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FLORENTINE EPIGRAPHY

Aspects of Propaganda and Patronage Under the Medici

Eds. Patrick Kragelund & Marianne Pade

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Introduction

In connection with the publication of my *The Latin Inscriptions of Medici Florence. Piety and Propaganda, Civic Pride and the Classical Past* (Rome 2021) in the Supplementary Papers of the Danish Academy in Rome, the Academy's previous director and my diligent editor, prof., dr.phil. Marianne Pade suggested that we should organise a seminar on Florentine epigraphy to be published in the *Nordic Journal of Renaissance Studies*. We succeeded in gathering a group of scholars from the US, from the Netherlands, Finland, and Italy and without undue technical difficulties we could meet in a Zoom conference, my own lecture suitably being transmitted from the banks of the Arno, where it all started.

For Renaissance epigraphy in general, the Florentine corpus of some 220 texts presented in my book is a remarkably rich and well-preserved corpus that with notable variety and with a cluster of highly competent authors and historically crucial dedicatees develops a cornucopia of specimens, illustrating the ways Renaissance epigraphy adopted and expanded the models and parameters found in classical Roman epigraphy, in palaeography, linguistic style, metrics, historical resonance and sheer communicative impact.

In the anthology's first five chapters the focus is thematic and chronological, moving from religious donations, institutions and events, then finally turning to the *Comune* and its heroes, from Scripture and from Ancient Rome.[1]

Then follow chapters (VI-VII) focused on what might be termed the 'classical turn' of Florentine epigraphy. As emerges from one of its most notable monuments this classical turn manifested itself with a truly astonishing, fully fledged suddenness, as an Athena emerging from the forehead of Zeus. Suddenly 'medieval' parameters were abandoned in favour of an approach resolutely aimed at *recreating* (we are in the early *rinascimento*!) a classical style idiom. The place and circumstances for this recreation could hardly be more prominent: we are at the Medici sarcophagus in Brunelleschi's *Sagrestia Vecchia* in S. Lorenzo in 1433-35. The monument is for the father and mother of Cosimo the Elder and his brother Lorenzo.

Here, all of a sudden, we get a truly pioneering, stylistically very conscious and, in its choice of means, very spare and studiously correct attempt at writing a Roman style epitaph: dedicator in the nominative, dedicatee in the dative, filiation (abbreviated F followed by a genitive), ancient Roman

[1] Kragelund 2021, ch. I-V.

time-reckoning; and much more besides.[2] In fact, were it not for the names, this dedication could well have stood on display in the Via Appia of old.

As I have argued, this sudden reorientation calls for an explanation. Who among the learned men around Cosimo the Elder was responsible? In an inspiring Warburg paper from 1941, Frits Saxl quotes Francesco Sassetti (of Sassetti Chapel fame) for telling his children that if they needed a suitable epitaph (we are at the end of the fifteenth century) they would have to ask "Fonzio o qualche huomo docto intendente di simili cose" (Fonzio or some man of learning who understands similar things).[3] Now, the said Bartolomeo Fonzio possessed a copious so-called *sylloge*, which Saxl edited. A sylloge is a manuscript *compilation* or *anthology* of admirable ancient inscriptions. These Fonzio had copied from other such s*yllogae* and he used them as a pattern book, when a patron wanted a suitable epitaph.

This is, most likely, what would have happened, when Cosimo the Elder and his brother in 1433 wanted an epitaph for their parents, by then both dead. The Medici brothers must also have had access to someone "intendente di simili cose" – how else could they get the brilliant result? From the limited ancient epigraphic evidence known at the time, the problems in identifying the models of relevance are not insurmountable. We are doubtless dealing with some of the protagonists of the movement that in the 1430's recreated learned awareness of epigraphy. To this group of scholars we have a brilliant introduction[4] by the late, much missed Doyen of Roman epigraphy, previously *Scriptor Latinus* at the Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana Marco Buonocore. Marco singles out the *syllogae* (notebooks) compiled by Poggio Barcciolini and Cyriac of Ancona.

What could be learnt from Poggio and Cyriac's notebooks were the hall marks of a dedication to the dead of ancient Rome, found in a quite staggering number in the prose Medici-inscription.

Within this framework what is perhaps the most surprising is the absence of God and all references to the beyond. Of course, the burial is in a church – but so was the sarcophagus of Folco Portinari, the father of Beatrice – his inscription (Kragelund 2021, II.1) ends with a prayer, "May his soul, because of God's mercy, rest in peace". Nothing like that here, so also on this theological issue is the style remarkably faithful to the ancient (or should one say 'heathen'?) paradigm.

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[2] I here summarize my findings laid out in Kragelund 2021, VII.1; they, in turn, are succinctly summarised by Merisalo in her contribution to this volume, pp. 13-16

[3] Saxl 1941, 21.

[4] Buonocore 2005, 21-41.

