the Hunt*, the (same?) hunt can be spotted in the forest grove in the distant left, where a fire still burns and animals such as deer have chanced to seek safety in the water. Tiny figures are seen on this far-off bank, two of which swing clubs to deal deathblows to some fallen beasts. Two more figures appear about to emerge from the trees at the far left, presumably laden with more carcasses which are now being loaded onto the ship's bow by a centaur and the lifting figure in the direct foreground. Returning to the preceding panel, three men work together to lift and carry a dead ox in the left middle ground; one of the figures actually uses ropes to hoist the burden across his shoulder. At the far right, two centaurs, followed by a turbaned human, flee the carnage with their own prey and presumably head towards the arriving ships. The presence of mythical creatures, such as the satyrs and centaurs, is consistent in both scenes and appears free of incongruity, as the hybrids form a symbiotic relationship with man. In this respect, Piero takes significant liberties with the Lucretius text. The Roman philosopher strongly refuted the former existence of hybrid monsters for the sheer lack of pragmatism, citing centaurs, the Scylla and the Chimera as examples. Lucretius concluded the discussion on the subject: 'For although there were many seeds of things in the soil at the time when first the earth poured forth the animals, that is nevertheless no proof that creatures of mixed growth could be made, and limbs of various creatures joined into one'.[29] Piero's inclusion of satyrs and centaurs among man not only evokes antiquity but, more uniquely, evinces a sympathetic treatment of the primitive creatures that contradicts other Italian Renaissance depictions. In this trait, Piero can be said to exhibit a Northern artistic attitude. His satyrs no longer personify the vice of seduction; instead, they cooperate with man in the chase, partaking in the rewards. Piero presents an ancient time in which men and half-beasts were 'of equal status—a world only peripherally described in classical literature'.[30] Indeed, the symbiotic relationship between man and the mythical hybrids depicted in the New York pictures, as well with the tenderness bestowed upon the faun in *The Death of a Nymph* and the central mourning scene of Cyllarus and Hylonome in *The Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs*, show Piero as utterly independent of his artist contemporaries. There are no signs of the erotic behavior or grotesque clowning that is so prevalent in the satyr depictions of Mantegna and his circle. In terms of precedents, Lynn Kaufmann has suggested that Piero may have had access to two influential prints, close in temperament to Piero's satyrs: Dürer's *Hercules* (1498) and *The Satyr Family* (1505). The second of the German's images may have arrived too late to have had a direct impact, however. There also remains a second major iconographic departure from Lucretius, for taking into account his bitter complaints against the

'wicked art of navigation' (a later advance), it is impossible to overlook the conspicuous appearance of crude boats in *The Return from the Hunt*.

The suitability of the harsh subject matter of primitivism for a patron like Francesco del Pugliese has been questioned by Sharon Fermor, who reminds that Francesco was not only an anti-Medicean but also a devoted follower of Savonarola. It would seem odd, Fermor argues, that such a man would have commissioned panels so 'pessimistic and violent' in their appearance, as this would be contrary to his religious beliefs.[31] Yet, judging these *favole* by criteria of religious decorum runs contrary to the images' purpose. Such a layer of moral meaning remains hidden and an object of speculation. As Fermor then admits, 'such [secular] scenes were not known to have had clear ideological content', and indeed there is no obvious presence of moral tenets or a didactic aspect in the *spalliere* pair.[32] Piero's unflattering, even savage, depiction of man and Lucretius' notion that the ideal state of man's existence is one of semi-civilisation would not seem to be at odds with Pugliese's 'Christian notion of Creation'. It should not be forgotten that Francesco was a direct, outspoken man, as evidenced in the extreme by his brazen exclamation against Lorenzo de' Medici the Younger. He certainly did not appear to have a weak stomach, and—as a staunch Savonarolan and one of the signatories of the 1497 petition appealing to Pope Alexander VI to annul his excommunication of Savonarola—was even described as 'breathing like a bull' in the convent of San Marco on the night of the Friar's arrest, 8 April 1498.[33]

The most obvious reason for Francesco's commission is the decorative rather than moralising function of such particularly adventurous domestic images. Even Lucretius himself was of divided mind on the matter of civilisation's advantages. Piero, and by extension Lucretius, have often been characterised as 'primitivists'. Lucretius did cast a wistful look back to the earlier stages of man, noting that men were once hardier and that modern man became morally ruined by avarice and his craving for power, also adding that the mother Earth was past her prime and in a state of dissolution.[34] Yet the writer stopped short of advocating a return to such a primordial innocence and lawlessness, but instead spoke of the advancement toward a civilised society in which *ratio* (reason) rather than brute force ruled supreme. In this sense, Lucretius was much milder than the Cynics and Stoics and often appears as more of a progressivist, echoing his idol, Epicurus, who postulated that there exist two types of pleasure: kinetic (of the flesh) and katysthematic (intellectual). While the former, such as hunger, cannot be increased once the lack has been alleviated, the latter can be increased and is therefore nobler. In his treatment of the *Hunting Scene*, Piero likewise does not glorify the earlier stage of man. Instead, he shows it in its survival-of-the-fittest rawness. Even the relative calm of *The Return from the Hunt* appears to be in a precarious state. Again, it is important to stress that this sense

of tension probably would have greatly piqued the interest and imagination of the patron, serving to provoke fascinating exegetic discussion within the palace setting.

Looking at the hunting scenes through the broadest of lenses, it is tempting to associate Piero's imaginative recreation of primitive life with real historical events, marking an age of great discovery at the end of the fifteenth century that came to replace the world of fantastic bestiaries.[35] Word of Columbus' voyage to the New World made its way rapidly throughout Europe. His descriptions of the Americas in a short letter, first written in Spanish and printed as a pamphlet in Barcelona on 1 April 1493, were translated into Latin and published in Rome as *De insulis inventis* before the end of the same month. Following six more Latin editions and a German translation, the 'letter' was transformed into a sixty-eight stanza poem by Giuliano Dati and published in Tuscan by mid-June 1493.[36] While coloured by a Christian bias, the document aroused much curiosity in its mentions of 'Indians ... [who] go naked ... as their mothers bore them' and encounters with cannibals. Such brief yet compelling accounts of what Columbus must have seen as a Terrestrial Paradise—further reinforced by the much more sensationalised *Mundus Novus* by Amerigo Vespucci (figs. 39a-b) and its described land of pagan savages—must have captivated the common imaginations of many artists and their patrons at the turn of the century, if not influencing specific imagery such as Piero's hunting scenes directly.[37]

Few would dispute that *The Forest Fire* in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is among Piero's most enchanting images (fig. 40). Yet agreement as to its ambiguous content is a much more contentious issue. Thematically, I propose that instead of functioning as a part of an 'Early History of Man' cycle outlined by Panofsky, the Oxford *spalliera* existed as an independent panel.[38] The earliest secure record of provenance for the work is the collection of Count Giulio Rucellai in Florence. An entry in the Rucellai inventory of 1894 cites a 'quadro rettangolare rapp[resentante] l'Isola di Circe di Pier di Cosimo', a description almost certainly referring to the present panel.[39]

The interpretation of the subject as the Circe legend is a highly unlikely one but, in some ways, no less plausible than the one offered by Panofsky. *The Forest Fire* again reminds us that with Piero literary sources cannot always be taken as neat and precise leitmotifs for visual images. Apart from the Circe reference, a possible connection has been cited with the *Verae historia* of Lucian.[40] It would be difficult to argue against the potential appeal of Lucian's wonderfully quirky imagination for Piero's own sensibility. However, despite Lucian's fantastic descriptions of his journeys to myriad far-fetched locales, a reading of Lucian's accounts shows that any concrete visual similarities with Piero's panel are nonexistent. Panofsky's interpretation again is consistent with his reading of the New York panels and hinges on the idea of man's progress and the role played by fire. Yet in this case, Panofsky points to a different text as the most probable source for the Oxford picture: Vitruvius'

*De architectura*, retold by Boccaccio in a passage from *Genealogia deorum*. Vitruvius wrote on the civilising aspect of fire:

> Men, in the old way, were born like animals in forests and caves and woods, and passed their life feeding on the food of the fields. Meanwhile, once upon a time, in a certain place, trees, thickly crowded, tossed by storms and winds and rubbing their branches together, kindled a fire. Terrified by the raging flame, those who were about that place were put to flight. Afterwards when the thing was quieted down, approaching nearer they perceived that the advantage was great for their bodies from the heat of the fire.[41]

Vitruvius proceeded to describe how this discovery of fire, and its harnessing, lead to the rise of language and subsequently the emergence of communities and shelters of increasing sophistication. Nonetheless, in the context of *De architectura* as a whole, this passage ultimately is concerned much less with the occurrence of the fire itself than with its role in the origins of building and the importance of technical advancements through sharpened observation and skill. As Vitruvius later summarised, 'When ... these matters were so first ordained and Nature had not only equipped the human races with perceptions like other animals, but also had armed their minds with ideas and purposes, and had put the other animals under their power, then from the construction of buildings they progressed by degrees to other crafts and disciplines, and they led the way from a savage and rustic life to a peaceful civilisation'.[42] Ironically, as with Lucretius, another thematic divergence was expressed in Vitruvius' criticism of the intrusion of fantastic, hybrid forms.

> Such things do not exist and cannot exist and never have existed. Hence, it is the new taste that caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence.... The fact is that pictures which are unlike reality ought not to be approved, and even if they are technically fine, this is no reason why they should offhand be judged to be correct, if their subject matter is lacking in the principles of reality carried out with no violations.[43]

Such 'over indulgences', as Vitruvius deemed them, constantly inhabit Piero's pagan subjects, and *The Forest Fire* is no exception.

Piero's *Forest Fire* shows a period of human development that is neither savage nor particularly civilised. It is more akin to an intermediary stage of rustic life. Vitruvius' former passage, concerning the discovery of fire, is clearly inappropriate chronologically; in fact, this kindling of fire by the friction of trees even predates mankind's stages of progress depicted in the two hunting scenes. At the same time, a fully clothed herdsman, in tunic, cloak and shoes, carrying a yoke upon his shoulder, makes an appearance in the landscape at right, along with a well and two women with water buckets and a couple with a domesticated dog. Together with the rather advanced hut, such inclusions are a complete anachronism in light of the classical passages previously evoked to explain the picture. Two other descriptions from Lucretius have also been put forward as the closest classical references, the first relating man's chance discovery of metals:

> copper and gold and iron were discovered, so also heavy silver and useful lead, when fire upon the great mountains had burnt up huge forests with its heat, whether by some lightning stroke from heaven, or because men waging war in the forests had brought fire upon their foes to affright them, or because led by the richness of the soil they wished to clear the fat fields and make the place fit for pasturage, or to destroy the wild beasts and to enrich themselves with spoil ... However that may be, whatever the cause by which flaming heat with appalling din had devoured the forests deep down to the roots and parched up the earth with fire, through the hot veins into hollow places of the earth would ooze and collect a stream of silver and gold, of copper also and lead ... [44]

Lucretius then described how the metals were fashioned from different shapes into various tools and, subsequently, sturdy weapons. Thus, man's innocence was again lost. Returning to *The Forest Fire*, the visual focus is far from being the veins of molten metals; in fact, none are clearly visible in the composition despite an ambiguous area of smoldering earth in the bottom left hand corner. Most likely, if Piero wished to illustrate the Lucretius passage he would not have excluded the central subject entirely. Next, it has been plausibly proposed that Piero's scene may have illustrated Lucretius' meditations on the origins of language.[45] According to Lucretius' narrative, language preceded the discovery of fire as caused by lightning;[46] Lucretius explained the rise of language by motivations of 'convenience [that] moulded the names for things' In tracing language's development from man's natural sounds, the writer compared the phenomenon to the sounds of animals—Molossian hounds, horses and birds—that vary with specific needs. While the chaotic scene teems with action and an almost palpable crackle generated by the blaze, and even though Piero does depict his ox, lioness and crane as open-mouthed and perhaps in the act of emitting their individual sounds, Lucretius' specific description employs animals more as an evocative metaphor for man's first words as dictated by necessity for communication—and not in any direct correlation. And again, the inclusion of the herdsman and his clothing, yoke (already made of some metal components) and advanced habitation signal a much later stage of civilisation than the discovery of language, fire and, later, metals would suggest.

Instead, Piero engages the viewer above all with the dramatic effects of the conflagration and, moreover, with the colourful menagerie of animals. It is these two elements that directly attract attention, with the latter dispersing our gaze throughout the picture plane in a centrifugal pattern, from the birds, nearly all identifiable in nature, to the large forms in the foreground and inevitably to the riveting human-headed beasts in the left middle ground.

The two hybrid creatures in question—one a red deer and the other a pig, whose slightly smiling human face confronts the viewer—have aroused the most discussion in relation to the picture and its meaning. Again, scholars have suggested Lucretius as the source, referring to *De Rerum Natura*, Book V. 821-924. However, even though Lucretius mentioned odd deformities, such as the

hermaphrodite which failed to propagate its own kind, he proceeded to state that all monsters made were all in vain—'since nature banned their growth, and they could not attain the desired flower of age nor find food nor join by the ways of Venus'.[47] Thus, he claimed, many kinds of animals must have perished, either unable to protect themselves or win men's protections thanks to their usefulness. As for hybrid monsters, as stated before, Lucretius did not believe in their possible existence.

In this instance, the puzzling presence of the two creatures' human features is best explained through the clues revealed by technical examination.[48] As an X-radiograph image clearly shows, Piero made several changes to the figure of the pig. Not only are there *pentimenti* in the shape of the tail and the positions of both the hind and front legs, but the originally painted pig's snout also becomes plainly visible.[49] The superimposed addition of the human faces upon the two preexisting animal heads demonstrates a loosely additive quality to Piero's painting process. Akin to *The Misfortunes of Silenus* panel, in which revealing, lewd details of the original design were later eradicated, the surprising nature of Piero's subsequent alteration in the Oxford painting—conversely concealing the first, uncomplicated version of the animals—similarly points to a large degree of spontaneity and artistic license, leading away from a stable rigidly planned design.[50] Such transformations in the act of painting convey an experimental and bold painting approach, again reasserting that in most cases a painting is much more than a sum of quotations.

The varying condition of the three panels makes it difficult to compare the works in stylistic terms. *The Forest Fire* remains in comparatively good condition, with an even texture and high degree of finish, while the Metropolitan Museum panels have not fared nearly as well. The panel of the *Hunting Scene* was so badly worm eaten that it had to be transferred onto a new mahogany plywood support; while most of the damage to the paint surface is limited to localised areas, the left edge of the work, showing animals in flight, has been significantly retouched and is missing much of its modelling.[51] *The Return from the Hunt*, despite retaining its original support, is an apparition of its original state, having suffered greatly from paint and surface glaze losses due to old over-cleanings. The foreground figures in the bottom third of the work, especially the large figure hoisting an animal upon his back at left and the back of the centaur at right, show the most dramatic paint loss.[52] Yet other more obvious kinds of physical evidence support the case for *The Forest Fire* being not only an image possibly independent of a precise literary source but also of Panofsky's 'Early History of Man' series. For instance, in the Oxford painting the light source comes from the right side; the Metropolitan panels are lit from the left. *The Forest Fire* also differs in the higher intensity of light and the saturation of colour, especially in the ranges of blues and reds. There is a sufficient discrepancy in size: even though the three panels are nearly the same height, the Oxford panel is significantly longer (203.5 cm compared to 169.5 and 168.9 cm). Four horizontal poplar panels were

used for the construction of the Oxford panel, compared to three for both works in the Metropolitan Museum. Finally, as far as available technical analysis can tell us, *The Forest Fire* was painted in oil, while the hunting panels were both executed with a combination of oil and tempera, possibly pointing to a slightly earlier dating.

It is certainly possible that Piero himself invented the subject of *The Forest Fire*, or otherwise 'bastardised' a contemporary or classical source in arriving at his final version. The fact remains that nothing in the entire body of Classical literature seems to correspond neatly with the image. The conclusion that the picture is most likely an individual painter's conceit again can be supported by the contemporary passage from Lorenzo de' Medici's 'criteria for paintings', quoted in Chapter III. Il Magnifico's thoughts on this matter seem no less appropriate than his own poetic writings and their possible relation to Piero's panel. In his *Selve d'amore* (post-1476), composed on the theme of a man's love for his inaccessible beloved, Lorenzo described the Golden Age,[53] in which all animals coexisted in a peaceful world, as part of a larger discourse on the contrast between harmony and violent excess. A sudden forest fire finally upsets the balance of the elements, serving as a metaphor of love unbound.

> Poca favilla, dalla pietra scossa, / nutrita in foglie e in picciol rami secchi, / scalda; e, dal vento rapido percossa, / arde gli sterpi pria, virgulti e stecchi; / poi vicina alla selva folta e grossa / le querce incende e i roveri alti e vecchi: / cruda inimical al bosco l'ira adempie: fumo e faville e stran stridor l'aria empie.
>
> L'ombrose case in fiamme e i dolci nidi / vanno e l'antiche alte silvestre stalle; / né fera alcuna al bosco par si fidi, / ma spaventata al foco dà le spalle: / empiono il ciel diversi mugli e stridi: / percossa rende il suon l'opaca valle: / lo incauto pastor, cui s'è fuggito / il foco, piange attonito, invilito.[54]

Even though pastoral poetry found greater popularity with Venetian rather than Florentine artists, Piero's panel may be proof of such a visual response, above all in spirit. Certainly, other Florentine examples can be compared in this context in slightly earlier or contemporary works by artists such as Benozzo Gozzoli, Pisanello, Pollaiuolo and Uccello, who made numerous zoological studies and finished paintings, including beasts both wild and domestic, and had a special love for detailed, wildlife inhabited landscapes.[55]

The relationship between Piero's bears, lion and human-faced creatures and Lucretius' third agricultural age of man remains tenuous. The intended meaning behind *The Forest Fire* is probably not a highly involved yet forced interpretation of classical sources but rather a fanciful and entertaining scene, appealing for its close observation of animals and the attractiveness of the varied landscape. Certainly, it is these subjects that capture the viewer's eye most. The enchanting array of animals and birds are rendered with such great care that it is not difficult to imagine Piero first

sketching the variety of birds, ranging from partridges to cranes, not only from branches (white osprey and rook at left) or real flight (pigeon at center and peregrine hawks at upper left), but also from market counters (long-beaked woodcock near center).[56] This practice of drawing from life can be seen in two of Piero's animal studies in Rotterdam and Windsor, the former sheet very possibly intended for *The Forest Fire* (fig. 41).[57] Yet despite our familiarity with nearly all of the beasts depicted, Piero's combinations in the unified setting are truly unreal. When looking at the quasi-human expressions of the bellowing ox and particularly the panting mother bear, struggling up the hill with her cubs, the interpretation of the image as the Isle of Circe does not appear quite as far-fetched as it might first seem.

In examining the painting from the point of view of its creator, Piero exploits the opportunity to demonstrate his skills in painting a difficult scene: a sweeping fire, the ultimate painterly conceit. As Pliny reminds us in his praise of Apelles, the depiction of Nature's awesome brilliance, whether it be a fire, a flash of lightning or a sunrise, convincingly showcases a painter's power of variety and ingenuity.[58] The same attraction to difficult subjects resurfaces in Leonardo's *Trattato*, offering a list of topics related to a Deluge composition: 'Darkness, wind, tempest at sea, deluge of water, forests on fire, rain, bolts from heaven, earthquakes and the collapse of mountains ... Herds of beasts ... thunder and lightning' [59] In all three panels that include a forest blaze, Piero succeeds in his effort to skillfully capture similar elusive effects. A dynamic landscape, alive with a masterfully portrayed fire and an engrossing collection of animals in different states of flight, surely would have pleased a private patron in his domestic chambers. There, he would be provided with a colourfully vivid window into a time much longed for by modern man, touched more by Nature than man's ambitions. Even though *The Forest Fire* is not closely related visually to Lucretius' later passages relating to pastoral living, which dwell specifically on the cultivation of fields and man's development, the writer did praise the age of rusticity above all others.[60] In this sense, Lucretius presents a glimpse of what Lorenzo il Magnifico and other contemporary Renaissance poets strove to evoke. However, the only signs of man in the Oxford image is the mentioned herdsman and the distant figures drawing water from the well. As a departing bystander, the herdsman does remind us vaguely of Lorenzo's final image in the *Selve*, when 'the prudent shepherd, who has fled the fire, weeps, stupefied and disheartened'. In Piero's image, it is not the animals or the surrounding rustic setting that acts as secondary side-attractions, but rather the small, interloping figure of man.

In contrast to the subordination of man to Nature and its unrestrained forces in the Oxford picture, it is man and his intellectual faculty that figure most conspicuously in the grand-scale construction in *The Construction of a Palace spalliera* in The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida (fig. 42).[61] The panel's earliest known provenance establishes a link with the Medici, having

been previously owned by Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici (1611-63) and housed at the Villa di Mezzomonte in Florence in 1637, where the work hung above a fireplace. The panel then passed to a house on via della Scala, the Florentine residence of the cardinal, in 1646 before being placed at the Villa di Castello in 1663.[62]

In its subject matter, the image would be a promising candidate as the final part of a Civilisation series, heralding man's full intellectual maturity. Lucretius noted that after the lessons of fire had been learned 'kings began to found cities and to build a citadel for their own protection and refuge'.[63] Vasari did mention 'buildings' as an element of the Pugliese decorative scheme, together with animals, costumes and various instruments. Yet, aside from the vagueness of the Aretine's description, there are more serious complications mitigating against the Sarasota panel's merger with any of the mentioned *spalliere* in a cycle context. The panel varies significantly from the rest not only in size, but also in its appearance and execution.[64] Both the scale and the style of the figures and the emerging building point to a variance in chronology and/or subject. The execution of the work led Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt to even question the attribution, pointing to the 'curiously weak and disjunctive figures, ... conventional landscape, ... curiously uncomprehending rendering of the architecture'.[65] However, despite their rather uninspired appearance, the figures remain convincing Piero creations in a Morellian sense. The foreground workers—mostly bowlegged, with splayed big toes, as seen in the protagonists of the 'Vulcan' canvases—display the artist's typically unidealised anatomies. The most recognisable traits appear in the horseman and his young apprentice at right and the workman in white handling a hammer and seated on a cut stone slab in the left foreground. In the middleground at the left border of the composition walk a mother and her two children, one of whom she holds in swaddling clothes in her arms while taking the other by the hand—one of several distinctly autograph details. Even the animal participants at far left, such as the two oxen drawn to the cart and the long-eared asses in the background, give away Piero's hand when compared to the Tedaldi *Incarnation* or the destroyed Berlin *Adoration* (fig. 93). Nonetheless, as seen in the varying vantage points, several odd inconsistencies persist. The foreground figures are viewed frontally, as if the viewer is close to ground level, although the smaller middle- and background figures are shown as if seen from a much more elevated position. Other internal discrepancies occur in the painting of shadows, which fall in different directions or are missing altogether, as well as in the inconsistent scales of the figures. Two prominent horsemen facing the building in the left middleground, for example, are significantly larger than surrounding figures both parallel to and even in front of them. The same can be said for the two strolling figures in the shade of the left colonnade and the much smaller ant-like figures sliding down a cable in front of them. It is the smallest figures in the middle and background that are most plausibly executed by an assistant's brush. However, due to a lack of

other clear precedents for a division of labour in Piero's surviving *spalliere* and a lack of a compelling reason for such division, Piero's responsibility for the execution can be sustained. Still, in light of new evidence of Nicola Caprini, a live-in painter in Piero's household at the late date of 1518 (App., doc. 21), an assistant's participation cannot be discounted altogether.

The dating of the work has oscillated everywhere between the early 1500s to 1520. In my view, the panel dates to Piero's late period, *c.*1510-18. Much of the confusion is understandable, resulting precisely from the inconsistent nature of the execution. Rather than appearing as convincing human participants, the figures are rendered like small game pieces, arranged carefully within a symmetrical plane. The horizon and vanishing point are placed at a higher level than in Piero's other *spalliere*. The palace stands perfectly centered and Piero has applied strict perspective throughout the scene, most conspicuously in the foreshortened marble statue in the left foreground and horseman galloping towards us in the middle ground, bisected by the invisible orthogonal stretching to the vanishing point, located at the end of the palace's central aisle. The perspectival lines are incised into the paint surface in many areas, most clearly seen around the edges of the building blocks.[66] All of this compositional formality is in stark contrast to the Metropolitan Museum panels and is most often found in Piero's later works, such as the Lucca *Volto Santo* in Budapest and Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpiece, in which forms and compositions grow more simplified and balanced, equated by Bacci with a deliberate 'archaic' or 'primitive' trend. The spaciousness of the work is to some extent reminiscent of the Borgherini *spalliere* by Granacci, particularly his *Joseph Led to Prison* (1518-19), even though the Sarasota panel lacks the latter's austerity of action.[67]

Despite the comparisons to the three *Ideal Cities* in Baltimore, Berlin and Urbino,[68] the connection remains only a loose one, since *The Construction of a Palace* is much more narrative based. The question remains as to what kind of narrative it is. There is no central character(s) and whether the scene is a depiction of a mythological or a Biblical subject—as suggested by Bacci and later Maurizio Calvesi, both of whom equated the construction with the building of the Temple of Solomon—remains unclear.[69] Giuliano da Sangallo's double villa for Lorenzo il Magnifico at Poggio a Caiano, begun in 1485, often has been proposed as a real-life prototype for Piero's structure. More persuasive is Webster Smith's allusion to an analogous double palace that was proposed but never carried out for the enlargement of Duke Cosimo I's villa at Castello in 1515.[70] The scheme was to include a second identical palace next to it, with a connecting loggia and courtyard in between. Smith suggests that an earlier Sangallo design may have been known to Cosimo I, having come down in an inheritance. The earlier plan could have been commissioned in 1497-8 by his great uncle, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco, and his brother Giovanni, before the latter's death in 1498. These proposals lack any direct evidence, however.

Much more convincing is the plan for a never realised palace for Lorenzo il Magnifico in the area of via Laura, commissioned from Giuliano da Sangallo in 1491-2.[71] In what would have been Giuliano's most ambitious villa project, the palace would have sprawled over land stretching from the Porta a Pinti in the northeast corner to the Innocenti hospital in the southwest and from the Borgo Pinti (east) to the via Capponi (west). In the words of Linda Pellecchia, 'Had it been built, this project would have transformed—in almost Neronian fashion—a section of the city of Florence into a private estate for the Medici'.[72] Despite its marked quattrocento design elements, not unlike those seen in Giuliano's place for the King of Naples in 1488, a hastily executed surviving drawing for the via Laura construction by Giuliano's brother, Antonio, points to a post-Medici exile date of conception.[73] As Pellecchia concludes, the sketch was made under hurried and pressure-driven circumstances, yielding an amalgam of old and new ideas, in which Giuliano reused older quattrocento elements side by side with cinquecento ones, the latter in large part a response to Bramante's Belvedere in Rome. A design in progress, judging by its numerous alterations and inconsistencies, the plan for the enormous palace, with its open arms reaching out to embrace a garden in front of it, was most likely made for a specific and fast-approaching deadline: Leo X's entry of 1515. Although the colossal design appears overly extravagant in its existing form, sufficient evidence points to its status as a real project.[74] And while Leo X would no doubt have eagerly welcomed such an opportunity to rekindle his father Lorenzo the Magnificent's age of glorious architectural triumphs in self-reflected fashion, the palace's practical purpose, according to Pellecchia, may have been to provide Duke Lorenzo of Urbino and his mother Alfonsina with a grander and more modern place of residence, composed of two vast but separate apartments for men and women as in other Ducal palaces elsewhere.[75] Certainly, the extraordinary design's probable date in the second date of the 1500s would be in keeping with the stylistic dating of Piero's even more improbable construction in the Sarasota panel.

Piero's image still remains, above all, a fantastic creation, prompting Peter Tomory to propose that the image may function as both an allegory (Triumph of Architecture) as well as an honorary tribute to the Sangallo family and its service to the Medici.[76] While Giuliano was one of Piero's known close friends and was famously memorialised along with his father in Piero's two Rijksmuseum portraits, according to Tomory the relation between Guiliano's unrealised projects and Piero's baffling image remains conjectural. Finally, it has also been suggested that the panel may have been produced for Florence's *Arte dei Maestri di Pietre e di Legname* (Guild of the masters of wood and stone), perhaps as a kind of illustrated sign of the artisans' building craft.[77] Both Giuliano and Antonio da Sangallo had, in fact, described themselves as *legnaiuoli* in the 1489 *catasto*, having produced a large number of commissions in wood, including choir-stalls, sacristy cupboards and architectural models.

Arriving at a precise meaning for the Sarasota panel proves a difficult task, made more so by the lack of a clear context; while the work could have been an independent adornment, it cannot be discounted that it was meant to be viewed along with one or more others (which, stylistically, are extremely unlikely to have been the Metropolitan *spalliere*).[78] Most convincingly, the palace is an ideal, or fantastic, rather than a real structure. As Martin Kemp suggests: 'no one closely reading Vitruvius [in *De architectura*, Book V] would arrive at a structure like that depicted by Piero, and it is likely that he created a fantasy architecture designed to impress visually rather than to invite precise functional analysis'.[79] First, there is the presence of several odd elements, leading to the conclusion that Piero did not set out to depict a directly observed illustration of building technique. The scaffolding is gone and the palace seems to be complete; so, why do the workers continue to transport, saw and chisel? The products being made seemingly have no place in the building's structure. More puzzling is the palace's location. Set in an empty plane, surrounded at the back by a body of water and hills on either side, a building of such grandeur seems strangely isolated and somewhat mythical. Whatever the scene's iconography, Brandt believes that it 'reflects an Albertian vision of the ideal relation between practice and theory, patron and practitioner, and of the visual arts to society'.[80] Also convinced that the image is not a direct illustration, she links the ornamentation of Piero's palace, such as the bronze statues atop the parapet and the cornucopia designs on the frieze, to Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (1450), in which the author, unlike Vitruvius, commended the inclusion of *all'antica* figural sculpture on a building, while still warning against ostentation. In fact, Alberti wished to put this into practice mounting architectural statuary on his projected yet unfinished top story of the Tempio Malatestiano, with its figures, garlands and reliefs. A drawing by Giovanni Bettini da Fano shows the Tempio under construction, devoid of the top level, and offers another valuable illustration of building techniques.[81] This sense of an ideal, Antique-inspired structure, in which proportion and symmetry yield beauty in an Albertian equation, is countered by the Sarasota image's depiction of the concretely practical.

The carpenters and masons utilise a wide range of contemporary building instruments, used on either timber or stone; specially designed hoists in the background and the vises designed to hold planks in place during sawing serve as showpieces of the builders' ingenuity. As in the case of *The Forest Fire*, the Sarasota panel is an image of 'scenographic intent', perhaps loosely based on Alberti's text rather than any existing architectural structure, drawing in the eye to explore the bustling scene in all of its areas of movement and details showing various skills and tools. This approach is rhetorical in a sense, for it is this same artist's conceit—the depiction of strict perspective and building tools in this case—that was already seen in the blaze and range of animal life of *The Forest Fire*. Above all, the Sarasota picture functions as an insightful visual document of the

contemporary practice of building at the time and the merging of this practice with the theoretical ideal. Building devices are exposed to the viewer for close study with almost scientific realism in the picture's foreground. And yet the palace itself stands aloof as a piece of conceptual mastery, unequaled in the present day. This latter dimension of idealisation must have seemed especially suitable in a patron's home, for nothing symbolised the personal and civic pride of a commercially successful Florentine as effectively as a grand *palazzo*.[82] Piero's edifice can be readily understood just as such a status symbol.

Piero's sole surviving canvas paintings, *The Finding of Vulcan* in The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn., and *Vulcan and Aeolus (as Teachers of Mankind)* in The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, were first separated in 1861 and almost certainly functioned as pendants on the same theme (figs. 43-4).[83] Most likely executed in the last decade of the quattrocento, the works are of similar dimensions, with the Hartford picture measuring 10 cm wider.[84] Unfortunately, both pictures are in poor to fair condition and in the past led scholars to doubt their authenticity or attribute the works to an assistant(s). As with *The Return from the Hunt*, shapes and bodies have lost much of their subtle modelling, becoming flattened as a result of previous restorations and surface abrasions. The specific canvas supports are identical and of great interest in their unique diamond weave. This lozenge twill provides a compact and sturdy surface as a result of the diagonal directions of the weave, made of a series of concentric rhomboids, and was known to impart certain light and colouristic effects to the works. It has been suggested that the lozenge weave fabric, most likely of linen, originally may have served a more prosaic purpose, having once been a discarded or worn tablecloth.[85] Not only is the choice of support unprecedented within Piero's own oeuvre, but it remained relatively rare at the end of the quattrocento in Florence, with the important exception of ephemeral decorations for festivals or triumphal processions. Recent examples of such painting supports have been found in Tuscan paintings of the 1500s and 1600s.[86]

In concluding his passage on the Pugliese commission, Vasari mentioned a painting either lost or otherwise unknown showing 'Mars, Venus with her Cupids, and Vulcan'.[87] This introduces the distinct possibility that a third image existed in an expanded Vulcan series. Herbert Horne astutely noted that Vasari's account in the 1568 edition of the *Lives* makes it appear as if the painting of Mars, Venus and Vulcan were independent of the Pugliese decoration, while the earlier edition hinted at the contrary.[88] Furthermore, in describing the Pugliese works, Vasari referred to 'various scenes with *little* figures' The figures in the two canvases certainly are not small in scale. There are also great differences between the Vulcan pictures and all of those previously discussed in a technical sense: canvas support, larger dimensions, vertical format and, to some degree, style. Vasari also specified that the Pugliese pictures hung 'intorno a *una* camera' and not within two separate chambers (*camera*

and *antecamera* as proposed by Panofsky). Thematically, Panofsky and many scholars who followed have included the two canvases as the final part of the Civilisation series based on the role of fire as a unifying element. Again, Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum* was named as a possible source, in its assimilation of the Vitruvius and Lucretius texts in its twelfth book. The link between Vulcan and man's control of fire is an obvious one. The link between fire in the Vulcan canvases and fire in the Metropolitan and Oxford panels is extremely loose and problematic.

Both Vitruvius and Lucretius showed fire as a positive discovery, bringing man closer and fostering social bonds. The prints from editions of Vitruvius' *De architectura* used by Panofsky to illustrate his argument show man benefiting from fire and, as a result, interacting in peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the woodcuts chosen, showing *The Discovery of Fire* and *The Erection of Primitive Buildings* (in which fire is also present), range from printing dates of 1521 to 1547, too late to have influenced Piero's images.[89] More important, such illustrations appear to be far removed from the Metropolitan and Ashmolean *spalliere*, in which fire is shown as either a destructive, threatening element or a painter's conceit. Such different themes lead Keith Christiansen to dismiss the relation between the New York pictures (and their putative depiction of human progress) and man's control of fire.[90] It must also be remembered that Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus and Vitruvius all stressed in their own ways that the true catalyst in man's progress was Nature and man's ingenious adaptation to it. The impetus (or *daedala*) was 'stark necessity' and positively not the determinism of divine intervention, which would be strongly implied if one is to include the Vulcan images as the concluding ones in the formation of a cycle.

As is most often the case with Piero's pagan subjects, there are few if any visual precedents and parallels for the Vulcan scenes that are represented. Images of 'Vulcan at the Forge' did occasionally appear in works such as Mantegna's *Parnassus* (Louvre) of 1497 for the *studiolo* of Isabella d'Este in Mantua, Sodoma's (*c.*1508-13) and Baldassare Peruzzi's (1511-12) versions in the Villa Farnesina, and Antonio Lombardo's post-1506 marble relief in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg.[91] Vasari mentioned that Domenico Ghirlandaio represented the Story of Vulcan for a private decorative fresco cycle, now destroyed, in the Medici Villa di Spedaletto near Volterra in 1490-91.[92] A strange, small panel , most likely of a later date and attributed to both the Master of Serumido and Bachiacca, depicts two figures who appear to be *Vulcan and Apollo*, judging by their accompanying instruments and dress.[93] Notwithstanding such diverse and intermittent examples, the life of Vulcan remained a largely unmined subject and Piero's *Finding of Vulcan* canvas, in particular, seems to be the only illustration of its kind.

The Hartford picture was sold to William Graham in 1886 as 'The Triumph of Chastity' The most appealing though erroneous identification, prior to Panofsky's much more convincing 'Story of

Vulcan' suggestion, had been the myth of 'Hylas and the Nymphs'. Other suggestions as to the subject matter included the 'Death of Daphnis' and 'Phaon courted by the women of Mitylene'. The real story represented in the Vulcan pictures appears to be that of the God of fire's Greek counterpart, Hephaestus. The legendary artificer god suffered not one but two falls from Olympus, both as a result of his parents' disgust. Born with deformed legs, Hephaestus was a disappointment to Hera and, as described by Homer in Book XVIII of the *Iliad*, was hurled from the heavens 'through the will of my own brazen-faced mother, who wanted / to hide me, for being lame'.[94] The boy landed into the sea but was saved by Thetis and Eurynome, who harboured the youngster in an underwater grotto where he learned the blacksmith's art. However, it is the second fall that is probably shown in the Hartford work. In his maturity, while interceding in a quarrel between his parents, Hephaestus reminded his mother of his second fall some years later: 'There was a time once before now I was minded to help you, / and he [Zeus] caught me by the foot and threw me from the magic threshold, / and all day long I dropped helpless, and about sunset / I landed in Lemnos, and there was not much life in me. / After that fall it was the Sintian men who took care of me'.[95] Hephaestus here refers to his intervention on his mother's behalf during the Trojan War. As Apollodorus explained: 'Him [Hephaestus] Zeus cast out of heaven, because he came to the rescue of Hera in her bonds. For when Hercules had taken Troy and was at sea, Hera sent a storm after him; so Zeus hung her from Olympus. Hephaestus fell on Lemnos and was lamed of his legs, but Thetis saved him'.[96]

Piero depicts the fallen god on the island of Lemnos but instead of Thetis or Sintian men we find the boy surrounded by graceful nymphs, caught unaware by the spectacular fall as they gathered flowers. The nymph at the bottom right looks up bewildered at the child while holding open a basket of flowers wrapped in an ornamental cloth. The nymph directly behind her lets flowers fall from her transparent veil in surprise, while two other companions approach the scene from the left, one carrying a basket of flowers upon her head as the other cradles a small white dog.[97] Piero's inclusion of the nymphs can be explained by a corruption of a passage from Servius' fourth-century *Commentary on Virgil's Fourth Eclogue*, upon which the overwhelming majority of post-classical sources were based. Even though Vulcan is said to have been found and nourished *ab sintiis* (by the Sintians, a barbarian population that immigrated to Lemnos from Tracia) in the original text, the passage became misinterpreted by copyists as either 'nymphs' (*ab nimphis*) or, even more wildly, 'apes' (*ab simiis*).[98] Five monkeys in fact do appear seated upon the corners Vulcan's double-level triumphal car in Francesco del Cossa's Vulcan fresco of 1469 for the month of September in Ferrara's Palazzo Schifanoia. There, instead of the god, a woman appears seated in his place, with a globe under foot. The cart is pulled by two dogs while the circular flame in the sky refers to flame and lightning, two clear manifestations of Vulcan.[99]

A close examination of the boy and his surroundings conclusively dismisses the received interpretation of the Hylas myth, while supporting the Vulcan claim. Panofsky is right in pointing out the nymphs' state of 'maternal concern rather than amorous excitement'; there seems to be nothing predatory about their solicitude, and contemporary sources dealing with the symbolism of the falcon, shown in the direct foreground, evoke positive rather than aggressive connotations.[100] The body of water in the background at left, proposed in the past as the site of Hylas' abduction, is of incidental rather than vital significance.[101] Furthermore, there is a prominent hole in the cloud above the scene, through which the god may have fallen. The most meaningful hint as to the identity of the scene is the boy himself. Rather than striking the handsome figure of Hylas, the boy appears as an awkward adolescent. He has been called everything from 'misshapen' to 'crooked' and 'bow-legged', and the short proportions of his lower body support this. Still, an incongruous factor remains: according to the literary sources, Vulcan would have appeared quite mature at the time of his second fall.[102]

In the past, the attribution of the Hartford painting had often seemed as perplexing as its iconography—again, a problem largely due to its poor physical state.[103] The *Vulcan and Aeolus* canvas in Ottawa, albeit more fortunate, likewise suffers from a worn condition.[104] Nevertheless, both pictures are unquestionably authentic. The Hartford picture is striking not only in the exquisite landscape but also in the physiognomies and distinctive anatomies of the figures, which are so typical of Piero's other mythological protagonists. It is the ornament of the nymphs and the verdant surroundings that are the most captivating elements of the image, however. The meadow and its rich carpet of flowers rivals the lushness found in Botticelli's *Primavera*. The birds overhead, together with the basket carrying nymph at the far right, are resonant with the nearly contemporary Santa Maria Novella frescoes by Domenico Ghirlandaio, particularly *The Visitation*. In matters of design and articulation of the figures, Piero most closely approaches the naturalism and conciseness of Domenico, rather than Leonardo or even Signorelli—albeit with passages of typically awkward anatomy and faulty perspective.[105] The luminous colour and magnification of detail that again reveals Piero's attraction for natural phenomena is idiosyncratic in its obsessiveness. It is, for example, in his botanical fidelity, most particular to his earlier period, that Piero shows a delicate dimension that is to differ so strikingly from the rougher and bolder technique that emerges in later religious works such as the Yale and Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpieces.