I shall not here go into unnecessary detail, since the importance of this background is laid out in detail in Kragelund 2021, chapters VI and VII. Indeed, the importance of Poggio and Cyriac will cause no surprise, but what perhaps needs emphasising is the crucial role of the, in modern scholarship, commonly neglected epigraphic dictionary by Pseudo-Valerius Probus. This dictionary was clearly much in use in the fifteenth century. Its *lemmata* suggest that it is pre-Christian, but in modern discussions it is often confused with the likewise spurious *De notis iuris* once ascribed to Valerius Probus.[5] Surely, the existence of a seemingly Late Antique epigraphical dictionary is an issue that deserves further scrutiny!

What in any case matters is that this Florentine reorientation from the medieval to classical parameters of Roman epigraphy also broadened out to adopt phrases and expressions used in inscriptions quoted or invented by ancient authorities. In the triangle between event commemorated, language adopted and metrical models employed it is, in short, clear that epigraphy was conceived as a genre *per se*, a medium through which members of the Florentine city state, in Latin the *Res publica,* could eternalise the aspirations of its civic humanism. In this approach that was pioneered by the Medici inscriptions, citizens and authorities would follow suit up through the fifteenth century.[6]

But in the changing political landscape of the Florentine republic, it soon became clear that the genre also, and indeed easily, could adapt to new, more monarchical aspirations. And for such aspirations we may once again briefly turn to the inscriptions of the Sagrestia Vecchia, because on the side of the sarcophagus facing those entering one meets a verse inscription in four very solemn elegiac couplets framed by a classical *tabula ansata*. I am happy to see that my colleagues (Buonocore, below p. 4, Merisalo, below p. 15) agree in seeing the model for this poem in an ancient verse epitaph in elegiac distichs (CIL VI 12652) now standing next to the *Dying Gaul* in the Capitoline Museums. This was a poem that in those days was much copied.

But what matters in this context is, first, the poem's designation of the tomb as a *Mausoleum* (l. 12). This is a strong word, heavy with princely, not to say monarchical ambition. Arresting to have it here, so early in the Medici trajectory. The other arresting aspect is the use of the concept PATRIA, in the first line, in the third and in the final. One goes away with the impression that this was a public funeral – as for instance was Brunelleschi's in the Duomo (Kragelund 2921, VI.5). But this was *no such*

[5] PROB. *litt. sing.* 271 ff.; on the dictionary, see Kragelund 2021, 301 n. 145-146.

[6] Kragelund 2021, ch. VI-VII; Hankins 2000 is a fine introduction to a much debated area.

thing. Still, with a deft turn of phrase, the poet has given expression to a typical Medici approach to the issue: even if not everyone else would do so, they themselves made sure to stress their intimate links with the PATRIA.

With the "Advent of the Medici Monarchy" and "The Medici Comeback" (Kragelund 2021, ch. VII-VIII) the anthology documents how such aspirations became ever more pronounced, but also how they, increasingly, caused controversies that still, centuries later, emanate from monuments of the period.

This, of course, culminates with the accession of "Cosimo de' Medici, the Second Duke and first Grand Duke" (Kragelund 2021, ch. IX). In an almost torrential outpouring of epigraphic monuments, often accompanied by the Augustan symbol of the Capricorn heralding the advent of a new age, Cosimo set out to inscribe what was now *his* city, with inscriptions that deliberately echoed the Golden Age of Rome's first emperor. In this endeavour, Cosimo was aided by a series of experts, among them Piero Vettori and Vincenzo Borghini (more on whom below). Monuments like the Porta Romana, the Medici Mercati, the Public Archive, the marble floor of the Duomo, the Uffizi, the Equestrian Statue of the Piazza Signoria and the new bridge across the Arno (to mention just some) still bear witness to this determined and well orchestrated epigraphical *tour de force*.

With Cosimo's successful establishment of Tuscany as a territorial state, the glory of the Medici was its nadir soon followed by decline, an aspect illustrated in the gradually more subdued epigraphy of his successors that frequently dwell on past glories (Kragelund 2021, ch. X).

But where the Medici experienced decline, Florentine pride in its great men continued to flourish (Kragelund 2021, ch. XI-XIII) – in no field more exuberantly than in everything associated with Michelangelo, to whom a descendant dedicated a splendid Hall of fame (ch. XII). Far less straightforward was the road of Galileo to epigraphical fame, since a Vatican ban on at all honouring his achievements was for long in vigour. In 1693, the fiftieth anniversary of his death, this ban was challenged by his devoted pupil Vincenzo Viviani, who turned his entire city palazzo into a public memorial for the great scientist, with meter-long inscriptions. This was some decades later followed by a, at long last, public monument in S. Croce, a development intriguingly documented by inscriptions still in place (Kragelund 2021, ch. XIII).

On this wide-ranging material, Marco Buonocore offers a magisterial *tour d'horizon*. He points to the recent works on material from Papal and post-risorgimento Rome by Alberto Paolucci and Antonino Nastasi (to which I, due to Corona, sadly had no access) as well as to the excellent anthology by Tyler Lansford, *The Latin Inscriptions* of Rome from 2009,

with whom I share the ambition to combine high levels of scholarship with broad accessibility, also for those with little or no Latin. Due to the staggering wealth of the Roman (some 400) as opposed to the Florentine material (some 220) Lansford has wisely opted for a regional disposition and a generous use of maps, which I only found it imperative to imitate in the case of the Duomo and the area surrounding it (Kragelund 2021, fig. 2.6), a plan on which readers will find 23 notable memorials marked out.

Buonocore further highlights the copious variety of parallels between the Florentine corpus and that of antiquity, for instance in the case of the bilingual dedication of the Tiberian freedman to his beloved Claudia Homonoea (CIL VI 12652 = IGUR III 1250), in the use of one letter abbreviations such as HMHNS and SPQF and the elegiac memorial to the inundations in 1557 (Kragelund 2021, I.2), with its numerous parallels in Roman renaissance epigraphy (Lansford 2009, 394-99; 336-39).[7]

Buonocore rightly highlights a notable aspect in what is without doubt the single largest inscription in this material. This monumental inscription that covers the whole façade of the house of Galileo's admiring pupil Vincenzo Viviani (Kragelund 2021, XIII, 3-4 with fig. 13.1a) was clearly not meant to be read, line by line. Its sheer panoramic size is enough to convince onlookers of the excellence of its honorand, much, one imagines, as would the scale of the Ankara *Res gestae* to its onlookers in antiquity.

Bounocore finally reminds us how this material in stylistic and palaeographic terms gives a panoramic survey of the scripts employed from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. Here, we get an *iter epigraphicum* reaching from the gothic to the monumental Roman.

It is on this latter aspect that Prof. Outi Merisalo offers a detailed study. By focusing on the palaeography of the tombs in S. Lorenzo. she lays bare an intriguing contrast: While the inscriptions, in linguistic terms, are perfect imitations of the classical idiom, the monumental capital letters used by the Medici sculptors were of Carolingian inspiration. Merisalo notes classicising elements, but in a well-illustrated tour taking us further up the peninsula she outlines how the cutting-edge centres in the developments of the humanistic script were Padua, Verona and Venice. Merisalo's fascinating sample traces the gradual northern evolution of the *antiqua*, the *italica* and the restored Classical capitals, then returning south to S. Lorenzo to show how the dedications to Cosimo the Elder and his sons Piero and Giovanni (Kragelund 2021, VII.2-3) belong to a period of transition, still loyal to traditional Florentine patterns, but not without awareness of the new enthusiasm for Augustan-type geometrical capitals. The issue seems well

[7] Kragelund 2021, II.6; VII.3. SPQF: IV.8; VI.5; VI.9.

worth pursuing, for instance looking closer at the scripts employed by the epigraphists of Duke Cosimo II.

Prof. Henk van Veen takes us on an intriguing tour into a sixteenth-century epigraphic laboratory and lays bare the vicissitudes of what he calls a failed project. In the 1550s, Vasari was hard at work decorating the newly completed Quartiere di Leone X with frescoes turning the halls into a series of *Fasti Medicee*, one hall for each of the ancestors, from Cosimo the Elder and Giovanni delle Bande Nere onwards. Here, as later in the Salone dei Quinquecento celebrating the reign of Cosimo II (finished late 1565), clarifying inscriptions were needed, but through Vasari's letters and drawings van Veen meticulously unravels how Vasari's project ran into troubles. Vasari had first turned to the learned Cosimo Bartoli for suggestions, but the process was not straightforward; by the end of 1557 when the painting was close on completed, Vasari still lacked the ducal all clear for the needed inscriptions. At some point the artist apparently gave up on Bartoli and contacted Jacobo Guidi, but to no avail. The top authority, the Duke's *epigrammist*a,[8] Piero Vettori was then contacted, but again in vain. "Probably in desperation", as van Veen formulates it, Vasari then turned to his old friend, the learned Vincenzo Borghini, who not so many years later would become the chief provider for the inscriptions adorning the splendid apparatus displayed in all Florence during the glorious entry of Giovanna d'Austria in December 1565.[9] With a detective's acumen, van Veen lays bare how also this appeal came to no fruition, the reluctance of the participants apparently illustrating that this was an unthankful task, where one could all to easily put one's foot wrong, when it came to satisfy the Duke. The time was limited and there was also a recurrent problem as to the level of commenting: should it be generalising (thus Vettori) or specific. But the frescoes are far from generalising, a circumstance making it difficult to use inscriptions lacking specifics. Days became weeks, and after further back and forth the end result was that no inscriptions were applied.

Later in 1558 Vasari then took recourse to composing an explanation entitled *Ragionamenti sopra le invenzioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel palazzo di loro altezze serenissime*. After his death, his nephew completed the work and published it in 1588 with a dedication to Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici.

In modern history of art/ art history, the predominant theory has been to view the *Ragionamenti* as belonging to a genre *per se* that "stands alone

[8] Kragelund 2021, I, 3.

[9] For the events and rich bibliography, see Lepri 2017.

from the paintings”. In “essence” they are, it has been said, “a kind of celebration of the Medici and of Vasari’s work”.