The Hartford and Ottawa canvases certainly have more in common than their states of conservation. As companion pieces (perhaps in the absence of one or more other images), like the Metropolitan Museum panels, we must view the canvases together thematically in order to understand them fully. It is because of this need for some type of intelligible relation that the Hartford image is unlikely to be the Hylas myth or the story of Telemachus on the island of Circe, just as the Ottawa

picture cannot incorporate the myths of Endymion (as the lying figure in foreground), Tithonus (cricket), Mars, Venus and Cupid (right hand family group) or Neptune-Hippius (the horseman at center). It seems much less strained to view the images as parts of a narrative rather than as symbol-laden allegories. The most plausible narrative reading of the Ottawa picture centers around the seated figure of Vulcan asborbed at his anvil, accompanied by Aeolus and his bellows.[106] Lucian's *De Sacrificiis* described the immaculate birth of Hera's 'wind-child, Hephaestus, who, however, is not in great luck, but works at the blacksmith's trade over a fire, living in smoke most of the time and covered with cinders, as is natural with a forge-tender; moreover, he is not even straight-limbed, as he was lamed by his fall when Zeus threw him out of Heaven' [107] Typically, Piero chose to depict the Fire God not in a forge as commonly shown, but within an exotic landscape. The location may be Lemnos, populated by its inhabitants, or if we are to believe Virgil's account in the *Aeneid*, the setting may be somewhere between Sicily and the island of Lipari, the archipelago belonging to Aeolus.[108]

The divine smith is shown fashioning a horseshoe, an act in which the young horseman shows much interest, while Aeolus looks up from his bellows to study the rider. In the background, we witness the beginnings of a construction, odd for the simultaneous presence of a hammer, nails and saw together with a primitive club and unsquared timbers. Interestingly, this crude structure is strikingly similar to the more advanced one in the central background of the aforementioned Prometheus illustration from the 1497 edition of the *Metamorphoses*, showing the evolving industry of man (fig. 35).[109] A mother and child huddle in front of a seated male nude (the father?) at right, while a younger nude lies asleep in the direct foreground.[110] The latter's conspicuous fetal-like presence is difficult to explain in iconographic terms and may suggest the secure contentedness of an advanced society that is expressed by Vulcan's mastery of fire and metal. In *Genealogia deorum*, XII. 70, Boccaccio referred to two kinds of fire. The first was celestial, invisible and associated with Jupiter. The second was the elemental fire of Vulcan, resulting from the first and responsible for phenomena such as thunder and lightning. Notwithstanding Prometheus' punished theft of fire from Jove's chariot, only this second type of fire was accessible to man. On one hand, Vulcan was often perceived as the mythological figure of greatest ridicule—a cuckold. Yet Vulcan also embodied a vital civilising aspect; wedded to Venus, his character assumed the allegory of Craftsmanship allied to Grace or Beauty. The list of Vulcan's magical creations is impressive: the armour of Achilles and Hector, Agamemnon's sceptre, Harmonia's necklace and Ariadne's golden thread. Even though Vulcan is occupied in a much more prosaic task in Piero's painting, such an implication of superior skill and integrity for one's craft may have held a special appeal for a patron successful and ambitious in business.

The question of the patronage of the Vulcan canvases remains unsolved. Most common is the naming of Francesco del Pugliese; the profile image of Vulcan, specifically, has an element of portraiture, possibly representing Francesco himself.[111] This remains speculation, however, since no verifiable portraits of the merchant have come down to us. Most recently, the backing of the Ottawa canvas has provided a new provenance clue, revealing an inscription of *c*.1800 (?) and implying that the work was once owned by an underaged member of the Micheli (or Michele) family.[112] As of the present, the commonplace surname unfortunately offers no additional direction in the search for the canvas' original provenance.[113] Aside from the Pugliese, two other, albeit equally hypothetical, possibilities present themselves in the Strozzi and Capponi families. The image of the falcon appears conspicuously in the foreground of the Hartford picture, calling to mind the Strozzi heraldic device. The falcon emblem appears on either end of a cassone from the Apollonio di Giovanni workshop from the Palazzo Strozzi, now at the Metropolitan Museum.[114] The relatively uncommon instance of a late quattrocento work on canvas may also point to other possibilities. Subjects depicted on such a support usually dealt with secular subjects, with Piero, Botticelli and the Pollaiuoli (and their three lost *Labours of Hercules* canvases for the Medici) offering the best examples.

One Biblical personage also found particular favour with artists working on canvas. Narratives involving Moses appeared in Rosso's *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro* (Uffizi) for Giovanni Bandini and Perino del Vaga's Moses canvases, in two of the most notable examples. Significantly, a mid-1530s inventory of Lodovico Capponi's house recorded five canvases of 'istorie di Moisè'.[115] Could this include the two Piero canvases, quite feasibly parts of a larger narrative cycle as has long been suspected, with an erroneous attribution of subject? It is not out of the question that the compiler of the inventory could have mistaken Piero's images for the Biblical subject, thinking the Hartford work to represent 'The Finding of Moses', despite the discrepancy in the child's age, and the Ottawa companion showing the Israelites building shelter while at rest in the wilderness. In addition to their successful silk business, the Capponi also had a *battiloro* company and the reference to the blacksmith god, the embodiment of metal craftsmanship, would also certainly seem fitting. Such theories remain unproven, however, until further documentation can be found.

Piero's love of the animal world may, in this case, assist with the dating of the commission. Besides Piero's inclusions of a soaring pheasant and a cricket and butterfly in the right corner of the foreground, it is the giraffe wandering at right that seizes our attention. The animal is very likely to have been executed from a contemporary live model. On 11 November 1487, the beast arrived in Florence as a gift from the Sultan of Egypt to the Medici and the Signoria. In his *Diary*, Luca Landucci famously described how a shipment of rare animals was presented to the Signoria, including: 'Una giraffa molto grande e molto bella e piacevole; com'ella fussi fatta se ne può vedere i

molti luoghi in Firenze dipinte. E vissi qui più anni' [116] Similar in a general sense to Francis I's emblematic elephant, the Medici giraffe came to stand as a symbol of political potency. Thus, using 1487 as a probable *terminus post quem*, it is possible to place the Vulcan works between 1487-1500. Such a date is in accord with the pair's stylistic qualities, similar to other works of the same period such as the *Simonetta Vespucci* and *Venus, Cupid and Mars* panels.

In observing the manner in which Piero disregards or recasts traditional forms and takes on the challenges of new subjects—not only in his flexible use of literary sources but also the highly original pictorial treatment of the subject matter—we must again address the question of the selection process for these unusual subjects. It appears increasingly credible that Piero enjoyed a large degree of creative independence in his handling of the classical stories, many of which had rarely been portrayed on a monumental scale, if at all. This ubiquitous element of imaginative originality leads to the conclusion that patrons such as Francesco del Pugliese would have sought out a painter like Piero with specific intent, to design and execute the type of *favole* in which he was known to have excelled in both sensibility and style. The patron would have suggested the subject and, perhaps with the aid of a more learned adviser, provided the relevant literary template.[117] In Piero's case, the latter direction may not have been too necessary, as the most probable texts by classical authors were transmitted through Boccaccio, and in their original, were not by any means obscure at the time and were reasonably accessible. The mentioned pictorial departures from the Lucretius text, for example, certainly may have been within Piero's realm of decision making, motivated above all by aesthetic concerns. In images studied here, Piero repeatedly exploited his own strength of *fantasia* to great effect, raising Alberti's urging of *varietà* to the highest level. *The Forest Fire* and *The Construction of a Palace*, which are the strongest candidates for being viewed both literally and allegorically, are the two images most loosely associated with any particular textual source and, perhaps more than any other secular works, serve as demonstration pieces of Piero's artistic license. Teeming with its real and imagined beasts, *The Forest Fire* best illustrates this unbridled flight of the imagination. Most revealingly, technical analysis of the Oxford panel offers a window into Piero's working process and intent by showing that the appearance of human faces on two of the animals was a product of Piero's whimsy rather than a literal reading of a classical text. As such discoveries prove, the dependence on texts without careful attention to the visual evidence and, in turn, visual examination unaided by further technical studies can often prove deceiving.

Piero's inclusion of fire in every image discussed, with the exception of two, is a part of the painter's exhibition of virtuosity. It is for this reason that Piero's talents appealed to such a great degree to patrons seeking secular paintings and, likewise, the reason that the placement of all five (or even six, including the Sarasota panel) works in a series format remains highly dubious. In

justification of this scepticism, the fire motif plays a different function in nearly every work and appears to have minimal connection with the development of civilisation, save for methods of hunting. Fire fulfills a threatening purpose in the Metropolitan Museum pictures, a spectacular 'conceit' in the Oxford blaze, and is understated as a practical aid in Vulcan's crafting of a horseshoe. In fact, Lucretius mentioned fire only in an implicit manner. Nor are the supposed different phases clearly distinguished from one another, as one would expect from a cycle.

On the function and placement of the *spalliere*, I believe that Panofsky's proposal of a coherent cycle similarly creates too many incongruities. The combined themes of man's evolution, according to Lucretius, and the allegorical significance of fire and its civilising influence (Virgil) make for an incoherent and unnecessarily complex iconographic program. Certainly, it would have been unusual to have made such a cycle—intended for an aristocratic but not a courtly residence—so difficult to read, of different scales and supports, colour schemes and narrative sources that would have included Lucretius, Diodorus Siculus, Virtruvius, Virgil and Homer. The two Metropolitan Museum *spalliere* most likely depict two different scenes of the same narrative and, therefore, the same rather than two progressive stages of civilisation. *The Forest Fire*, in which no phase of evolution is at all distinct and man makes but a modest appearance, is most likely a single, independent panel. The Vulcan canvases may be lacking at least one companion picture and, based on differences in support, size and content, formed their own separate narrative. Ultimately, there may have been three separate commissions. Francesco del Pugliese's involvement notwithstanding, the works most likely involved diverse patronage and, in many ways, it is the unresolved provenances of the Vulcan canvases (Michele?) and *The Construction of a Palace* (Medici?) that may hold a large part of the answer, despite the latter's stylistic discrepancies, indicating a later date.

Taken separately, the commissioned myths do not lose any part of their compelling visual appeal. Largely decorative but still extremely striking in their narrative intricacies, the works discussed surely must have delighted their patrons. Irrespective of the political views that are so often adduced to secular domestic paintings, the pictures serve as intellectually and visually inviting images designed to titillate and offer entertainment to their owner. It is in the same unlimited flexibility of interpretation that Piero scholars have found so unsettling in such puzzling pictures that—inversely—their owners probably derived so much pleasure and pride.

[1] 'Multi multa ferunt, eadem sentita nulli est: / pulchrius est pictis istud imaginibus'. Quoted from S. Settis, *La Tempesta interpretata. Giorgione: committenti, il soggetto* (Turin, 1978), p. 118.
[2] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 66-7. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 655-6.
[3] The Pugliese family, originating in Prato, was one of the oldest in the Oltrarno, reaching back to 1251 in the person of messer Ridolfo, a judge and the first of eight *priori di Libertà* that the family gave to the State between 1463-1529 (see ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 4358). Also see ASF, Ceramelli Papiani 3887 (Pugliese); and a short passage on the family in B. Elliker (ed.), *La Famiglie di Firenze: Testi e Ricerche Araldiche di Roberto Ciabani*, 4 vols. (Firenze, 1992), III, p. 852.
[4] D. Clark, 'Filippino Lippi's *The Virgin Inspiring St. Bernard* and Florentine Humanism', *Studies in Iconography*, VII-VIII (1981-2), pp. 175-87. Clark adds that Piero del Pugliese showed a great interest in Stoic writings, referring specifically to the scrap of paper on the rock behind St. Bernard in Filippino Lippi's Badia altarpiece, with the inscription 'Substine et abstine' (bear and forebear) from Epictetus. Clark suggests that Piero del Pugliese may have been responsible for choosing ancient Stoic texts to provide Vasari's mentioned *istorie* for the Pugiese palace. Nonetheless, the patron of Piero's New York works is much more likely to have been Francesco; furthermore, the images cannot be claimed as clear illustrations of any particular Stoic philosopher's writings, including Epictetus, or as straightforward representations of a favoured return to the primitive life of ancient man in general.
[5] Francesco's enrollment in the guild is noted in ASF, Arte della Lana, 22, carta 152.
[6] Giovanni Cambi, *Istorie*, 4 vols. (Florence, 1785-6), XXI, pp. 58, 125; and XXII, p. 28. Cited in E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (NY, 1967), p. 57, n. 67.
[7] H. Horne, '"The Last Communion of St. Jerome" by Sandro Botticelli', *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, X (1915), pp. 52-4, 101-2.
[8] Panofsky, 1967, pp. 52-4. Among the list's extant works: Botticelli's *Passing of St. Jerome* (Metropolitan Museum, New York) and two shutters by Filippino, a *Noli mi tangere* and the *Christ and the Samarian Woman at the Well* (Pinacoteca Manfrediniana e Raccolte del Seminario Patriarcale, Venice), intended to flank a Flemish *Head of Christ*. Two mentioned shutters by Botticelli, made for the missing *Last Judgment* by Fra Angelico, may be the *Annunciation* shutters presently in Moscow. Remaining works of uncertain or untraced identity included Filippino Lippi's *Nativity with Magi* and a little work by Pesellino.
[9] Horne, 1915, pp. 104.
[10] ASF, MSS Carte Dei, 38/5. Cited in Leonardo Ginori-Lisci, *I Palazzi di Firenze nella Storia e nell'arte*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1972), II, p. 773.
[11] For the chronology of the building of the Pugliese's great family-house: H. Horne, 1915, pp. 73-4.
[12] Panofsky, 1967, pp. 33-67. Elena Capretti also includes *The Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* in the decorative series, identifying it as a stage in which fire was used to forge metals and arms, eventually leading to carnage (Lucretius, V. 988-1010). However, this inclusion has little basis when examined in terms of physical evidence (the London panel is much wider—260 cm—and the painting technique is significantly more refined) and, more important, literary sources. The *Battle* corresponds very faithfully to a passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.
[13] For recent analyses of the panels see: F. Zeri and E. Gardner, *Italian Paintings. A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Florentine School* (NY, 1971), pp. 176-80; Bacci, 1976, pp. 88-9; Fermor, 1993, pp. 62-81; Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 109-110; Capretti, in Weil-Garris Brandt (ed.), *Giovinezza di Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Palazzo Vecchio and Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 1999-2000 (Florence, 1999), pp. 230-32.
[14] S. Craven, 'Three Dates for Piero di Cosimo', *The Burlington Magazine* CXVII (Sept. 1975), pp. 572-6.
[15] This is in agreement with Bacci, 1976, pp. 88-9. Everett Fahy draws the opposite conclusion, dating the images *c.*1507 on the basis of the 'drastically distorted' forms while placing the more 'balanced' *Bacchanals* at *c.*1500.

[16] Landucci recounted: '25th June. There was a hunt in the Piazza de' Signori: two lions, and bears, leopards, bulls, buffaloes, stags and many other wild animals of various kinds, and horses; the lions were brought in after the rest, and chiefly the one that came first did nothing, on account of the great tumult of the crowd; except that certain big dogs approaching him, he seized one with his paw and dropped it dead on the ground, and a second the same, without taking any notice of the other wild beasts: when he was not molested, he stood quite still, and then went away further on. They had made a tortoise and a porcupine, inside of which were men who made them move along on wheels all over the Piazza, and kept thrusting at the animals with their lances.' Quoted in C. Lloyd, *The Forest Fire* (Oxford, 1984), unpaginated.

[17] For a reproduction of the reliefs see Ginori Lisci, 1972, I, p. 531, fig. 432.

[18] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 66. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 655.

[19] Examples of Uccello's animal sketches exist in Dijon's Musée des Beaux-Arts (inv. 1745), Vienna's Albertina (inv. 27), and Stockholm (inv. 45 and 46). For Vasari's mention of the drawings: Vasari, 1568, B-B, III, p. 65.

[20] The 1492 Medici inventory included a 'battalgie e draghj et lionj' and a 'storia di Paris'. Vasari made no mention of the latter, however, instead describing another lion battle. J. Pope-Hennessy, *Uccello* (London, 1950), p. 172.

[21] Tarcaniota even collaborated with the monk and scholar Pietro Candido on a 1513 edition of *De Rerum Natura*, dedicated to Tommaso Soderini, who in turn is known to have had a book of Lucretius' paraphrases as early as 1504. See C. Whistler and D. Bomford, *'The Forest Fire' by Piero di Cosimo* (Oxford, 1999), p. 22.

[22] The manuscript was rediscovered by Poggio Bracciolini in 1418, during the Council of Constance, and sent to Florence, where it was copied by Niccolò Niccoli, who owned it until 1434 (the copy coming to be known as the Codex Laurentianus 35.30). For the transmission of the text, including pre-Renaissance copies: L.D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of Latin Classics* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 218-22.

[23] *Indice generale degli incunaboli delle biblioteche d'Italia*, eds. Centro nazionale d'informazioni bibliografiche, Teresa Maria Guarnaschelli et al., 6 vols. (Rome, 1943-81), III, p. 247. Also see *Biografia Universale Antica e Moderna* (Venice, 1827), vol. XXXIII.

[24] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, I. 8.2, trans. Oldfather, 12 vols. (London, 1933), I, pp. 29-31. Diodorus also commented on Hephaestus and the origins of fire: 'when a tree on the mountains had been struck by lightning and the forest near by was ablaze, Hephaestus went up to it...and greatly enjoyed the heat' (Ibid., I. 13.3, Oldfather, I, p. 47). Diodorus' forty-book *World History*, compiled in Greek between *c.*60-30 BC, has been commonly judged as an eclectic 'compilation only as valuable as its authorities'. A Latin translation of Books I-V by Poggio Bracciolini was published in Bologna, 1472.

[25] For an in-depth discussion of Book V and Lucretius' ambivalent position on the idea of progress see A. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1935), pp. 222-42.

[26] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, V. 966-9, trans. W Rouse (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 451-3.

[27] Ibid., V. 1250-51 (Rouse, p. 475).

[28] Ibid., V. 1011-14 (Rouse, p. 457).

[29] Ibid., V 916-19 (Rouse, p. 451).

[30] L.F Kaufmann, *The Noble Savage and Satyr Families in Renaissance Art* (Ann Arbor, 1984), p. 77. Of particular interest is Chapter VII: 'Lust and its Taming: Italian Renaissance Satyrs', pp. 65-81.

[31] Fermor, 1993, pp. 80-81.

[32] Ibid., p. 80.

[33] Horne, 1915, pp. 52-6, 101-5.

[34] On man's discovery of beneficent arts and their subsequent use for evil purposes as a result of man's moral failings, see Boas and Lovejoy, 1935, pp. 239-40. The authors observe, however, that

there is a strain in Lucretius in which he appears as 'even a precursor of the enthusiasts for the idea of progress in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'. The authors particularly stress the resonance found in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*.

[35] The *Liber de naturis rerum creatarum* (*On the Nature of Created Things*) of 1492, and its illustrations of marvellous inhabitants and hybrid creatures, is a good example of such a bestiary, dealing in part with the fantastic imagined races of mankind from distant lands. See Jean Michel Massing's entry in J. Levenson (ed.), *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1991-2 (New Haven, 1991), p. 125, cat. no. 6. Also see Massing's 'Early European Images of America: The Ethnographic Approach', pp. 514-20, for responses to newly discovered Aztec and other native American artifacts by Northerners such as Dürer and Burgkmair.

[36] See Daniel Boorstin's 'The Realms of Pride and Awe', Ibid., pp. 15-16.

[37] For the Latin Basel edition of *De insulis inventis* (1492), see Ibid., p. 237, cat. no. 136. The original detailed *Journal* of Columbus' journey had been lost.

[38] While arguing for a strong connection with Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, Catherine Whistler and David Bomford also suggest that the Ashmolean panel could have been a 'separate undertaking for a relative or friend of the original patron [Pugliese]'. Whistler-Bomford, 1999, p. 23.

[39] The inventory entry was first noted by Grassi and confirmed again in a letter from Conte Bernardo Rucellai to Christopher Lloyd in 1972. See C. Lloyd, *A Catalogue of the Earlier Italian Paintings in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1977), p. 150, n. 1. Towards the end of the First World War, the panel passed into the collection of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, where it remained until 1933.

[40] Anonymous contributor to the *The Burlington Magazine* XXXVIII (1921), p. 257. For Lucian's tale, see *Lucian*, trans. A.M. Harmon, 8 vols. (London, 1913), I, pp. 239-357.

[41] Vitruvius, *De architectura*, II. Chapter 1. 1-3, trans. F. Granger, 2 vols. (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1931) I, pp. 77-81. Vitruvius' passage was retold by Boccaccio in *Genealogia deorum*, XII. 70, ed. V. Romano (Bari, 1951), II, p. 624. Aware of Vitruvius' 'pagan' stance, Boccaccio took care to add that Adam was the real begetter of advance.

[42] Vitruvius, II. Chapter 1. 6-7 (Granger, I, p. 85).

[43] Ibid, VII. Chapter 5. 4 (Granger, II, pp. 105-7).

[44] Lucretius, V. 1241-57 (Rouse, p. 475).

[45] Whistler-Bomford, 1999, pp. 18-21. For the passages on language: Lucretius, V. 1028-1090 (Rouse, pp. 459-63).

[46] Ibid., V. 1091-1101 (Rouse, pp. 463-5).

[47] Ibid., V. 837-54 (Rouse, p. 447).

[48] The most illuminating discoveries were discussed by David Bomford in the first of his Oxford Slade Lectures, 'Art and Uncertainty', 22 January 1997; a more extensive summary of the examinations is published in Whistler-Bomford, 1999, pp. 4-9. For other recent technical findings consult R. White, J. Pilc and J. Kirby, 'Analyses of Paint Media' in *The National Gallery Technical Bulletin* XIX (London, 1998), pp. 74-95. As stated in the Table of Results (p. 87), Piero used a heat-bodied walnut oil medium as in his *Death of a Nymph*, producing the same type of richer, more saturated colour effects and pleasing surface finish.

[49] As revealed by the IRR, the painting's underdrawing is generally more fine and exact than the fluid rendering detected in the *Death of a Nymph*. This is especially evident in the detailed delineation of the foreground lion and its anatomical details, tail and whiskers.

[50] Piero's other changes in the painting process include the repositioning of some of the flames and shadows (revealed in layers of red paint beneath black in the central part of the painting), the outlines of the landscape and the altered flight of birds (starlings?) in the left distance. See Whistler-Bomford, 1999, pp. 6-8.

[51] Tempera and oil on panel, 70.5 x 169.5 cm, three panel construction. The rebuilding of the *Hunting Scene*'s previously unsound support was carried out by Wedekind in 1951. The picture was cleaned in 1967. See The Metropolitan Museum of Art's conservation records.
[52] Tempera and oil on panel, 70.5 x 168.9 cm, three panel construction. Again see the Museum's conservation records for the panel's history of cleanings, reattachment, and paint compensation (from 1928-67).
[53] Lorenzo also wrote wistfully of 'The Golden Age' in *A Wood of Love*, II (1486-92). See Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. J. Thiem (University Park, Pa., 1991), pp. 141-56. Some passages of the *silva* poem are akin to Lucretius, Book V: the longing for the unspoiled age before Prometheus when there was no animosity between the beasts, and all lived in harmony, free of jealousy or revenge. See verses 84 and 113 for the desired return to a pre-Promethean state (Thiem, pp. 147, 154).
[54] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Selve d'Amore*, I. 7-8, in *Tutte le opere. Scritti d'amore*, ed. G. Cavalli, 3 vols. (Milan, 1958), II, pp. 280-81. Quoted in translation in R. Turner, *The Vision of Landscape in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton, 1966), pp. 244-5. Turner raises the possibility that Lorenzo's writings and strong interest in the pastoral tradition may have influenced Piero's art.
[55] Some illustrations include: Gozzoli's Palazzo Medici frescoes of 1459, in 'The Room of the Magi'. Pisanello's *Vision of St. Eustace* (National Gallery, London) and numerous animal studies in the Louvre. Pollaiuolo: landscapes in the Hercules small panel series (Uffizi), *Apollo and Daphne* or *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (both in National Gallery, London). Uccello: animal studies from Vasari's book of drawings (Stockholm) and lost *Animal Battles* for the Palazzo Medici.
[56] For identifications of each bird type see Whistler-Bomford, 1999, pp. 10-11.
[57] *A Bear and Her Cub; Two Deer; The Head of an Ox*. Pen and brown ink over faintly visible metalpoint indications on rose-salmon prepared paper, 14.9 x 18.2 cm. Boymans-van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam, inv. no. I. 242. W. Griswold dates the study 1500-5, thus coinciding closely to the Oxford painting. Piero's sheet and its suggested contours and unclear anatomies forms a sharp contrast to Leonardo's animal studies and their scientific rigour. See W. Griswold, *The Drawings of Piero di Cosimo* (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1988) pp. 275-6, fig. 45. Second animal study (Griswold, 1988, fig. 13): *An Ox*. Black chalk and white heightening on blue tinted paper, 23.4 x 17.6 cm. Royal Library, Windsor, inv. 12796.
[58] Pliny the Elder, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake, (Chicago, 1976), pp. 132-3. 'He [Apelles] also painted the unpaintable, thunder, for example, lightning and thunderbolts...'
[59] Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo On Painting*, ed. M. Kemp (New Haven and London, 1989), p. 233.
[60] Lucretius wrote on the cultivation of fields in Book V. 1361-1378 (Rouse, p. 485).
[61] Recent investigations of the panel include: M. Kemp's entry in J. Levenson (ed.), *Circa 1492...*, 1991, pp. 251-2; K. Weil-Garris Brandt, 'The Relation of Sculpture and Architecture in the Renaissance', in Millon and Lampugnani (eds.), *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi to Michelangelo* (Milan, 1994), pp. 80-97; P. Tomory, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings Before 1800*, The John and Marble Ringling Museum of Art (Sarasota, 1976), pp. 14-15; Forlani-Capretti, 1996, 130-31; and Bacci, 1966, pp. 104-5 and 1976, pp. 96-7. The image is illustrated as an example of building practice in F. Cardini, *Europe 1492: Portrait of a Continent 500 Years Ago* (NY, 1989), p. 69.
[62] The Medici provenance was noted by Sylvia Mascalchi in her 1983 thesis on the Medici painting collection in the seventeenth century. The panel that can be assumed to have been Piero's was described as 'a long, narrow painting over a chimney, representing a building [under construction]'. No artist's name was given in the registrar.
[63] Lucretius, V. 1108-1111 (Rouse, p. 465).
[64] The Sarasota panel measures 82.6 x 196.9 cm, inclusive of a 5.1 cm strip at the top. Even without it, the panel measures approximately 7 in. higher than the Metropolitan panels. The work survives untrimmed, evidenced by the ragged lip of paint and priming. The panel remains in good condition,

with most of the small damages having been confined to the upper half. Some abrasion was found in areas such as the mounted figure directly at center. As in the *Death of a Nymph*, thumb prints were found in the foreground and other areas, preserved beneath thick wax and varnish.

[65] Weil-Garris Brandt in *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi...*, 1994, p. 86, n. 17.

[66] Horizontals and orthogonals are also incised into the panels' ground in the three *Ideal Cities spalliere* (see Krautheimer in n. 68 below).

[67] Bacci also observes this parallel with the Borgherini panels and even refers to Piero's 'postmannerist figures' in the background of the Sarasota work. Bacci, 1966, pp. 104-5.

[68] Weil-Garris Brandt mentions the relation of the *Ideal Cities* and their rhetorical purpose to Piero's panel, before proceeding to enumerate Piero's various departures, in *The Renaissance from Brunelleschi...*, 1994, p. 87. For discussions on *the Ideal Cities* specifically, see R. Krautheimer, 'The Panels in Urbino, Baltimore and Berlin Reconsidered', in Ibid., pp. 233-57; and Kemp in *Circa 1492...*, 1991, pp. 249-51. In discussing the Sarasota painting, Kemp refers to it as a 'vision of architectural optimism that aligns it in function with the spalliera paintings of ideal townscapes in Urbino, Baltimore and Berlin' (Ibid., p. 251).

[69] M. Calvesi, 'Un quadro in "cantiere"', *Ars* II, no. 7 (8) (July 1998), pp. 77-85. Referring to several passages in the first and second Books of Samuel and the first Book of Kings (i.e. the three Books of Kings) in support of his hypothesis, Calvesi identifies the structure with the 'house of David' built on the ground of Jerusalem (acquired by David, as God had instructed through Nathan) by David's son, Solomon. In fact, Calvesi identifies the tunic-dressed horseman and accompanying boy as David taking Solomon to the site of the temple. Calvesi proceeds to interpret the temple as a symbol of the Church, connecting it with the construction of the new basilica of St. Peter's in particular. The reference to the Temple of Solomon was first made by Bacci, 1976, p. 97.

[70] W. Smith, 1971 article (Michigan State, Department of Art, 1969), in Ringling Museum curatorial file.

[71] Capretti also proposes this link to the via Laura design in Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 131. For an in-depth study of the extravagant palace design by Giuliano and its drawn plan by his brother Antonio, see L. Pellecchia, 'Designing the Via Laura Palace: Giuliano da Sangallo, the Medici, and Time', in M. Mallett and N. Mann (eds), *Lorenzo the Magnificent. Culture and Politics*, Warburg Institute Colloquia (London, 1996), pp. 37-63. The palace's hypothetical reconstruction is illustrated in fig. 2 (p. 50).

[72] Pellecchia, 1996, p. 37.

[73] Ibid., pp. 37-47. The Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi sketch (282 A)—a composite drawing conceived almost as a 'paste-up', made of four sheets, with the palace and gardens occupying a single large sheet (see fig. 1 in Pellecchia article)—reveals two inscriptions, referring to houses bought by Perugino in 1494 and 1498, thus serving as a *terminus post quem* as a Medici palace could not have been designed during their exile from Florence.

[74] Ibid., p. 47. As indicated in the Uffizi sketch, some property was marked for demolition, while other inscriptions reflect a concern for economic matters.

[75] Ibid., pp. 47-8. Pellecchia also points to an interesting potential element of competition between Giuliano, who considered himself the Medici's chief architect, and Leonardo, who also put forth a building plan for a new, spectacular Medici palace around this time.

[76] Tomory, 1976, pp. 14-15.

[77] This guild association is proposed by David Franklin in *Painting in Florence from 1500 to 1550* (provisional title; forthcoming).

[78] Federico Zeri (1959) and Everett Fahy (1965) are the most notable scholars to have argued for the inclusion of the panel as a culminating scene in a 'Civilisation' series, dating it *c.*1507.

[79] Kemp, *Circa 1492...*, 1991, p. 252. In the first chapter of Book V, Vitruvius described how 'the Greeks lay out their forums in the form of a square surrounded by very spacious double colonnades,

adorn them with columns set rather closely together, and with entablatures of stone or marble, and construct walls above in the upper story'.

[80] Weil-Garris Brandt, 1994, p. 88.

[81] For an illustration of the Bettini da Fano image in Basinio da Parma's *Epos Hesperis*, see J.G. Alexander, ed., *The Painted Page: Italian Renaissance Book Illumination 1450-1550*, exh. cat., Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1994 (London, 1994), p. 91, fig. 30. Another depiction of Renaissance building practice is found in the frontispiece of Filarete's *De architectura*, Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, Lat. VIII. 2, fol. 1.

[82] In this respect, it would be interesting to speculate on a possible connection with the Palazzo Pugliese. The twin division of the ideal palace into two equal parts mirrors the north and south division of the Palazzo Pugliese in 1480, between Francesco and his uncle.

[83] For the most complete discussions of the Hartford canvas, aside from Panofsky's text, see J.K. Cadogan, ed., *Wadsworth Atheneum Paintings II. Italy and Spain. Fourteenth through Nineteenth Centuries* (Hartford, 1991), pp. 122-5; Bacci, 1966, pp. 76-7 and 1976, p. 89; Fermor, 1993, pp. 75-9; and Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 97-9. For the Ottawa companion canvas see: M. Laskin and M. Pantazzi, eds., *Catalogue of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa: European and American Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts 1300-1800*, 2 vols. (Ottawa, 1987), I, pp. 221-6; Bacci, 1966, pp. 77-8 and 1976, p. 89; Fermor, 1993, pp. 75-9; and Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 97-100.

[84] *The Finding of Vulcan* (Hartford): oil and tempera on canvas, 155 x 174.5 cm. *Vulcan and Aeolus* (Ottawa): oil and tempera on canvas, 155.5 x 166.5 cm. A horizontal seam, running along the top quarter of the paintings, may indicate that the looms were not large enough to accommodate such broad canvases.

[85] J.M. Reifsnyder, 'Artists' Canvas—Or Just An Old Tablecloth?', in *Painting Techniques, History, Materials, and Studio Practice*, summaries of the papers at the Dublin Congress (International Institute of Conservation Conference), Dublin (Sept., 1998).

[86] Reifsnyder mentions two Florentine examples, by artists from the Medici court: Giovanni Bilivert's *Allegory of Vanitas* (a seicento work) and Justus Susterman's *Portrait of Eleonora I Gonzaga*. Later examples include Titian's *Paolo III with Nephews* (Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples) and Domenichino's *Erminia and the Shepherds* (Louvre). The surface was a favoured one in Caravaggio's oeuvre.

[87] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 67: 'E così un quadro di Marte e Venere con i suoi Amori e Vulcano, fatto con una grande arte e con una pazienza incredibile'

[88] Horne, 1915, p. 104.

[89] For the 1521 Vitruvius illustrations, see Panofsky, 1967, figs. 19 and 22 (*De architectura*, Como, 1521, fols. 31v and 32).

[90] K. Christiansen, 'Early Renaissance Narrative Painting in Italy', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* XLI (Fall 1983), p. 39. Christiansen writes: 'Moreover, despite their generic relation to Lucretius, Piero di Cosimo's [Metropolitan Museum] scenes cannot be construed as an illustration of any text, for in one important respect they depart from all ancient descriptions of primitive life'. This point of divergence is fire.

[91] Marcantonio Raimondi also executed two prints around 1505, showing *Vulcan, Venus and Cupid[s]*.

[92] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 479. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 519. Domenico painted 'a scene of Vulcan forging thunderbolts for Jove at the Spedaletto for Lorenzo de' Medici the elder, containing a number of nude figures'. Botticelli, Filippino Lippi and Perugino were said to have also participated in the commission.

[93] *Vulcan and Apollo* (?) 34.5 x 28.5 cm; 1955-81, Locamo (as found in Künsthistoriches Institute photo library).

[94] Homer, *Iliad*, XVIII. 395-400, trans. A.T. Murray, 2 vols. (London and NY, 1925), II, pp. 317. The god's fall and discovery are also alluded to in Virgil's *Aeneid*, VIII. 422-3, trans. Fairclough, 2 vols. (London, 1996), II, p. 89.
[95] Ibid., *Iliad*, I. 587-594 (Murray, I, pp. 47-9).
[96] Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, I, 3.5-6, trans. J. Frazer (London, 1933), pp. 21-3.
[97] The shared motif of the basket-carrying nymph at the far left and similarly posed figures in works by Filippo Lippi and Botticelli was noted in J. Paoletti, 'Wadsworth Atheneum. Italian School: Problems and Suggestions', *Apollo*, LXXXVIII (Dec. 1968), pp. 421-2.
[98] Panofsky, 1967, p. 37.
[99] The presence of the dogs in the Schifanoia fresco is typical of Car of Vulcan iconography. The temple on Etna, the location of Vulcan's smithy, was dedicated to Vulcan's dogs, symbolising fidelity and affection to one's true love (in this case, Vulcan's misdirected love for Venus). Ripa also mentioned the dog-led car motif in his *Carri de i quattro Elementi*. See G. de Tervarent, *Attributes et Symboles dans l'Art Profane 1450-1600* (Geneva, 1959), p. 79.
[100] This positive interpretation of the falcon was conveyed by Panofksy to Charles Cunningham, former Director of The Wadsworth Atheneum, in a letter of 13 June 1946. Panofsky refers to medieval naturalists (Bartholomaeus Anglicus), the Bestiaries, emblematists such as Pierio Valeriano and Typotius, and Father Ripa in his denial that the bird stands for wicked lust. 'In these sources we find a great variety of meanings, but most of them positive, and none of them remotely similar to prurience. The falcon may signify Exile (Ripa, on account of the *peregrinus*), logic (Ripa: clearsightedness), *ingenium* (Typotius), high spirit, prudence, fortitude, sublimity, the sun, God, speed, vital force, temperance, justice (all of this in Pierio Valeriano, on account of the falcon's good eyesight, courage, velocity, and generally good habits). And, first of all...*vergogna honesta* ('virtuous modesty'; Ripa with many sources), because the falcon refuses to eat impure things and hides himself when he has made a mistake. The falcon is thus a frequent attribute of "*nice* girls."' Also see Panofsky, Letter to the Editor, 'Comments on Douglas's *Piero di Cosimo*', *Art Bulletin*, XXVIII (Dec. 1946), pp. 288-9.
[101] Contrary to Panofsky's argument, there is a body of water present in the left background of the image, thus perhaps alluding to the River Ascanius. Wadsworth Atheneum Paintings Collection 'Information Sheet', pp. 4-5F. For similarly depicted water nymphs see the abduction of Hylas represented in the upper right corner of a cassone by a follower of Perugino in *The Legend of the Argonauts* of *c.*1470 (Metropolitan Museum, NY).
[102] No other stories of abandonment or rises from wilderness to greatness of deities or heroes in myths, legends, or historical accounts match Piero's treatment as well as the Vulcan tale. For an extensive list of examples, see G. Binder, *Die Aussetzung des Königskindes Kyros und Romulus* (Herstellung, 1964), pp. 128-57. Also: O. Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, trans. F. Robbins and S.E. Jelliffe (NY, 1952), pp. 3-86.
[103] The technical analysis is found in The Wadsworth Atheneum Painting Collection 'Information Sheet' regarding condition and visual documentation, catalogued by Marilyn Brown (1974), pp. 1-3B. The Hartford picture is badly abraded in areas, having undergone multiple cleanings and restorations. The canvas has been relined at least twice. Areas of extensive retouchings, as revealed by UV light, are especially prominent in the heavily repainted face of the nymph, standing second from the right, and portions of the sky, especially along the horizontal seam of the canvas. The vertical margins of the picture were terribly damaged before restoration; the right vertical had cut off about 1 ½ inches of the present canvas while the left margin was seriously torn, with a significant section of the water and half of the tree trunk missing (since repaired with new canvas). Several of the original *pentimenti* are visible: in the second figure from the left, a right portion of the drape in which she holds her dog has been painted over as grass, while her robe originally fell over the lower calf of her forward leg. The boy originally had longer hair, the lower part of which has been painted over as grass. The back foot of the kneeling woman at the bottom right is in a damaged state. Largely because to its physical state,

the work had unjustly been called 'rough and feeble in the highest grade, unworthy of Piero' (Foulkes, 1894) and 'too gross for Piero' (Venturi, 1911; this opinion was changed in 1927). J.W. Lane (1939) marked a 'burlesque' Botticellean flavour, while Bacci noted a certain 'grotesca' in the figures.

[104] Conservation reports and photographic evidence were consulted in The National Gallery of Canada's conservation department. The work was cleaned in 1937, the year of acquisition from the Schaeffer Galleries, at which time at least five coats of browned varnish were removed. With the varnish removal came the repaints, which proved to be 'unnecessarily large'. The male figure to the left of the seated woman with a child suffered the only major damage. The original paint was gone from a large portion of the face and its immediate surrounding areas. Much repainting had also been done around the feet of the white horse and 'for apparently no reason' since there appeared to be little damage; this repaint was removed and the legs were restored to their original size and shape. A UV fluorescence in 1966 again revealed the most damaged areas to be the seated man at right and the head of 'Aeolus' at the far left. Both the face of the man at right and the left arm/shoulder and back of 'Vulcan' appeared to be damaged and inpainted; the chest of 'Aeolus' is particularly abraded. Only local consolidation and readhesion of paint have taken place since then (1987 and 1995), and the work remains stable. A recent exhibition (2000) of both canvases at Ottawa's National Gallery, curated by David Franklin, included recent X-radiographs, showing *pentimenti* around the horseman's right arm and shoulder (originally higher) and the giraffe's horns (originally pointing closer to the left).

[105] Piero's surprisingly unstudied anatomies include the right hand of the seated man in profile at right and the head of the brown, gaping horse in the Ottawa canvas. Incongruous perspective is also found in Vulcan's anvil which has been recessed too far back from the figure's feet.

[106] Homer described the pair as occupied in this way in *The Odyssey*, X. 17 ff. In the *Libellus de imaginibus deorum*, Aeolus also was described as working two bellows ('flabia, instrumenta fabrilia'); see Panofsky, 1967, p. 46, n. 41.

[107] Lucian, *De Sacrificiis*, trans. A. Harmon (London, 1969), VI, pp. 153-73, esp. 161-3. In describing the god's fall, Lucian made a reference to another abused 'arch-craftsman', Prometheus: 'But Hephaestus came off quite well beside Prometheus. Who does not know what happened to him because he was too philanthropic? Taking him to Scythia, Zeus pegged him out on the Caucasus and posted an eagle at his side to peck at his liver every day' (Harmon, p. 163).

[108] Virgil, *Aeneid*, VIII. 416-23 (Fairclough, II, p. 89). If not Aeolis, the territory of the northernmost group of Greek immigrants to the western coast of Asia Minor, the setting may represent Boeotia, the land from which Aeolians were partly derived. Boetia, in central Greece, was well known for its horse breeding, which could perhaps help explain the inclusion of the animal in the Ottawa picture. See M. Cary, ed., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 12, 139.

[109] In this comparison, Panofsky's connection between the two myths is somewhat applicable: 'Thus the Prometheus compositions might be considered a belated post-script to the Vulcan epic, related to it in the abstract rather than concretely'. Panofsky, 1967, p. 51. The 'abstract' relation (based on man's progress through industry and ingenuity, thanks in part to the Fire God and Titan) must be emphasised, as I do not believe that the Prometheus *spalliere* and Vulcan canvases formed a unified series.

[110] Capretti notes a relation between the pose of the woman and child and Donatello's *Madonna Dudley* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London), which belonged in the Del Pugliese household collection, flanked by two Fra Bartolomeo panels (Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 100). For the Donatello relief, see P. Barocchi, ed., *Il Giardino di San Marco* (Florence, 1992), p. 72-8. I fail to see any convincing compositional derivation, however.

[111] Although damaged from the area inside the nose vertically down to the top of the chin, the Vulcan profile is not as badly disfigured as some of the others.

[112] This discovery was made by David Franklin and conveyed to me in March 2000.

[113] The most distinguished Florentines of the 18th and 19th centuries with a matching surname included the botanist Pier Antonio Micheli (1679-1737) and the nineteenth-century architect Vincenzo Micheli.

[114] The panels depict the conquest of Trebizond by Sultan Muhammad II in 1461. See: J. Pope-Hennessy and K. Christiansen's 'Secular Painting in 15th Century Tuscany: Birth Trays, Cassone Panels, and Portraits', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, XXXVIII (Summer 1980-Spring 1981), p. 13. Also: H. Nickel, 'Two Falcon Devices of the Strozzi: An Attempt at Interpretation', *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, IX (1974), pp. 229-32. In 1479, Benedetto da Maiano was commissioned by Filippo Strozzi to make 'uno chassone grande intarsiato, *chol falchone*, arme e divisa per tenere le mia scriture proprie' [own emphasis].

[115] For mention of the inventory see W. Bombe, *Nachlass-Inventare des Angelo da Uzzano und des Lodovico di Gino Capponi* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 45-6; and D. Franklin, *Rosso in Italy* (New Haven, 1994), p. 110, n. 90.

[116] L. Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516* (1583), ed. I. Del Badia (Florence, 1883), pp. 52-3, also found in Panofsky, 1967, p. 47, n. 44. The poor animal died before 1492, breaking its neck in a doorway.

[117] In *De pictura*, Alberti advised the artist to keep company with 'poets and orators who have many embellishments in common with painters and who have a broad knowledge of many things. These could be very useful in beautifully composing the istoria whose greatest praise consists in the invention. A beautiful invention has such force, as will be seen, that even without painting it is pleasing in itself alone'. Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. J. Spencer (New Haven and London, 1966), p. 90.

## Chapter V. The Early Altarpieces (1480-1500 and 1500-10)

The protean quality of Piero di Cosimo's painting style is most evident in the progression of his large-scale devotional paintings. Piero's altarpieces also comprise the few precious cases of documented commissions, enabling a more complete reconstruction of the artist's elusive chronology and patterns of patronage. The rare advantage of knowing a number of documentary sources—some new—behind the religious works not only allows for the establishment of personalised relationships between Piero and his base of patronage but also the patrons' special devotional ties to the requested religious images and their function. This type of localised focus presents each Piero altarpiece in its own light, with its own specific 'case history' in formal, iconographic and technical terms, in an attempt to answer how Piero organised the visual order of his altarpieces, both conceptually and structurally. By describing the foundation of exchange through the substantiating documents, each altarpiece can be categorised as a commodity in an economic sense, passing from producer to the consumer, and as particularised as the frame, *paliotto* (altar frontal) or candles surrounding it. The great interest, of course, lies in the fact that such visual commodities were intensely devotional and memorialising in nature.

Each of Piero's altarpieces, therefore, was a highly specific object executed for a family chapel and, in some communal situations, a chapel shared by a *compagnia*. In other words, 'rather than referring specifically to the liturgy of the mass, most altarpieces were tied into the liturgical functions of the church through the dedication of the altar or chapel to a particular cult, and to the celebration of that cult within the church calendar'.[1] Foregoing a cataloguing of Piero's eleven altarpieces in a long line of others produced by Florentine contemporaries in this period, the next two chapters will set out to establish the role played by members of a family or a confraternity in ordering each altarpiece and, consequently, Piero's artistic response to the iconographic demands and the physical chapel setting that he set out to accommodate. All are treated individually, with respect to the dual physical and spiritual requirements surrounding the altarpiece, which shift from one commission to the next.

In Piero's earliest period of altarpiece production (1480-1500), it is possible to mark a transition from Piero's indebtedness to the styles of Cosimo Rosselli and Filippino Lippi to the forging of his own personal idiom. In Piero's *Madonna and Child with SS. Onofrius and Augustine*, where the influence of Rosselli remains in the rigid and centralised composition and stolid Madonna, a sense of acute characterisation and tactility already appear in the figures of the two side saints. This attention to meticulously rendered surfaces and precision of detail is realised in the *Pala Del Pugliese* and again in the later Capponi *Visitation* and in the Innocenti Altarpiece. In these works, the purity of

light plays a main role in revealing the detail; it is the type of light that creates contrasts rather than subdued areas of fusion, producing a sharp over-all focus in which the picture surface is evenly articulated as the painter strives for an undifferentiated clarity of vision. By the early 1490s, Piero clearly begins to move away from the orbit of Filippino and closer to that of the Northern tradition and its incoming paintings and prints, which must have absorbed Piero in their minute observation and careful execution.

Yet while the influence of contemporary protagonists such as Filippino or Hugo van der Goes from the North and their disseminated ideas about art-making form an engrossing subject and deserve special attention, Piero certainly should not be overlooked as a major protagonist in altarpiece design in his own right as early as the 1480s. Similar to Filippino's Nerli Altarpiece in Santa Spirito, Piero's works for the Del Pugliese family in the eponymous *Pala Del Pugliese* and Innocenti Altarpiece prove remarkably novel in their involved interaction of saints, the appearance of the donor portrait in the guise of a saint and the use of the averted gaze among certain *sacra conversazione* participants. Many of these elements later find unmistakable echoes in the works of Pontormo and the latter's S. Ruffillo Altarpiece (*c.*1514), Pucci Altarpiece (1518) and St. Anne Altarpiece of 1527-8 in the Louvre (and its complex interplay of hands between the Virgin, Anne and the Christ Child). As will be explored in the second half of this chapter, the extraordinary qualities of Piero's Tedaldi *Incarnation* will also be explored. In a sense, it was precisely such a work that made possible another later pioneering effort of an earlier pupil: Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna of the Harpies*.

**I. 1480-1500**

On stylistic grounds, Piero's first altarpiece commission is commonly agreed to be the *Madonna and Child with SS. Lazarus and Sebastian*, datable to the early 1480s, in the church of SS. Michele Arcangelo e Lorenzo Martire in the small town of Montevettolini, outside Pistoia (fig. 45). The original church dedicated to St. Michael was probably constructed around 1200 and was noted in 1260 as belonging in the district of Vaiano. A May celebration in honour of St. Michael is mentioned in the statutes of 1410, pertaining to the eighth day of the month, one of the three feast days of the saint marking the apparition on Mount Gargano. The church of San Giovanni Battista e San Lorenzo a Vaiano, two kilometers from Montevettolini, was suppressed on 11 June 1449, and it appears that many of the church's objects (it is not possible to say which, in the absence of an inventory) were transferred to San Michele a Montevettolini, the present and more spacious location.[2]

In 1514, 'gli ufficiali maggiori del Comune diedero facolta agli operai di far dipingere un S. Sebastiano a spese ed a piacer loro'.[3] Instead, the officials found what they intended to commission to

be already present, in Piero's *Madonna and Child with SS. Sebastian and Lazarus*. The work was sighted in a different location at that date, hanging above the San Lazzaro altar, the fourth chapel to the right of the high altar.[4] In 1888, 'per allontanarlo da ogni possibile danno', it was cleaned and placed in the Chapel of the Sacrament, directly to the left of the main altar. The altarpiece was recorded for the first time in 1895 by Giuseppe Baronti, still without an attribution to Piero. Baronti wrote of a *Madonna and Child in Glory with SS. Francis and Anthony* by the Florentine Curradi (1595-1658) hanging opposite another panel, situated to its right—in the Chapel of the Sacrament. He attributed the latter to an unknown artist, mentioned by some as Lorenzo di Credi while showing the manner of Filippo Lippi. This second panel is certainly the one now attributed to Piero.

The identity of the saint to our left is revealed by the inscription at the picture's base: S. LAZARUS AVE GRATIA PLENA S. SEBASTIANUS. True to traditional representations, Piero depicts the saint as a young man and, judging by his iconography and pairing with St. Sebastian, as a plague saint. In his left hand, Lazarus holds a clapper, which was used as a signal warning of the arrival of someone stricken with the plague to those in the vicinity. A white dog lies at his feet, licking the sores marking his legs; this scriptural reference in the Gospel of St. Luke (XVI. 19-31) also constitutes a part of St. Lazarus' traditional iconography as plague saint.[5] While the Virgin Mary watches her son with a serene gaze, the animated Christ Child looks at St. Lazarus and blesses him. St. Lazarus responds by raising his own right hand to the infant, a gesture accented by the left hand's placement upon his heart. This privileged interaction between Lazarus and Christ leads one to suspect that the saint was at the source of the painting's (and altar's) dedication. Saints Lazarus and Sebastian are depicted as roughly the same age and both are clad in nothing but a cloak, though Sebastian's dramatically contrasts his companion's in its rich scarlet colour. Four arrow wounds blemish his pale skin, and he clasps two of the arrow shafts in his left hand while gesturing to the Christ Child with his right.

Previous confusion arose from the misidentification of St. Lazarus as St. Roch, who is much more frequently represented with Sebastian as a co-protector of plague victims in contemporary Tuscan altarpieces. In fact, the Sebastian and Roch pair appears in two later works in the church.[6] Nonetheless, Piero's left figure is missing Roch's most obvious attributes: the pilgrim attire, the walking staff, hat, boots and disclosed sores upon his upper thigh. The origin of this Piero commission remains unknown and the possibility cannot be discounted that one or both of the two saints correspond to the name of the work's patron. Yet, without documentation, the most probable explanation of the joint presence of the saints centers on the protection they offered from pestilence. As told in the likely fictitious *Acts* of the fifth century, Sebastian personified great courage at the hands of Diocletian's archers and showed an immunity from life-threatening injury, thus becoming

known as the church's most famous thaumaturge. In Montevettolini, there is a record of a hospital founded in 1348 on what is now via della Costa, used in times of pestilence 'bastava per andarvi a finire dolori e follie' [7]

While Federico Zeri's 1959 attribution to Piero has not been challenged since, this very early devotional image is Piero's most eclectic.[8] The stylistic mixture, together with the parochial nature of its commission, point to an early stage of Piero's career, concurrent with his apprenticeship to Rosselli. The relative robustness of Piero's Madonna hints at Piero's roots with his mentor. In this figure, Piero shows the last vestiges of his teacher's solidity and solemnity, as demonstrated in Rosselli's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* of 1478 for the Compagnia di Sant'Andrea dei Purgatori (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

In the figures of SS. Lazarus and Sebastian, Piero can also be seen reacting to some of the subtleties in the style of Filippino Lippi and, to a lesser extent, Botticelli. The two elongated and somewhat feminine figures recall Filippino's *Annunciation* tondi (Museo Civico, San Gimignano), commissioned in 1483, and especially the Uffizi *Pala degli Otto di Prractica*, with its pointing St. John the Baptist, of 1486—an image that also shares the feature of the *pietra serena* border at the bottom of Piero's Montevettolini picture, containing an inscription.[9] Although Filippino's altarpiece for the Signoria's Sala del Consiglio may date too late to have affected Piero's early commission directly, its enlivened interplay of figures and closely studied detail probably would not have been unfamiliar to Piero. It is, however, Piero's *Madonna and Child* in Stockholm's Royal Collection that best demonstrates the artist's exchange with Filippino during the 1480s. The latter picture differs only in minor detail from Filippino's *'Strozzi Madonna'* (Metropolitan Museum, New York), probably executed *c.*1487, before Filippino's departure for Rome (figs. 46-7).[10]

The Montevettolini composition is rather cramped, placed within an austere interior. The biforic window(s), of Netherlandish origin and reminiscent of Leonardo's *Benois Madonna* (Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg) of *c.*1478-80, open out onto a hazy landscape, an effective foil in its unfocused quality to the sharp finish of the foreground figures. The later *Manzi Altarpiece*, attributed to Bastiano Mainardi, now in Philadelphia's Johnson Collection, uses a similar compositional device, but with the addition of a third archway. Yet, how much more animated Piero's figures appear and how much more developed the landscape.

The technique of execution begins to foreshadow Piero's familiarity with oil painting and the realisation of its fluid potential. There are signs of Piero's blending of the medium in an effort to produce the desired colour and atmospheric effects. Citing the Montevettolini work in connection with the technical analysis carried out on Michelangelo's *Doni Tondo*, Ezio Buzzegoli writes that Piero's early example serves as 'proof that the young Piero di Cosimo was already perfectly versed in

a technique which was almost certainly of Flemish derivation. Here, besides the physical aspect of the layers of colour, we noted that the artist used his fingers to blend the colours and render them transparent, and that the underdrawing was executed on the preparatory layers of gesso and animal glue before a thin layer of white lead in an oily medium was applied, a typically Flemish technique'.[11] Therefore, already in the early 1480s, Piero was seeking the greater fusion and fluidity that oil could lend to the brush. The broad handling evident in such an early example disappears by the 1490s and the early years of the cinquecento, when the individual brushstrokes grow almost imperceptible in their smooth application.

Returning to painting in tempera (?), Piero's earliest output includes a *Madonna and Child with SS. Onofrius and Augustine* (private collection, Toronto), similar to the Montevettolini altarpiece in its reductive composition but radically different in the typology of figures (fig. 48).[12] Piero now endows the participants with greater presence. Imbued with a coarse rusticity, the figure of St. Onofrius stands in direct contrast to Montevettolini's two slender saints.

The painting's conservational factors conspire to make its dating a challenging task. The physical state varied dramatically throughout the picture prior to the restoration, with the Christ Child and the figure of Onofrius surviving in good condition, despite reconstruction in the saint's lower half. The Virgin, on the other hand, included repainted passages, most of all in the flattened left hand and the face—an alteration that explains her strangely blank expression.[13] While Capretti places the commission in the early 1490s—between Piero's *Visitation* and Innocenti Altarpiece—a more likely date is probably earlier: 1485-90.

Although a drawing closely connected to the altarpiece survives in Budapest, it is most likely a copy, perhaps after Piero's now-lost preparatory drawing (fig. 49).[14] Executed with great delicacy and careful hatching, the sheet is a near exact copy of the finished painting with the exception of the altered appearance of St. Onofrius, suggesting that the painted version may not have yet been executed. The panel also finds notable points of reference in two altarpieces, the first a *Madonna and Child with SS. Onofrius and Augustine*, formerly attributed to Niccolò Soggi, now in the Collection Spiritier, Amsterdam (fig. 50). Apart from the kneeling position of the flanking male saints, the Amsterdam panel exhibits a near-exact composition, down to the lions wandering the landscape behind Onofrius. Another analogous composition, as previously observed by Anna Padoa Rizzo, appears in Lorenzo di Credi's *Virgin and Child with SS. Julian and Nicholas of Myra* (Mascalzoni Altarpiece) of 1494 for the Chiesa di Cestello in Florence, now in the Louvre, Paris (fig. 51).[15]

Piero's Toronto panel is perhaps that most heavily influenced by Cosimo Rosselli. In the solidity of the Virgin and the statuesque bearing of the side saints, the picture most closely approaches a Rosselli altarpiece from the final stage of his career, a *Madonna and Child with St. Euphrosynus, St.*

*John the Baptist and Bartolomeo Canigiani as Donor*, originally executed for the oratory of Bartolomeo Canigiani in Volpaia, near Radda in Chianti, and now in Florence's Palazzo Strozzi (fig. 52). Notwithstanding the inclusion of the kneeling donor in profile, Rosselli's work is strikingly similar in its strident colour, balanced composition and triple-arched interior, revealing a distant landscape. As in the Montevettolini altarpiece, Piero's Christ Child faces toward the saint at left (Onofrius) and conventionally raises his right hand in benediction. The Virgin now also directs her attention to the anchorite saint, providing a strong basis for believing Onofrius to be the dedicatory saint relevant for the commission. Piero conforms to other rare but similar representations of the fourth-century Theban monk-turned-hermit, showing him with a long beard, holding beads and a crutch, and covered only by a loin cloth with a simple belt.[16] The two lions moving along a path in a landscape detail directly behind St. Onofrius doubtlessly refer to the saint's death, after which the two animals emerged from the forest to dig his grave. In a characteristic detail appearing beyond the two animals, a house-boat sails in the distance, with what appears to be white linen hanging out to dry.

Piero's originality is most pronounced in the tactile contrast created between the appearances of the two saints. St. Augustine holds a golden crozier and wears a striking tri-colour combination of a green cope, with an embroidered gold trim and bright red lining, over the customary black robe and leather belt. In its volume and facility of execution, the black robe is reminiscent of the matching garment worn by St. Dominic in the St. Louis altarpiece. The mantle's red lining matches the colour of the bishop's mitre, with its intricate gold ornament. Such visual richness is countered by Onofrius' rough austerity, his exposed sun-beaten skin, and unkempt hair and beard. Yet Piero treats the physicality of the hermit's beads and loin cloth—part animal hair, part dried woven palm leaves—with the same delicate attention to texture as the bishop's attire to create a unified surface.

St. Augustine was recognised during the Renaissance as the patron saint of the *pezzai* (cutters of leather for shoes), while St. Onofrius served as the patron of weavers and dyers.[17] Without documentation, however, the most fruitful reading of the altarpiece's motive for commission remains of a broader nature. Most likely, the work was either ordered by the Augustinian order with a special dedication to St. Onofrius or for an altar with that saint's dedication. The latter's inclusion may have been appropriate as the namesake of a confraternity or, just as likely, that of an individual patron.

In pursuing the most obvious indications of the represented saints, I believe that the largely destroyed Florentine church of Sant'Onofrio di Foligno, on via Faenza, should be considered first as the original destination for Piero's panel. Suppressed in 1800, only the refectory remains intact from the former Franciscan convent. Sant'Onofrio was mentioned for initially in 1316.[18] At that time, the Romitorio di S. Onofrio in Campo Corbolini—as the hermitage was named after its district—had accommodated the Augustinians of San Luca in Quaracchi, providing housing during the building of

their future cloister of San Luca. In 1390, Sant'Onofrio was in the hands of the *Romite* nuns, before passing in 1419 to the nuns of San Martino al Mugnone and becoming known as Sant'Onofrio di Foligno, after the place of origin of the tertiary Franciscan nuns that at that point adopted the cloister.[19] The convent's earliest Augustinian denomination deserves special notice, explaining the presence of the eponymous saint in Piero's image; furthermore, the commissioning of an altarpiece with saints chosen to commemorate an earlier or founding religious order by the present inhabitants (in this case Franciscan) certainly would not have been unprecedented.[20]

Pistoia previously emerged as a second possible point of origin based on the old attribution to a local master, Bernardino del Signoraccio (1460-1532).[21] In searching for the altarpiece's potential church locations in Pistoia, two emerge as distinct possibilities. The more plausible site would have been the church of San Lorenzo. Founded in 1278 by the Bishop of Pistoia Guidaloste Vergiolesi, the original oratory was called Sant'Antonio in pantano (marsh).[22] The convent became occupied by the frati Eremitani di S. Agostino. The dual presence in Piero's picture of the founder of the Augustinian friars (also called the Hermits of the Order of St. Augustine) and a hermit saint that receives Christ's benediction and functions as the focal point of the image, seems to convincingly explain a commission originating with a brotherhood of Augustinian hermits.

Another possibility, put forth by Padua Rizzo, is found in a Pistoian monastery under the title of SS. Onofrio e Basilio, initiated around 1340 by the Monaci Basiliani o Armeni. Most important, there existed an old connection to St. Augustine, as the founder of the rule followed by the *monaci basiliani* until 1306. As Dondori wrote in 1666, the original church of Sant'Onofrio 'fu sempre in divozione [...] per una Vergine detta della Consolazione posta nell'altare maggiore'—a most appropriate object of devotion, considering that the Virgin was the patron of the Augustinian order.[23] If indeed the panel belonged to the monks, it most likely would have been placed above the church's high altar, rather than the attached oratory of the *compagnia* (decorated in fresco and containing an altarpiece from the first decade of the quattrocento).[24] In 1614, the monastery then passed on to the *Minimi* (or Minims, 'the least' of the brethren), who rededicated it to the Immaculate Conception and St. Francis of Paola. Becoming a hermit known for his healing powers, Francis (1416-1507) gathered around himself a following of the *Minimi*, whose Rule was based on that of the Franciscans.[25]

Whatever the potential Pistoiese location of Piero's panel may have been, as Anna Padoa Rizzo points out it would have been present for study by artists such as Lorenzo di Credi, who would have seen the work during his travels to Pistoia for a variety of commissions. Credi surely would have seen Piero's panel after its installment, having been asked to paint the *Madonna and Child with Four Saints* for the Ospedale del Ceppo in 1510-12 (now in the Museo Civico, Pistoia). This work certainly seems to owe something to Piero's panel in Canada, in both the arched openings, leading to a low-

horizon landscape, and the solemnity of the columnar standing figures. An equally interesting question of influence is embodied by the *Madonna di Piazza* (1479-85), commissioned from Verrocchio but predominantly showing the hand of Lorenzo di Credi.

Fortunately, one of Piero's altarpieces has retained its predella and—despite the observation that the tabernacle frame is a nineteenth-century imitation of the original—offers the best example of a complete altarpiece arrangement not only by Piero but by any quattrocento Florentine artist in existing North American collections.[26] This work is the *Pala Del Pugliese* in The City Art Museum of St. Louis, showing a *Madonna and Child with SS. Peter, John the Baptist, Nicholas of Bari and Dominic* (fig. 53). The original Pugliese provenance is based on the family's coat of arms found on either side of the predella base, showing a red lion above three stripes upon a gold ground.

The patron of the work was Piero di Francesco del Pugliese (1430-*c*.1498), a vigorous supporter of the arts already mentioned in connection with his nephew, Francesco, and the latter's commissioned set of *spalliere* from Piero. Residing in the quarter of Santo Spirito, Piero del Pugliese held the post of *priore di Libertà* of Florence in 1474-5 and *gonfaloniere di Giustizia* in 1458, 1467 and 1479.[27] In 1494, he was a member of the *consiglio grande*. In 1438, he matriculated in the Arte della Seta and served as a consul in 1477, 1481, 1489 and 1496.[28] As established by Herbert Horne, Piero joined the Arte della Lana in 1453 and became the owner of a successful bottega, which he ran along with his sons and nephew in the Convento Maggiore di San Martino.[29]

In addition to the building of his family palace, Piero del Pugliese was responsible for the construction and decoration of three family chapels throughout his lifetime: that in Lecceto; a chapel at Santa Maria del Carmine, its dedication to St. Jerome assumed from the chapel's previous owners, the Guidoni[30]; and a chapel at Santa Maria alle Campora, dedicated to St. Bernard, for which Piero generously paid not only for the chapel's construction, its windows, Filippino Lippi's altarpiece and vestments, but also an illuminated manuscript, *spalliere*, curtains and an organ.[31]

The most puzzling aspect of the *Pala Del Pugliese* had been its original provenance. Past suggestions often relied on Francesco del Pugliese's will of 1503, in which he named the Dominican convents of San Marco and Santa Lucia in Florence and the friary of San Domenico in Prato as cash legatees.[32] However, recent evidence, first illuminated by Eve Borsook and Gioia Romagnoli and recently reconstructed by Jill Burke, has traced the work conclusively to the small town of Lecceto in the parish of San Martino in Gangalandi, south of Florence in the Val d'Arno.[33] On 12 September 1473, a Dominican brother named Domenico Guerrucci decided to leave Florence's San Marco with the consent of his superiors and retire to a contemplative life in Lecceto, in the company of another *confratello*. With the help of two local builders, Guerrucci began the modest construction of an 'oratorio minore di S. Maria a Lecceto' and a small hermitage, consisting of only one room and a

study.[34] On Christmas of 1475, during a ceremony in the minor oratory, the church was consecrated as Santa Maria a Lecceto.

In the second half of the quattrocento, three churches were built in the area with the support of members of the Florentine nobility who owned farms and land there: Santa Lucia a Monte Orlando (Franciscan), Santa Maria delle Selve (Carmelite) and Santa Maria a Lecceto (Dominican).[35] As pointed out by Eve Borsook, the latter two profitted greatly from the patronage of Filippo di Matteo Strozzi. The first major patron of the church was not the more prominent Filippo, however, but Piero del Pugliese, who presented it with an annual revenue from the sale of a vineyard in 1477 to fund further construction. It was no coincidence that in Florence, the Guerrucci lived around the corner from the Del Pugliese, on the Borgo San Frediano.[36]

In the first two years work proceeded slowly, and in his *memoria* Friar Domenico mentioned the facade and lateral walls of the church as 'sino a mezo e la faccia dinanzi total complevit'.[37] Other payments made by Piero, between July and December 1477, were specifically aimed at the stone construction outlining the main portal and the oculus window in the facade.[38] Despite the church's half-finished state, Guerrucci recorded that Piero founded a family chapel, almost certainly the same located on the right hand side of the church and consecrated on 1 May 1481. The consecration was performed by Fra Giuliano da Montelupo 'in honour of Christ and Saint Mary and Saint Peter Apostle and Saint Nicholas and of all saints'.[39] This altar dedication perfectly accommodates the participants in Piero's *sacra conversazione* and, together with the presence of the family's arms on the predella, affirm the connection with the St. Louis panel beyond doubt, identifying it with the 'altar with the new and beautiful predella', mentioned by Guerrucci as that offered to the church by Piero del Pugliese. In 1596, the Dominican father Serafino Razzi also referred to the church's Del Pugliese altar as: 'l'altare che sta alla destra, entrando in Chiesa, in honore di Gesù Christo della Gloriosa Vergine di San Piero Apostolo, di S. Niccolò e di tutti i santi'.[40]

For unknown motives, Piero del Pugliese abandoned his financial support for the church near the end of 1477. Perhaps the end of such contributions may have been related to the construction of the Del Pugliese chapel in La Campora and the resulting diversion of funds between October 1479 and April 1488. In April of 1477, Filippo Strozzi mentions his acquisition of two chapels in Lecceto and Le Selve for the first time, in two letters, marking the point that he stepped in as the Lecceto church's major patron to carry on its construction.[41] The final stages of the church's construction must have occurred in 1489, as the *vetri* were called in to install glass in the windows and oculi, decorated with festoons and the Strozzi arms.[42] Before his death in 1491, Filippo left the church a bequest of 500 *fiorini d'oro*, with the obligation of an annual celebration of the feast of SS. Jacob and Philip, and nearly a century later, in 1588, the church was consecrated under the name of SS. Jacopo e Filippo as

a suitable gesture of gratitude to its chief benefactor.[43] A two-sided sketch by Fra Bartolomeo (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York) shows the small hillside church in its finished state, seen from the west (recto) and northwest (verso).[44]

The dating of Piero's work had also been a divisive issue, fluctuating from *c.*1485 to as late as 1501 in previous studies.[45] The Pugliese altar dedication on 1 May 1481 in Santa Maria di Lecceto serves as the logical date for the altarpiece's *terminus post quem*. In light of Guerruci's reports regarding Piero Del Pugliese's gift of the altarpiece, we also know the panel's completion date: 1485, the year of Guerruci's death. The panel was therefore begun soon after Piero's return from Rome and most likely finished in 1484-5. Other altarpieces for the church soon followed. A payment for Bernardo Rosselli's *Pietà* in Santa Maria di Lecceto is recorded on 5 July 1487, while Domenico Ghirlandaio's 'la tavola d'altar maggiore, con la Nostra Donna, San Giovanni e San Filippo' was not done until 4 July 1488.[46]

Piero del Pugliese may appear in no less than four contemporary images, all by the hand of the merchant's most popular painter: Filippino Lippi. In the Brancacci Chapel's *The Raising of Theopholus* fresco, Piero has been identified as the third figure from the left border. His head turned to the right and arm extended left toward the Holy Family, the same figure reappears as the white-haired figure in the right foreground of *The Adoration of the Magi* (Uffizi, Florence). An enigmatic double-portrait in Denver seems to portray Filippino Lippi, in a profile self-portrait, facing a Piero of advanced years, his white hair cropped short. Finally, Piero appears prominently as the kneeling patron, in profile, at the bottom right hand corner of *The Vision of St. Bernard* (*c.*1485) now in Florence's Badia, but intended for Santa Maria alle Campora at Marignolle and the church's family chapel there.[47]

Piero's realistic profile of SS. Nicholas of Bari likewise strongly suggests the presence of portraiture. St. Nicholas cannot be identified literally with his namesake, Niccolò del Pugliese, Piero's son. Born in 1477, he would have been a young child at the time of execution. This date corresponds precisely with his father's involvement in the church's construction, however. And it is equally poignant to note that Piero introduced his nephew, Franceso, to the act of giving when both presented a painted frieze for Piero's chapel in Santa Maria alle Campora on St. Nicholas' feast day in 1487.[48] Instead, it may be possible to find Piero del Pugliese's own image in the kneeling saint.[49] Despite some difference in age, the similarity between the profile and the merchant's depiction in the Badia altarpiece and the Denver double-portrait is extremely close, from the figure's prominent brow to his short-cropped white hair. Infrared reflectography examinations reveal significant underdrawing *pentimenti* in the area of the saint's head; Piero enlarged the profile in the painting stage, as the original had a more sharply sloped nose and forehead. Although it remains inconclusive, this could

suggest an attempt to more accurately capture the sitter's portrait—or, as will be discussed, perhaps to obscure it. This portrait hypothesis is supported further by Piero's avoidance of the saint's most commonly represented type, as a middle-aged bishop with a short beard.

The presence of St. Dominic, the representative of the order, and St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Florence, are clearly justified. Piero Del Pugliese's representation as St. Nicholas is more veiled yet not dissimilar from his appearance as actual patron in Filippino's Badia image—his presentation of the three golden balls to the Virgin and the Christ Child alluding eloquently to his pious gift of land and money to the church in their honour. Piero del Pugliese's features as St. Nicholas, in the face's upper portion, appear distinctly older than those of himself as patron (at age fifty-five) in Filippino's depiction. It is possible that Piero wished his identity to be somewhat hidden within those of his holy representative and, in a sense, subsumed.[50] This act of ambivalent concealment may be compared to the patron's wish not to place his arms on the altar, although they do appear on the altarpiece itself. In marked contrast to Filippo Strozzi, who took over the church's patronage with clear displays of his family's presence and control, in effect obscuring the Del Pugliese past participation, Piero del Pugliese acted as more of a well-meaning *benefactore* than official patron. In acknowledging Piero's gift, Guerrucci responded: 'May it be God's pleasure to receive this sacrifice to bless his home and temple, and to make us [Guerrucci and Del Pugliese] among the number of his elect'.[51] As explained by Burke, Piero's gift was not contractually based and 'outside the notion of patronage that was founded on the legally contractual and spiritually "mercantile" system of credit and debt'.[52]

Painted in tempera with oil glazes, the *Pala Del Pugliese* is Piero's smallest surviving altarpiece. The present condition is excellent; even though ultraviolet examination revealed a large number of areas showing former restoration, they were mostly limited to the setting of former blisters and buckled paint.[53] Piero's execution varies from very linear handling, as seen in the Virgin's robe, to imperceptibly smooth transitions of modelling in the sky and St. Dominic's black robe. As in his *Death of a Nymph*, Piero's fingerprints have been detected in the sky area, where he manipulated the paint in the heavy bodied drying oil. Formally, the work is most impressive in its enamelled light effects and jewel-like colour, particularly the emerald green, blue and red tones. In this, together with Piero's panoply of human types and great attention to texture—the very skin of things—the altarpiece holds much in common with the near-contemporary arrival of Hugo van der Goes' *Adoration of the Shepherds* to Florence on 28 May 1483 and its erection by Tommaso Portinari in Sant'Egidio. As in the Northern arrival, the lucid clarity of colour and light in the St. Louis image reveals itself in the delicacy and near-scientific fidelity of detail, such as the flower vase at centre and the figure of St.

Nicholas, with his richly embroidered cope and mitre and the reflecting golden balls, symbolic of his charity. Piero even includes a stitched-up tear in the robe of St. John.