There is surely an element of truth in this, but I side with van Veen in viewing their primary function as that of replacing the missing inscriptions, thereby filling “the comprehension gap that arose when, in 1558, the plan to provide the paintings with *tituli* was finally abandoned” (but on this see more below, p. 38). On this reading, the *Ragionamenti* were in grand part meant to ‘stand in’ for the *tituli* that never came in place. On an intuitive basis, this down-to-earth explanation seems confirmed by modern visitor behaviour: moving from room to room most modern visitors of the Quartiere move straight to the modern multilingual version of the *Ragionamenti* standing in each room and then look up to comprehend what Vasari, section after section, had actually depicted.

Prof. William Stenhouse looks with meticulous attention at the reception of Florentine inscriptions in the rich and varied literature devoted to the city’s art and monuments. The timespan is the early modern period.

This approach is not as straightforward as it may sound. In Stenhouse’s phrase, “Guidebooks tend to be written with one eye on their predecessors” and often become normative. So questions of autopsy or otherwise are not easy to settle. Some guidebooks repeat their predecessors. And errors of transcription are plentiful. Often, the inscription’s content is all we get. In manuscript diaries, Stenhouse has detected further, sometimes accurate, transcriptions. The popular guidebook by Ferdinando Migliore paraphrased the inscriptions, but also cites them and comments upon them. In Stenhouse’s view – and his wide ranging and sharp-eyed approach seems to corroborate – “the inscriptions were important to many curious visitors to Florence, but … they were not part of a ‘must-see list’”.

Anthologies on epitaphs of famous men include much interesting material, some of it never inscribed. Stenhouse shows how rival versions coexisted, for instance on Michelangelo and Poliziano. He unravels the perplexing case of two inscriptions allegedly relating to Paulo Giovio’s monument by the entrance to the Biblioteca Laurenziana.

Stenhouse has perceptive comments on the patterns of reception. In the main, the fifteenth century is already in the early modern age viewed as the truly golden age. Alluding to Botticelli’s *Primavera*, Rainer Maria Rilke’s verdict on Florentine art, “Frühling, aber kein Sommer” already had its early modern forerunners among those, who – apart from Michelangelo and Giovio – discarded most of what came later.

Patrick Kragelund
Copenhagen, October 2023

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Ita ut de plano recte legi possint

Modelli espositivi epigrafici tra tradizione e ideologia a Firenze tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento. A proposito di un libro recente

By Marco Buonocore

The monograph by Patrick Kragelund, dedicated to the epigraphic production in Florence (over 220 Latin inscriptions) from the mid-thirteenth century to the end of the Medici dynasty in the mid-eighteenth century, allow us to evaluate how epigraphic programs were consolidated and refined. Furthermore, we realize that many of these inscriptions, in their graphic and formal composition, are influenced by classical Latin traditions, literary as well as epigraphic.

L'epigrafia, tra i sistemi di comunicazione scritta, conserva sempre, in tutti i suoi *tempora* culturali, un ruolo primario; qualunque scrittura esposta, con le proprie tipologie, con le proprie categorie, con le proprie finalità documentarie, rappresenta un particolare insostituibile di una precisa committenza, di un determinato pensiero, di una irripetibile manifestazione dell'uomo.

Molteplici e di variegato spessore sono le sollecitazioni che suscita la lettura di questa monografia firmata da Patrick Kragelund,[1] già direttore della Biblioteca dell'Accademia reale delle belle arti di Copenaghen, dedicata alla produzione epigrafica di Firenze, dalla metà del XIII secolo al termine della dinastia dei Medici (arriviamo alla metà del 1700). Sulle tensioni sociali, amministrative e politiche di quel periodo siamo ben informati ma lo studio dell'A., impostato sostanzialmente sull'analisi della coeva produzione epigrafica, consente - osservando il passato da una diversa angolazione – nuovo dialogo e un nuovo approccio per riannodare la *facies* della 'scrittura esposta' con la tradizione antica. Alle oltre 220 iscrizioni latine di questa silloge, tutte trascritte e tradotte, l'A. riserva un commento basato sulla diretta autopsia secondo quelle coordinate editoriali atte per la facile utenza e una corretta intelligenza, ed è arricchito da considerazioni paleografiche, storiche e filologiche basate, oltre che sulla rilettura critica di tutta la bibliografia edita

[1] Kragelund 2021.

precedentemente e selezionata con cura (sono registrati 199 titoli), anche sull'utilizzo di fonti archivistiche. Ne consegue che talune iscrizioni destinate a rimanere incomprensibili per la loro difficoltà oggettiva e per la condizione del supporto, con l'ausilio di tali accurate esplorazioni archivistiche e conseguenti precisi nonché controllabili riferimenti, acquistano significato e maggiore chiarezza. Inoltre, il corredo di un magnifico apparato iconografico di confronto offre al lettore un'opera di riferimento e al contempo una vera e propria 'walking or reading Guide' dello spaccato di quell'arco cronologico che alla fine vide tra l'altro la scomparsa del latino come mezzo privilegiato del messaggio inciso. Ci si sofferma sui quei monumenti latori di cruciali informazioni sulla città, la sua arte e su quei personaggi che hanno animato la scansione di quei *tempora*. Si prende per mano il lettore e lo si immerge in quella realtà, lo si invita a confrontarsi con il dettato iscritto, lo si stimola a ragionare sul messaggio epigrafico e a dialogare con la sua struttura compositiva così da capire al meglio anche le radici e le mode filologiche alla base della sua costituzione. Questa monografia ben si allinea con altre costruite con la medesima finalità, come hanno prodotto per Roma (confronto quasi ineludibile) – ma potrei fare riferimento anche a tante realtà municipali d'Italia che hanno avviato il censimento della propria tradizione epigrafica esposta - Alberto Paolucci nel 2016 con *Scrittura e simboli del potere pontificio in età romana. Lapidi e stemmi sui muri di Roma* o Antonino Nastasi nel 2019 con *Le iscrizioni in latino di Roma Capitale (1870-2018)*, senza dimenticare l'interessante studio del 2009 di Tyler Lansford, *The Latin Inscriptions of Rome: a Walking Guide* (opportunamente richiamato anche dall'A.); insomma con questa monografia, con quelle da me ricordate - e con altre ancora – rimaniamo in perfetta sintonia con il nostro passato che vide proprio agli albori della produzione epigrafica manoscritta la presentazione dei testi epigrafici secondo un registro sostanzialmente topografico: a complemento delle descrizioni della città di Roma, dei cataloghi regionari, dei breviari, redatti già in epoca costantiniana e successivamente nei *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* ad uso dei pellegrini, è abbastanza comune infatti che fossero trascritti documenti epigrafici, così come l'osservatore li aveva letti e capiti, o il più delle volte esemplati da fonti precedenti, seguendo proprio la topografia della città.

Dalle iscrizioni che ricordano il padre della Beatrice di Dante (pp. 49-50) e la costruzione del Ponte Vecchio (pp. 15-16), del Bargello (pp. 65-67) e del Duomo (p. 31), si passa a quelle sull'ascesa al potere dei Medici (cap. VII-IX) che proprio per la produzione epigrafica ufficiale largo uso fecero dell'esperienza incisa augustea e imperiale. Dal 1537 in poi, Cosimo, secondo Duca e, infine, primo Granduca, non mancò di trasmettere tramite la *memoria*

incisa il ricordo di tutta la sua impegnativa campagna edilizia che interessò mura, ponti, chiese, mercati, piazze e monumenti. Quando iniziò il declino del Granducato, questo inevitabilmente – come sottolinea l'A. – si dovette riflettere in un declino dell'autorappresentazione epigrafica della dinastia e le *memoriae* incise alla fine si concentrarono spesso sulle glorie passate. Ma ancora più interessanti sono le considerazione dell'A., quando sottolinea che ciò che sopravvisse al passaggio di Firenze dalla repubblica mercantile alla monarchia fu il culto pervasivo e altamente patriottico degli uomini illustri. I monumenti a uomini di lettere e d'arte sono numerosi, e questa tendenza raggiunge il suo culmine con quanto è inciso per Michelangelo (cap. XII). Al contrario, gli onori per il più grande scienziato del periodo, Galileo Galilei, furono all'inizio fortemente osteggiati dalla Chiesa, e la sua tardiva riabilitazione ebbe luogo solo quasi un secolo dopo che l'Inquisizione aveva condannato i suoi insegnamenti (cap. XIII).

Ma unitamente alle considerazioni storiche che emergono dall'approfondita analisi dei *tituli* relativi a quella serie di personaggi che affollano e animano ciascuno con la propria dignità e con le proprie iniziative la vita cittadina di Firenze (un utile indice bipartito, dedicato ai luoghi e ai nomi, ci agevola nel recupero di tutta questa messe di notizie), grande emozione suscita il ripercorrere, grazie alla doviziosa e generosa documentazione iconografia sopra già ricordata, i luoghi della frequentazione culturale e tutta la complessa e articolata evoluzione grafico-formale della produzione cittadina in cui è facile ravvisare, quasi in un ideale scandito *iter epigraphicum*, quelle tracce dell'infiltrazione degli elementi onciali o del preludio alla gotica epigrafica, quelle testimonianze della successiva gotica maiuscola e minuscola [come per l'iscrizione del restauro di Ponte Vecchio del 1333 (p. 16)], quegli esempi del ritorno finale, per l'Umanesimo e poi per il Rinascimento, alla monumentale romana.