The Bishop of Myra's striking combination of red and green is countered by the sobriety of Dominic's white tunic and scapular underneath a long black cloak. As the Founder of the Order of Preachers (the Dominican friars), Dominic is honoured as the centre of attention, introduced into the Virgin's presence by the welcoming hand of St. Peter—the patron's actual name saint—and receiving the benediction of the Virgin and Child as well as the acknowledgment of St. John the Baptist. It was SS. Peter and Paul who were seen by Dominic in a vision, serving as the impetus for his founding of the order; in fact, the figure of St. Peter is represented in the golden design upon the cope of St. Nicholas. Crowned by his golden star, Dominic holds open a gospel book, while clasping a lily (of chastity) to his chest. Piero beautifully intimates a play of light throughout the scene, as seen in the keys of St. Peter and the shadows cast upon the cloth of honour hanging upon Mary's canopy. Embroidered on the cloth, we find tiny symbols of Christ and Mary: the three nails of the Crucifixion, the doves of the Holy Spirit and stars. The golden *Stella Maris* above the Virgin is a small display of painting virtuosity in its shadowed highlights and the reflections struck from each pearl.[54]

Even in light of the work's highly spiritual and elevated function, Piero still leaves a few typical marks of his sense of play. The Baptist's staff appears to sprout leaves, merging as it does with the green canopy of a tree in the background, while the outline of Dominic's right heel can be made out beneath the folds of his black habit. Yet, rather than functioning self-indulgently as distancing gestures of eccentricity, such quirky details achieve quite the opposite effect, attracting the worshipper with an earthy sense of the *quotidiano* and thus aiding him in his private meditation. This same effect is seen, to a somewhat lesser extent, in Piero's other altarpieces to follow in the next two decades, such as his Tedaldi altarpiece. Despite the picture's compressed foreground, the composition as a whole is one of Piero's most successful attempts at creating the sense of a fictive opening into space, drawing the viewer into a radiant landscape. As Nora Desloge notes, Piero here uses light not simply as a means of achieving the illusion of physical clarity and tactility (seen in the *Stella Maris* and Nicholas' golden balls) but as a metaphor of the divine.[55]

The *Visitation with SS. Nicholas and Anthony Abbot* panel (National Gallery of Art, Washington) is a rare instance of a securely documented work by Piero and dates to 1489-90 (fig. 54).[56] The altarpiece is also mentioned by Vasari in the church of Santo Spirito:

> ...ne la chiesa di Santo Spirito di Fiorenza lavorò a la cappella di Gino Capponi una tavola, che vi è dentro una Visitazione di Nostra Donna con San Nicolò e un S. Antonio che legge con un par d'occhiali al naso, che è molto pronto. Quivi contrafece uno libro di carta pecora un po'vecchio, che par vero, e così certe palle a quel San Niccolò, con certi lustri ribattendo i barlumi e' riflessi l'una ne l'altra, che si conosceva infino allora la stranezza del suo cervello et il cercare che e' faceva de le cose difficili.[57]

Piero's panel was removed to the Villa Capponi in Legnaia in 1713, at which point it was replaced by Giovanni Sagrestani's present *Marriage of the Virgin*. The original altarpiece belonged in one of the church's four Capponi family chapels.[58] The chapel is located in the northeast corner of the right transept and was dedicated to St. Nicholas, the 'protector of our house' in the words of Cappone Capponi, and to whom a family chapel was dedicated in another oltr'Arno location: the monastery of San Bartolomeo on Monte Oliveto, founded by Bartoldo di Caponcino Capponi in the mid-fourteenth century.[59] The Capponi arms—intersected diagonally with the top half black, the bottom white (representing the motto 'Post tenebras lux')—are placed above the window, and the sepulchre of Neri di Gino Capponi by Bernardo Rosellino is recessed prominently into a niche inside the right wall.

The Capponi family originated in Lucca, settling in Florence in the twelfth century and, after extending their business interests from the cloth business to several major guilds, formed one of the city's most profitable commercial houses.[60] Between the years of 1287-1531, this illustrious family accounted for ten *gonfaloniere di Guistizia* and fifty-six *priori di Libertà*.[61] It is the family's larger and wealthier Neri branch in the Santo Spirito district, on via S. Spirito (gonfalone Drago)—once resident in a palace appearing in the background of Domenico Ghirlandaio's *St. Francis Resurrecting a Child* fresco in Santa Trinita's Sassetti Chapel (where Palazzi nos. 122-3 now stand)—that is of greatest relevance to us, having been responsible for Piero's commission.

The St. Nicholas Chapel in Santo Spirito was founded by Gino di Neri Capponi, who bought it in 1459, two years following the death of his father, Neri di Gino.[62] Unlike his father and grandfather, Gino was not drawn to public service and the republican cause, never holding a diplomatic or military post. Instead, he proved to be the most ambitious businessman of the family.[63] In his will of 1485, Gino states that he spent 500 florins on the family chapel during his life.[64] While he does not describe exactly how this money was spent, it is reasonable to assume that some was spent on the legal acquisition of the *ius patronatus*, right of patronage, to the chapel from the Operai of the church and another amount spent on the chapel itself. Having died in 1487, Gino could not have been the direct patron of Piero's panel; yet it remains likely that the dying man would have had significant input as to the subject of the picture and its chosen executor.

An entry two years later, discovered by Stephanie Craven in the Archivio Capponi, leads us to believe that the altarpiece was ordered by an heir (App., doc. 8). The 'Piero Chapponi' mentioned as the payer of the six florins for the *adornimento* (carved wooden frame) must have been Gino's eldest son. Piero (1446-96) was less inclined to involve himself in the business dealings that so absorbed his father and followed a career path closest to that of his grandfather Neri di Gino (1388-1457), who fought in the Battle of Anghiari in 1440.[65] A friend of Lorenzo il Magnifico, Piero became an active ambassador, going on state missions to Ferdinand of Naples and Alfonso of Aragon. As a field

commander, Piero was Captain of Cortona in 1490 and five years later Captain of Volterra. In 1493, he held the highest post of *gonfaloniere*.[66] Following Il Magnifico's death in 1492, Piero willingly filled the vacated position of leadership, dedicating himself to the service of the state. Following a decade of allegiance to the Medici, Piero then turned against Piero de' Medici, who was expelled from the city in 1494 for ceding several strategic fortresses to Charles VIII.[67] Ultimately, his passionate political involvement cost Piero his life, as he died on the battlefield in 1496 while commanding forces in the reconquest attempt of Pisa—a town earlier subjugated to Florentine rule by his grandfather.[68] In his rebellious streak, Piero Capponi thus shared much in common with Filippo Strozzi the Younger as champions of the Republic. It is interesting to note that rarely were Piero's patrons well defined *palleschi*.

In 1496, the city paid for the republican hero's body to be carried from Pisa to Santo Spirito, where Piero was laid to rest in the St. Nicholas Chapel, 'in the same sepulcher which Gino his father and Neri his great-grandfather had had constructed from marble many years ago'.[69] By this date, the chapel would have looked the same as it does now. Craven's uncovered documents cover the period between 13 October 1489 and 16 January 1490, with the former date marking Chimento del Tasso's frame commission and serving as the likeliest *terminus post quem* for Piero's painting. In the case of Santo Spirito, as was often the custom, the design and decoration of its chapels show that the frames were usually made prior to the painted works. The chapels appear to have been consistently uniform, containing altarpieces of similar size. For example, Giuliano da Sangallo carved the frame of the Bardi altarpiece in Santo Spirito directly before Botticelli was employed to paint it.[70]

In the 1493 will of Neri di Gino Capponi (1452-1519), younger brother of Piero, the St. Nicholas chapel is referred to as the chapel of the Visitation.[71] The Visitation is a somewhat unusual choice of subject for an altarpiece, usually appearing within a fresco cycle. Of great relevance is Pope Sixtus IV's 1475 issue of an encyclic, concerning Mary's visit to Elizabeth. A celebration marking this occasion followed, together with the granting of indulgences.[72] In the altarpiece, the Annunciation, preceding the Visitation (Luke I. 36-56), is ingeniously represented in a detail: a fresco on a church facade, in the right background behind the Massacre of the Innocents.

We are doubly fortunate to have recourse not only to the panel's surviving documentation but also a rare preparatory sketch (fig. 55).[73] The Uffizi drawing, so typical of Piero's early draughtmanship in its nervous, spiky line, shows the central figures of Mary and Elizabeth in their highly symbolic meeting of hands, while the sheet's verso depicts a male saint seated in a reading or writing posture at a lectern—perhaps a study for the painted figure of St. Nicholas in the altarpiece.[74] Rather than being accompanied by Zacharias and Joseph—as sometimes seen in sixteenth-century Venetian painting—the two women are framed by the seated figures of St. Nicholas of Bari on our

left and St. Anthony Abbot on the right. The iconography of St. Nicholas is already familiar from the *Pala Del Pugliese*. Here the saint is shown reading from a book, legibly inscribed with a Latin text in Gothic minuscules, revealing a passage from the Song of Solomon I. 1-6.[75] Piero's ability to capture the physical characteristics of the elderly again resonates in the simple charm of these two seated saints, seemingly of the same stock as the Innocenti Altarpiece's SS. Peter and John in their rugged features and the string-like patterns of veins and tendons in their coarsened hands. The three golden balls, so praised by Vasari, lie beside Nicholas, while Anthony is accompanied by his attributes of the crutch and bell. Anthony's presence in the altarpiece is explained by his link to St. Augustine, to whom the order of Santo Spirito belonged. In his *Confessions* (VIII. 6 and 12), Augustine mentioned Anthony as the patriarch of monasticism and a hermit saint. The Tau ('T')-shaped handle of his crutch relates to the traditional emblem of the medieval monk and his kind deeds performed with the infirm. St. Anthony—like St. Nicholas—became known as a miracle worker and, more specifically, as a healer of men. In the yellow strip of land behind and to the left of Anthony wanders one of the Antonine order's pigs, allowed to roam freely in the streets by special privilege. Pig lard was supposedly used as a remedy during the outbreak of eysipelas or ergotism in the eleventh-century, which became known as St. Anthony's Fire, and for which the saint provided a remedy.

Painted in oil on panel, *The Visitation* is in good condition.[76] As with the *Pala Del Pugliese* and Innocenti Altarpiece, the viewer is immediately struck by the picture's gemlike colour and microscopic realism. Piero creates a contrasting distribution of light and dark areas by pairing the lighter figure of St. Nicholas (wearing a yellow robe and red cloak) with the similarly light Virgin (red robe and sky-blue cloak with a green lining) in opposition to the dark violet-brown cloak of Elizabeth and the dark green cloak and black habit of St. Anthony. Piero then cleverly reverses the two polarities by painting a light filled background scene on the right and a darkened Nativity scene on the left. The trompe l'oeil effect of Nicholas' attribute of the golden balls is matched by the details surrounding St. Anthony, who writes illegibly with a quill while holding an ink horn in the other hand. A writing case lies in a drapery fold between his knees and a hide-bound book rests on the edge of the step beside his crutch. This sense of tactility surrounding the old hermit and his absorbed state is accented by his black spectacles and his brow, furrowed in the act of writing. The stage-like setting of the Visitation and most of the landscape beyond is bathed in a warm, bright light striking the scene from the left—and thus corresponding to the natural light entering the transept from the cupola above.[77] The lucidity of the town scene and the hills and sea beyond is hardly obscured by atmospheric perspective, save for the blue tint in the most distant hills.

Piero's altarpiece shares telling similarities with several other prominent works of the time. Along with the link to Domenico Ghirlandaio's Visitation fresco scene in Santa Maria Novella, a connection

can be made with Filippino's Badia panel and its even articulation of forms by concentrated light and rich colour.[78] Piero's panel is also reminiscent of Domenico Ghirlandaio's and Bartolomeo di Giovanni's 1488 *Adoration of the Magi* (Galleria dello Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence) in its inclusion of the Massacre of the Innocents in the background, as well as the hard quality of light and portrait-like features of the participants.

Domenico's altarpiece would have been well known to Piero, having adorned the *cappella maggiore* of the church of Santa Maria degli Innocenti, a prominent Florence location and the site of Piero's own work for the Del Pugliese approximately five years later. Piero del Pugliese's commission for this second altarpiece from Piero was dedicated to the Virgin and shows a *Madonna and Child with SS. Catherine of Alexandria, Elizabeth of Hungary, Peter and John the Evangelist* (fig. 56). Housed in the Galleria dello Spedale degli Innocenti, the oil on panel work hangs adjacent to Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Adoration*; both panels were commissioned under the direction of Francesco di Giovanni Tesori, who was made prior of the Hospital in 1483.[79] In Piero's Life, Vasari dwelled on the humorous anecdotal quality of the Piero commission rather than the work itself—'in questa sono veramente assai cose buone'—and his anger at the intrusions of the meddling *spedalingo*.[80]

Luckily, the initial outfitting of the altar—including Piero di Cosimo's panel—is also sufficiently documented. The records refer to the painter's activity for Piero del Pugliese between 1491 and 1493.[81] Work on the Pugliese chapel in the Innocenti Church can be tracked from the summer of 1491 to the following winter, as Piero del Pugliese is mentioned in a list of debits for the Hospital on 25 August 1491—'... de' dare lire trentasei, che tanto ha pagato Ser Alessandro nostro a più persone per la chapella sua ...'—with payments reappearing on October 16th and December 16th.[82] It was probably around this time that Piero di Cosimo's new altarpiece was commissioned, as it was already placed above the altar by the end of 1493. The list of expenditures concerning the erection of the new panel is found in the *Entrate e Uscite* of the Hospital, noted in a list of expenses between 29 November and 26 December 1493 (App., doc. 11). As mentioned by Giuseppe Richa in his 1759 description of the chapel, the altarpiece was 'arricchiata di teste di Cherubini fatti di terra invetriata da Luca Della Robbia' ('enriched by heads of cherubs made in glazed earth by Luca della Robbia'). This slightly misattributed *Annunciation* lunette in blue and white *terra cotta* with a row of *teste di Cherubini*, once crowning Piero's panel and dating to *c.*1491, was by the hand of Andrea della Robbia and is now in the courtyard of the Ospedale.[83]

The church interior, in the fifteenth century only including the Del Pugliese and Lenzi Chapels and the *altare maggiore*, was almost entirely redone in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet although the Pugliese chapel is now dismembered, parts such as the remaining Della Robbia lunette

and Piero del Pugliese's payments help facilitate a faithful reconstruction.[84] Cirri described the location of the Pugliese chapel as on the right side of the middle of the church, opposite the Cappella Lenzi, dedicated to St. Catherine, on the left.[85] The altar was complete with the family arms, on both the columns and *paliotto*. The chapel was probably no less impressive in appearance than the *cappella maggiore*, based upon Piero del Pugliese's payment for the gilding of the altarpiece frame, its predella, candlesticks, architrave, columns and pillars. Both altarpieces were covered with curtains when not in liturgical use.[86]

In his image, Piero di Cosimo again strives for variety, which reveals itself most vividly in the Virgin's elaborate throne. The two putti behind the flanking candelabras create the illusion of being inanimate, seen as parts of the structure's decoration like the white marble winged putto-head crowning the throne. This fictive effect would have been reinforced further by Luca della Robbia's maiolica lunette, and its inclusion of numerous three-dimensional putti heads, placed above Piero's altarpiece. In a sense, the sophisticated design of the throne becomes a meeting point for Piero's dual interest in antique forms (seen in the throne and its decoration) and descriptive naturalism (attendant putti and landscape).

Despite frequent comparisons in the art historical literature to Leonardo and the light effects in his devotional images, Piero's play of light and shadow is of a different kind. It is much more restless and untempered. Piero and Leonardo do share formal—or optical—interests on two counts: backlighting effects or the inter-reflection upon closely placed surfaces, and the depiction of lustre (seen in the shiny highlights in St. Nicholas' attributes of the three golden balls and the pearls' reflections upon the Virgin's cloth of honour and its *Stella Maris* in the *Pala Del Pugliese*). Yet far from striving for a Leonardesque unity through the darkening and muting of colour, Piero uses light to produce a 'halogen lamp effect' of stark and lucid contrasts. The light of the Innocenti Altarpiece brings out the richness of colour—particularly in the red tunics of the Virgin and St. Catherine—and the clarity of detail. Even the landscape retains this sense of lucidity rather than receding under a cover of *sfumato*. While the landscape of the *Pala Del Pugliese* resembles that of the Dresden tondo (fig. 85), the open hills of the Innocenti Altarpiece are similar in their sharp focus to the Toledo tondo (fig. 84), also from the 1490s, and the Washington *Visitation*.

Iconographically, Piero combines a *sacra conversazione* with the Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine. This fusion of subject is reflected somewhat in the eclecticism of the figures and their awkward relation to one another. Despite his attempts at compositional harmony, Piero does not quite achieve this effect. Due to their varying angles and even physiognomies, the figures surrounding the Virgin in a circular formation appear as separate entities rather than parts of a unified whole, lacking the greater spatial and figural coherence of the *Pala Del Pugliese*—in both the physical and

psychological relationship of its figures.[87] The addition of the six often overlooked accompanying background figures, in spite of their formal awkwardness, may hold special added significance for the altarpiece's placement in a church associated with the Hospital of the Innocents, however. Although usually referred to as angels, their identities are, in fact, not entirely clear, their haloes alluding to saintly status while the panel's setting would suggest that they may even represent actual *innocenti*. Gazing in serene reverence at either the Virgin or the Christ Child and in some cases wearing flowered wreaths in their hair (as seen in the four farthest figures), these idealised, youthful attendants remain somewhat of a mystery, even in the matter of their sex, although most of their faces and dress seem to be male.

Like the earlier Del Pugliese altarpiece, the Innocenti work stands out for Piero's brilliant use of colour and light and subtle idiosyncratic touches. The kneeling St. Catherine is the image's most arresting figure, exquisite in the combination of red and green and the delicacy of her gauzy veil. Piero depicts her headdress and pearls with the greatest care, while framing her left hand, with its play of soft shadow and limpid light, against the ultramarine robe of the Virgin. Extending her hand to receive the wedding ring from the Christ Child, Catherine is shown as a young virgin princess after her conversion, at the moment when the Virgin appears to her with the infant, who accepts her as his bride. In fact, as recently shown by Adrian Randolph, the saint's distinctive pearl adorned headdress and jewellery decorating her shoulder—the *brocchetta da testa* and *brocchetta di spalla*—were typical of marriage decoration at the time.[88]

While presenting the wedding ring to St. Catherine with his left hand, the Christ Child takes a rose from the hand of another kneeling female saint to his right. This saint had previously been identified as either St. Rose of Viterbo or St. Dorothea.[89] A Franciscan Tertiary of the thirteenth-century who died at the age of eighteen, Rose of Viterbo (1235-52) was usually shown as a youthful woman in a grey Franciscan habit and wearing a wreath of roses. Despite her cult's popularity in Umbria, she hardly appears in Florentine altarpieces. St. Dorothea (a fourth-century virgin martyr from Asia Minor) would seem a suitable choice as the patron saint of brides and midwives. Yet the saint was typically represented with roses in her hand or upon her head, or otherwise carrying a basket of apples and roses, as an allusion to a passage from *The Golden Legend*.[90] However, it is the most recent identification of St. Elizabeth of Hungary that proves the most persuasive.[91]

Tesori's construction and enrichment of a new Del Pugliese chapel subsequently attracted the continuing patronage of family members, such as Filippo di Pierfrancesco del Pugliese as seen in his unpublished will of 18 May 1511.[92] In this revealing document, Filippo leaves a shop to the chapel of the Innocenti dedicated 'in *Sanctam Helisabet* vel aliam Sanctam quam cappellam edificavit in dicta ecclesia Pierus Pater dicti testatoris' (own emphasis added). Also more appropriate iconographically

to Piero's depiction of his kneeling black-habited saint, St. Elizabeth was, like S. Rosa, a Franciscan Tertiary (but lived for six more years and thus closer to her painted age) and, just as in Piero's image, was most often represented with an apronful of roses. Surprised by her husband while in the act of bringing food to the hungry, the bread that she was trying to conceal suddenly turned into roses in front of his eyes. The daughter of King Andreas II of Hungary, Elizabeth came to be known as a girl of remarkable piety and charity at an early age, coming to be known as the gentle châtelaine of Wartburg.[93] First maltreated by the family of her future husband, Ludwig IV of Thirungia, she was widowed shortly after marriage, losing her husband to the plague. Soon after, she was forced to abandon her children and subsequently turned entirely to God for the final three years of her life, dedicating herself to charity for the poor and the sick. More precisely, she expressed her faith through the building of and daily service in a hospital in Marburg (1228), in addition to also providing for the education of children. While Catherine was recognised as the patron saint for young women not yet married, Elizabeth became the patroness of charities, children dying young, nurses, widows and young brides. The two would have therefore formed a complimentary pair in an altarpiece destined for a hospital that specifically cared for abandoned children and tried to provide for their futures.

Behind St. Elizabeth stands St. Peter, again present as the chapel's donor, Piero del Pugliese, and in his left hand holds his two keys to Heaven and Hell, one gold and the other silver. Closest in type to the male saints in Piero's *Visitation*, Peter has the physical appearance of a kind, elderly fisherman rather than the Prince of the Apostles with his big rough hands, grey beard and tan skin. Instead of showing Peter wearing his customary gold cloak over a blue tunic, Piero depicts him in a red cloak worn over a black tunic, embroidered with gold. Peter is balanced on the right side of the picture by the long-bearded St. John, shown as an old evangelist rather than as a young apostle, and resonating with the patronymic of Francesco di Giovanni Tesori. In his right hand, he clasps his Book of Revelation and a quill to his chest. As the patron saint of the Arte della Seta, St. John would have been ideally suited for a place in a Del Pugliese commissioned image.

Piero del Pugliese's vital role in providing opinions for the rebuilding of the family chapel is explained by his high standing in the silk guild, which was responsible for funding the church's redecoration.[94] As a consul of the Arte between September and December 1489, Piero's opinions at the time of the church's remodelling, such as that concerning the form of the rebuilt Lenzi chapel, would have reflected those of the guild. As underscored by Burke, Piero del Pugliese's decisions regarding the iconography of Piero's image also closely adhered to institutional concerns.[95] It is important to remember that Piero's panel was commissioned for a foundling hospital that not only took care of abandoned infants but later sought to provide for their future. This paternal foster role of the hospital was especially critical for the female children under its charge, for whom the Innocenti

tried to provide dowries and to find suitable marriages, allowing for the transfer of each girl to a man's care. Piero's depiction of a wedding, with the figure of St. Catherine flanked by two protective male saints, was thus highly pertinent in light of the hospital's social responsibility as fatherly custodian. Piero del Pugliese's pious donations to the hospital and the commission of Piero's panel helped to maintain this charitable civic structure, while at the same time gaining spiritual favour for his own soul by virtue of the good Christian deed.

**II. 1500-10**

The brilliance of light and colour reach their peak in the paintings of the middle period of Piero's career. Considering that it is precisely at this time that Piero has been closest linked to Leonardo by past scholars, a revaluation may be necessary due to several contradictory factors distancing Piero from the older master (as just seen with the Innocenti picture). The relatively hard quality of light used by Piero in the Tedaldi *Incarnation* differs greatly from Leonardo's attention to atmosphere and the use of shrouding shadows in images such as the *Mona Lisa.* Rather than creating vision-like forms through darkening and blending, Piero's light effects function to differentiate, producing highly distinct outline forms and thus achieving *rilievo*. The sharp treatment of light in Piero's altarpieces of this period is closest to that of the stylistically contemporary *Madonna and Child with Two Musician Angels* (*c.*1505-7) in the Vittorio Cini Collection, Palazzo Cini, Venice (fig. 57).[96] While scholars such as S.J. Freedberg pointed to the Cini *Madonna* as one of Piero's most 'Leonardesque' works, it is not necessarily so in terms of its bright, unfiltered colour and stark lighting.[97] Piero's concerns with light effects are even more boldly revealed in the small preparatory sketch for the Venice panel (fig. 58).[98] Both the drawing and finished painting evince a clear preoccupation with tonal relationship. The final effects, however, are not atmospheric, and the clarity of forms is pure Piero. Instead, Piero most closely approaches Leonardo in his complex arrangement and interaction of figures, as illustrated by the kneeling angel at right, drawing a bow across his *lira da braccio*, which has been convincingly likened to Leonardo's model for a kneeling, twisting Leda in his *Leda and the Swan* drawing in Rotterdam (*c.*1503-4) (fig. 59).

In his colour choices, Piero favours *cangianti* modelling and fully saturated hues that produce greater clarity, legibility and, at times, emphasis.[99] It is fairer to say that Piero's emerging concern for greater plasticity in terms of lighting, colour and modelling—sacrificing atmosphere in the process—places Piero's works in the final decade of the quattrocento and the first decade of the cinquecento closer to Michelangelo and near-contemporary *Doni Tondo* (Uffizi, Florence). Despite the dearth of panel paintings in Michelangelo's oeuvre, leaving few points of reference, there remains the

relevance of his apprenticeship to Domenico Ghirlandaio, whose works on panel and in fresco exhibit the same qualities of contrast and clarity throughout the 1470s and 1480s, with the San Giusto Altarpiece of the late 1470s (Uffizi, Florence) serving as a suitable example.

Although previously overlooked, it is not Piero's Cini picture but an unexpected example that connects Leonardo and Piero more conclusively than perhaps any other. Once again, technical evidence plays a vital role, drawing the veil on the *Madonna and Child with SS. John the Baptist, Cecilia (?), and Two Angels* (Private collection, New York) and introducing it as the integral missing link (fig. 60).[100] While the tondo, datable to *c.*1505, shows little congruence with Leonardo upon cursory viewing in its present state, a restoration in 1991 provided astonishing findings leading to an altogether different conclusion.[101] An X-radiograph reveals that the painting was executed in at least two separate campaigns, carried out a brief time apart.[102] Piero's initial conception varied strikingly from the final result, originally depicting the Madonna and Child seated alone in a rocky grotto. The rocks were placed at the top of the composition, hanging down vertically above the two figures, with gently rolling hills in the distant landscape to their left and right.[103]

A decision made by either Piero or his patron to change the picture's setting then lead to a blocking out of the landscape with an opaque brown, nearly black underpaint, which still serves as the background colour, covering the entire surface with the exception of the central group. The X-ray furthermore revealed the following addition of the infant St. John the Baptist at left together with the two angels and a figure at the extreme right that is either a third angel or possibly St. Cecilia.[104] As the restoration record explains, it is this overpainting of the background that explains the current disparity between the light-coloured flesh tones of the original Madonna and Child, painted on a white ground, and the visibly incongruous, dark *sfumato* effects seen in the juxtaposed surrounding figures.

More slight alterations continued to take place following the addition of the new participants. The hands of the angel at left, clasped in an attitude of prayer, were visible directly behind the head of the Christ Child before being painted out, perhaps judged to be too confusing within an increasingly crowded composition.[105] In its present state, the panel's colour and detail combine to dazzle, as seen in the Madonna's dark green robe and crimson dress, with pearl brooch and the string of pearls adorning the hair of the figure at far right. Piero also added the charming detail of the apples, two of which are held in the lap of St. John as the Christ Child bites into another. A fourth apple, half eaten, lies below him.

The original grotto setting of Piero's picture is the most direct point of congruence with Leonardo that we can claim with some degree of confidence. It would appear that Piero's initially conceived background was thus a reformulation of the older master's *Madonna of the Rocks*.[106] Again there

looms the inevitable question of transmission. Both of Leonardo's versions of the subject were executed in the Sforza court in Milan, the Louvre panel dating *c.*1483-5 and the second effort in London's National Gallery interrupted in 1499 and completed in 1506-8. The unfinished painting would have certainly remained in Milan as property of the confraternity of the Immaculate Conception in S. Francesco Grande. Cartoons did exist, as evidenced by Boltraffio's two heads (of the same size) for a Madonna and Child drawing in the Chatsworth Collection—yet Boltraffio was of course working in Milan. Meanwhile, the diffusion of Leonardo's composition in Florence seems to have been nearly non-existent. It remains conceivable that Leonardo would have brought preparatory studies for the second version with him to Florence in 1500 or would have designed new ones, since he was expected to complete the panel upon his return to Milan. Again, the question arises as to whether or not Piero would have had personal access to Leonardo, for it is from such drawings that Piero could have appropriated Leonardo's cavernous setting.

It remains interesting to speculate whether Piero may have arrived at such a solution independently, although the grotto setting would have been unprecedented before Leonardo's Milan project, and to question why such a novel approach was ultimately discarded and blacked out. Who was it that made this decision—painter or patron? If the latter was the case, such a preference for a more traditional representation could help at least partially explain the Florentine response to some of Leonardo's own advances and experimentation and, conversely, his motivations for seeking the relative independence afforded by court patronage as a *stipendiato*.

Turning to Piero's altarpiece receiving the most attention and praise from Vasari, the *Incarnation with SS. Margaret, Catherine, Peter, John the Evangelist, Filippo Benizzi and Antoninus* (Uffizi) can be said to be the artist's most coherent and mature composition (fig. 61). The original setting of the panel was the Servite church of Santissima Annunziata, inside the small Tedaldi Chapel located on the right side of the left transept and directly opposite the Grazzi Chapel.[107] Vasari related:

> ... fu allogato a Piero una tavola a la cappella de' Tedaldi nella chiesa de' Frati de' Servi, dove eglino tengono la veste et il guanciale di S. Filippo lor frate, nella quale finse la Nostra Donna ritta, che è rilevata da terra in un dado, e con un libro in mano, senza il Figliuolo, che alza la testa al cielo, e sopra quella è lo Spirito Santo che la illuminata; né ha voluto che altro lume che quello che fa la colomba lumeggi e lei e le figure che le sono intorno, come una S. Margherita et una S. Caterina che la adorano ginoc[c]hioni, e ritti son a guardarla S. Pietro e S. Giovanni Evangelista, insieme con S. Filippo frate de' Servi e S. Antonino arcivescovo di Firenze, oltra che vi fece un paese biz[z]arro e per gli alberi strani e per alcune grotte; e per il vero ci sono parti bellissime, come certe teste che mostrano e disegno e grazia, oltra il colorito molto continovato: e certamente che Piero possedeva grandemente il colorire a olio. Fecevi la predella [now lost] con alcune storiette piccole, molto ben fatte; et in fra l'altre ve n'è una quando S. Margherita esce del ventre del serprente, che per aver fatto quello animale e contraffatto e brutto, non penso che in quel genere si possa veder meglio, mostrando il veleno per gli occhi, il fuoco e la morte in uno aspetto veramente pauroso.[108]

According to Ugolino Verino, the Tedaldi originated in Fiesole and held occupations mostly in finance,[109] establishing residence in the quarter of S. Giovanni (gonfalone Vaio), in the direction of what is now via dei Servi. The obvious proximity of the family's property to SS. Annunziata clearly explains their active patronage of the church. Only two of the family's palaces remain standing from what was originally an impressive string of the oldest houses between the city's first and second circuit of walls. The first is the now-called Palazzo Niccolini (also formerly the Palazzo Naldini del Riccio) on via dei Servi, 2-4, directly on the eastern corner meeting with the new Piazza del Duomo.[110] At the opposite (southern) end of the former Tedaldi property, on the corner of via dello Studio and via della Canonica, stands the thirteenth-century Palazzo Tedaldini, partially destroyed in the erection of the Duomo. The rest of the Tedaldi houses in-between these two survivors were completely demolished during the building of the new cathedral.[111]

The Tedaldi of greatest interest to us as the most likely patron of Piero's altarpiece is Pierozzo Domenicano di Baldo di Pierozzo Tedaldi (b. 1476). Known as 'Fra Pietro', he assumed the Dominican habit in the convent of San Marco on 22 December 1505.[112] Only a few months earlier, Pierozzo, already described as a friar of the same church, assumed the responsibility of debtor for his deceased father in a document of October 6th.[113] Little else is known of Pierozzo, other than his recommendation to the King of Poland by the Signoria of Florence (on a diplomatic mission perhaps),[114] and it is his more worldly younger brother, Giovanni di Baldo di Pierozzo Tedaldi (1484-1542), who garnered most of the fame as the family's last *priore di Libertà* and senator in 1537.[115]

The Tedaldi chapel in Santissima Annunziata, originally dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, was relatively ancient.[116] The chapel is mentioned as early as 1422 as the site of the drafting of the testament of Niccolora Tedaldi, daughter of Pierozzo Aliotti.[117] In 1446, after referring to the Cappella Villani (dedicated to the Crucifixion), one notary cites that the aforementioned chapel is before 'la cappella detto Tedaldi', while another document of the same year draws attention to the chapel's stained glass window: 'Vedi la Cappella de Tedaldi, e occhio di vetro con la loro arme in faccia a detto Cappella'.[118] On 10 April 1464, Talento di Pierozzo Tedaldi bequeathed Santissima Annunziata an annual payment of six florins for the celebration of St. John's feast day.[119]

It appears that the chapel was rededicated to S. Filippo Benizzi in 1671, even though it was known by that name at a much earlier time. Perhaps the most striking disclosure dealing with the chapel's patronage, introduced here for the first time, presents a second source of patronage. As shown in a notarial document of 11 September 1515, it now appears that the medieval order of the *Ammantellate*, so called because of their cape habits, also congregated in the chapel of S. Filippo Benizzi (App., doc. 27).[120] The Pinzochere Ammantellate della Vergine Maria de' Sette Dolori, as the tertiary order of Servite nuns was fully known, was founded in the late thirteenth century by Giuliana

de' Falconieri (1270-1341), whose merchant uncle (Alesso Falconieri) was one of the seven founders of the Santissima Annunziata. Renouncing the pomp of the world, the sisters opened their order with the consent of Filippo Benizzi and their constitution was approved by Pope Martin V in 1424 and confirmed by Innocent VIII in 1487.[121] The order occupied two other chapels within the church, its chief responsibilities consisting of the celebration of the Immaculate Conception and the conducting of funeral services.[122] The observance of the Conception by the *suore* is documented in 1505 and again in 1513, as the Servite friars were paid by the sisters in return for the festivities.[123]

In investigating whether the possible double patronage of the chapel affected the figural arrangement and the iconography of Piero's altarpiece, at least the former element may be elucidated somewhat by Piero's known preparatory sketch, formerly in the Kunsthalle, Bremen (fig. 62).[124] Free of *pentimenti*, the developed and fairly detailed drawing appears to be from Piero's mid to late stages of design. Although the study is significantly more sure-handed than the searching *Visitation* sketch, its scratchy lines and angular forms lack the fluency and grace of the late chalk studies for the *Immaculate Conception* to be discussed in the next chapter.

The changes wrought by Piero in the placement of the holy participants between the study and final painted image are highly intriguing, however.[125] Not only was the bearded St. John the Evangelist transformed into an angelic Leonardesque youth in the finished painting, but SS. Filippo Benizzi and Antoninus also came to occupy the positions formerly belonging to the two female saints—closest to that of the Virgin. Finally, the same two male saints—now standing—switched sides in the painted version, with S. Filippo placed to the right of the Virgin.[126] It should be considered whether the original placement of the female saints, as closest to the Virgin and standing on the same stepped platform (ultimately changed to the narrow dado) as the Virgin herself, was related to the chapel's joint usage by the Ammantellate and the nuns' possible participation in the ordering of Piero's panel. Such a case of shared patronage would further explain the painting's commonly claimed subject of the 'Immaculate Conception' in past scholarship, although the dado's Annunciation *grisaille* and other accompanying background narratives surrounding Christ's birth decisively confirm the main scene as the Incarnation, as will be later discussed.[127]

Still, the Tedaldi role in the commission remains the most secure on the basis of the chosen saints. The Evangelist, the chapel's dedicatory saint, stands conspicuously on the privileged right of the Virgin and points to the opposite figure of St. Peter, Pierozzo's name saint, who in turn gestures back to the Mother of God in this triangular dance of hands. Along with St. Peter opposite him, St. John conventionally functions as the saint initiating immediate contact with the worshipper, fulfilling a mediatory role performed again by St. Dominic in Piero's later Yale altarpiece. SS. Catherine of Alexandria and Margaret of Antioch, holding a cross and rosary beads (perhaps serving as a pun on

*margarita*, or pearl) in her clasped hands, kneel in the foreground as two saints often linked with one another as early Christian virgin martyrs. While the reason for these two figures' inclusion remains somewhat unclear, Pierozzo did have a sister named Margherita; in his 1505 will, he also stipulated that if the Servite priests were to fail in fulfilling his requests, his payments were to be made instead to the sisters of St. Catherine of Siena of the third order in Piazza San Marco.[128] It is, nonetheless, Catherine of Alexandria that is represented in the altarpiece, despite the lack of identifying attributes in the preparatory sketch.

While the light upon the features of SS. John the Evangelist, Catherine and Margaret smoothes and softens the features, further accenting their appearance of youth, it produces a very different effect on the faces of SS. Filippo Benizzi, Antoninus and Peter, defining them incisively and yielding portrait-like resemblance in which the viewer can discern every bone and wrinkle. SS. Filippo Benizzi (left) and Antoninus stand closest to the Virgin. Filippo (*c.*1233-85) holds a special place of honour in his proximity to Mary, as the prior general of the Servite Order from 1267-85 and the virtual founder of the Servite nuns.[129] Piero shows him in his usual guise, as a middle-aged Servite friar in the black habit of his Order, holding a five-petalled lily belonging to the angel Gabriel in the Annunciation and alluding to Mary's crown. Antonino Pierozzi (1389-1459), the founder of San Marco in 1436 and Archbishop of Florence in 1446, is shown in his Dominican habit and the narrow white pallium of his archiepiscopal office. The elderly Dominican inclines his head towards the Virgin's radiance, with the look of a learned but physically frail man.[130] His face can be assumed to be based on a close likeness, propagated in several early images. Both men are shown with rays around their heads rather than haloes, for neither was canonised until after the panel's execution. Antonino was canonised in 1523, while Filippo followed in 1671, the year that Piero's panel was replaced by Volterrano's *S. Filippo in Glory*, Filippo having been beatified earlier by Leo X in 1515.

The panel is in an excellent state of conservation and serves as the best example of Piero's vivid colour and crystalline light so typical of his work in the first decade of the cinquecento.[131] Despite some degree of the saints' emotional distance, the Tedaldi altarpiece remains Piero's most unified figural composition. The most convincing subject of the scene remains the Incarnation, the moment immediately following the Annunciation when the Virgin Mary accepts the angel Gabriel's pronouncement that 'You shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus' (Luke I. 26-38). The preceding Annunciation scene is narrated by Piero in the *grisaille* relief on the dado below, showing Mary acknowledging her destiny. *The Golden Legend* states that it was at the instant of the angel's message that 'the Son of God was conceived in her womb, perfect God and perfect man', while The Gospel of St. John describes the miracle more tangibly, as a union of the divine and the human: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. And we saw his glory—

glory as of the only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth' (John I. 14). The Word—derived from the Latin *caro* or flesh—therefore was transformed into a unified totality in the form of Jesus (in the Virgin's womb), an 'enfleshment' of God's Word through his descent. Following the descriptions of Matthew and Luke, Piero shows the descent of God's Word in an explicit manner, through the dove of the Holy Spirit, illuminated from above by a bright warm light. Thus, it is Mary and her perpetual virginity that remain at the core of this image, raised upon a pedestal in a kind of holy 'spotlight' and gazing upwards at the Dove of the Holy Spirit. Represented both as virgin and mother, she raises her left hand in acceptance while placing her right hand upon her womb in a gesture of great meaning, acknowledging that she has become the 'chosen vessel' of the Lord.[132]

Piero makes effective use of the pronounced light source in two ways, one corporeal and the other spiritual. As natural light, the radiance illuminates the miracle and its witnesses, while bringing out the brilliant clarity of the colours and details which characterise Piero's taste, as best seen in the manner in which St. Catherine's holds a book in her right hand (perhaps a reference to her great learning) and the play of light on the finger which marks its page. As in scenes of the Annunciation and the Nativity, the spiritual light helps to clarify the Marian mystery metaphorically, alluding to her perpetual virginity, which was the main tenet of the Servites ('virginitas ante partum', 'in partu' and 'post partum'). In fact, St. Bernard and other theologians explained the Incarnation by comparing the conception and Mary's purity to the passage of sunlight through a glass window:

> Just as the brilliance of the sun fills and penetrates a glass window without damaging it, and pierces its solid form with imperceptible subtlety, neither hurting it when entering nor destroying it when emerging: thus the word of God, the splendour of the Father, entered the virgin chamber and then came forth from the closed womb.[133]

Befittingly, it is Fra Bartolomeo's *Vision of St. Bernard* altarpiece (1507) for the Bianco Chapel in the Badia that can be said to be a *locus classicus* contemporary image of saints enacting a *sacra conversazione* in a landscape. Although its completion date is probably too late to affect the Uffizi panel, it is possible that Piero had recourse to the Frate's image during its production and may have incorporated part of its solution. The right-hand group in the *Vision* does, in fact, appear to find an echo in Piero's ex-Bremen sketch and the poses and gestures of the saints on the corresponding side.[134] An earlier work by Filippino Lippi—the *Rucellai Altarpiece* in The National Gallery, London—also certainly cannot be overlooked as an equally daring depiction of a nursing Virgin in an outdoor *sacra conversazione*. Executed in *c.*1485-7, Filippino's wild landscape would have been unprecedented in such a context, although certainly befitting the painting's Vallombrosan origin, and could not have failed to make an impression on contemporary painters such as Piero upon seeing it in the Rucellai family's Chapel of St. Jerome in San Pancrazio.

Piero is at his most uninhibited in the elaborate landscape, creating unusual organic shapes in the forms of the trees. These background scenes contribute to a fuller narrative, which has its origin in Christ's Incarnation. The hill at left contains a Nativity scene in a manger, accompanied by the ox and ass, while a shepherd appears to approach the scene from the field above. The right landscape shows the Holy family labouring up a path in the Flight into Egypt.[135] The basin-like composition, bracketed by two hills, is similar to the Palazzo Martelli *Nativity* tondo, perhaps an early copy after the destroyed Berlin tondo of the same subject (figs. 93-4).

It is, in part, the analogous landscape and overall execution of the *Bacchanals* (*c*.1500-5) that helps date the altarpiece to *c*.1504-5.[136] There are two other important points of pictorial reference for Piero's composition. The first is the Louvre *Adoration of the Virgin and Child with SS. Jerome and Zenobius* by Mariotto Albertinelli (with Franciabigio), originally for the St. Jerome Chapel in Santa Trinita and dated 1506 (fig. 63). Though Albertinelli depicts a different subject, his image shares many commonalities, particularly in the Virgin's placement upon a pedestal, here bearing a *grisaille* relief of the Temptation. The landscape echoes Piero's valley, framed by higher ground on either side; here, the two sides of the landscape serve as settings illustrating moments from the saints' lives, while Piero's landscape narrates succeeding scenes from the Mary's role in the early life of Christ. Albertinelli's more abbreviated, less ambitious composition bears too many resemblances to the *Incarnation* to discount Piero's influence, and it must be taken into account that Piero's work was erected in a prominent church and would have been widely accessible. To date the Santissima Annunziata altarpiece *after* this panel by Albertinelli is unfounded, going against not only the convincing stylistic affinities to Piero's works at the turn of the century but also the patron's biographical parameters.[137]

This last argument for the early dating of 1504-5 hinges upon the circumstances surrounding Pierozzo Tedaldi's entry into San Marco on 22 December 1505. Before taking the Dominican vestments, Pierozzo was obligated to give up his material possessions. As documented, Pierozzo settled his final financial affairs on 19 December 1505.[138] The will refers to Pierozzo as 'cittadino fiorentino frate non ancora professor di San Marco' and states that he is leaving half of a blacksmith shop, on the Ponte Vecchio, to Santissima Annunziata in return for the annual celebration of the feast of St. John the Evangelist at the family altar, to be observed with the same solemnity as the Christmas celebrations. The priests were also responsible for an annual commemoration of his death, for his soul and those of his ancestors, upon the day following Christmas.[139]

Even though too little stylistic evidence exists between the *Incarnation* and Fra Bartolomeo's *God the Father with SS. Mary Magdalen and Catherine of Siena* of 1509 in the Museo di Villa Guinigi, Lucca to warrant a date as late as 1509-10 for Piero's work (as proposed by Capretti), Laura

Cavazzini's much earlier dating of *c.*1498 seems equally to be too early.[140] Unlike Cavazzini, I do believe that the documentary evidence of Pierozzo Tedaldi's will and taking of the habit does hold significant relevance in finalising the date of the altarpiece.

Stylistically, Piero's Tedaldi altarpiece may have been one of the most direct precursors of a panel now in Budapest's Szepmüvészeti Múzeum, showing the *Volto Santo of Lucca* (fig. 64).[141] Lacking a secure date, the work appears to belong on stylistic grounds to the first decade of the cinquecento, possibly between the earlier Tedaldi altarpiece and the Perugia *Pietà*. The attribution of this stylistically evasive work has proven the most problematic of Piero's altarpieces, having prompted a series of widely differing opinions.[142] The precision of detail and luminosity of colour are obscured to some degree by the dirtied, slightly yellowed varnishes, yet still succeed in revealing Piero's care and patience of execution.[143] This treatment is especially evident in the drapery, as well as the face and hands of the triumphant Christ, physical traits reminiscent of the Perugia image.

The work's quality of execution and a number of telling stylistic marks offer convincing proof of Piero as the work's author. The hilly landscape is typical of the painter, particularly close in type to those in the Amsterdam double-portraits. In fact, the same kind of red domed structure in the left background appears again not only in the Giamberti portrait (at left) but also the Perugia *Pietà* and its octagonal cupola (at right). In speculating about the identity of the conspicuous circular building in Budapest image, it is in fact possible to suggest an allusion to the Holy Sepulchre. In nearly every respect, Piero adheres to the Lucchese Volto Santo legend with an iconographic precision that is no less exacting than the narrative fidelity applied in his Ovidean *Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* or the magnified realism of the Amsterdam portraits. According to tradition, the Volto Santo was carved by Nicodemus, who assisted in taking down Christ's body from the cross and preparing it for burial (John III. 1-10, VIII. 50-52, XIX. 39). It was said that the Pharisee meditated on the image of Christ so intensely that he became divinely inspired to carve Christ's face as he remembered it upon on the cross. Despite this account, the image still came to be included among the holy icons known as 'acheiropoietic', or not made by hands.[144] The carved sculpture miraculously made a safe passage from the east, escaping the eighth-century iconoclasts and finally washing up at the harbor of Luni, near Lucca. The object was placed in the Duomo of Lucca in 780.[145] Piero lavishes great attention to every detail down to the figure's slippers (alluding to the legend in which the image miraculously kicked off its silver shoe as a gift for a poor young minstrel) and chalice, placed beneath the right foot (fig. 65). As he does with the richly lined garment and imperial crown of Christ as *Christus Rex*, Piero enhances the preciousness of the Eucharistic vessel and, going a step further, deceptively extends the chalice into our real space in both its proximity to the picture plane and the bottom edge of the panel.[146] Unseen in any available reproductions, a fictive grey frame, approximately three inches in

width and reaching to the outer edges of the panel, also runs along the entire work and is reminiscent of the Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpiece and the chronologically later panel's trompe l'oeil painted frame and candle (see Chapter VI).

According to Bacci, landscape details point to the painting's Florentine origin despite the Lucchese subject.[147] However, the white marble campanile at the extreme right of the picture, identified by Bacci as Giotto's creation in the Piazza del Duomo, may instead allude to Lucca and the white-topped bell tower of S. Martino. The townscape as a whole bears little resemblance to Florence, lacking in recognisable landmarks, and more convincingly implies the site of the silkweavers' place of original origin. Whatever dispute may exist concerning the true identity of the depicted location, According to Vasari, Piero would have had a precedent for the painting of the Volto Santo in the works of Cosimo Roselli, who painted a fresco of Nicodemus carving the holy relic around 1489 in Lucca's San Martino, where he would have seen the Volto Santo in situ, and back in Florence executed a Volto Santo image for the *tessitori di drappi serici* (silk weavers) in San Marco.[148] An altarpiece in the Los Angeles Museum of Art is commonly accepted as the San Marco altarpiece described by Vasari but has become identified not with Rosselli but the Master of the Fiesole Nativity (fig. 66). This suggested executor of the panel has been linked with Filippo di Giuliano di Matteo (1449-1503), a member of the Jacopo del Sellaio workshop, or the less likely Gherardo di Giovanni del Fora (1445-97), known best as a miniaturist and manuscript illuminator.[149]

The silk weavers' guild, originating in Lucca, was best known as San Marco dei Lucchesi or Ceppo dei Tessitori upon its foundation in Florence in *c.*1450, although it was also called the Compagnia della Santa Croce due to Lucca's special link with the Volto Santo. At this time, the company established a hospital near San Marco on via Largha, called the Ospedale della Misericordia dei Tessitori, in which the weavers had an altar.[150] Del Badia added that the brotherhood also had a chapel in San Marco and in April 1490 erected an altar there, for which an altarpiece was commissioned (presumably that described by Vasari). On 15 October 1490, members decided to renew their residence and hospital and bought three attached houses on via S. Gallo, collectively named 'Il Palazetto' The installation of the *Volto Santo* by the Master of the Fiesole Nativity in San Marco would have occurred in the early 1490s, suggesting a possible association with Savonarola, whose priorate spanned 1491-8, and his own restrained and didactic visual preferences. The original location of the altarpiece was not the first altar along the left wall of the nave, after the transept—where Vasari saw it—but rather on the *tramezzo* facing the women's praying area of the nave.[151]

The old meeting-place of the company and hospital were abandoned, however, and by 1515-16 they were being used as horse stables.[152] In 1539, the company was transferred to via Sant'Egidio, near the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova.[153] Yet the altarpiece itself was not taken down from its

second location in San Marco (the altar of the Holy Cross in the left nave) until around 1582, during the rebuilding of nave walls, and is noted as being seen in the guild's new rooms in 1684.

Further evidence in the confraternity's archival accounts verifies the existence of *two* panels in the possession of the brotherhood, one on the San Marco altar and the other adorning the altar of the Compagnia's nearby hospital on via Largha.[154] It is conceivable that this second panel (subject unknown) was thus once on the altar of the Ospedale della Misericordia dei Tessitori, fully outfitted for all necessities in 1481; the picture was no longer at the new location of the same hospital, constructed at the start of 1490, however, and it was perhaps at this time that the panel may have been transferred to this site, Il Palazetto.[155] The possibility that Piero's *Volto Santo* was this second panel should certainly not be discounted and would help date the work much earlier, to the early 1490s.

Matters are complicated somewhat by a third altarpiece, a *Volto Santo with SS. John the Baptist and Mark*, now in the convent of San Salvatore al Monte alle Croci and convincingly attributed to the Master of Serumido (fig. 67).[156] Executed at a significantly later date than the San Marco image, the San Salvatore panel may have served as the altarpiece for the new seat of the silk weavers guild. A potentially related image is an Uffizi drawing, attributed to Filippino Lippi and dated in the 1490s (fig. 68).[157] The dating of the drawing coincides with the San Marco altarpiece, although its precise function and relationship to the altarpiece commissions remain uncertain as a whole. It is possible that the drawing was for the tabernacle frame, an idea supported by the highly wrought Corinithian capital on the left side pilaster. The most plausible hypothesis, however, is that the drawing may have been a preparatory drawing by Filippino for a planned but never executed altarpiece.[158] Despite the drawing's inclusion of the two angels and Christ's lowered head, tilted to the right, the closest similarities are with the San Salvatore *Volto Santo*, and it is also possible that Filippino's sketched composition was used at a later date by the Master of Serumido. As already noted, some connection between Filippino and this Master certainly existed, as attested by the latter's copies; it is therefore plausible that the San Salvatore panel was executed at a later date by the Master of Serumido on the basis of Filippino's drawing for his own unrealised picture.

Of the images introduced, the one closest to Piero's Budapest panel is the version in San Salvatore. The two most noticeable similarities are in the inclusions of the aureole atop the crucifix and the perfectly frontal countenance of Christ. The former is a faithful rendering of the Lucchese relic, while the latter is not. There is a conspicuous absence of angels. The base of the cross reaches down to the ground in both panels, also unlike the San Marco image. The discrepancies between the San Marco version and that by Piero point to the conclusion that Piero's source was presumably the Lucca wooden crucifix itself and not the San Marco altarpiece. Even if he did not see it with his own eyes, Piero no doubt would have received an accurate description from Rosselli. The exclusion of

Christ's head tilt can be explained by the iconic nature of the image and the demands of patronage. As Caroselli writes, 'concessions must be made when an artist is reproducing a holy image that must be immediately recognisable to the viewer. And to a worshipper of the late-fifteenth century the formality of the *Christus Rex* imagery and the penitential message were balanced by the accessibility of the kindly face of Christ' [159]

The luxuriousness of Christ's painted silk robe would doubtlessly have had special resonance for the *tessitori*. Certainly, Piero's Volto Santo is no less ornate in its trappings than the San Marco and San Salvatore figures. Christ is adorned by a triple tiara of gold and pearls, a black robe fringed with gold ornament and belt and similarly embroidered shoes, stitched with more pearls. The ambiguity of the setting aside, another detail indicates the link to San Marco and, by extension, the silk weavers. Piero's landscape, organised in a basin-like composition, remains the most intact part of the paint surface. To the right of the bottom of the Volto Santo's robe, a central building is topped by what curiously looks to be a well; washing hangs out of windows. Of greatest relevance, however, is a minuscule figure dressed in red sits on a ledge of a building, a ladder standing beside him. The figure is shown painting a lion, now grown faint and nearly invisible in reproductions, that holds a white banner with the red cross of the Resurrection, the same banner held by St. John the Baptist in the San Salvatore panel. The red cross also appears at the base of the tympanum above the frame of the San Marco altar belonging to the company and is visible in yet another before unmentioned detail in the Budapest panel. Close inspection of the chalice at left exposes six nearly indiscernible oval images embedded in its precious surface. The top three scenes, placed at the stem of the cup, include a female figure (Mary?) in a red robe at left; the upper body of the dead Christ shown rising from the sepulchre at center; and a male figure in red (St. John the Evangelist?) at right. The larger triad of scenes at the foot of the chalice reveals two single figures flanking the much better articulated central image of a blue robed female figure shown in front of the risen Christ, dressed in the white robe of the Resurrection and carrying aloft the same white banner with a red cross. Curiously then, the Master of Serumido later combined elements from both of the earlier panels: the inclusion of the two kneeling saints from the Master of the Fiesole Nativity and, from Piero, the frontal Volto Santo crucifix, hilly landscape and the absence of the mandorla of angels—while the banner with the red cross of San Marco serves as the common element uniting all three altarpieces, displayed in different guises and practically entirely concealed in Piero's rendering.

Piero's *Pietà with SS. John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalen* in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, also appears to date slightly later than the Tedaldi *Incarnation* on the basis of its more subdued tone and simplified composition, qualities that are taken a step further in Piero's post-1510 altarpieces (fig. 69). The symmetry and reductiveness of the altarpiece places it near 1510,

between the Tedaldi altarpiece and that in Yale.[160] It is in the *Pietà* that Piero begins to show a marked shift from the earlier, more compositionally elaborate examples, such as the Innocenti panel. Both the landscape and general composition of the altarpiece suggest a gradual movement away from the more crowded and complex preceding works. The brilliance of colour remains a constant, however.

The *Pietà* has survived in its original ornately sculpted and gilded frame, composed of two flanking pilasters with Corinthian capitals supporting an arch, and remains in a good state of conservation.[161] Even though no documents relating to the picture's direct commission or installation have yet emerged, we do know its original location and patronage from later documentation. The work was commissioned for another rural and isolated site, this time as distant as the little town of Abeto, north of Norcia in central Umbria, and the church of San Martino di Abeto di Preci. In 1393, the Valle Catoriana was said to be divided into four *plebati* (small ecclesiastical districts): Campi, Preci, Valle Oblita, and Monte Sanmartino.[162] St. Martin was the patron saint of five villages in the Preci Diocese: Abeto, Le Gogne, Gualdo, Maltignano and Trognano. The relevant church is located in the first village.

On the basis of an eighteenth-century notarial document, mentioning the chapel in the Chiesa Parrocchiale di Abeto and introduced by Antonio Fabbri, the altarpiece originally belonged in the Cappella della Pietà, on the altar commissioned by the Lucci family. On 2 August 1785, for reasons of economic necessity, Filippo Lucci sold the direct patronage of the Chapel of the Pietà to a Don Stefano Cesqui di Valeriano (to whom he owed fourteen *scudi*) and his heirs for the price of nineteen *scudi*.[163] In the hands of the Cesqui family, Piero's panel was removed in 1855 by the heirs to their palace for safety reasons, during the restoration of the church.[164] As Ansano Fabbi concluded, the presence of a major, mature work by Piero in such a remote area may throw some light on the working relations and commercial interractions between the rural inhabitants—or, more, specifically the *portatori* associated with customs—and the population of Florence. Yet in light of their relative poverty, it is unlikely that the Abeto valley's inhabitants would have directly ordered a Florentine work of art for their town. Instead, it is much more plausible that the panel originally was commissioned by either the acting priest or rector of San Martino di Abeto di Preci between 1500-10 or the artisan confraternity of San Giovanni Battista Decollato dei Portatori di Norcia in Florence. This confraternity of the porters of Norcia met in a hospital of the Misericordia, located in via S. Gallo and run by the society from 1317 onwards.[165]

Piero chooses to base the image around stark forms, placed against an equally simplified landscape recalling that of the *Volto Santo*. The distinctive trees and minute detail of the landscapes of the *Incarnation* and the secular *Bacchanals* have vanished. Instead, Piero focuses on the central

scene's sense of intense devotion and mourning. The rigid body of Christ lies stretched across the knees of the three mourners, SS. John and Mary Magdalen and the Virgin Mary at centre, all witnesses to the Crucifixion and Descent from the Cross.[166] The scene's general emotional timbre and quiet grace, reflected in the sobriety of composition, are lightened by the lucid brightness of the sky and the use of lively colour in the figures. The arid, brown landscape of Calvary and dark blue and reddish-brown sombre attire of the Virgin is countered by St. John's purple-pink mantle, yellow scarf, and azure shirt, with its gold trimmed neckline, and Mary Magdalen's dark blue robe and red mantle with gold embroidery.[167] While her attendant saints appear almost as youthful angels, Mary is shown as an elderly woman, her hands aged and thin.[168] St. John cradles Christ's head—strangely cupping his falling hair rather than physically supporting the head itself—while looking in the direction of the Virgin Mary. Both Christ's hands, rigid and somewhat awkward, and the face of St. John recall Piero's execution in the *Death of a Nymph* and, more aptly, his *Venus, Cupid and Mars* in Berlin. At right, Mary Magdalen supports Christ's feet, her eyes cast down in grief, as three angels hold the instruments of Christ's Passion in the clouds above. While opting for a more austere expression elsewhere in the composition, Piero shows his gift for detail in the golden highlights in the Magdalen's hair, the glistening tears below the eyes of all three mourners and their stippled haloes, as well as in the scene's foreground objects. In front of the *pietà* group lie the hammer and nails, tongs and a white jar of ointment, alluding to the oil of myrrh with which the Magdalen anointed Christ's feet at the supper with Simon the Pharisee (Luke VII. 36 ff). It is possible that the opening in the ground at the bottom edge of the image may represent traces of the dug tomb. A path winds up a hill behind the main scene, leading to the three crosses of Golgotha, framed starkly against the sky.

The most conspicuous feature in the hilly landscape is the appearance of St. Martin of Tours and the beggar on a path at right. Esteemed as one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages, the fourth-century monk turned bishop must be remembered as the patron saint of the Abeto church. Piero illustrates the former soldier's great act of charity, from this early period of his life, when Martin met a nearly naked beggar at Amiens and cut off half of his *paludamentum* (military cloak) to clothe him. Piero paints the young man seated on a white horse and in the process of dividing his cloak with a sword and draping it around the beggar. Continuing an ascetic life, Martin founded many monasteries and became known for converting many in rural areas. Until that point, the practice of Christianity had largely been limited to urban centers, and it is precisely this proselytising aspect of the saint that must have greatly encouraged his veneration in a small Umbrian town like Abeto of Preci.

In attempting such a particularised and 'synchronic' investigation—concentrating on the known or probable patrons, Piero's role in shaping the appropriate pictorial solutions, and the altarpiece's

devotional function once inside its intended church setting—my intention has been to shed more light onto Piero's patterns of picture-making and the pictorial formulation of very specific religious images. The noted variegation in Piero's style and composition from his early to late periods, so closely wed to these requirements, must be closely studied for its motivating factors, and I will attempt to do so in the following chapter.

[1] M. Kemp, 'The altarpiece in the Renaissance: a taxonomic approach', in P. Humfrey and M. Kemp (eds.), *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 13-14.
[2] In both its architecture and artwork, much of the present church is the product of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.
[3] G. Baronti, *Montevettolini e il suo Territorio* (Pescia, 1895), pp. 126-7. The 1514 document is found in the Part. del Comune, 19 November 1514.
[4] The St. Lazarus Chapel, also dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, now contains a canvas showing *St. John the Evangelist* (originally in the oratory of the Madonna della Neve) that replaced Piero's panel in 1888, at which time the latter was moved, following a cleaning, to its present location in the Chapel of the Sacrament.
[5] St. Luke XVI. 20-23: 'And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: *moreover the dogs came and licked his sores*. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom' [own emphasis].
[6] Baronti, 1895, pp. 126-7. The Chapel of the Annunciation, now containing a *Virgin with St. Gabriel*, would originally have been adorned with an Annunciation scene with St. Sebastian to the right, St. Roch to the left and four other saints below; the Chapel of the Crucifixion still contains two canvases executed in 1631 (Jacopo Vignali), showing the two saints separately.
[7] Ibid., p. 20. A later 1534 inventory describes the hospital's meagre interior.
[8] F. Zeri, 'Rivedendo Piero di Cosimo', *Paragone*, X (1959), pp. 36-50. Also see Cecilia Filippini's reference to Cosimo Rosselli's early influence in *Maestri e botteghe: Pittura a Firenza alla fine del Quattrocento*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 1992-3, [Florence, 1992], p. 74, cat. no. 2.6. Bacci, who stresses an affinity with Filippino and Leonardo, and Fermor favour 1475-80 and 1480 datings respectively.
[9] A similar border ledge exists in Botticelli's *Pala Bardi* (Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), executed in 1484-5 for the Bardi chapel in S. Spirito. Botticelli's two St. Johns exhibit shared qualities with Piero's early altarpiece in their attenuated and delicate linearity of pose.
[10] Assuming that Piero executed his image soon after Filippino's model, *c.*1488 appears to be the most reasonable date for the Stockholm work. Piero places grapes and half an apricot or peach (?) next to the reading Christ Child, while Filippino includes the symbolically rich pomegranate. As opposed to Piero's side window view of an open landscape leading to a town beyond, Filippino's window reveals a colonnaded arcade, behind which opens a cityscape. The poses and emotional tenor of the pictures are identical, however, despite Piero's more velvety light effects that are closer to that of the earlier Leonardo works (the *Madonna with a Carnation* or the *Benois Madonna*). Some of Leonardo's early drawings, executed during his first stay in Florence, also could have provided the iconographic source for Madonna and Child interior scenes, so popular in the late quattrocento.
[11] E. Buzzegoli, 'Michelangelo as colourist revealed in the conservation of the Doni Tondo', *Apollo*, CXXVI (Dec. 1987), pp. 405-8.
[12] The panel, measuring 204.5 x 174.5 cm, is now in a private collection in Toronto, Canada, having been bought at Sotheby's London on 19 December 1987 (lot 4). Before that, the work was in the collection of G.B. Lanz in Rennaz, Switzerland, where it remained during and after World War II. See short passage in C. Whitfield, *Discoveries from the Cinquecento*, exh. cat., Colnaghi and Company, Leicester (London, 1982), pp. 56-8.
[13] In a written correspondence of 19 August 1998, Dianne Dwyer Modestini, the picture's last restorer, noted large areas of loss in the middle of the panel—including the head of the Madonna—and along the bottom in its former state before restoration. The green drapery of St. Augustine also was severely damaged from blistering. She writes that 'the painting had suffered greatly from water or severe damp, as the gesso layers were much deteriorated and the paint loss is typical of water damage' The work's present state is dramatically improved.

[14] Recto: *Madonna and Child Enthroned between SS. Onofrius and Augustine*; verso: *Two Partial Studies of a Male Nude; Study of a Leg*. Pen and brown ink, except for the figure study near the center of the sheet in black chalk, 16.8 x 20.9 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, inv. 1773. Griswold did not accept the sheet as a Piero, suggesting that it is a drawn copy after Piero's preparatory drawing. Griswold, 1988, pp. 288-90.

[15] See A. Padoa Rizzo, 'Ancora sulla Madonna di Piazza' in F. Falletti (ed.), *I Medici, Il Verrocchio e Pistoia* (Livorno, 1996), p. 72.

[16] An earlier representation of the saint can be found in a panel by a follower of Fra Angelico in Florence's Certosa.

[17] G. Kaftal, *Saints in Italian Art. Iconograpy of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence, 1952), p.102.

[18] For S. Onofrio di Foligno's building history, see W. and E. Paatz, *Die Kirchen von Florenz*, 6 vols. (Frankfurt, 1952), IV, pp. 463-4 (complete description pp. 463-73). Also: G. Richa, *Notizie delle chiese fiorentine devise ne' suoi quartieri*, 10 vols. (Rome, 1756), IV, pp. 168 ff. Since 1419/29, the church was also known as S. Onofrio delle Contesse, after the three Umbrian countesses that founded this Tertiary branch of Franciscan nuns.

[19] Lorenzo Il Magnifico later had the installations equipped with another dormitorium and prefects. Nothing essential seems have been changed for the remainder of the 15th century, and it was only in the late 16th century that a new, important building period began. Paatz, 1952, IV, p. 464.

[20] A similar case is found in the Matteo di Giovanni altarpiece from S. Maria dei Servi in Sansepolcro, originally dedicated to S. Lucia. Matteo's triptych included the female saint, although unrelated to the Servites or their new dedication. I am grateful to David Franklin for providing me with this example.

[21] Bacci (1976) pointed to Pistoia as the work's origin, a view supported by Anna Padoa Rizzo, who proposed that the work may have belonged on the main altar of once existing Sant'Onofrio of Pistoia. See Padoa Rizzo, 'Ancora sulla Madonna di Piazza', 1996, pp. 72; and the elaborated version in Padoa Rizzo, 'Arte a Pistoia nel Quattrocento', in *L'Eta di Savonarola. Fra'Paolino e la Pittura a Pistoia nel Primo '500* (Venice, 1996), pp. 43-4.

[22] G. Tigri, *Pistoia e il suo territorio* (Pistoia, 1854), pp. 243-4.

[23] A. Padoa Rizzo, 'Arte a Pistoia nel Quattrocento', 1996, p. 44, noting G. Dondori, *Della pietà di Pistoia* (Pistoia, 1966), p. 31.

[24] Padoa Rizzo, 'Arte a Pistoia...', 1996, p. 43, noting M. Bacci, 'Il pittore pistoiese Sano di Giorgio', *Bulletino storico pistoiese*, XII (1911), pp. 197-207. Also L. Neri, 'La pittura in San Francesco dalle origini al Quattrocento', in L. Gai (ed.), *San Francesco. La chiesa e il Convento in Pistoia* (Pistoia 1993), pp. 81-165.

[25] A. Chiti, *Pistoia* (Pistoia, 1910). This order became suppressed in 1810. The Cappuccini then rebuilt the church, which Vescovo Sozzifanti consecrated in 1872 and is now known as the Chiesa de' Minori Cappuccini.

[26] The altarpiece's three predelle narrate episodes from the lives of three of the four depicted saints and differ greatly from the illusionistic central panel in their much sketchier execution. The left predella shows the heretical Albigenses throwing a book with the true doctrine, given to them by Dominic, into a fire; yet three times the flames reject the book without injury. The middle predella illustrates the meeting of the young Christ and St. John the Baptist in the wilderness, as described in the apocryphal thirteenth-century *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. The right scene depicts Nicholas chopping down a tree dedicated to the pagan cult of Diana, the incarnation of the devil.

[27] ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 4358 (own reference).

[28] ASF, Arte della Seta 246, fols 37r, 38v, 42r, 44v. For this archival evidence, see J. Burke, *Form and Power: Patronage and the Visual Arts in Florence c.1480-1512* (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Ph.D. thesis, 1999), p. 112, n. 10.

[29] Horne, 'The Last Communion of St. Jerome by Sandro Botticelli', *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, X (1915), p. 56.

[30] ASF, Not. Antecos. 14416, fol. 335r. See Burke, 1999, p. 121, n. 63. This most well-known Pugliese chapel was noted by Vasari for its frescoes by Gherardo Starnina (1350-1400), that 'acquired for Starnina rank and fame among his craftsmen' and was later often cited by authors such as Richa as the most impressive in the church. See Richa, X, p. 43. Unfortunately, only some fragments of the frescoes, showing Jerome's life, remain in the church's Sacristy. The altarpiece by a medieval painter, showing the saint's death, also is gone. Founded by Francesco di Belisario del Pugliese in 1334, the chapel passed to the Bonaccorsi family in 1780. The present altarpiece is Domenico Feretti's *Deposition*. See BNF, Sepoltuario Cirri, VI.

[31] I.B. Supino, 'La Cappella del Pugliese', *Miscellanea d'Arte* (1903), p. 2.

[32] Morselli (1957) confused the St. Louis panel with another Piero work once in S. Marco, on the basis of Vasari's passage: '...e nel novizato di San Marco, in un quadro, una Nostra Donna ritta col Figliouolo in collo, colorita a olio' (Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 61). Capretti (1996, pp. 95-6) suggested S. Domenico in Prato as the source, based partly on the Del Pugliese origins in the town. This proposal cannot be borne out, however. In the chapels of S. Domenico, nearly every important Pratese family is represented except the Del Pugliese. For this, see P. Bernardo Orsi, *Il S. Domenico di Prato: Notizie e Documenti* (Prato, 1977). As S. Domenico grew in stature, a monastery dedicated to S. Niccolò was founded by Cardinale Niccolò Albertini on 22 February 1322. The nuns of the order included Suor Oretta Pugliesi (d. 1504), the most notable member on account of her nobility; however, the chapel in her honour was decorated by three frescoes (*Christ Carrying the Cross*, the *Crucifixion*, and the *Pietà*), dated 1509, and a late-quattrocento altarpiece and predella depicting the story of San Clemente. Thus despite Lecceto's relative obscurity, the documentary sources noting S. Maria Lecceto's matching chapel dedication are overwhelmingly convincing and conclusively end our search for the painting's origins.

[33] E. Repetti, *Dizionario geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, 5 vols. (Florence, 1835), II, pp. 666-7. Eve Borsook was the first to discuss the church's Pugliese Chapel and its dedication, yet without linking it to the St. Louis altarpiece, in 'Documenti relativi alle cappelle di Lecceto e delle Selve di Filippo Strozzi', *Antichità viva*, IX (1970), pp. 3-20. The Del Pugliese patronage and 1481 consecration of the family's altar is also noted—but again without mention of Piero di Cosimo's involvement—in G. Romagnoli, *L'Eremo di Lecceto* (Signa, 1991), pp. 7-22 (esp. p. 10). For the most complete discussion of S. Maria Lecceto's Pugliese patronage, see Burke, *Form and Power...*, 1999, Chapter IV, pp. 91-108.

[34] ASF, Carte Strozziane V, 1185, ins. 22, c. 5. All of the following Carte Strozziane citations related to the church are from Romagnoli, 1991, p. 21; and Borsook, 1970, pp. 14-20.

[35] Filippo Strozzi founded the *cappella maggiore* with three consecrated stones in July 1478. See Borsook, 1970, p. 4, for this foundation of the chapel. For the entire history of S. Maria Lecceto and a detailed account of its decoration, again see Romagnoli, 1991, pp. 7-22.

[36] ASF, Catasto 1000, fol. 412v. A member of the family also witnessed the will of Piero's brother in 1467. For this record see ASF, Not. Antecos. 14416 (Ser Francesco di Piero Moletti, 1460-69), fol. 528v.

[37] E. Sanesi, *Il Seminario fiorentino* (Florence, 1913), p. 177.

[38] ASF, CS, V, 1185, ins. 22, fol. 6.

[39] Borsook, 1970, p. 5, n. 49.

[40] S. Razzi, *Breve Discrizione del Luogho Chiamato Santa Maria di Lecceto* (a hand-written copy in the Biblioteca di San Marco, Florence).

[41] Romagnoli, 1991, p. 12.

[42] ASF, CS, V, 36, fol. 381 left.

[43] ASF, CS, V, 1162, fol. 6r-7r (testament of 14 May 1491); and ASF, CS, V, 1185. According to the last wishes of their father, Filippo and Lorenzo Strozzi acquired a farm near Empoli and donated it to the friars.

[44] C. Fischer, *Fra Bartolommeo. Master Draughtsman of the High Renaissance* (Rotterdam, 1990), pp. 395-8, cat. no. 112.
[45] Rathbone (1940), Douglas (1946) and Passavant (1968) dated the work late, at 1501. Zeri (1959), along with Bacci (1966), Desloge and Meyer, and Forlani-Capretti (1996) placed it 1485-90. Freedberg (1967): late 1480s-early 1490s; John R. Spencer: before the *Visitation*; and Fermor (1993): *c.*1495.
[46] ASF, CS, V, 1769, fol. 33 right (Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli's *Pietà* fresco and altar *paliotto*); CS, V, 36, c. 369 left (main altarpiece by Domenico Ghirlandaio and workshop).
[47] Shortly before his death, Piero del Pugliese commissioned the Uffizi shutters by Fra Bartolomeo of *c.*1497 that flanked Donatello's *Dudley Madonna* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). Filippino Lippi probably executed another, smaller work around 1480 for Piero—a *Lucretia* panel in the Galleria Palatina—which Vasari described as 'una storia di figure piccole condotte con tanta arte e diligenza'
[48] As Burke notes, Niccolò was born nineteen years after Piero's marriage to Pippa di Berto d'Arrighi. With Pippa's pregnancy most likely beginning soon after Piero's first gift to the church at the end of 1475, it is possible that Piero's naming of his son reflected a Christian act of gratitude for their good fortune. Burke, 1999, p. 105.
[49] The comparison was first mentioned in Bacci, 1966, p. 70.
[50] Burke, 1999, p. 105.
[51] ASF, Varie Notizie e Ricordi Spettanti alla Chiesa di S. Maria di Lecetto, 'Copia intitulationis dicti libri et codicis Fratris Dominici', fol. 6r. '[La chiesa] fu fundata e cominciata del prezzo e danari d'una vigna laquale dono el magnifico huomo Piero del Pugliese a frate Domenico Gurrucci ... Sua piacere di Dio ricievere questo sacrificio a benedire la sua habitatione e tempio. Et noi fare del numero de sua eletti' Ibid., p. 100, n. 51.
[52] Ibid., p. 100.
[53] Saint Louis Art Museum conservation records. The four-membered main panel measures 166.4 x 113 cm. The work has a recorded physical history since 1937. In that year and soon after purchase (1941) the panel underwent treatment for cleavage, buckling and loss of paint. During its last treatment (1964), more extensive symptoms of the same ailments were addressed. The green robe and canopy had suffered most, and the proximity of candles was the likely cause of some of the damage at bottom. The restorer noted the convex warp of the panel support, the panel's uneven grain and knots, contributing to insecurity and loss of paint, and shrinkage, resulting in compression on the paint as seen in the cleavage and buckling. The paint surface was then cleaned and old restorations and varnish removed; considerable success was achieved in reducing all buckled areas and the panel remains stable.
[54] N. Desloge and L. Meyer, 'Italian Paintings and Sculpture', *The Saint Louis Art Museum Bulletin* (Winter 1988), pp. 30-33. As Desloge and Meyer note, the *Stella Maris* functioned as yet another Dominican emblem ('The Pala Pugliese virtually summarises the constituents of Dominicanism') and was connected to a song sung by Dominic. Tablets shown on the frame's pilasters read *ARC* (*Ave Regina Coelis*) and *Ave, Ave*, 'in memory of the hundreds of daily *Aves* recited by Dominic and his friars'
[55] Ibid., p. 33. Desloge and Meyer compare Piero's 'luminous realism' to earlier explorations by Domenico Veneziano, Fra Filippo Lippi and Piero della Francesca, while noting that his use of 'illumination in the spiritual sense' is akin to that of Leonardo and Giovanni Bellini.
[56] The precise documentation for the adornment of the chapel is introduced in S. Craven, 'Three Dates for Piero di Cosimo', *The Burlington Magazine*, XCVII (Sept. 1975), pp. 572-6. For extensive discussions of the altarpiece, see Bacci, 1966, pp. 71-2; Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 104-5; and Capretti, 'Antefatti della Controriforma in Santo Spirito: tipologia, iconografia e sviluppo dell'altare, dalla "Visitazione" di Piero di Cosimo all'altar maggiore del Caccini', in Forlani-Tempesti (ed.), *Altari e immagini nell spazio Ecclesiale: Progetti e realizzazioni fra Firenze e Bologna nell'eta della*

*Controriforma* (Florence, 1996), pp. 45-51. The latter text is especially useful in its mentions of religious doctrines—both Biblical and in the writings of St. Augustine—and their relevance to Piero's panel.

[57] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 61. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 651.

[58] A Capponi chapel existed in S. Spirito even before the church was rebuilt; Piero di Bartolomeo Capponi elected to be buried there on 13 June 1417. For the four family chapels see BNF, Sepoltuario Cirri, XXI, pp. 5804-9. Chapel XXIV (dedicated to the Santi Arcangeli), adjacent to that originally containing Piero's *Visitation*, was said to have once housed Botticelli's *Archangel Saints* (now replaced by a twentieth-century image of St. Rita). The two chapels belonging to the Capponi da S. Frediano were: Chapel XXX (dedicated to the Virgin), which formerly had a *Virgin Enthroned with Saints* by Fra Filippo Lippi (now: Pierfrancesco Foschi's *Transfiguration*) and Chapel XXXI (dedicated to Crucified Christ), now adorned by Francesco Curradi's *Crucifixion*. See Paatz, 1953, V, pp. 141-2.