È palese che per la produzione epigrafica del tardo Quattrocento e di tutto il Cinquecento siamo in grado di valutare come si fossero consolidati e affinati i programmi della resa epigrafica lapidaria dopo le esperienze, tra i tanti nomi che si possono fare, di Felice Feliciano, Giovanni Francesco Cresci e Luca Orfei. Viceversa, ispezionando i manoscritti epigrafici redatti in quel medesimo periodo, nella trascrizione di quegli stessi *tituli* che erano stati da archetipo per la formulazione delle norme da seguire, tutto questo è mancato quasi completamente; un controsenso, tra le regole teorizzate e imposte per la resa epigrafica monumentale e le trascrizioni di quegli stessi *exempla* nelle sillogi epigrafiche: da una parte, cioè, una sapiente e filologica ricerca del modulo, dall'altra, tranne pochi casi, la quasi sempre assenza o per lo meno

il disinteresse verso la trascrizione paleograficamente fedele dei testi.[2] L'A. ben evidenzia questa aporia fondando la sua diagnosi sulle esperienze di Poggio Bracciolini (*Sylloge Poggiana*)[3] e di Niccolò Signorili (*Sylloge Signoriliana*).[4] È scontato che con il Trecento, a seguito inizialmente dell'esperienza dell'umanesimo padovano, poi di Francesco Petrarca, l'interesse per il mondo antico e le sue fonti invitò i letterati e più generalmente tutti coloro proiettati verso lo studio delle antichità a riservare maggiore attenzione al documento iscritto. Tutto questo rinnovato interesse avviene, ovviamente, all'insegna di una rivoluzione paleografica: il padre e inventore della scrittura umanistica è ritenuto, come si sa, appunto Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), che il suo padrino Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), per quanto ormai avanti negli anni, seguì con interesse personale partecipando all'esperienza del giovane amico. Il suo florilegio dei *tituli* è frutto evidentemente di testi all'origine trascritti in modo non metodico, in seguito assemblati e ordinati. Ma la prima grande raccolta di iscrizioni classiche che si sia conservata è quella comunemente denomina *Silloge Signoriliana*, perché attribuita al romano *de regione Montium* Niccolò Signorili. La sua prima redazione, adesposta, è databile al 1409; successivamente l'autore, su incarico di papa Martino V (1417-1431), elaborò una *Descriptio urbis Romae* nella quale inserì un *corpus* più ampio del precedente, com'è facile constatare leggendo i testimoni di questa seconda redazione. La raccolta, nata come complementare a un lavoro più vasto, ebbe poi autonoma circolazione, senza cioè il contesto della *Descriptio*, che portò a una terza redazione. Come si vede, prima che venisse prodotta una vera e proprio silloge epigrafica, i *tempora* della sua costituzione potevano essere non pochi, sempre frutto di assemblaggi di precedenti testimoni miscellanei da cui l'autore escerpiva quella documentazione che a suo parere avrebbe costituito la base del codice epigrafico e che, in questo modo, doveva essere esente da aggiunte e correzioni.

Molte di queste iscrizioni, proprio nella loro composizione grafico-formale, risentono della tradizione latina classica sia letteraria sia epigrafica che l'A. con profonda sensibilità filologica opportunamente mette in rilievo. Per rendersi conto di quanto la tradizione passata abbia influenzato nel contenuto e nella forma molti dei *tituli* della Firenze di quel tempo, basta confrontarsi con l'indice degli autori classici e delle iscrizioni antiche, nella gran parte dei casi di origine urbana: su tutti, il noto epitafio bilingue latino greco composto per la liberta di età tiberiana *Claudia Homonoea* dal suo

[2] Vd. quanto scrivo in Buonocore 2012.
[3] Gionta 2010/11.
[4] Silvagni 1924 a Petoletti 2003.

compagno *Atimetus*.[5] Massiccio è l'uso del distico elegiaco, con tutti i procedimenti stilistici che lo potevano costituire (iperbati, anafore, enjambement e altro): d'impatto emotivo sono i due distici dell'iscrizione collocata sulla facciata della chiesa di S. Niccolò Oltrarno (pp. 16-18) che ricordano l'inondazione dell'Arno avvenuta nel 1557 e che richiamano analoghi testi epigrafici d'età romana, come, ad esempio, l'iscrizione del *portus Curensis*[6] posizionato alla confluenza del fiume Tevere e del torrente Corese, il cui *pons violentia torrentis ablatus*. Non meno interessanti sono le *iuncturae* tipiche dell'epigrafia classica e repubblicana, come quel *suis inpensis* della campana di Cosimo de' Medici (pp. 46-47), in cui si riscontra l'alternanza *inpensis*/*impensis* ancora attestata in iscrizioni del primo periodo imperiale; o quella formula *de se bene merito* presente nell'epitafio della tomba di Ugo di Tuscania del 1481 (pp. 29-30). Allo stesso modo non si tralasciava l'uso di *litterae singulares* che l'utente con facilità avrebbe potuto e dovuto poter interpretare grazie proprio alle prime sillogi epigrafiche allora circolanti che ne tentavano una corretta intelligenza: si pensi alla tipica sequenza *H◦M◦H◦N◦S* (riscontrabile nell'iscrizione della tomba di Ugo di Tuscania appena evocata) tipica dei *iura sepulcrorum.*