[59] Cappone Capponi's mention of St. Nicholas appears in his diary of 1461. BNF, Collezione Genealogica Passerini, 186 (81), fol. 280r.

[60] For a full account of the Capponi family's Neri branch, see R. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence: A Study of Four Families* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 187-213; and F.W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Rucellai* (Princeton, 1977).

[61] Additional historical information on the Capponi is contained in G.B. Crollalanza, *Dizionario Storico-Blasonico delle Famiglie Nobili e Notabili Italiane Estine e Fiorenti*, 3 vols. (Pisa, 1890), I, p. 228. Also see biographical entries in: V. Spreti, *Enciclopedia Storico-Nobiliare Italiana*, 6 vols. (Milan, 1932), I; and B. Ellıker (ed.), *Le Famiglie di Firenze: Testi e Ricerche Araldiche di Roberto Ciabani*, 4 vols. (Florence, 1992), III. The two Capponi family palaces are discussed in L. Ginori Lisci, *I Palazzi di Firenze nella Storia e nell'arte*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1972), II, pp. 665, 743.

[62] For the content of the inscription to Gino see ASF, MSS 624, Rosselli, I, p. 16 (no. 19). The purchase of the chapel is mentioned in ASF, CS, Ser. II, LXXXXIII, fol. 13v. See Craven, 1975, p. 572.

[63] Having inherited a very sizable patrimony, Gino used the working capital to build a remarkable family fortune through one wool shop, two companies in Florence and Pisa, and an expansion of his business into Catalonia. In 1480, Gino paid taxes at the highest possible rate of 22%. Goldthwaite, 1968, pp. 195-6.

[64] ASF, Archivio Capponi, Patrimonio Vecchio, Cassetta 67, busta 2, fol. 14r. See Craven, 1975, p. 572. The continuous furnishing of the chapel is evidenced by Gino's 1481 payment of 20 florins to Sandro di Giovanni di Vitri for the plain glass window above the altar (BNF, Archivio Capponi, no. 140, fol. 149r). In Kent, 1977, p. 264, n. 138.

[65] Yet by 1485, two years prior to Gino's death, his Florentine company was under his oldest son's name: 'Piero di Gino Capponi and Company'. After 1496, the Lyon branch (run by Gino's other two sons Neri and Alessandro) fell into obscurity and it becomes clear that the major investments and the future direction of the business were in the hands of Piero and his heirs. Goldthwaite, 1968, p. 207.

[66] For genealogical information consult: ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 1299a; and BNF, MSS Passerini 48. An extensive family tree is found in Ginori Lisci, *The Palazzi of Florence*, trans. J. Grillo, 2 vols. (Florence, 1985), p. 666, fig. 532.

[67] Piero's best remembered moment came in his often quoted verbal defiance of Charles VIII and his unacceptable conditions during the monarch's passage through Florence.

[68] Piero's son, Niccolò (1473-1529), completed his father's final task, triumphantly entering Pisa in 1509, and later held the title of *gonfaloniere* during the Medici expulsion of 1527.

[69] G. Aiazzi (ed.), 'Vita di Piero di Gino Capponi scritta da Vincenzio Acciaioli', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, IV, Pt. 2 (1853), p. 40.

[70] Giovanni d'Agnolo de' Bardi made a first payment on 7 February 1485 to Giuliano da Sangallo 'for the carving of the frame of the painting on panel made by Sandro del Botticello' The second payment was on 3 August 1485, to Botticelli for his painting materials. H. Horne, *Sandro Botticelli* (Princeton, 1980), p. 136.

[71] ASF, Not. Antecos. (Bartolomeo Zeffi, 1487-94), fols.120v-122r. In his unpublished testament of 6 November 1493, Neri di Gino, of the parish of S. Jacopo, left forty gold florins for the honouring of his father in the chapel of Gino di Neri Capponi, 'patron of the chapel of the Visitation in the said church of S. Spirito...' Priests were obligated to celebrate masses at the chapel altar and each year, without fail, to celebrate the day of the Visitation at the said altar with vespers.

[72] The Pope's 1475 letter is referred to in Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 104-5.

[73] Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, 286 E. Pen and brown ink over preliminary indications in black chalk on pale yellow tinted paper, 18.1 x 14.4 cm. Inscription on recto, top left (probably by Piero): 'dominicho / dominicho-anndreo / dominicho / dd domi' (?). Knapp (1899) was the first to recognize the connection between the drawing and the altarpiece. See A. Petrioli Tofani, *Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi. Inventario. Disegni Esposti*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1986-7), I, no. 286; and Griswold, 1988, pp. 189-93.

[74] As Griswold noted, Piero's handling of the pen still bears the stamp of Cosimo Rosselli. The medium and yellow tinted paper were also used by other artists training in Rosselli's bottega, as seen in a drawing by Fra Bartolomeo (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, 1244 E). See Griswold, 1988, p. 191 and ns. 27-8.

[75] For a full transcription of the passage inscribed in Nicholas' book, see F.R. Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1979), I, p. 369.

[76] Oil on panel, 184 x 189 cm. The work was restored in 1938-9 and again in 1955. At present, the picture is in good condition, with some restoration of the Madonna's blue mantle, the sky and bottom edge of the painting. T. Borenius extolled the work for its 'marvellous condition and unbroken pedigree' in his monograph on Piero's *'Salutation'*, London 1919, pp. 8-10.

[77] Piero's stage-like design is discussed at length in Capretti, 'Antefatti...', 1996, pp. 46-8. Capretti comments on the illusionistic extension of the altar top into the painting's foreground (not unlike in the Fiesole altarpiece) and the worshipper's privileged viewpoint, when standing below the image, comparable to a spectator's position in the orchestra section of an ancient theatre. One of the author's examples of similar perspectival artifice is Domenico Ghirlandio's *Miracle of the Resuscitated Child* fresco (1483-6) in S. Trinita.

[78] Both Filippino's and Piero's two altarpieces have invited a comparison with the tonally similar but more *maniera secca* handling of landscape by Mantegna (as seen in his two *Orations in the Garden* in the *Pala di S. Zeno* in Tours and London's National Gallery panel) and Giovanni Bellini (*Ecstasy of St. Francis*, Frick Collection, NY).

[79] P. Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: the Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor, 1990), p. 152. J. Burke addresses not only individual chapel patronage in the Innocenti Church, but also Tesori's larger role in creating an integrated decorative scheme in the orderly restructuring of the church's interior. See Burke, 1999, Chapter V, pp. 109-129.

[80] Vasari, 1568, B-B, pp. 67-8. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 656-7.

[81] The documentation was first discovered by Don Attilio Piccini, who then linked it to Piero's work on the Pugliese altar and its installation in 1493. Portions of the Innocenti Archive documents are taken from L. Cavazzini, 'Dipinti e sculture nelle chiese dell'Ospedale', in L. Sandri (ed.), *Gli Innocenti e Firenze nei Secoli: Un Ospedale, Un Archivio, Una Città* (Florence, 1996), pp. 119-123. For the fully transcribed documents see: Cavazzini, 'Un documento ritrovato e qualche osservazione sul percorso di Piero di Cosimo', *Prospettiva*, 87-8 (July-Oct. 1997), pp. 125-32.

[82] Ibid., Ser. CXXII, no. 32, 'Libro di Entrata e Uscita' E, fol. 89. See Cavazzini, 1997, p. 131, n. 13.

[83] Richa, VIII, p. 129. Also: L. Bellosi, *Il Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze* (Milan, 1977), pp. 12, 19, 235-6. The Del Pugliese altarpiece, along with the Della Robbia lunette, were

transferred out of the chapel in 1786, during a restoration of the church, and taken to the summer district of the Commissario dell'Ospedale. The altarpiece finally entered the Galleria dello Spedale degli Innocenti in 1971. Bellosi also includes inventory entries, with a description of Piero's panel and its value, from 1840 and 1891. Meanwhile, the two kneeling attendant angels by Andrea della Robbia, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, are more likely the 'dua agnoli' adorning the high altarpiece of the Ingesuati (see Burke, 1999, p. 122, n. 66).

[84] BNF, Sepoltuario Cirri, VII, p. 3622, no. 18. Stefano Rosselli also wrote: 'Sono altri due Altari nel mezzo di chiesa, et a quello, che viene a mano manca guardando l'Altar grande, e una bella Tavola di mano di Piero di Cosimo Valenti Pittore di suoi tempi, quale Altare e della famiglia del Pugliese, e vedevisi ancora l'Arme loro dipinta nell'arse del Paliotto' ASF, MSS 625, *Sepoltuario Fiorentino ovvero Descrizione della Chiese, Cappelle e Sepolture ... fatta da Stefano Rosselli*, 2 vols. (1657), II, p. 1365, no. 3.

[85] The dimensions of Piero's and Neri di Bicci's panels for the Del Pugliese and Lenzi altars are nearly square in format (measuring 137 x 142 cm and 203 x 197 cm respectively), and it is likely that Piero's panel was planned to correspond with Neri's earlier example—providing a visual symmetry sought by Tesori.

[86] See the payments for curtains in the respective chapels in May 1489 and December 1493 in AIF, Ser. CXX, no. 10, fol. 442 and Ser. CXXII, no. 33, fol. 102r. Burke, 1999, p. 122, n. 69.

[87] The sense of the saints' detachment had lead scholars to call the work 'grave, heavy, superficial' (Venturi, 1911), little inspired and conventional—and even 'tedious' (Douglas, 1946). Nora Desloge instead justly notes that the works of the early 1490s 'move toward complex, full-blown forms which obscure the direct clarity'. Desloge-Meyer, 1988, p. 31.

[88] A. Randolph, 'Performing the Bridal Body', *Art History* (1998), pp. 188-9.

[89] For the S. Rosa interpretation, see Bacci, 1976, pp. 89-90; and Fermor, 1993, pp. 125-6. For St. Dorothea: Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 111-12.

[90] Condemned to death by the Roman governor Fabricius for her refusal to recant the Christian faith, Dorothea was taunted on her way to execution by Theophilus, a scribe who mocked her by asking to send him roses and apples from the garden of her bridegroom (Christ) in Heaven. A child later appeared to Theophilus with a basket of roses and apples, offering proof of a future life with Christ and thus converting the Roman. In another account, it is not an angel but the infant Christ that delivers the revelatory basket of flowers. See Kaftal, 1952, pp. 330-31; and J. Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York, 1979), pp. 108-9.

[91] For the convincingly argued recent identification of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, see Burke, 1999, pp. 125-6.

[92] ASF, Not. Antecos. 5714 (1509-13), fols. 67-72v (mention of the chapel's dedication to St. Elizabeth on fol. 71). I would like to thank Louis Waldman for providing me with this reference.

[93] Brief descriptions of the saint, canonised in Perugia in 1235 by Pope Gregory IX, are found in Kaftal, 1952, pp. 337-42; D. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), p. 139; and D. Apostolos-Cappadona, *Dictionary of Christian Art* (NY, 1994), p. 120.

[94] The *opera* of the Innocenti yielded power to the consuls of the Arte della Seta after 1450. Gavitt, 1990, p. 144.

[95] Burke, 1999, p. 127.

[96] The oil (and tempera?) on panel Cini *Madonna and Child with Two Musician Angels* measures 11.6 x 85.2 cm. It is one of the rare examples of an extremely well-preserved paint surface, saved from extensive restorations and repaintings. The flesh tones and red and blue garments are typical of Piero's luminosity and richness. Small retouchings are present in the meadow, on the wing of the musician angel, and left shoulder of the Madonna. A contemporary but inferior copy of the work—once belonging to the Marchesi Pucci, and later in the Palazzo Davanzati (1966) and the Uffizi deposits (1973)—now hangs in the Museo di S. Salvi. See further, F. Zeri, ed., *Dipinti toscani e oggetti d'arte dalla collezione Vittorio Cini* (Venice, 1984), pp. 31-2.

[97] S.J. Freedberg wrote perceptively of the Cini Madonna's variations: '[It] is certainly Leonardo-inspired, but its musical design is interrupted by eccentric cadences, and the smiling presences that it contains are not harmonious and sfumato but, contrarily, too sharply searched by line and light, curious and poignant in appearance and psychology'. S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500-1600* (NY, 1983), p. 98.

[98] *Madonna and Child with a Musician Angel*, pen and brown ink, brown wash and white heightening on brownish red tinted paper, 10.3 x 7.7 cm. Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe, Uffizi, 176 E. The use of such media on a red-brown surface is common not only for Piero but other artists in the Rosselli circle, such as Fra Bartolomeo, as noted by Griswold. Piero's interest in exploring the play of light is apparent in his disregard for proportion (note the enormous Christ Child) and anatomical fidelity (seen in the Virgin's badly drawn left arm). The light source, falling from the left, bathes nearly the entire angel; white heightening is also applied heavily on the head, left arm and belly of the Christ Child, and the forehead, left forearm, and right, robed shoulder of Mary. As a whole, the lively sketch is treated with great freedom of execution and differs from the painted version on several counts. In the sheet, there is only one angel; the wing upon which the Christ Child places his right hand is not extended; and, finally, the Child's action remains more ambiguous. In its composition and light effects, Griswold connects the image with works by Leonardo, particularly the latter's *Virgin and Child with a Cat*. Griswold, 1988, pp. 181-3. Also: Petrioli Tofani, *Inventario*, 2 vols. (1986), I, p. 78, no. 176 E.

[99] The similar use of colour and light in the works of Ghirlandaio, Filippino and Michelangelo is convincingly argued by J. DeLancey, 'Before Michelangelo. Colour usage in Domenico Ghirlandaio and Filippino Lippi', *Apollo* (Feb. 1997), pp. 15-23; and J. Dunkerton, 'Michelangelo as a Painter on Panel' in M. Hirst and J. Dunkerton, *The Young Michelangelo*, exh. cat., The National Gallery, London (London, 1994).

[100] The oil on poplar panel tondo measures 71.1 cm in diameter and 3.8 cm thick. The reverse is inscribed, albeit erroneously, with a 17th or 18th-century hand: 'di Piero [illegible] elli / maestro di Lionardo da Vinci e Andrea del Sarto' (the missing section may refer to Cosimo Ros*elli* [own emphasis]). Provenance: private collection, Great Britain; Gilou-Cendrars collection, France. Roberta Olson notes the image's illusionistically convex space, suggesting Piero's possible experimentation with mirrors and their optical effects, in Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 252-3.

[101] The restoration was carried out by Mark Leonard. The technical findings are taken from his treatment record, dated 9 March 1991. The restoration's main purpose was to remove the dull, discoloured thin natural resin varnish and to unify the panel's sense of space and form by removing the previous restoration's overly extensive retouches, which flattened out the forms and created a disturbing contrast between the central group and the added surrounding figures. The panel support itself (composed of two horizontally joined planks) remains in very good condition and has not been thinned, cradled or altered in any way. The panel has not been cut down, as evidenced by traces of gesso spilling over the panel's edges. See Treatment Record, pp. 1-4.

[102] Ibid., p. 2. As M. Leonard concluded: 'A close examination of the surface confirms the fact that all of these changes in the composition occurred very early on in the life of the picture. The naturally occurring drying cracks found on the surface of the painting are consistent through all of the underlayers as well, indicating that the changes were made before complete drying of the entire structure had taken place'

[103] Although past attributions to Piero justifiably remain dubious, the *Adoration of the Christ Child* tondo in the Federico Mason Perkins Collection, Assisi, reveals a similar rocky grotto setting (fig. 106). See F. Zeri, *La collezione Federico Mason Perkins* (Turin, 1988), cat. no. 51. Currently given to the Master of the Lathrop Tondo, the panel was first proposed as a Piero by Perkins and later accepted as such by Berenson (1936, p. 389; 1963, p. 165).

[104] The identity of St. Cecilia was proposed by Sharon Fermor, based on what appears to be musical notes in her hands.

[105] The most prominent *pentimenti* included changes in the head of the Christ Child and the profile of his upper back; both were toned during the restoration.
[106] In his own description of a dark cave in a rocky landscape composed around 1480, Leonardo wrote with mystical undertones of his fear and desire in coming to the entrance of a great cavern: 'fear of the menacing darkness of the cavern; desire to see if there was any marvelous thing within it' British Library, Arundel MS, 115r. In Kemp, 1988, pp. 98-9.
[107] The oil on panel *Incarnation* measures 204 x 172 cm. The work was acquired from Padre Maestro Evangelista Tedaldi by Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici on 16 December 1670 (ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 55 [Libro di Ricordanze, 1640-94] fol. 115). The panel was replaced in 1671 by Volterrano's *S. Filippo in Glory*.
[108] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, pp. 65-6. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 655.
[109] The family's early wealth was reflected in their large sums volunteered to the Republic in 1354-57. Between 1283-1531, the Tedaldi produced one *gonfaloniere di Giustizia* and twenty-two *priori di Libertà*. The Tedaldi coat of arms (blue lion on gold ground, with red horizontal bands) and inscriptions also appear in the Badia and S. Croce, as well as the tribune of S. Giovannino in via S. Gallo. The genealogical history of the Tedaldi is contained in: ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 5163 a-b; ASF, Ceramelli Papiani 4584; Elliker, 1992, I, p. 293; and Crollalanza, 1890, III, p. 12. For the family's role as art patrons see H. Horne, 1915, pp. 52-6, 72-5, 101-5.
[110] The palace was bought from the Tedaldi in 1532 by Giovanni Naldini, who later bought others; it was probably this new family that transformed the acquired houses into the single building we see today. See Ginori Lisci, trans. Grillo, 1985, I, pp. 421-5.
[111] Ibid., p. 421. Lisci mainly relies on the description given in A. Ademollo, *Marietta de'Ricci ovvero Firenze al tempo dell'assedio. Racconto storico*, ed. Passerini, 6 vols. (Florence, 1865), 1, p. 241. It appears that figures such as Donatello, Michelozzo and later Giuliano and Antonio da Sangallo rented from some of the Tedaldi studios which opened on to the Piazza del Duomo.
[112] ASF, MSS 603, Carte Pucci, fol. P. XII, 5.
[113] ASF, Not. Antecos. 17544 (Bastiano Ramucci, 1492-1508), fols. 308v-309v. On 2 September 1498, Baldo di Pierozzo took 100 *fiorini d'oro* from Bernardino di Bartolomeo di Giovanni Sellario. This money was used for the dowry of Mona Angellette, wife of Bernardino and daughter of Talento Pierozzi de Tedaldi. Baldo promised to pay Bernardino 8 florins per year in interest ('per le spese di matrimonio'). Bernardino then gave permission for the money to be spent to pay for 'immobili e crediti del monte'. Until the date of the document, Bernardino had been the creditor of Baldo and his offspring; however, Baldo had died and the 100 florins (plus 8 florins of interest) became Pierozzo's responsibility as the debitor. The debt had to be repaid within 5 years.
[114] BNF, Collezione Genealogica Passerini, 192 (Tedaldi), fol. 9.
[115] Griswold suggests Giovanni as a possible alternative patron. Griswold, 1988, pp. 158-9.
[116] For a historical background of the chapel see W and E. Paatz, I, p. 107; and F. Petrucci, *Santissima Annunziata* (Rome, 1992), p. 45. For Vasari's *c.*1598 groundplan of SS. Annuziata, see H. Teubner, 'Das Langhaus der SS. Annunziata in Florenz. Studien zu Michelozzo und Giuliano da Sangallo', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XXII (1978), p. 37, fig. 8.
[117] ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 64 (Libro di Contratti 1309-1499), fol. 57.
[118] ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 59 (Libro Memorie e Ricordi 1200s-1543), fol. 3r. and Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 58, fol. 72v.
[119] ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 59, fol. 28v.
[120] I am grateful to Louis A. Waldman for this reference.
[121] The order's earliest habitations included a Falconieri house behind the Duomo, left by the foundress, and the present day Palazzo Grifoni (via dei Servi) or Palazzo dei Signori (Piazza della Nunziata). After 1514, the order was housed in Caffagiuolo, a residence left to them by Donna Alessandra and Monaldo Tessitori in a will of 12 August 1509. For the history of the Donne

Ammantellate: Richa, VIII, pp. 82-8; Paatz, I, pp. 44-5; and Follini-Rastrelli, *Firenze, antica e moderna* (Florence, 1792), IV, pp. 22-5.

[122] The sisters' devotional practices were mirrored closely in the Pistoian branch: see D. Maria Montagna, 'Sorelle e fratelli dei Servi nel primo Cinquecento. La situazione pistoiese dal 1515 al 1545', in *Studi storici dell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria*, XXXII (Rome, 1982), pp. 297-301. The other SS. Annunziata chapels occupied by the Ammentalate were the Falconieri Chapel (first dedicated to S. Donnino and then the Conception), at the end of the southern transept, and the Chapel of the Virgin of Seven Sorrows (Madonna Addolorata) in the south nave. The chapel of the Addolorata was also dedicated to S. Filippo Benizzi and used for his cult but not until the late nineteenth century. See Fra U. Forconi, *Chiese e conventi dell'Ordine dei Servi di Maria*, quaderno no. 4 (Viareggio, Sept. 1972), pp. 96-8.

[123] ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 703, fol. 3 (for the 6 Dec. 1505 *festa*) and Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 705 (for the 1513 celebration).

[124] Pen and brown ink, the figures at the bottom right in black chalk, 20.1 x 25.1 cm. Former inv. no. 42. The Bremen sheet was one of at least 1,560 works taken by the Soviets from the Schloß Karnzow during the Second World War. The sheet most likely remains in Russia today, and therefore not destroyed as pronounced by Capretti and others. See *A Catalogue of the Works of Art from the Collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen Lost During Evacuation in the Second World War* (Bremen, 1997), p. 194 (cat. no. 1058). The sheet was first linked to the Uffizi painting by G. Pauli in *Zeichnungen alter meister in der Kunsthalle zu Bremen* (Frankfurt, 1914) p. 8. For the best discussion of the work, with full bibliography, see Griswold, 1988, pp. 156-62.

[125] The ambiguous black chalk sketch of two figures, resembling a kneeling S. Filippo clasping the Virgin at her waist, in the drawing's bottom left corner is discussed in Griswold, 1988, p. 160.

[126] In the painting, Piero lowered the viewpoint and showed SS. John and Peter addressing the beholder. Piero also added St. Catherine's attribute of the shattered wheel, while consigning Margaret's beak-headed dragon to the now-lost predella.

[127] For a past assumption of the Immaculate Conception as the painting's subject, see for example: A. Chastel, 'Fra Bartolomeo's Carondolet Altarpiece and the theme of the "Virgo in nubibus" in the High Renaissance', in Kemp and Humfrey (eds.), 1990, pp. 129-40. This is corrected in Bacci, 1976, p. 92.

[128] For the mention of Pierozzo's sister see ASF, MSS Carte Sebregondi 5163. For Pierozzo's testament consult note 138 below.

[129] Filippo first entered the order around 1253, three years prior to Alexander IV's approval of the group as an order of friars, living in strict poverty and performing works of mercy both corporeal and spiritual. A preacher of penitence skilled in reconciling sinners to the Church and negotiating peace, Filippo was even considered for the papacy.

[130] Antonino was appointed archbishop by Pope Eugenius IV in 1446, taking up the appointment with great reluctance. Known as the 'people's prelate' and the 'protector of the poor', he was the author of many theological and instructional works.

[131] The last restoration took place on 30 January 1980 (by Seroni). Before restoration, a severe woodworm problem and the deterioration of surface paint were observed; various layers of yellowed varnish also camouflaged the loss of colour. The phases of restoration involved the solidifying of the lifted colour and cleaning the layer of discoloured varnish and glue with solvents. This cleaning revealed the original splendid tonality. Finally, a mastic synthetic varnish was applied. For the full report see the conservation files in Florence's Opificio delle Pietre Dure, inv. 1890, no. 1589.

[132] Early Christian art (most notably German) often represented Christ's incarnation in a much more corporeal manner, showing the conceived child as a small effigy—in foetus-like form—framed within a *mandorla*. This 'Platytera' representation disappeared during the fifteenth century.

[133] St. Bernard's passage is quoted in M. Meiss, 'Light as Form and Symbol in Some Fifteenth-Century Paintings', *Art Bulletin*, XXVII (Sept. 1945), pp. 175-81. Through Northern scenes of the

Annunciation and other Marian mysteries, Meiss argues that despite the greater attention paid to linear perspective the greater advance in the representation of reality made by masters of the first half of the fifteenth century was the sophisticated treatment of light. For another relevant Biblical quotation, comparing Mary with the 'brightness of eternal light', see Wisdom of Solomon, VII. 29, 26.

[134] Griswold, 1988, p. 157 (with reference to Borgo, 1976, p. 99).

[135] Bacci suggested that the church represented in the background of the Flight is the convent of Monte Senario (Bacci, in L. Berti, ed., *Il Primato del Disegno*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence [Florence, 1980], p. 161; and supported in Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 127). The Order of Friar Servants of St. Mary was founded in 1233, by seven Florentine cloth merchants, in the isolated area of Cafaggio, to lead a life of poverty and penance in the 'longing for a life in the spirit of the Primitive Church'. In 1241, part of this group moved farther away, in search of even greater solitude, to the heights of Monte Senario (12 miles from Florence). St. Peter Martyr took action to unite the two branches during his Florence visit (1244-5). This identification of the church in the painting is attractive, albeit purely speculative.

[136] The dating of the *Bacchanals* convincingly rests not only on its stylistic qualities but, more pragmatically, on Giovanni Vespucci's marriage to Nannina Nerli in 1500 that the *spalliere* were most likely commissioned to celebrate.

[137] Capretti bases her 1509-10 dating not only on Albertinelli's panel, but also Piero's influence on Andrea del Sarto's landscapes in his *Story of Filippo Benizzi* in the church's atrium of 1509-10 and Fra Bartolomeo's *God the Father with SS. Mary Magdalen and Catherine of Siena* of 1509 in the Museo di Villa Guinigi, Lucca (or the unmentioned, but in my opinion more closely related, S. Marco *Madonna and Child with SS. John the Baptist, Peter Martyr, Benedict, Nicholas, Catherine and Mary Magdalen*). Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 127-8; and Capretti in A. Cecchi and A. Natali, eds., *L'Officina della Maniera: Varietà e fierezza nell'arte fiorentina del cinquecento fra le due repubbliche 1494-1530* (Venice, 1996), p. 138.

[138] ASF, Not. Antecos. 5432 (Filippo di Cione di Cioni, 1505-6), fols. 46r-49r (unpublished). The 1505 will reappears in ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 59 (Libro Memorie e Ricordi 1200s-1543), fol. 23v; and ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 65 (Libro di Contratti 1500-49), fols. 80-87 (4 copies).

[139] The blacksmith shop was mentioned previously, in a document of 8 March 1500. It states that Pierozzo had bought the bottega from Piero di Bartoldo di Piero Tedaldi in 1500 and that his shares in the shop were to be sold two years after his death by his heirs for 110 florins. See ASF, Corp. Rel. Sopp. 119, 65 (Libro di Contratti 1500-49), fol. 3r.

[140] Cavazzini, 1997, pp. 125-32. Cavazzini does not believe that the SS. Annunziata work was done more than four-five years following the Pala degli Innocenti. The foundation of her argument rests on the physical similarity of the two kneeling St. Catherines. However, the stylistic differences between the two works are pronounced. The Tedaldi commission demonstrates a much more mature (and successful) development of the standard *sacra conversazione* composition—albeit with a unique subject—and a more convincing pictorial space of greater depth. The dramatic lighting, accenting the equally dramatic gestures of the figures, also points to a date farther removed from the Innocenti image.

[141] Oil on poplar panel, 160 x 120.5 cm. The panel was purchased from Luigi Resimini, Venice, in 1893.

[142] The attribution to Piero was made in 1921 by Lederer ('Az Orszagos Magyar Szépmüvészeti Múzeum Évkönyvei', Budapest), who recognised Piero's hand in the typically varied landscape, vivid colour, and the detailed decorative elements. Gabriel von Térey in his 1916 Budapest catalogue listed Bugiardini (Berenson), Andrea Solario (later Berenson), Giovanni Caroto (Loeser) and even the Veronese school (Térey, Bode) as past suggestions. G. von Térey, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Museums für Bildendekünste in Budapest* (Berlin, 1916), pp. 181-2. Also see: V Tàtrai, ed., *Museum of Fine*

*Arts Budapest* (London, 1991), p. 96; and A. Pigler, *Katalog der Galerie Alter Meister* (Budapest, 1967), pp. 541-2.

[143] The panel was last restored in 1987 by Fáy András and remains in fair condition. The two-part panel support, with a cradle batten construction in the back, shows cracking along the joint (due to warping) and worm tunneling under the priming, especially in the upper and lower edges. There is evidence of chalk priming. Losses are clearest along the panel's edges. The paint surface suffers from some abrasion, particularly in the azure robe of the Volto Santo, raised paint and flaking pigment in a vertical direction. Several areas of retouching have darkened, becoming matte, as seen in the blue sky. Overpainting is evident in the sky, drapery, the reddish-ochre surface of the cross and the Volto Santo's hands and face. Previous interventions included retouchings, infillings, cleaning and ironing. Signs of the latter lamentably endured in burned, compressed areas visible in the sky. The oil was applied in uneven thickness. The clouds, drapery ornament and landscape reveal thick application; the sky and the figure's robe and face show a thinner layer. See December 1987 restoration report in Szépmüvészeti Múzeum curatorial files.

[144] The history and iconography of the Lucca Volto Santo and subsequent pictorial representations of the relic are offered in an entry on the Master of the Fiesole Epiphany in S. Caroselli, *Italian Panel Painting of the Early Renaissance in the collection of the Los Angeles Museum of Art* (Los Angeles, 1994), pp. 62-75. Also see: C. Baracchini and A. Caleca, *Il Duomo di Lucca* (Lucca, 1973). The other four famous acheiropoeietic images of Christ are in Roman churches: the Mandylion of Edessa, a portrait sent by Christ to King Abgar V; the Sudarium, or 'Veronica's veil'; a portrait of the Virgin and Child thought to have been done by St. Luke; and a portrait of Christ given by St. Peter to Senator Pudens (Caroselli, p. 74, n. 7).

[145] Haußherr, 1962, pp. 134, 136. The polychromed wood crucifix now present in the Duomo has been dated later, as a late twelfth-century to early thirteenth-century replica of an earlier version.

[146] During a church service, the priest would have raised the Holy Host before the worshippers, linking it to the painted chalice behind him and thus combining Christ's body and blood in the form of consecrated wafer and wine. As shown in painted examples, the divine object usually is found at Christ's right side as it was the side of his wound and, according to Augustine, the side of 'eternal life'.

[147] Bacci, 1976, p. 95. Bacci identifies a *marzocco*, the well-known symbol of republican Florence, as standing along the wall of a house to the left of the bottom of the Volto Santo's robe. Studying the house closest to the foreground to the left of the holy figure, I found two stacks of barrels to either side of the doorway rather than the presence of a *marzocco*.

[148] Vasari, 1568, B-B, III, p. 444. Trans. de Vere, I, pp. 497-8.

[149] Caroselli, 1994, p. 71. Filippo has been identified with the 'Master' in E. Fahy, 'Some Early Italian Pictures in the Gambier-Parry Collection', *The Burlington Magazine*, CIX (Mar. 1967), pp. 133-4; and A. Padoa Rizzo, 'L'altare della Compagnia dei tessitori di San Marco a Firenze: dalla cerchia di Cosimo Rosselli al Cigoli', *Antichità viva*, XXVIII, no. 4 (1989), pp. 17-24. Gherardo and his brother Monte were living in a house in the Piazza S. Marco, according to the 1480 *catasto* (N. Pons in *Maestri e botteghe...*,1992, p. 35); furthermore, Vasari mentioned that Gherardo painted a lunette above an altar in S. Marco. The other works attributed to the Master—very possibly a follower of Domenico Ghirlandaio—include the eponymous *Epiphany* in Fiesole's S. Francesco and the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence).

[150] ASF, Decima dei religiosi di S. Spirito, fol. 99 reads: 'una stanza dirimpetto a S. Marco, con loggia in colonne, con certe stanze di sopra', some of which were rented out.

[151] The original and subsequent placement of the S. Marco *Volto Santo* is discussed by Caroselli, who includes a ground plan of the church (Caroselli, 1994, pp. 67-8).

[152] J. Del Badia, *La compagnia dei tessitori di drappi e la sua loggia* (Florence, 1904), pp. 6-8, with references to documentation. For the company's origins, also see: R. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca, 1991), p. 411, n. 206; and J.H. Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late*

*Medieval Florence* (Oxford, 1994), p. 462, Index 95a ('S. Maria Nuova' a misprint for 'S. Marco Nuovo').

[153] A. Padoa Rizzo, 1989, pp. 17-24. The description of the brotherhood's transferal to Sant'Egidio is contained in ASF, Compagnie Religiose Soppresse, C.LXVII, 677 (Libro di Ricordi 1647-1684), fol. 2 (as cited in Padoa Rizzo, 1989, p. 18, n. 8).

[154] The presence of two panels is noted in ASF, Comp. Rel. Soppr., C.LXVII, 677, fols. 18v, 19.

[155] J. Del Badia (1904)—as mentioned by Padoa Rizzo, 1970, p. 19; and Padoa Rizzo, 1989, p. 18, n.13.

[156] The altarpiece was attributed to the Master of Serumido by F. Zeri, 'Eccentrici fiorentini—II', *Bollettino d'Arte* (1962), pp. 318-26. The panel is discussed at length by A. Natali, 'Filologia e ghiribizzi: Pittori eccentrici, piste impraticate', in *La Piscina di Betsaida. Movimenti nell'arte fiorentina del Cinquecento* (Florence, 1995), pp. 138-41.

[157] Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, no. 227 E. For a discussion of the Filippino sheet see Alessandro Cecchi's entry in G. Goldner and C. Bambach, eds., *The Drawings of Filippino Lippi and His Circle*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997-8 (NY, 1997), pp. 244-5. Also: Caroselli, 1994, p. 73.

[158] This supposition of a separate painting commission implied by Filippino's drawing was made most recently by Cecchi in *The Drawings of Filippino Lippi...*, 1997-8, p. 244.

[159] Caroselli, 1994, pp. 70-71.

[160] W Bombe, 'Una Pietà di Piero di Cosimo', *Augusta Perusia* 1-2 (1907), pp. 88-9. In a 1907 exhibit of Umbrian art, the work was characterised as being influenced by Piero della Francesca and Signorelli, while Venturi attributed the picture to Bartolommeo della Gatta. Bombe was the first to give the work to Piero in the same year, noting a stylistic affinity to Piero's *Venus, Cupid and Mars* and *Death of a Nymph*. The two *spalliere* certainly predate the Perugia altarpiece. Finally, Zeri (1959) dated the work post-1507, referring to Piero's 'neo-quattrocento sense', conspicuous in the later, more elliptical works such as the Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpiece.

[161] I was fortunate to have studied the panel during its final cleaning stage on 27 July 1999, on site in Tecni.Re.Co's San Chiodo lab in Spoleto. Previously, the panel was cleaned of candle wax and smoke deposits by Cristofani in 1920; the surface was cleaned again and consolidated by Fumi in 1955. The panel is composed of three vertical panels (with some cracking along the left panel joint and another running along the left part of Golgotha) and is of original size, evidenced by the lip of paint and unpainted border that surrounds the painted surface along all edges. Photos in Tecni.Re.Co's Sant'Agatha lab files show the work in its pre-restored state, revealing some damage to the support, darkening of the paint surface due to accumulated grime and old varnishes, and paint abrasion, most pronounced in the Virgin's mantle and Christ's body. Some abrasion still remains after cleaning and in-painting, as seen in the *pentimenti* throughout the flesh of Christ: the nose, now raised higher, the modeling of the body in the chest, collarbone, stomach and hands. Underdrawing can also be seen in St. Martin's white horse and the left bottom section of Golgotha.

[162] A historical and geographic description of the region is given by A. Fabbi, *Preci e la Valle Castoriana. Documenti storico-artistici della diocesi di Norcia* (Spoleto, 1963), pp. 21-2, 152. The division of the four *plebati* is stated at the base of the Codice 'Pelosius' in the Archivio Arcivescovile Spoleto.

[163] ANN, Notarile no. 19 (Giuseppe Berardelli Botaio, 1783-6), fol. 283. See Fabbi, 1963, pp. 139-42.

[164] For a record of the panel's provenance see Fabbi, 1963, pp. 139-42; and F. Santi, *Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria: Dipinti, Sculture e Oggetti dei Secoli XV-XVI* (Rome, 1985), pp. 79-80. The work never returned to its original setting, instead entering the Cesqui palace in Trevi. Strong efforts by the State prevented the panel from being sold to a Roman antiquarian firm and a judicial ruling in 1915 declared the work 'inalienable' Two years later, the panel became housed in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria.

[165] Henderson, 1994, p. 199 and n. 25; also Appendix, 68a (pp. 456-7). Henderson's sources: *Capitoli della Compagnia dei Portatori,* ed. P. Fanfani (Bologna, 1858), p. 8; R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur älteren Geschichte von Florenz*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1896-1908), IV, p. 439.

[166] Such a placement of Christ's body is seen in Perugino's earlier *Pietà* (1485) for the convent of San Giusto in Florence (now in the Uffizi), despite the dissimilar settings and treatment of figures.

[167] The green middle-ground landscape is heavily abraded and there is a loss of modelling in the hills. Although the panel has retained much of its vibrancy of colour, some blue areas—seen in Mary Magdalen's dress underneath her red mantle and John's garment beneath his robe—have turned dark green, the underlying paint colour.

[168] Such an elderly portrayal is seen in Perugino's *Pietà* fresco (also in the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria), as well as in Crucifixion images such as Castagno's fresco (transferred to canvas) in S. Apollonia and Mantegna's central predella for the San Zeno altarpiece in the Louvre.

## Chapter VI. The Late Altarpieces (1510-22)

The most noticeable stylistic shift in Piero di Cosimo's altarpieces occurs around 1510, entering his last decade of production. This time, along with the preceding few years, form a pivotal period of change not only for Piero but the entire Florentine artistic climate. Filippino Lippi died in 1504, followed in 1507 by Cosimo Rosselli. Leonardo departed for Milan in 1506, while Raphael ended his short stay two years later. Michelangelo was needed in Rome in 1505 and was recalled in 1508 to fresco the Sistine Ceiling. Fra Bartolomeo left for Venice in 1508 and again to Rome in 1514-15. Andrea del Sarto's earliest work dates from *c.*1508-9, leaving Piero, his master, as perhaps the most accomplished and well-known older painter still resident in the city of Florence. In light of this vacuum that existed between the turn-of-the-century and the rise of the 'young lions' such as Del Sarto, Pontormo and Rosso, it is therefore surprising to observe that rather than helping to dictate a new stylistic movement, Piero chooses to work in a more restrained style and only now begins to respond in earnest to Leonardo's tonal effects. Rather than denying Piero's influence during this period, however, it is more accurate to note that the ageing master's inventiveness became channelled in another, less perceptible direction.

The liveliness of the Palazzo Cini *Madonna and Child with Two Musician Angels* and its amused Christ Child—brimming with a sense of joy and animation that anticipates Pontormo's infant in his San Michele Visdomini *Pucci Altarpiece* of 1518—is no longer seen in Piero's religious works after the first decade, giving way to sobriety in the three altarpieces to be discussed here. The emphatic lighting of the Tedaldi *Incarnation* is much subdued. To a great degree, the later examples contain fewer daring treatments of subject matter as Piero filters the provocative details found in earlier devotional pieces, such as the *Pala Del Pugliese* or the more recent *Incarnation*. Striking is the absence of decorative compositional arrangements or the earlier *horror vacui* of figures. Even the landscape has grown into an empty expanse by comparison. Increasingly a more frugal palette is chosen, underscoring the deliberate simplicity in technical execution and composition, creating an impression that is contemplative, balanced and harmonious. It is now the stark and unencumbered monumentality of the participant figures that holds centre stage. The simplicity and greater scale of Piero's late works have in the past invited attributions to Ridolfo Ghirlandaio and, indeed, to some degree formal comparisons can be made to artists such as Ridolfo, Bugiardini and Fra Bartolomeo.[1]

Conspicuous is the lessening of Piero's trademark attention to detail. Some past scholars had gone further, noting that there is seemingly less finish and obvious care in the execution of these late works. This, however, is farther from the truth when observing the delicacy of colour and grace of the apparition-like figures in the Fiesole *Immaculate Conception*. Moreover, there has not been sufficient

inquiry into why such a change took place at this time. Rather than viewing the stylistic transition as a sign of the debilitation of the artist's talents and mental state, as Vasari would have us believe, there are three other more plausible factors to be introduced here. The first and most obvious reason relates to the painter's declining health. Lacking any documentary confirmation, Vasari's descriptions of Piero's misanthropy ('when he was old ... he had become so strange and eccentric that nothing could be done with him') must instead be tempered by more sound evidence. Newly discovered facts indicate that Vasari's mention of Piero's severe physical limitations 'by reason of his palsy' do seem very close to the truth, on the other hand. The first of Piero's three bequests ('donationes causa mortis'), discovered by Louis Waldman and dated 22 June 1518, reveals that the immediate motivation of the donation was a serious illness from which the painter had been suffering for some considerable time ('aliquantisper')—possibly leading to such a partial paralysis—and that he feared he might not survive (App., doc. 21).[2] Piero died four years later from the plague, and it is probable that this preceding illness severely curtailed his work, if not stopping it altogether. Not only does this biographical fact preclude us from confidently dating any of the painter's works to 1518-22 (at least any wholly by his hand), but it forces us to reconsider Piero's physical state during the second decade of the sixteenth century.

Aside from Piero's own physical health, another motive for the differences seen in Piero's late production relates to the more often overlooked physical states of the panels, in each case damaged and much altered. The Yale altarpiece is the gravest case and remains off-view, in storage. Finally, in Piero's case, few have questioned the extent to which the location of the late altarpieces and the identity of the patron dictated the painter's treatment of a subject. It will be argued that Piero's marked austerity in his last altarpieces is at least partly attributable to a significant change of patronage and the intention for export.

It would also be remiss to avoid the issue of Savonarola's legacy at the turn of the century. Certainly, the changes in the religious climate in Florence, reaching their dramatic climax with the Dominican preacher's execution on 23 May 1498 in the Piazza Signoria, coupled with the political turbulence signalled by the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492 and the two French invasions of 1494 and 1499, could not have left the lives of practicing artists untouched, albeit to varying degrees and circumstances of patronage. The sense of unease is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Botticelli's inscription at the top of his unconventional *Mystic Nativity* (The National Gallery, London) of 1500, indicating that he painted it during 'the troubles of Italy'[3] The increasing dearth of ornamentation and fantasy in Piero's own late altarpieces—not to mention the disappearance of inserted patron portraits as saints—in favour of a directness that would coincide with Savonarola's message. The saints Antoninus and Vincent Ferrer do appear in two of Piero's post-1500 altarpieces.

Nonetheless, the selection of both saints was intertwined with the panels' specific church destinations and dedications, and in the final estimation Piero's more straightforward and less rhetorical treatment of his late religious compositions cannot be attributed to Savonarola's influence with any surety approaching the evidence existing in the painting examples of contemporaries such as Botticelli, Fra Bartolomeo and Lorenzo di Credi, all known for their committed devotion to the *frate*. By contrast, as already seen, Piero's commissions for the Del Pugliese family, known as ardent *piagnone*, are his most unconventional and at times playful. To reach a firmer decision on Piero's works, however, it is imperative to study them together closely as a group.

The *Madonna with Child and SS. Vincent Ferrer and Jerome*, now in the Yale University Art Gallery's Jarves Collection, New Haven, is Piero's largest altarpiece (fig. 70).[4] Judging by its broad execution and stable, restrained composition the work is close in date to that in Borgo S. Lorenzo. Of all the extant altarpieces, this one is undoubtedly in the poorest physical condition. Again, most of the damage is the result of a series of past restorations. The panel suffered greatly from overcleaning, leading to an irretrievable loss of the top paint layers.[5] The most misleading overpainted detail was removed in the 1915 restoration. A star above the left saint's head, an attribute prompting past scholars to identify the saint as Dominic, appears in reproductions of 1895 and 1901 but not in the catalogue of 1916. It is therefore safe to assume that Hammond Smith, the restorer in 1915, decided against the star being original.[6] As will be made clear, Smith's decision was correct.

Most of the attention in the *sacra conversazione* is bestowed upon the figure of St. Jerome. The Virgin looks down at the Christ Child and introduces the saint into their presence with her left hand. Playfully clasping his mother's veil with his left hand, the infant raises his other in benediction. Covered by a grey mantle, the bearded hermit accepts Christ's blessing with a pointing gesture to his chest. In his left hand, Jerome holds the stone with which he beat his breast to dispel the hallucinations during his reclusion in the Syrian desert. Behind and to his right we encounter a small scene from his four years spent in the desert as the half-naked ascetic kneels before a crucifix, clutching the stone in his hand. Jerome is flanked by two other distinctive attributes. The cardinal's hat lying upon the step of the Virgin's throne alludes to his standing as a Doctor of the Church and his service under Pope Damasus I, while the charming lion peeking out beside his feet reminds of the account in which the saint removed a thorn from the beast's paw and thus gained a loyal companion. The identity of the male saint opposite the hermit saint is that of Vincent Ferrer—and not Dominic as has long been supposed—a correction that is linked closely to the panel's recently discovered patronage.

The technical finding of the star above the left saint's head to be a later addition, together with the absence of a lily, a second characteristic attribute of Dominic, affirm the presently ascribed identity.

Piero represents St. Vincent (1350-1419) in typical fashion, as a middle-aged Dominican friar. Holding what is likely to be the Book of Revelation in his left hand, the saint makes his distinctive upward gesture with his right. An active participant in the efforts to heal the papal schism between Benedict XIII in Avignon and Urban VI in Rome (consequently leading to the Council of Constance of 1414), Vincent became best known as an accomplished preacher and miracle worker.

The detail most directly related to the altarpiece's original destination is found below the Virgin: the *grisaille* relief at the base of her throne shows four hooded brothers of a religious order, kneeling in prayer before a crucified Christ. The supplicant at the far left has his back to us, revealing a robe deliberately left open to receive the strokes of the lash. On account of this, James Jarves, the panel's previous owner, suggested that the picture may have been taken from a suppressed convent belonging to the *Bianchi* or Flagellants. It is Lisa Venturini's documentary findings (1995) that confirm Jarves' theory by conclusively tracing the commission to the Compagnia di San Vincenzo Ferreri, a society once under the protection of the larger Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello, also called *La Scala*, that had its seat in Florence's Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella.[7] The latter was a society of young boys ('una società di fanciulli') dedicated to the Archangel Raphael and held its main seat in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala. By 1541 the society had moved near the convent of Santa Maria Novella, at a moment when the local hospitals, including the Ospedale degli Innocenti, made concessions to the order of San Martino.[8] As noted in a 1586 report by Modesto Biliotti, the keeper of the convent's *Chronica*, the Company of St. Raphael served four suppressed confraternities in all: those of St. Vincent, St. Zanobius, St. Ignatius of Antioch and the Holy Spirit.[9] Piero's altarpiece commission for the first of these brotherhoods seems incontestable on the existing documentation; the presence of the chosen saints is equally poignant, their connotations perfectly in keeping with the penitential nature of the confraternity. St. Jerome had been the most widely recognised patron saint of penitents, while St. Vincent was the great prophet of the Last Judgment, his sermons calling for the repentance of sin. Piero's work for Santa Maria Novella is certainly appropriate considering the physical proximity of his dwelling, as the artist is documented as having lived in the via della Scala, which runs in front and to the west of the Dominican church. Venturini's dating of *c.*1515 certainly seems in keeping with the similar appearance of the Fiesole and Borgo S. Lorenzo altarpieces, both dated around the same late period (1515-18).

On 10 November 1465, with the consent of the brothers, Bartolomeo Niccolai, the prior of Santa Maria Novella, conceded a small locale to be used as an oratory by St. Vincent's limited constituency.[10] The original foundation of the company was probably closer to 1455, the date of the saint's canonisation, and its activities therefore would have begun in 1456, when the saint's feast day was first honoured on April 5th. The company of St. Vincent was not long lasting, however, as

evidenced by various documents from 1534-41, dealing with the cession of the confraternity's property to the overseeing Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello.[11]

Among the most conclusive testimony of Piero's panel within the smaller confraternity is that offered in an undated 'Inventory of the Household Goods in the Company of St. Vincent' Third in a list containing a reliquary, a cross, sepulcher and vestments among more pedestrian objects, is a 'tavola di Santo Vincentio'.[12] Later records of the confraternity's seat from 1583 describe a 'tavola dell'altare di Compagnia dentrovi dipinto la Vergine con il figlio in braccio et Santo Vicentio e Santo Girolamo' [13] This description is repeated in another inventory of 1591.[14] While these fifteenth-century documents identified the left saint as St. Vincent, the descriptions that followed in the seventeenth century inexplicably changed him to St. Dominic. In 1677 Cinelli recorded about the Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello: 'In compagnia è una bella tavola di Domenico del Grillandaio [*sic*], ove la Vergine a sedere, che 'l bambino Giesù ritto sopra il destro ginocchio sostiene, effigiata si vede: in alto sono 4. Agnolini con libri in mano, S. Domenico e S. Girolamo mettono in mezzo il trono, nel cui dossale sono a chiaro scuro 4. battuti ch'un Crocifisso adoano, ed una graziosa lontananza dà finimento all'opera'.[15] Here, despite his incorrect attribution to Ghirlandaio, Cinelli was undoubtedly describing the Yale altarpiece. The four figures above the main group ('in alto sono 4' or the 'agnolini con libri in mani') will be discussed later in connection to the panel in its present state. The same misidentification of St. Vincent as Dominic is found in the confraternity's own inventories from 1691 and 1784.[16] Thus, we may infer that the retouched addition of the star above St. Vincent's head, confusing the saint with Dominic, occurred sometime between 1591 and 1677.

A tentative reconstruction has been made between the Yale altarpiece (fig. 71) and two other panels in the Museum of Fine Arts and the Church of the Advent, both in Boston, each depicting a pair of *Angels* (figs. 72-3). The panels were associated with the commission by Fahy in 1965 and could have been divided when the altarpiece was transferred out of the convent in the 1700s.[17] Their original position within the picture would certainly explain Cinelli's mention in 1677 of the presence of: 'in alto sono 4. Agnolini con libri in mano' The Boston panels are of identical measure (67 x 87 cm) and were originally on panel; the Museum of Fine Arts' work has been transferred to canvas. Despite their own damage suffered, which includes some grossly repainted sections, the two fragments do conform stylistically to Piero's hand and fit Cinelli's inclusion of the held books in his description of the *agnolini*. It is possible that both of these smaller panels have been cut down, on account of the tight cropping around the figures.

Despite a certain rigidity, the Yale altarpiece still contains several of Piero's more typically charming traits. The unkempt St. Jerome and his passionate disposition make for a compelling emotional foil to the tranquil introspection of St. Vincent. Piero's light effects make their strong

presence felt, as do occasional passages of striking colour, such as the Virgin's bluish green mantle, worn over a carmine red undergarment. The *sfumato* softening the composition is a marked presence in other post-1510 works, such as his Strozzi *Liberation of Andromeda* and, more closely in date, the Fiesole *Immaculate Conception*.

The Borgo S. Lorenzo *Madonna and Child with SS. John the Baptist and Thomas* panel is most closely related to the Yale altarpiece in its balanced composition of the seated Virgin with Child and two columnar, flanking male saints (fig. 74). In its simple organisational structure, the image also builds upon the stylistic transition heralded by the equally controlled but more colourfully vibrant Perugia *Pietà*. The work hangs in the sacristy of the much renovated Chiesa del Crocifisso in Borgo S. Lorenzo, just north of Florence. The painting's surface has greatly suffered, most likely from repaintings carried out in 1771, during the final restoration and modernisation of the church (rebuilt by 1754).[18] A cleaning in the mid-1970s revealed a false dark frame contained within the work.[19] A trompe l'oeil candle also emerges from the bottom edge of the feigned frame, bridging the illusory pictorial space and the real space, and its lit candles, of the altar below.

The Virgin, extremely close in appearance and pose to that in the New Haven altarpiece as well as a formerly attributed tondo in a private Italian collection,[20] is seated on a ledge of what appears to be an outdoor portico at the centre of the composition, with the sea stretching out behind. She looks down at the playful Christ Child, now shown in a standing pose, who looks at St. Thomas to his left while offering a gesture of salutation in the opposite direction to St. John, who returns it. Two graceful angels hover above the Virgin and hold aloft a pearl-decorated crown, honouring her as the *Mater Ecclesiae*. St. Thomas gestures to his chest with his right hand, acknowledging the infant's gaze, and holds his attribute of the spear with his left. Known best for his incredulity at Christ's appearance to his disciples following his death (John XX. 19-29), together with his second didactic example of scepticism concerning the Virgin's Assumption, Thomas is shown in his typical guise: young and beardless and carrying the instrument of his martyrdom. St. John the Baptist, likewise standing in slight contrapposto, is shown in characteristic fashion, bearded and dressed in an animal skin tunic, tied at the shoulder. The Baptist's slender cross leans away from his body to parallel Thomas's spear.

Light enters the scene from the left, infusing it with a sensitive *sfumato*. The picture's composition and standard iconography create a sense of emotional unity. The monumental presence of the saints is most striking in comparison to the willowy SS. Lazarus and Sebastian in the early Montevettolini altarpiece. The figures of the Borgo S. Lorenzo image have grown dramatically in their stature and their proximity to the picture plane, the latter underscored by the fictive candle at

bottom. The emphatic and statuesque physical forms, along with the broader and more spacious composition, are elements again reminiscent of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's earlier altarpieces (fig. 75).

Only a tentative suggestion can be offered for this work's original provenance. Most likely, the altarpiece in question was executed for the Compagnia della Vergine Maria, better known as the 'Azzurri', so called on account of the colour of the confraternity's vestments. The company was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and situated near the Pieve of the town.[21] Unfortunately, there is no conclusive documentary proof of this being the original site. What we know about the Compagnia degli Azzurri is that it obtained the ground upon which to build its oratory and seat from the bishop of Florence; payments in the 1400s consisted of seven lire and as many *soldi*.[22] The company venerated an old image of the Virgin, discovered near a cistern after having been thrown there by iconoclasts. The main celebrations fell in May and the 8th of September—the Nativity of the Madonna—which included a grand procession. At the end of the sixteenth century, tailors and other artisans gathered in the neighborhood of the Azzurri under the protection of the penitent company of S. Omobono. At the Azzurri's suppression in Napoleonic times at the end of the eighteenth century, the panel would have been transferred from the oratory of the Compagnia to its present location. Upon entering the Santuario del Crocifisso, the panel then became the property of the Compagnia dei Neri, another penitent brotherhood that had its seat in the church and arose to new prosperity in the early 1800s.

Some clues as to the panel's origin and dating may lie in a collection of *Ricordi* (1432-1534) from the 'Natività di Maria del Borgo S. Lorenzo, detta degli Azzurri'.[23] One document from 1482 begins by naming the Virgin Mary as 'nostra avvocata' or defender. A much later document, from the Capitoli della riforma del 1733, mentions 'cera, olio, e biancheria l'Altare della Virgine' and includes mention of the Saint's Day for Tommaso Apostolo: the 22nd of December (one day after the usual feast day).[24] Most importantly, this altar dedicated to the Virgin also must have existed during the probable time Piero's altarpiece was executed, for a cluster of payments were made between 1519-20 for its adornment. These payments include objects such as candles, brass basins, a velum-bound book of items, and, more telling, an exquisite *paliotto* of damask.[25] This rapid succession of payments—all related to the main altar and its decoration, and all made within a two year period—may tentatively suggest that Piero's altarpiece was also executed and installed around the same time, thus pointing to 1519 as a possible *terminus ante quem* for the work. It must be remembered that Piero was gravely ill by 1518, however.

The latest of Piero's extant altarpieces mentioned by Vasari remains in situ, in the Church of San Francesco in Fiesole, and was most likely executed around the same time as, if not slightly earlier than, the Borgo S. Lorenzo image (fig. 76).[26] Vasari described *The Immaculate Conception with SS. Francis, Jerome, Bonaventure, Bernard, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* thus: 'Fece una tavoletta de

la Concezzione nel tramezzo de la chiesa di S. Francesco da Fiesole, la quale è assai buona cosetta, sendo le figure non molto grandi' [27] The same placement is repeated by Raffaello Borghini in his *Il Riposo* (1584).[28] Even though the literal meaning of *tramezzo* as 'something that acts as a partition between one thing and another' usually applies to a rood-screen (or transverse wall) the word may also be translated more generally as the transept, which separates the church in two parts. It appears that San Francesco did indeed once have a *tramezzo*—as illustrated by P. Bonaventura Dei in a ground plan of the church and the inclusion of a *pluteo* (the Roman term equivalent for such a screen)—despite its appearance as a single aisle church.[29] While Vasari's meaning remains unclear, the original placement of Piero's altarpiece can be traced to the Chapel of SS. Concezione, the second of two lateral altars on the right side of the church from the western entrance. The altar originally faced a Raffaellino del Garbo *Annunciation*, now back in situ. Both altars were built in the first half of the fifteenth century, between the second and third ogival arches. All four of the choir altars were destroyed and reconstructed in 1752[30]; at this time Piero's panel was placed in the choir, behind the main altar, and was replaced by a *Crucifixion* attributed to Pietro Marchesini, before finally being restored to its present place during the last restoration of the church in 1905-7 by the architect Giuseppe Castellucci.[31]

Near the bottom left edge of the panel is a faint inscription reading 'Pier di Cosimo 1480';[32] which in 1903 Berenson correctly pointed out was a later addition. St. Anselm's inclusion in the altarpiece also helps place the work after 1480, since his canonisation did not occur until 1494. Most of the evidence points to a much later execution: perhaps *c.*1515. The panel most likely would have been erected by 19 October 1516, the date of the church's second consecration, upon which occasion its ancient name of Santa Maria del Fiore was changed to San Franceso.[33]

The panel's late dating is corroborated stylistically by two surviving preparatory drawings in the Uffizi (figs. 77-78).[34] The freely executed sketches are also vital to discerning Piero's approach to the painting's design. Although it remains unlikely that the two sheets formed a single large study for the altarpiece's entire composition, as noted by Griswold, both drawings are probably fragments of a sheet of large dimensions, perhaps later divided by an early collector.[35] There are a number of revealing differences in the sketches as opposed to the finished work. These include the ambiguous presence of figures, perhaps saints rather than angels, with a kneeling figure (St. Jerome?) to the right side of the Virgin in the drawing of the heavenly sphere; standing, rather than seated, figures of SS. Francis and Jerome; and the absence of scrolls and tablets in the depiction of the six saints in the bottom register.[36] Piero's working methods in the sketches—the outlines indicated lightly in black chalk, the figures and draperies then worked up using red chalk, and finally again elaborated with small changes in black chalk—are unique in his oeuvre and, more important, reveal a greater degree

of experimentation with light effects and atmosphere following Leonardo's departure from Florence. As a possible conduit of Leonardo's drawing style during the late stages of his career, Piero's use of red chalk in this way must have affected Pontormo's early development in the use of the medium.[37] The execution of the panel itself and its conception imply a connection with Fra Bartolomeo and particularly with Del Sarto in its smooth, softly rounded surfaces and muted palette.

Vasari's passage also calls attention to the 'not so large figures' in the picture. The oil on panel work measures 184 x 178 cm and contains figures that are far from small; yet, when compared to other works of the second decade of the cinquecento—particularly those by Michelangelo or Fra Bartolomeo—Vasari's claim becomes not unreasonable. The two-tiered composition is topped by a pyramidal group showing the haloed figures of God and Mary, typologically represented as King Ahasuerus and Esther of the Old Testament. Ahasuerus is in the act of forgiving his wife for entering uninvited into his presence during a banquet, a crime punishable by death, after she heard that the wicked Haman, the king's adviser, had ordered the extermination of the Jews. Despite breaking the law to save her people, Esther's courage and high-mindedness prompt Ahasuerus to relent—'This law was not made for you but for all others' (Esther XV. 13)—as he extends his sceptre to her. This heroic story of Esther was thought to be the prefiguration of Mary's own absolution from original sin, and the parallel between the two figures influenced Immaculate Conception iconography well into the sixteenth century. Much earlier, the connection was made in a Vesper Hymn of the 1480 Office of the Immaculate Conception:

> Assueri regis sceptrum
> Caput tangens Virgo tuum
> Mori fecit laqueatum
> Aman sanctis inimicum.[38]

Below, six saints gesture and hold scrolls and tablets relevant to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception. The composition thus includes two separate spheres, the divine ('higher plane') and the human, formally kept separate but iconographically joined through the included inscriptions. All of the six saints, with the exception of St. Francis, are Doctors of the Church. All six take part in the *disputa* over Mary's Immaculate Conception. The tablet held by St. Francis is perhaps the most direct allusion, reading 'Conceptionem Virginis Mariae celebremus'. Interestingly, two of the inscriptions do not match their sources. St. Jerome's quotation in fact is taken from Pascasio Radberto, once known as Pseudo-Jerome, and his 'Ep. IX ad Paulam et Eustochium'; St. Bernard holds a tablet with an inscription from San Pier Damiani. Despite these two misattributions, all but two of the inscriptions held by the saints, save for SS. Francis and Thomas Aquinas, are contained in a single text: the *Officium de Immaculata Conceptione Beatae Virginis Mariae* (in the 'Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum'), composed by the Franciscan Bernardino de' Bustis between 1475 and 1480. The

Officium was approved by Pope Sixtus IV, becoming known as the *Dilecte fili Libenter* on 4 October 1480.[39]

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the debate surrounding the purity of the Virgin between the 'maculists' (represented by the Dominicans) and the 'immaculists' (the Franciscans) raged with particular turbulence in Tuscany.[40] The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception held that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin ('sine macula originali concepta'). Despite its absence from the Gospels, the story was very well-promulgated. Joachim and his wife Anne could not conceive a child, for Anne was barren. Following Anne's vow to God to dedicate a child to the temple, an angel delivered to husband and wife the news of their impending gift. Joachim and Anne met at the Golden Gate of Jerusalem, where Anne fell into her husband's arms; by the Renaissance, this chaste embrace was believed to be the moment of conception. Nine months later Mary was born and presented at the temple at the age of three. This story was told in the second-century *Protogospel of James* and *Pseudo-Matthew*, before being replaced six centuries later by the *Liber de Nativitate Mariae*.[41] The debate on the Immaculate Conception remained unresolved, however, since the Council of Trent had named all three sources apocryphal.

The origin of the conflict between the maculists and immaculists arose from the desire of the latter to establish a feast day in honour of Mary's conception.[42] Not all of the saints included in Piero's picture championed the Immaculate Conception. Her proposed feast day was opposed staunchly by Bernard of Clairvaux, who argued that it was unfitting to honour sexual desire, as well as by Thomas Aquinas, who believed that Mary was immaculate at birth but that she was sanctified in the womb *after* her conception. While the Dominicans followed Thomas Aquinas' writings, the opposing Franciscans followed the teachings of Duns Scotus, who argued that she was immaculate from the moment of her conception. Both orders believed the Virgin to be immaculate; the debate was over the exact moment that this occurred (at conception, in the womb, at birth, at the Annunciation, or in the mind of God before her conception?). The maculists, for instance, believed that the Virgin was with sin only during the brief time between her conception and her sanctification, as a fetus in utero. Inwardly, the maculists also feared that the Immaculate Conception would make Mary the equal to her Son. On the other side, the Franciscans continually accused the former of claiming Mary to be a sinner and did so to great effect. In Florence the mystery was celebrated in the trecento before being declared as one of the obligatory celebrations in Santa Maria del Fiore on 8 December 1440. In fact, plans for the construction of a church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception were made in 1448 but never realised. In January 1517 a congregation of priests promoting Mary's cult was invited to the city by the Medici. After centuries of fierce debate, the doctrine finally won confirmation only in 1854.

The most common representations of the Immaculate Conception were in Books of Hours, particularly the Hours of the Virgin, with the *Grandes heures* of the Duc de Berry and the Duke of Bedford's Book of Hours serving as the best examples.[43] Piero's interpretation of the sacred mystery is significant as it constitutes one of the earliest large scale visual representations in or near Florence. Piero's iconography is indeed a rarity, confined to the first decades of the cinquecento, for with the Counter Reformation came a newly introduced image of Mary as the Woman of the Apocalypse, showing the Immaculate in a white dress, crowned with twelve stars and resting on a crescent moon (Revelation XII. 1) and treading upon a serpent (Genesis III. 15).

It is, in fact, revealing to compare Piero's *Immaculate Conception* with Vasari's own version for Bindo Altoviti, installed in the banker's family chapel in Santi Apostoli in 1541. In great contrast to Piero's interpretation, which in many ways looks back at older conventions while incorporating the new, Vasari favoured a highly abstruse vision that—despite the precise clarity of the included inscriptions—is typical of the Aretine's concerns in its iconographic and compositional complexity.

Of the more or less contemporary representations, the *Immaculate Conception* by the Lucchese Master of the Immaculate Conception of 1494 comes closest to Piero's iconography and could conceivably have served as a precedent (fig. 79).[44] As with nearly every representation of the doctrine to follow—Piero's picture being a notable exception—the Lucca panel is of an elongated vertical format, with an arched top. God the Father, shown with a cruciform halo usually attributed to Christ, blesses and absolves the kneeling and crowned Mary with his sceptre, while an adjacent scroll alludes clearly to the story of Esther before Ahasuerus: 'Non emin pro Te, sed pro omnibus haec lex constituta est'. A multitude of angels surround the two figures, while three saints and two prophets hold inscriptions honouring the doctrine in the earthly realm below. The surroundings serve as a Marian metaphor in terms of her garden of the Song of Songs. Piero's altarpiece is related to a small number of other compositions, the most convincing of which as a directly related image is Francesco Francia's version of 1512 in S. Frediano, Lucca. The connection seems possible despite Francia's markedly vertical format and iconographic differences, such as the inclusion of King David and King Solomon, together with symbolic references to the Virgin. Several other representations of note followed, all with varying degrees of divergence from Piero's type. With few exceptions, God the Father and Mary, enthroned or borne upon a cloud as the *Virgo in nubibus*, crown the composition—often with allusions to the story of Esther—while saints and fathers of the church engage in a *disputa* below.[45] Adam and Eve also soon made their appearance in Immaculate Conception images.[46]

After Berenson revealed the 1480 date as apocryphal, the panel became dated as post-1510 and said to conform to the style of Fra Bartolomeo; others noted the presence of workshop hands. However, both observations were probably the result of the work's extremely bad condition at the

time. The latest restoration of 1984-5, partially recovering the former crystalline transparency of details, allows for a more informed judgment and sheds much light on the altered pictorial language of Piero's later years.[47] Formally and stylistically, the work can be said to be the culminating image in Piero's progression toward a more deliberate and subdued style, marking 'a departure from his bizarre vein of naturalism'.[48] In its marked geometrical order, symmetry and balance, the design was no doubt appropriate to the commission and its solemn subject. The landscape is no longer fantastic, as in the *Incarnation*, but has now grown uncharacteristically austere and desolate, with the exception of two lonely figures on the way to a church in the hills at right. The solemnity of the composition is mirrored in the muted colour scheme, in which an earthy ochre, brown, yellow, grey and low-key green dominate. The absence of strident colours—save for splashes of red in the garments of Mary and God the Father, St. Jerome's cardinal hat and St. Anselm's cloak—contributes to a feeling of quiet harmony. Also gone is the bright, raking light of the Lecceto and Innocenti altarpieces. Here, Piero's use of gentler light further unifies the picture, enveloping the figures in a subtle *sfumato*. In all, Piero presents a somewhat ethereal vision, producing a feeling of repose and restraint.

There is a degree of impetuosity as always. Though understated, this is glimpsed in the projecting altar, serving as a base for the kneeling SS. Francis and Jerome, and its illusionary extension from the altar above which the panel would have been placed (the worshipper's real space) into the panel's own fictive space. Piero again succeeds in capturing details in a few passages such the hands of St. Francis, pierced with their curved nails of great tangibility, and the brooch and garment of St. Anselm, along with the tattered white sleeve of St. Jerome. The angels above are very typical Piero creations, similar to those in Boston with their downcast eyes and *sfumato* surrounding the features.

The exact iconographic demands put forth by the priests of San Francesco for Piero's panel remain unknown. Yet at such a late date in his career, we can expect Piero to have enjoyed some latitude in this respect, and it is quite possible that the 'intentional archaism' that has often been attached to the work can instead be attributed to Piero's sensitivity to a need for a new iconography, in which Esther acts an indirect metaphor and hence as a less intrusive occupant to a position considered to be reserved for Christ alone and embroiled in so much acrimonious debate. To a certain extent, the same case of visual decorum or appropriateness can be made for the Yale altarpiece and its commission by Santa Maria Novella's flagellant confraternity of S. Vincenzo. As a part of the Dominican order, the confraternity no doubt greatly approved of (if not directly responsible for) the altarpiece's muted quality. The clearest stylistic parallel is found in the numerous Dominican altarpiece commissions executed by Fra Bartolomeo and their reductive appearance.

To conclude, it seems most fruitful to continue exploring two areas when questioning the late changes in style and execution visible in late altarpieces, now that the biographical factor of Piero's

debilitating health during the final years of his life has been documented. These areas involve matters of production and patronage. Even though style changes are a delicate and speculative area, perhaps the most straightforward reason behind the spare and seemingly cursory appearance of the late panels is their consistently poor physical condition. All three altarpieces have suffered greatly in the past, not only through climatic damage but also extensive repainting. In terms of production itself, other questions surface: can we speak quantitatively about Piero's production in his late period? Although increased production could inevitably lead to a loss in quality, the numbers of works produced by Piero did not increase, however. The issue of workshop participation may be considered, now that Piero is know to have had a confirmed live-in pupil from Rome. Nonetheless, the quality of the works does not necessarily indicate the presence of a second hand.

As also argued here, it does seem highly plausible that, in Piero's case, varying circumstances of patronage played a critical role. It seems most negligent to ignore that both Piero's earliest and latest periods almost exclusively contained altarpiece commissions destined for sites outside Florence, at times very provincial ones.[49] Altarpieces from 1480 to *c.*1489 were intended for places such as Montevettolini and Lecceto, while those from the final decade or so—with the exception of the Yale altarpiece—likewise left Florence, this time for Abeto in Umbria and the closer Tuscan locales of Fiesole and Borgo S. Lorenzo. This is in great contrast to 1489-*c.*1505, a period when it is possible to say that each of Piero's surviving works was commissioned for highly notable Florentine church settings, by prominent private patrons. The Pugliese and Capponi families head the latter list, and although the early *Pala Del Pugliese* did adorn the family chapel in provincial Lecceto, it was ordered by an influential and sophisticated Florentine citizen.

With regard to the connection between the late Piero and the provinces, much of the matter rests in the unknown identities of the specific patrons. Sometimes Florentines themselves had links with provincial sites which encouraged them to order works for dispatch. The possibility remains that some may be lurking behind seemingly provincial commissions, as proved to be the case with the Del Pugliese in Lecceto. The consequences of patronage remain a vital key to understanding quality; the amount a patron would have had to spend, for example, would have affected the amount of work Piero did. Also, the fact that Piero was not residing in these locations is crucial for quality, as he would have been somewhat less accountable for the result (unlike Piero della Francesca or Rosso in San Sepolcro, for example).[50]

The element of inconclusiveness arises from the paucity of dated or documented Piero altarpieces, with a known Florentine private patron, from this late period to serve as an appropriate comparison. The question of whether provincial patrons received less polished works because they were provincial or because they wanted them to appear as they do is an extremely challenging one.

The answer probably has its roots in Piero's own style and his own painterly concerns late in his career. It is, however, doubtful that Piero received provincial patronage at this stage because he was less accomplished or 'dated' in Florence.

The conclusion that the reductiveness seen in some of Piero's altarpieces was at least in part linked to their exportation is best supported when the three late altarpieces are compared with another late example, albeit with a secular subject: the *Liberation of Andromeda*, painted around 1510-13 for Filippo Strozzi, a most discerning and well-placed patron. Of all of Piero's panels, this *spalliera* in particular was executed with the most amazing care and invention. The soft luminosity and blending of contours in the San Francesco panel is an effect shared by other late but smaller religious works such as the *Nativity with St. John the Baptist and Two Musician Angels* in the Galleria Borghese, Rome (fig. 95), the *Sacred Family with St. Joseph* in the Palazzo Cini Collection, Venice (fig. 96), and most notably the *Madonna and Child with Young St. John, St. Margaret and Two Angels* in the Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa (fig. 97).[51] Despite such stylistic similarities that to some extent unite the Fiesole altarpiece with the Strozzi commission, the marked contrast in presentation is glaring. Certainly, the *Liberation* demonstrates that Piero's work had not dropped off in quality in his late period, thus suggesting that the final commissions likewise were based on a prestige of a continuing kind.

The responsibility of forging a new formal approach in Florentine painting from the second decade and onward soon passed on to Piero's own pupils, Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo, and other emerging younger artists such as Rosso, all of whom had already made in a mark in the Chiostro dei Voti of Santissima Annunziata by 1516.[52] It is precisely Piero's influence upon these ascendant painters, and his legacy as a whole, that will be discussed in the conclusion.

[1] Piero's Yale Altarpiece, for example, was attributed to Ridolfo by Osvald Sirén in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Pictures in the Jarves Collection Belonging to Yale University* (New Haven, 1916), pp. 189-91, and by W. Rankin before him in 'Some Early Italian Pictures in the Jarves Collection of the Yale School of Fine Arts at New Haven', *American Journal of Archeology*, X (1895), p. 149. For connections between Piero and Fra Bartolomeo, see: L. Borgo, 'Fra Bartolommeo's Beginnings—Once More, with Berenson', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXIX (Feb. 1977), pp. 89-93.

[2] Louis Waldman, 'Fact, Fiction, and Hearsay: Notes on Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo, *alias* Piero di Lorenzo Ubaldini', *Art Bulletin*, LXXXII (Mar. 2000), p. 172-3, 175 (here: App., doc. 1).

[3] Botticelli's Revelation-inspired Greek inscription reads: 'I Sandro made this picture at the conclusion of the year 1500 in the troubles of Italy in the half time after the time according to the 11th chapter of Saint John in the second woe of the Apocalypse during the loosing of the devil for three and a half years then he will be chained in the 12th chapter and we shall see [him burying himself?] as in this picture'. E. Langmuir, *The National Gallery Companion Guide* (London, 1994), pp. 28-9.

[4] The Yale Altarpiece measured 209 x 205.7 cm in its original uncut state.

[5] Previous restorers noted that there was a significant amount of overpainting at one point; in its present state, most of this repaint and, sadly, much original paint have been removed. Over all, there is widespread abrasion and loss of surface paint and original detail. The front of St. Vincent's black cloak has lost nearly all of its former modelling and detail. The panel also has undergone severe splitting along six of its vertical joints.

[6] The altarpiece's state of preservation is discussed by Kristin Lister (former Chief Conservator) in a letter of 23 March 1993. A summary of restorations, composed when the work was still attributed to Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, describes actions carried out in the 1915 restoration: the panel was braced and filled out to give an oval shape to the top arch. Observations were made that the Madonna's face was repainted and that the surface was worn and much stippled over; there was a bad spot above St. Vincent's right eye. In 1931, the panel was cradled, and the paint set and restored by Durham. Another restoration took place in 1940.

[7] Venturini introduces the inventories relating to Piero's altarpiece and documents dealing with the foundation and the history of the Compagnia di S. Vincenzo in 'Piero di Cosimo e la Pala della Compagnia di San Vincenzo', *Paragone*, XLV (Mar.-July 1994), pp. 60-67.

[8] G. Richa, *Notizie istoriche delle chiese fiorentine devise ne' suoi quartieri*, 10 vols. [Florence, 1755], III, p. 108.

[9] See M. Billioti, *Chronica Pulcherrima Aedis Magnique Coenobii S. Mariae cognomento Novellae, Florentinae Civitatis*, MS (1586), Biblioteca di S. Maria Novella, partially published in *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum* (1893-8), I-II, pp. 390-92. G. Richa writes: '... fu concesso quel luogo che servi prima a tre soppresse compagnie, cioe quella di San Vincenzio, di San Zanobi, e dello Spirito Santo' (Richa, III, p. 108).

[10] S. Orlandi, *Necrologio di Santa Maria Novella*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1955), II, pp. 289, 349-50.

[11] ASF, Comp. Rel. Sopp. 155, fasc. A, *Contratti, scritte e testamenti*, cc. n.n. (12 June 1533 and, for the latter, 25 February 1535). The document approves 38 members of the Compagnia di S. Vincenzo: evidence that the company was still active at this date. See Venturini, 1994, p. 67, nn. 21-2.

[12] ASF, Comp. Rel. Sopp. 155, fasc. B, carte sciolte, verso. The full inventory reads: 'La reliquia di Santo Vincentio. La croce di Santo Vincentio. *La tavola di Santo Vincentio* [emphasis added]. La tavola dello Spirito Santo. E cori di Santo Vincentio e dello Spirito Santo. El sopalcho della compagnia di Santo Vincentio. E paramenti bianchi e fiore d'oro e altra roba auta dalla donna di Guasparre Rucellai. Veste della compagnia, questa a frati. Libri, leggii, usci, serramenti, pietra sacrata, calici, deschi, cantelieri, tele dipinti. E altre cose atenente a detta compagnia' Venturini, 1994, p. 67, n. 24.

[13] ASF, Comp. Rel. Sopp. 164, no. 36, *Inventorio di scritture*, fol. 6r. Venturini, 1994, p. 66, n. 9.