Ben noto è *locus* di Plinio il Vecchio[7] in cui si affermava quanto fosse importante per la conservazione del passato a fronte della inesorabile usura del tempo la testimonianza scritta veicolata dalle iscrizioni. Concetto ben testimoniato in numerose clausole di *leges*, dove palese è il riferimento alla convinzione di una comoda lettura del messaggio inciso e conseguentemente di una sicura capacità di comunicazione: "ita ut de plano recte legi possint; quo loco commodissime legi possint; et quo facilius totius actae rei ordo posterorum memoriae tradi possit" (così che possano venir lette correttamente dalla strada; in un luogo nel quale si possano leggere in tutta comodità; e affinché più facilmente lo svolgimento dell'intera vicenda sia tramandato ai posteri) – segno evidente che la prassi non ottemperava sempre a quanto richiesto, avvertendone l'esigenza di ricordarlo in modo così perentorio). Ma nella realtà quanti erano messi nella condizione di dialogare con la scrittura incisa quantunque la si volesse *veloci percurrere oculo* come ricorda Orazio?[8] Sappiamo infatti che taluni documenti legali redatti su bronzo, un materiale in cui si riconosceva un forte simbolismo di inviolabilità e per questo considerato sacro, potevano essere anche difficili da consultare

[5] *CIL* VI 12652 = *IGUR* III 1250. Sulla fortuna del testo in epoca medievale-umanistica vd. Buonocore 2004, 139-144 e 195-196.

[6] *CIL* IX, 8961.

[7] *N. h.* 2.154.

[8] *Sat.* 2.5.55.

da parte dei cittadini, sia per lo stile, sia, soprattutto, per la fitta e compressa scritturazione talvolta resa ancora più ostica dalla posizione d'affissione: ne consegue che simili documenti si potevano sia "conoscere" sia "leggere".[9] È scontato che, se il testo si fosse voluto far leggere con facilità e chiarezza espositiva, il suo posizionamento e la sua resa grafica dovevano essere tali da consentirne il facile riscontro richiesto e favorire conservazione e tradizione. Ma non mancano anche esempi di come talune iscrizioni pubbliche-ufficiali fossero 'a prima vista' di non facile lettura. Pertanto, la *propositio* con la conseguente affissione del documento poteva dar vita a una pluralità di redazioni tutte relative a uno stesso dispositivo a fini di notorietà, di pubblicità, di produzione degli effetti voluti. La 'pubblicazione' di una normativa, di un atto ufficiale, di una *memoria* di elevato interesse, poteva essere anche non compiutamente letta, ma doveva almeno certificare al cittadino che il testo era ormai entrato in vigore. Prova a mio parere di questo ragionamento, su cui già in altra sede mi sono voluto soffermare,[10] sono le due maestose iscrizioni posizionate ai lati del portone d'ingresso di Palazzo Viviani di cui l'A. offre (pp. 272-273) una indicativa immagine: in due enormi stendardi marmorei, 'fatti calare' dalle soprastanti finestre, è inciso un complesso testo epigrafico in latino commissionato da Vincenzo Viviani nel 1693 per celebrare e lodare l'intera vita e le maggiori scoperte del proprio maestro Galileo Galilei. Quantunque le due monumentali iscrizioni rispondessero a precisi e collaudati modelli espositivi di 'pubblicità epigrafica' ritengo che non tutti fossero in grado di leggere e capire compiutamente il compresso e non semplice dettato iscritto, ma certamente ne potevano acquisire la notorietà e la pubblicità.

Tanto altro potrei scrivere su questa interessante lavoro che l'A. ha condotto con competenza, cura e passione, calandosi con grande sensibilità e rispetto nelle pieghe della storia, dialogando con i fatti, antichi e recenti, interrogando i documenti epigrafici, con l'intento di modellare una scandita e precisa ricostruzione storica del passato.

[9] Sull'argomento rimando a Nicolaj 2007.
[10] Buonocore 2016.

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LETTERING THE MIGHT

Remarks on the Palaeography of the Inscriptions on the Fifteenth-century Medici Tombs in the Basilica of S. Lorenzo

By Outi Merisalo

This article examines the palaeography of the fifteenth-century funeral inscriptions of the Medici in S. Lorenzo, Florence in their material and historical context. The oldest monument, the sarcophagus of Giovanni di Bicci and Piccarda di Edoardo, from the 1430s, just as Cosimo the Elder's monument (c. 1468) are characterised by the expected traditional Florentine lettering without serifs but with increasingly classicising elements of presentation, as yet untouched by the antiquarian innovations of 1450-1460s Northern Italy, which restored the fully geometric classical monumental capitals as well as adopted the classical abbreviations and ancient formulae. As late as the early 1470s the Medici inscriptions maintained the early Renaissance Florentine epigraphical style.

1. Introduction

This article will examine the fifteenth-century funeral inscriptions of the Medici in the Florentine basilica of S. Lorenzo in order to analyse and contextualise their script and material characteristics.