[14] Ibid., fol. 16v. Venturini, 1994, p. 66, n. 10.

[15] G. Cinelli, in F. Bocchi and G. Cinelli, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze* (Florence, 1677),

pp. 265-6.

[16] For the 1691 inventory, see ASF, Comp. Rel. Sopp. 155, fasc. B, cc. n.n. For the 1784 inventory, see ASF, Patrimonio Ecclesiastico 43, fasc. 32, *Inventorio degl'arredi sacri e mobili della venerabile Compagnia dell'Arcangelo Raffaello detta la Scala, fatto questo dì 22 dì luglio 1784*: 'una tavola grande dell'altar maggiore fra le due finestre rappresenta la Beatissima Vergine con Gesù Bambino in braccio, S. Domenico e S. Girolamo e varii angeli di maniera antica con sua tenda gialla di tela lacera che serve per coprirla e suo ferro, è fissa nel muro' The company ceased its activities in 1785. Again see Venturini, 1994, p. 66, nn. 11-12.

[17] E. Fahy, 'Some Later Works of Piero di Cosimo', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, LXV (Apr. 1965), pp. 201-12. Fahy's discovery is cited in Venturini, 1994, pp. 60, 64 nn. 1-2.

[18] The panel measures 202 x 165 cm. The more awkwardly touched-up sections include the coarse hands (particularly the left) of St. John and the right arm of the Christ child, which resembles a wooden prosthesis. Several splits run vertically along the panel. The most pronounced starts at the left angel's neck and descends to the left of Mary's right foot; another crack runs through the left part of St. Thomas.

[19] Fahy, 1965, p. 210. Fahy notes that this practice was typical of some of Fra Bartolomeo's works.

[20] For the Madonna of great similarity in the *Madonna and Child with Infant St. John the Baptist*, 88 cm, see Forlani-Capretti, 1996, p. 137; and L. Vertova, 'Florence. The Biennale Internazionale dell'Antiquariato', Palazzo Strozzi [exh. review], *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXVII (Dec. 1985), pp. 926-9. Most recently, the tondo has been attributed to the Master of Serumido in R. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (New York, 2000), p. 253, fig. A51.

[21] The discovery of the work in the possession of the Compagnia degli Azzurri was noted by C. Gamba, 'Una tavola di Piero di Cosimo a Borgo San Lorenzo', *Rivista d'arte*, III (1905), pp. 253-5. Gamba found the reference in *Memorie storiche del Crocifisso dei Miracoli al Borgo S. Lorenzo* (Florence, 1838 and 1865), which records the end of the cappella della Compagnia restoration in 1771 and mentions 'in cornu Evangelii fu collocata la Madonna tra i SS. Giovanni Battiste e Tommaso che appartenne già all'antica Compagnia detta volgarmente degli azzurri'. The history of the confraternity was conveyed to Capretti in an oral communication from M. Pinelli. Forlani-Capretti, 1996, pp. 131-2.

[22] C.C. Calzolai's *Borgo San Lorenzo Nel Mugello* (Florence, 1974) is the most complete historical guide to the city. On the Compagnia degli Azzurri see pp. 77-80, n. 10-17.

[23] ASF, Comp. Rel. Sopp. 1521, no. XX, 2 (*Ricordi* 1432-1534). The naming of the company as the 'Nativity of Mary ... called the Azzurri' here may be misleading and does not necessarily raise doubts as to the absence of any reference to the Nativity in Piero's picture. It appears that the company changed its name on several occasions, and it is very possible that the company was officially called the 'Nativity of Mary' after Piero's execution of the panel. For example, by 1720, when a new oratory was built close to the Pieve and the Compagnia degli Azzurri, the latter came under a new wording: Compagnia del SS.mo Sacramento, under.the invocation of S. Omobono, in the oratory of the Nativity of the Virgin.

[24] Ibid., fol. 12v.

[25] Ibid., fol. 58v. On 22 March 1519, there is a payment for candles. In 1520, there is a payment for 'due bacinuzi d'ottone [brass basins] per l'altare...' together with an August 31 order for a 'capellinaio d'asse d'albero per apichare le nostre chappe [place to put clothing] della compagnia presso all'altare maggiore' On September 15 of the same year, another payment is made for the production of 'un libro di capitoli coperto a velluto desandrino...' [a velum-covered book of items] and the *paliotto* of damask: 25 November 1520 'uno paliotto d'domasco la sandrino sopannato a vela rossa sottile con uno fregio d'oro a figure d'nostra donna e angioli e fiangia verde e oro con dua arme d'oro tirato nel mezo cioè uno d'Luigi d'Giordano di Jacopo dal Borgo e l'altra della donna sua e il quale paliotto ciena fatto un presente e donato alla nostra compagnia per l'altare mag[g]iore Luigi d'giordano detto e la nostra donna gniene rimeriti per noi...' [a *paliotto* of damask with a thin red

cover and a gold frieze showing the Virgin and angels as well as a green and gold fringe with the two arms divided in half, belonging to Luigi d'Giordano and his wife who had this *paliotto* made and gave it to our company for the main altar, for which the Virgin thanks/rewards them].

[26] An ancient fortress once stood on the present site of S. Francesco, before its destruction by the Florentines in 1125; in 1225, the Romite di Sant'Agostino built a small convent upon the site, beside which a chapel was later erected in 1339. The church of S. Maria del Fiore, as it was called, later passed from the nuns and became the property of Guido del Palagio, a Florentine noble who presented it to the Franciscan brothers that settled there *c.*1391, renaming the church S. Francesco. Several enlargements were made at this time, with a restoration in 1399. By the 1458, the Franciscans had organised their archives and library there.

[27] Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 68. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 657.

[28] R. Borghini, *Il Riposo* (Florence, 1584; Hildesheim, 1969), p. 377.

[29] P. Bonaventura Dei, *Santa Maria del Fiore sul colle di Fiesole (ora S. Francesco)* (Florence, 1907), fig. facing p. 68. The suggestion that the church possessed neither a *tramezzo* nor any transept chapels (only the latter statement appearing correct) was made by Magnoli Scudieri in *Quattro restauri per un itinerario d'arte a Fiesole*, exh. cat., Fiesole-Museo Bandini, Florence, 1985 (Florence, 1985).

[30] The arms of several patron families were discovered above two of the altars during the 1752 demolition; they belonged to the Bonciani, Cavalcanti, Giuntini (or Borgherini) and Cafaggi. Dei, 1907, p. 23.

[31] In his changes of 1905-7, Castelluci was responsible for removing the Baroque altars and restoring the interior's original Gothic form, which included the reconstruction of the original four chapels and their altars. For a description of S. Francesco's architectural layout and placements of altarpieces, before and after the church's reconstruction, see O. Giglioli, *Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia* (Rome, 1933), pp. 167-79; and Dei, 1907, pp. 41-7. For another brief summary see M. Scudieri and M. Sframeli, *Le Chiese di Fiesole e Dintorni* (Fiesole, 1991), pp. 23-7. The altars and their altarpieces inside the church with the original and now restored arrangement (with the 1752-1905 altered arrangement in parentheses) are: main altar: Neri di Bicci's *Crucifixion* (Raffaellino del Garbo's *Annunciation*); first altar on the right: *Marriage of St. Catherine of Alexandria* attrib. to Cenni di Francesco (?) (same); second altar on the right: *Immaculate Conception* by Piero (*Crucifixion with SS. Mary Magdalen and Margaret of Cortona*, attrib. to Pietro Marchesini, now gone); first altar on the left: *Adoration of the Magi* attrib. to 'The Master of the Fiesole Epiphany' (same); and second altar on the left: *Annunciation* by Raffaellino del Garbo (*Virgin and Child with SS. Sebastian and Michael* by a Perugino follower, given to the Uffizi), made for the Compagnia di S. Michele.

[32] Dating the panel late, Berenson noted that the manner of turning the '8' in '1480' on its side indicates a later sixteenth or early seventeenth-century date. Berenson, *Pitture italiane del rinascimento*, trans. E. Cecchi (Milan, 1936), p. 389. J. Beck and A. Schultz, 'The Origins of Piero di Cosimo', *Source*, IV (Summer 1985), pp. 9-14: the authors argue that this does not necessarily mean that a date of 1480 was not once present and that it was removed at a later date (restoration?). Beck and Schultz uphold the early dating on the basis of (1) the stylistic dependence on Rosselli; (2) the inscribed (even if not original) date; and (3) the relation to Pope Sixtus IV's 'Cum praexcelsa' bull of 27 February 1477, composed by Leonardo di Nogarolo and dedicated to the Virgin's Immaculate Conception. However, a papal bull is insufficient evidence to date an altarpiece, especially one with such a ubiquitous subject, in both the literature and visual images of the time, and the stylistic qualities of the picture convincingly indicate a much later execution.

[33] The consecration of the church is mentioned in ACSFF, *Copia delle cronache del Convento di S. Francesco a Fiesole*, MS, fols. 41v-42r.

[34] *Immaculate Conception* (upper section), red and black chalk, 23.8 x 27.8 cm. Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi, no. 552 E; and *Six Half-Length Standing Saints* (bottom section), red and black

chalk, 14.4 x 27.8 cm. Gabinetto, 555 E. For reproductions and detailed descriptions of the sheets: Griswold, 1988, pp. 202-14, figs. 86-7. Also: A. Petrioli Tofani, ed., *Inventario I. Disegni esposti* (Florence, 1986), pp. 247-9.

[35] Griswold, 1988, p. 205-6.

[36] As Griswold suggests, Piero may have considered combining the two registers at the early stage of the design or including additional saints into the upper section.

[37] Piero's role as heir to Leonardo's accomplishments and his influence on Pontormo's drawings and the younger artists's personal, expressive uses of *disegno* are mentioned in J. Cox Rearick, *The Drawings of Pontormo: His Life and Work*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), I, pp. 18-19, 22, 24. Griswold argues for an opposite direction of influence, noting Fra Bartolomeo and Andrea del Sarto as plausible sources of influence upon Piero's post-1510 production. Griswold, 1988, p. 209, 214.

[38] M. Carmichael, *Francia's Masterpiece. An Essay on the Beginnings of the Immaculate Conception in Art* (London, 1909), p. 49.

[39] For the identification of these ecclesiastical sources, also see: Forlani-Tempesti, 1996, pp. 134-5.

[40] The main source for the background of the Immaculate Conception debate as cited here is N. Mayberry, 'The controversy over the Immaculate Conception in medieval and Renaissance art, literature, and society', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, XXI (Duke University Press, Fall 1991), pp. 207-24. For the most complete historical treatment of the subject Mayberry recommends a collection of essays edited by E. D. O'Connor, *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (Notre Dame, 1958). Also see: M. Levi D'Ancona, who identifies at least eighteen types of representations of the Immaculate Conception, in D'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, (NY, 1957); and A. Lepicier, *L'Immaculée Conception dans l'art et l'iconographie* (Editions Servites Pères Servites de Marie, 1955).

[41] Mayberry, 1991, p. 210. The embrace is also found in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger (Verona, 1987), pp. 417-18.

[42] To give a history of the conflict between the two rival visions: the debate escalated to the point of excommunications against one another, leading the Popes to take conciliatory actions. One of these first attempts, the Council of Basel (1431-49), affirmed the Immaculate Conception but then itself was declared invalid due to the church's schism at the time. In 1475 Vincent Bandelli published an attack on the doctrine in Milan. The attack so angered its defenders that Pope Sixtus IV, a Franciscan, intervened and ordered a debate on the issue in 1477. Francis Insuber, another Franciscan, defended the dogma so convincingly that the Pope confirmed the feast day of the conception, approving two offices (and masses) for its celebration: *Officium et missa Immaculatae Conceptionis Virginis Mariae*, composed by Leonardo di Nogarola (approved in 1477) and the second *Officium*, composed by Bernardino de' Busti (approved in 1480). The two offices confirmed the date as 8 December, even though the feast had already been celebrated—unofficially—on that date for several centuries. The offices' semantics of avoidance caused future problems, however. Stronger measures were taken in 1485 by Sixtus IV, as he put forth a papal bull, the *Grave Nimis*, forbidding under the punishment of excommunication that either opinion could be called 'heretical'. The sixteenth century was most notable for the Council of Trent (1545-63), during which the *Grave Nimis* was maintained and a new search for proof was launched.

[43] Many medieval litanies used metaphors from the Old Testaments to show Mary's purity. The most widespread examples include the Song of Solomon, 4; the Bride of the Canticles that describes Mary as beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, the rose of Sharon, the lily among thorns, the tower of David, the fountain in the garden, the enclosed garden or the closed gate; Ecclesiastes: cedar of Lebanon, flowering rod of Jesse, the rose garden, the olive tree, spotless mirror; Genesis: gate of Heaven; and Psalms: city of God. See Mayberry, 1991, p. 212.

[44] Fahy notes that the 'Master of the Immaculate Conception' appears influenced by Filippino Lippi and tentatively identifies him with Michele Ciampanti, a prominent late-quattrocento Lucchese artist, along with Antonio Corsi. The 'Master' was earlier associated with Francia and his circle. See G.

Martinelli and F. Arato, *Museo di Villa Guinigi, Lucca. La Villa e le collezioni* (Lucca, 1968), pp. 164-5, fig. VI.

[45] One of the very rare exceptions is the kneeling, earthbound Virgin in Andrea Previtali's *Immaculate Conception* of *c.*1515. In a rather awkward composition, she is flanked by two kneeling saints, with God the Father appearing in a cloud above.

[46] The figure of Adam (usually in a sleeping pose) is included in Sogliani's *Immaculate Conception* in Florence's Galleria dell'Accademia (executed for S. Francesco dell'Osservanza) and—later—in the sharply coloured version by Pierfrancesco di Jacopo Foschi for S. Spirito's Torrigiani Chapel (1544-6). Mary as the 'new Eve' appears above a highly original, twisting figure of Eve below in Carlo Portelli's Accademia *Immaculate Conception*, painted for Ognissanti (1566). An example of both progenitors of mankind appearing in the composition is found in Francesco Signorelli's version of 1521-3 (Museo Diocesano, Cortona), in which Adam and Eve flank the Tree of Knowledge in a small scene of the Temptation.

[47] As Alfio Del Serra noted, the panel arrived at the Uffizi laboratory in terrible condition. Despite being well preserved structurally, the picture suffered horribly from coarse retouchings and overzealous past cleanings (in the eighteenth century) with sodium or potassium, which took away much colour. All of the painting's 'original epidermis' of colours and varnishes was greatly damaged. Added varnishes then led to a darkening of tone and near-obscuration of legibility. With the use of delicate solvents, the 1984 restoration succeeded in removing hardened superimposed coats of paint in large overpainted areas such as the sky, landscape and the figures' vestments. Del Serra, in *Quattro restauri* ..., 1985, pp. 35-7; and Galleria degli Uffizi restoration records.

[48] Quoted from M. Scudieri's entry. Ibid., p. 16.

[49] On the subject of provincial commissions, the standard texts to consult are Castelnuovo, E. and Ginzburg, C., 'Centre and Periphery', in P. Burke (ed.), *History of Italian Art*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1994), I, pp. 29-112; and P. Burke, ed., *The European Renaissance: centres and peripheries* (Oxford, 1998).

[50] I am grateful to David Franklin for introducing and discussing a number of these issues with me.

[51] The tempera on panel Galleria Borghese *Nativity* tondo has been accepted as a Piero since Frizzoni's 1870 attribution. Despite heavy areas of repainting, the attribution appears secure and points to Piero's late period of production. The Palazzo Cini *Sacred Family*, in oil (and tempera?), is also in rather sensitive condition (particularly in the lower half and the figure of St. John) and belongs to a later date than the Borghese tondo: *c.*1515-20. The *sfumato* handling of the Cini work, softening the areas of highly vivid colour, is very similar to the oil technique used in the tondo in The Philbrook Art Center in Tulsa (Oklahoma), 135 cm. In the latter, a cleaning in 1959-60 revealed numerous abrasions and areas of repainting, in the two children and heaviest in the Virgin's face, worn thin to the underpainting. Despite such damage and obscurations, enough stylistic evidence remains to date the panel around the *Liberation of Andromeda*. The background detail showing St. Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar probably holds a clue to the panel's patronage (for example, the Hospital of S. Martino on via della Scala). For a recent mention of this tondo, see R. Olson, *The Florentine Tondo* (NY, 2000), p. 252.

[52] For documents revealing the dating of Andrea del Sarto's commission for the S. Filippo Benizzi cycle of 1509-10 see Doris Carl, 'Der Vertrag mit Andrea del Sarto für die Fresken des Atriums der Annunziata in Florenz vom 30. Juli 1509', *Mitteilungen*, XL (1996), pp. 371-4. The dating for the other relevant works are: Andrea's *Journey of the Magi*: 1511; Andrea's *Nativity of the Virgin*: 1511-14; Rosso's *Ascension of the Virgin*: 1513; and Pontormo's *Virgin and Child with Saints*: 1514-16.

## Conclusion. Piero di Cosimo's Artistic Legacy

'Mimesis can only create handiwork which it has seen, but *fantasia* equally that which it has not' – Philostratus the Athenian, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (220 AD)[1]

It seems most appropriate to conclude by addressing Piero's broader historical importance and examining his imprint upon the generation of artists that followed. As one of the period's most important yet often overlooked older innovators, Piero worked well into the new century. His range of influence extended not only to Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo, both of whom passed directly through his studio, and the peculiar Master of Serumido, but reached beyond to more conservative painters such as Lorenzo di Credi, Giuliano Bugiardini, Mariotto Albertinelli and Ridolfo Ghirlandaio. Piero's own subjects and pictorial solutions likewise ranged widely, from the oddity and emotional intensity of the mythological works to the later altarpieces and their relatively muted tone. In embodying both the strange exoticism so often associated with the quattrocento and the experimental idioms of the early cinquecento, Piero provides the perfect cautionary warning against the dangers of rigid classification and over-generalisation about style.

Even in the more convincing cases of borrowing, the possibility in Piero's own art remains less interesting than the manner of adaptation. As discussed in the forces of influence acting upon Piero's career, the question of whether or not Leonardo allowed Piero into his trusted circle and shared his ideas with the younger master may forever be open to debate. Yet it is not necessarily in matters of technique or direct borrowing but rather within the broader realm of creative ideology and observation that Piero connects with Leonardo most. This affinity is borne out in their mutual interest in natural history, surfaces and textures; their unceasing posing and attempted resolution of difficulties; complex arrangements; and the fertility of their concepts. Certainly, Leonardo's far more advanced grasp of and interest in the empirical driving force of things—whether it be dynamics, optics or neurology—can be seen clearly in the two artists' uses of perspective and anatomy in their art. As seen in his frequently awkward bodies, Piero was certainly less inclined to study the mechanics of his subjects with the same scientific rigour. This is borne out by such contrasts as Piero's dying nymph in the London *spalliera* with Leonardo's *Studies for the Anatomy of the Arm and Shoulder* of *c.*1510, now in Windsor. The same analogy can be made with the animal world, placing Piero's scattering animals in *The Hunting Scene* against Leonardo's exhaustive *Equine Studies*. A comparison between Leonardo's *Perspective Study for the Adoration of the Magi* of 1481 in metalpoint, pen and ink and wash (Uffizi, Florence) and Piero's *Construction of a Palace* similarly reveals discrepant levels of analytic complexity.

However, Leonardo's aphorism, 'painting is the grandson of Nature', certainly also holds for the younger painter, who seems to have studied Nature, its creatures and various phenomena with equal fascination in terms of substance and appearance.[2] Many of Piero's landscapes are absolutely unique in the weirdness and originality of their land formations; yet echoes of Leonardo's 1473 pen and ink *Study of a Tuscan Landscape*, Uffizi, and its penetration into the distance are also felt in Piero's primeval mountain ranges, and, much more directly, in two drawings: a giant *St. Jerome in a Panoramic Landscape* and a *St. Jerome in a Rocky Wilderness* in the Uffizi (figs. 87-89).[3]

Ultimately, both Piero and Leonardo displayed the most individualistic brand of *invenzione* and *fantasia*, producing images replete with a variety of puzzling marvels.[4] Invention, for Piero, grows into a legitimate aspect of his own role as creator and no longer becomes the exclusive domain of patron or a qualified humanist advisor. As early as the 1480s, Piero was, in a sense, exploiting patronage to refashion narrative in his own idiosyncratic ways—both in a purely pictorial and iconographic sense—while working from within the patronage establishment and fulfilling his commissions, as far as can be discerned, to high praise.

Returning again to Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo, the most direct heirs to Piero's artistic legacy, it is interesting to note that their daring compositions, unexpected colour schemes and emotional energy in domestic painting found expression not in *favole* but rather in the religious sphere, reaching the height of spatial complexity and strange elegance in the Borgherini *Story of Joseph* series of 1515-19 and, to a lesser extent, the five-panel project of 1518-23 for Giovan Maria Benintendi, also executed together by Pontormo, Andera del Sarto and Bacchiaca, plus Franciabigio.[5] Beginning with Andrea, Piero's immediate influence is best seen in his pupil's works prior to his departure for France. Of Andrea's two Borgherini panels (1515-17) in the Galleria Palatina, Florence, it is the first and much more complex *Early Life of Joseph* narrative that betrays Piero's influence most. The beginning of the Genesis story is depicted as a continuous narrative and executed in the saturated colours so familiar from his master's *Liberation of Andromeda*. But it is in the originality of the landscape and its varying planes, and, more specifically, the central rocky outcrop that the greatest similarity is expressed.

Del Sarto's inheritance of Piero's treatment of landscape—as variegated, untamed and somewhat fantastic—found expression even earlier. *S. Filippo Clothing the Beggar on his Way to Viterbo* and *The Punishment of the Gamblers*, the first two scenes composing the *Life of S. Filippo Benizzi* five-part fresco cycle in Santissima Annunziata's Chiostro dei Voti, commissioned in 1509, clearly exhibit Andrea's skills and interests in this area.[6] This same kind of imaginative approach to setting is demonstrated in a format as limited as a *predella* panel: his *Pietà with SS. John and Mary Magdalen; SS. Clare and Margaret (?)* of *c.*1509 in the Galleria Borghese, Rome.

In a broader sense, Piero's influence runs through much of Del Sarto's earlier works in various unpredictable elements, such as the *alla prima* painted male nude sitting on the steps in the San Gallo *Annunciation* of *c.*1512 (Galleria Palatina, Florence), the trompe l'oeil candle smoke invading the *Madonna of the Harpies* of 1517 or the frolicsome putti holding open the curtains in the Dresden *Marriage of St. Catherine* altarpiece of *c.*1511-14, equally notable for the dragon of St. Margaret and its interaction with the amused infant Baptist.

The X-shaped composition of Andrea's Dresden altarpiece is reflected, to large degree, in Pontormo's altarpiece in San Michele Visdomini. Pontormo's athletic Christ Child certainly reminds us of Piero's earlier representations of the playful infant in the Dresden tondo (fig. 85) and the Louvre *Madonna and Child with a Pigeon* (fig. 90). Although we can find a mixed soup of influences in Pontormo's early career—including Piero, Leonardo, Del Sarto, Michelangelo, and even Dürer and Lucas van Leyden—Piero's approach is present elsewhere and deserves more mention. The varied assortment and expressiveness of facial types in Pontormo's *Supper at Emmaus* canvas of 1525 (Uffizi, Florence), for instance, recalls not only the works of Northern masters such as Dürer but, more closely, Piero's Tedaldi Altarpiece and its portrait-like physiognomies of SS. Filippo Benizzi and Augustine. And despite the difficulty of neatly placing Rosso Fiorentino into a large stylistic movement, David Franklin also identifies an indebtedness to Piero's Santissima Annunziata panel with respect to Rosso's youthful fresco project and his varied characterisation of the apostles in the atrium the same church.[7]

Nowhere is the connection between Piero and Pontormo more recognisable than in the latter's contribution of four panels for the Borgherini. On the strength of this project alone, Pontormo can be deemed alongside Piero as the most progressive and idiosyncratic painter of such domestic panels during the 'High Renaissance'. Although the multiplicity of planes and architectural settings and the manipulation of narrative, accented by acidic colours and exaggerated gestures, reached the pinnacle of sophistication in the large *Joseph in Egypt* panel (*c.*1518-19), the original seed for this fantastic spirit may have well have been planted in Piero's studio and his much earlier flights from old formulae in the *spalliera* tradition.

Although it is the more 'strange' aspects and developments in landscape that have been discussed thus far with reference to Piero's legacy, his influence on the much more staid devotional works of painters working in a traditional mode should not be ignored.[8] Perhaps Piero's most far-reaching dissemination of his style came in the more modest format of tondi, which spawned numerous copies and bear many stylistic similarities with works in the same genre by painters such as Lorenzo di Credi and Raffaellino del Garbo. On a larger scale, the most distinct example of Bugiardini's reception of Piero's later style is found in the *Madonna and Child with Saints* in Pieve San Stefano a Campoli in

S. Casciano, Val di Pesa, while Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's *Madonna and Child with SS. Francis and Mary Magdalen*, 1503 (Accademia, Florence) and Albertinelli's (with Franciabigio) *Madonna and SS. Jerome and Ambrose* of 1506 from Florence's Santa Trinita, now in the Louvre, share striking similarities with Piero's Tedaldi *Incarnation*. The influence of Piero's latter panel also extended to Fra Bartolomeo, whose *Madonna and Child with Six Saints* of 1507-8 in San Marco, Florence, shows telling similarities of composition despite its more placid tenor and indoor canopied setting.[9] The same can be said about the Frate's Louvre *Annunciation with Saints*, dated 1515.

In terms of secular production, with the exception of Botticelli, Filippino and Bartolomeo di Giovanni,[10] few pursued mythological subjects to the extent of Piero's efforts. Although the Pollaiuoli and Luca Signorelli are also often mentioned as having an impact on Piero's secular art, such connections are not altogether convincing, particularly in view of their secular subjects in general and mythologies in particular.[11] Despite their frequent mythological subject matter, neither Apollonio di Giovanni [12] nor Biagio d'Antonio produced domestic panels comparable in painterly or iconographic innovation to Piero's *spalliere*. And despite taking on such captivating narratives as *Orpheus and Eurydice* (three panels in Rotterdam, St. Petersburg and Cracow) and *Cupid and Psyche* (Fitzwilliam, Cambridge, and Hester Diamond Collection, New York), Jacopo del Sellaio—while showing a consistent interest in depicting animals—ultimately works in a distinctly linear style, producing fragile figures of sinuous modelling, often confined within cramped compositions.

Attempts at tracing an artistic legacy for Piero's secular narratives in later cinquecento artists prove equally problematic. Francesco Granacci's *Athena and Marsyas spalliera* (Private collection, Geneva) of the early 1500s bears a remote resemblance to Piero and was once attributed to the older master by Douglas (1946) and Berenson (1963). As Freedberg noted, however, Piero's handling of paint is far superior to his rather uninspired structure and content.[13] Despite the common literary source of the *Metamorphoses*, Granacci's *spalliera* is too cursively executed and expressively barren to match any of Piero's efforts in his mythological panels.

The lack of a clear inheritor of Piero's mythologies, with the exception of the Master of Serumido, can be attributed not only to the diminishing popularity of painted cassone and *spalliera* panels[14] but equally to Piero's own esoteric subject matter and their unprecedented treatment. In a way, this hermeticism can be compared to Leonardo's experimental painting techniques or Pontormo's highly original figural drawings. Leaving aside his obvious public successes in designing ephemeral Triumphs, it must be asked how far the legacy of the individual explorations of narrative in Piero's *favole* would have spread. Shunning any clear political messages, such images reflect an important aspect of Renaissance culture and its evident taste for the highly original, intricate myths and allegories whose full meaning was apparent only to a limited audience even then. It is intriguing

to wonder whether such images had any impact on the much later illusionistic, painted narratives adorning the sumptuous *studiolo* of Francesco de' Medici I in the Palazzo Vecchio and its reflected taste of Vasari as a decorator.[15]

Kept inside private homes, and thus limited in access, the sense of ambiguity in Piero's myths most likely proved bewildering to both viewers and perhaps fellow artists alike. Yet it is precisely in his spectacularly innovative mythologies and their astonishing conceits that Piero was at his most progressive, and it is certainly no exaggeration to name Piero as the foremost painter of secular domestic images at the close of the quattrocento. Allowed to indulge his artistic license in his *spalliere*, Piero playfully challenged written sources rather than conforming to them. Images such as the *Hunting Scene* and *The Return from the Hunt* companion panels or the *Death of a Nymph* are perhaps the most creative results of the encounter between the printed page and Piero's imagination, revealing how the painter assimilated, transposed and remolded literary subjects and thereby raised them to a level far beyond that of illustration.[16] In his singular imagination, Piero created not a derivation of poetry but something *equal* to it, prompting Charles Trinkaus to elevate Piero over Botticelli to a more advanced level of invention and sensitivity to the ancient past, stating that the former painter's early history paintings 'came closest to expressing the ideas of those humanists who were conscious of the historical role of their tradition' in fusing the present with past literary traditions.[17]

New documentation, shedding light on Piero's life from his baptismal date to his last wishes, has furthered our understanding of Piero as a social being. Although we may never discover the truth about Piero's supposed peculiarities of personal character and living habits, his surviving artistic creations are gripping in their originality and eloquence, making him all the more worthy of his mention—directly after Leonardo—as the second Florentine in Vasari's third and highest Age of Italian art. In observing the delicacy and originality in Piero's portrait-images or in trying to unravel the meanings of his mythological novelties, surely it is impossible to continue viewing the painter as a mere primitive, 'an oddity among [Renaissance] masters' or worse yet as a 'curious bystander' during some of the most important transitional years of the Renaissance.[18] Near the end of Piero's Life in the 1550 edition, Vasari quotes Piero's epitaph in San Pier Maggiore:

> PIERO DI COSIMO PITTOR F[IORENTINO]
> S'IO STRANO, E STRANE FUR LE MIE FIGURE,
> DIEDI IN TALE STRANEZZA E GRAZIA ET ARTE;
> E CHI STRANA IL DISEGNO A PARTE A PARTE
> DA MOTO, FORZA E SPIR[I]TO ALLE PITTURE.[19]

These are perhaps some of the most just lines that have ever been penned about Piero, both then and even now. How conspicuous seems the absence of this vindicating passage in Vasari's final edition.

[1] Philostratus the Athenian, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, VI. 19, in M. Kemp, 'From Mimesis to Fantasia', *Viator*, VIII (Berkeley and London, 1977), pp. 366 ff.

[2] As seen in images such as his *Sketch of Cats and Dragon*, *c.*1513-14 (Windsor), Leonardo's interest in the natural world and fascination with animals, although on a higher plane of pragmatism than Piero's in its investigations, was of the same kind. This may be reflected best in a comparison between Piero's fleeing family of bears in *The Forest Fire* and Leonardo's silverpoint *Study of a Bear* in the Metropolitan Museum. A passage in Vasari describes Leonardo's care for animals ('with the greatest love and patience') and his purchase of birds from market sellers and their subsequent release. Vasari, 1568, B-B, IV, p. 18. Trans. de Vere, I, p. 627.

[3] *St. Jerome in a Panoramic Landscape*, black chalk and touches of white chalk on thick, cream-coloured paper, 61.8 x 52.9 cm; *St. Jerome in a Rocky Wilderness*, pen and dark grey-brown ink, 23.5 x 20 cm. Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe, Uffizi, 403 P and 7 P. Bernard Berenson called the former sheet '...on the whole, the most romantic and magnificent design for landscape in the Florentine School' (Berenson, *The Drawings of the Florentine Painters...*, 2 vols. [London, 1903], I, p. 131, and II, no. 1859). The elaborate composition of *St. Jerome in a Panoramic Landscape*, with its numerous *pentimenti*, appears to have served as an (unused) cartoon for a painting—as supported by its heavily worked, developed landscape and giant size. Assembled from five pieces of paper, the sheet may be the largest extant drawing by any artist of the Florentine quattrocento, as noted by Griswold. Despite the difference in media, the smaller, quick pen and ink sketch (7 P) probably served as another study for the same painted image. The precise significance of the arms on this drawing's verso remain ambiguous, even though the Felici family has been proposed by Griswold. Piero's sole extant image of *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* is the Museo Horne tondo, dating *c.*1495-1500 (fig. 86). A connection with the sketches remains somewhat superficial. The composition of both drawings is dominated by the landscape, while the saint's figure functions as the focal point in the tondo. The figure of St. Jerome also differs: shown beating his chest with a stone in the drawings and in a meditative state, although holding a stone in his extended hand, in the Horne painting. For a detailed study of both sheets, see Griswold, 1988, pp. 228-35. The sketches bear a striking similarity with Patinir's landscapes (and their sense of scale) in three versions of his *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* from his middle period of 1515-19 (now in the Ca d'Oro, Venice; Prado, Madrid; and The National Gallery, London).

[4] As Kemp notes, it was precisely such inventive indulgences—approved earlier by Dante, Cennini and Filarette, and practiced in literature by Francesco Colonna—that were 'disparaged by Alberti as beyond the limits of feasibility' See M. Kemp, 'From "mimesis" to "fantasia": The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in the Visual Arts', *Viator*, VIII (1977), p. 365.

[5] For a discussion of the Borgherini panels (six by Bacchiacca, four by Pontormo, two by Andrea del Sarto and two by Granacci) and their projected placement see A. Braham, 'The Bed of Pierfrancesco Borgherini', *Burlington Magazine*, CXXI (1979), pp. 754-65. Borghini identifies Del Sarto's *Early Life of Joseph* and *Joseph Interpreting the Dreams of Pharoah* panels as those above the cassoni ('spalliere da Cassoni').

[6] Shearman, *Andrea del Sarto*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1965), II, pp. 200-1, cat. 7-11.

[7] D. Franklin, *L'Officina della Maniera*, Uffizi [exh. review], *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIV (Feb. 1997), pp. 141.

[8] See, for example, D. Franklin, 'Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's altar-pieces for Leonardo Buonafé and the Hospital of S. Maria Nuova in Florence, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXV (Jan. 1993), pp. 4-16. Noting Ridolfo's merits as a painter on the basis of his patronage and notable influence rather than his originality, Franklin observes that his altarpieces 'have a balance, clarity, emotional sincerity and calm on a monumental scale that represent an individual contribution to Florentine painting of the period. The retrogressive aspects of Ridolfo's art remind us of the entrenched and even bland nature

of some Florentine high renaissance art. It was against Ridolfo as much as Fra Bartolomeo and del Sarto that young artists like Pontormo and Rosso reacted, in terms both of style and career' (p. 13).
[9] The S. Marco altarpiece bears a strong resemblance to another panel, commissioned by the Domenicans of Murano, Venice: *God the Father with SS. Catherine and Mary Magdalen* of 1509 (Museo di Villa Guinigi, Lucca).
[10] Few of Piero's contemporaries, if any, took as much pleasure in Ovidean episodes as Bartolomeo, exhibiting his fanciful detail and exceptional variety of animals and pagan creatures in both linear and continuous narratives such as *The Story of Io spalliere* (Schlossmuseum, Berchtesgaden, and The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore); *The Marriage of Peleus and Thetis* and *The Corte of Thetis* companion *spalliere* (Louvre, Paris); the *Hippomenes and Atalanta* panel (Sotheby's, London, in 1963); three *Argonautica* panels (two in private collections, the third in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris); and the *The Marriage Feast of Pirithoos and Hippodamia* and *The Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs* pair (private collection, New York).
[11] The Pollaiuoli produced a great number of Hercules compositions, but very few other mythological themes, save for the small *Apollo and Daphne* panel of *c.*1480-85 (The National Gallery, London). This work is a literal reading of the Ovidean myth, while the dance-like poses and the elegant branches of the changing nymph appear almost ornamental. Signorelli also painted few distinctly mythological panels, with the exception of *School of Pan* panel of *c.*1484-90 (formerly Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Berlin, destroyed 1945).
[12] E. Callmann, *Apollonio di Giovanni* (Oxford, 1974).
[13] S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy 1500-1600* (Middlesex, 1983), pp.100-1. For more thorough treatments of the panel see: C. von Holst, *Francesco Granacci* (Munich, 1974), pp. 135-6, fig. 27; and E. Fahy in *Il Giardino di San Marco. Maestri e compagni del Giovane Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Casa Buonarroti, Florence, 1992 (Florence, 1992), p. 156.
[14] The best examples of later changes, in which the *spalliera* tradition became outgrown and its creative handling channeled into large scaled individual panels, canvases and frescoes, are Titian's *poesie* for Alfonso d'Este and Philip II. Mantegna's *Battle of the Sea Gods* and two *Bacchanal* copper engravings became widely disseminated, as were Parmigianino's secular prints. Correggio also developed a special love for myths, seen in his *Jupiter and Ganymede* and *Jupiter and Io* (both from the early 1530s, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). Dosso Dossi and Guilio Romano—and his fantastic Palazzo del Tè frescoes of 1527-32—serve as two more notable examples sharing a strong interest in mythological subject matter.
[15] The celebrated study (1570-72) is composed of a combination of wooden panelling, marble niches containing marble statues, panel paintings forming cupboard doors and stucco-framed frescoes. Vasari's taste for Piero, as attested by the *Venus, Cupid and Mars* in his own collection, could be said to be consistent with the 'metaphysical Mannerists' and their controlled artifice in the second half of the seicento.
[16] A parallel can be made with Leonardo and his role in the *paragone* debate. As observed by Kemp, Leonardo showed no hesitation in claiming that he had out-stripped the poet in translating the 'dolce stil nuovo' into paint in his true likenesses of a female sitter (the beloved). See Kemp, 'Leonardo da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse', *Royal Society of Arts Journal*, CXXXIII (Feb. 1985), p. 200.
[17] C. Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1983), p. 42.
[18] Quoted from H. Hibbard, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (London, 1980), p. 241.
[19] Vasari, 1550, B-B, IV, p. 71. Own trans.: 'Piero di Cosimo, Florentine painter / I am strange, and strange were my figures / I gave in such [figures] strangeness and elegance and art; / And he who imparts strangeness in design throughout / Gives motion, strength and vitality to the paintings'.

## I. Bibliography of Manuscript Sources


ACSAF Archivio del Convento della SS. Annunziata di Firenze

ACSFF Archivio del Convento di S. Francesco a Fiesole

ANN Archivio Notarile di Norcia

AODF Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo di Firenze

Battesimi Maschi e Femmine 1460-66, 1466-73 and 1473-81

ASF Archivio di Stato di Firenze

Accademia del Disegno

Carte Strozziane

Compagnie Religiose Soppresse di Pietro Leopoldo

Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese

Decima Granducale

Decima Repubblicana

Manoscritti

Carte Dei

Carte Passerini

Carte Pucci

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Carte Sebregondi

Medici e Speziali

Notarile Antecosimiano

Portate / Campione del Catasto 1457; 1469; and 1480

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BNF Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze

Archivio Capponi

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