1.1. Capitals *all'antica* in Florence *c.* 1400-*c.* 1430

The use of ancient-type capitals in Florence was infrequent outside manuscripts in the first decades of the fifteenth century.[1] They were first used by gold-smiths and sculptors and only later in frescoes and paintings. Interestingly, the first instances of monumental capitals may be found in ecclesiastical, not specifically humanistic contexts in the 1410s and 1420s, i.e. in the sculptures and objects containing short inscriptions on scrolls and

[1] For the first manuscripts in *littera antiqua* (1390s-1413), see De Robertis 2016.

tablets, such as Ghiberti's statue of St John the Baptist outside the church of Orsanmichele, datable to *c*. 1412-1416 (Fig. 1).[2] Generally, the models of early fifteenth-century Florentine inscriptions are mediaeval, not ancient, as regards the often somewhat irregular spacing, very weak shading and the morphology of the letters, especially the absence of serifs (Fig. 1). Just as the *antiqua* script developed on the basis of late Carolingian minuscule, the capitals used in monumental contexts were of Carolingian inspiration (Figs 1 and 2). As in humanist texts in general, there was a gradual adoption of ancient dating (*Kalendae, Nonae, Idus*), ancient formulae and terminology (*papa* > *pontifex maximus* etc.) (Figs 2 and 3, still with *papa*).

Fig. 1 Ghiberti (1378-1455), St John the Baptist. Florence, Orsanmichele, 1419-1422. Note the absence of shading. Photo O. Merisalo

[2] Zamponi 2010, 64.

Fig. 2 Donatello (*c.* 1386-1466) and Michelozzo (1396-1472), Epitaph to anti-pope John XXIII (1425-27) Florence, Baptistery. Photo O. Merisalo

Fig. 3 Epitaph to anti-pope John XXIII. Florence, Baptistry. Note the absence of serifs and the use of Roman dating combined with mediaeval formulae: *A(n)no D(omi)ni MCCCCXVIIII XI Kalendas Ianuarii* (In the year of the Lord 1418, on 22 December). Photo O. Merisalo

1.3. Florence and Tuscany *c.* 1430-*c.* 1450

The monumental use of inscriptions in capitals *all'antica* strongly develops from the beginning of the 1430s onwards, on stone, metal and in frescoes. Both Michelozzo (inscriptions) and Paolo Uccello (1397-1475), whose 1436 fresco representing an equestrian statue of the condottiero John Hawkwood aka Giovanni Acuto (*c.* 1323-1394) in the Duomo of Florence sports an inscription in relatively regular, serifed monumental capitals (Fig. 4), contribute to this development.

Fig. 4 Paolo Uccello, John Hawkwood. Fresco.
Duomo, Florence. Photo Sailko. CC BY 3.0. Public domain

A new phase began when the sculptor Donatello left for Padua in 1443, thanks to the mediation of Palla Strozzi (see below).[3] In Padua he engaged in producing monumental capitals authentically modelled on Augustan geometric letter-forms, in conformity to North-Italian antiquarian scholarship that created the new, upright *antiqua* script and a new type of antiquarian decoration with archaeological elements and *all'antica* inscriptions for the humanist book (see below pp. 17-18).[4]

2. The tomb of Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici and Piccarda Di Edoardo de' Bueri (*c.* 1429/1433-1440?)

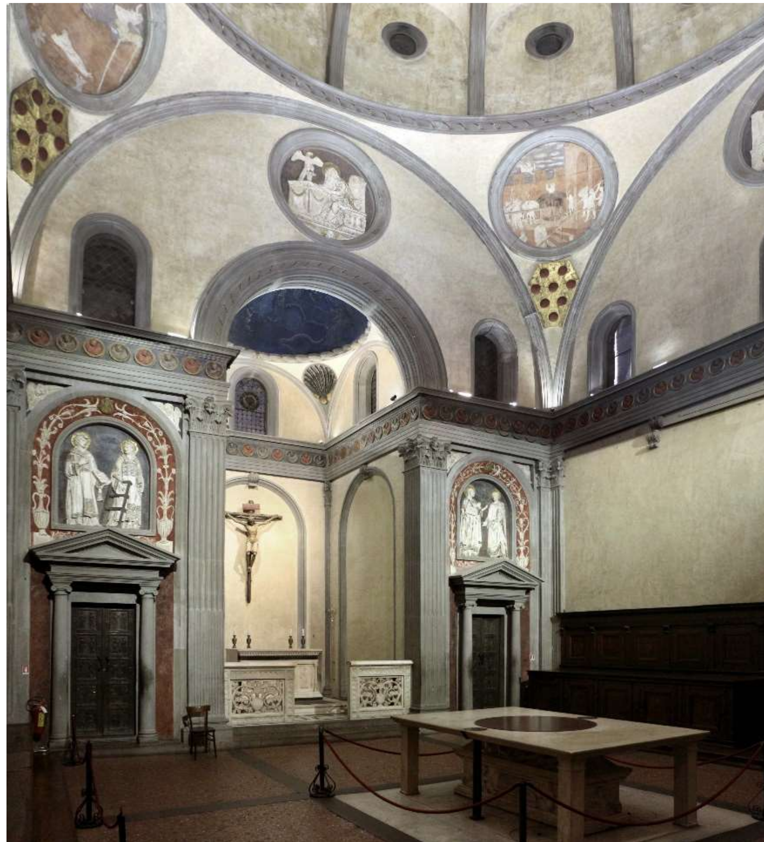

Fig. 5 S. Lorenzo, *Sagrestia vecchia*.
Photo Sailko, Wikimedia Commons

[3] Sanzotta 2019.
[4] Cf. Zamponi 2010, xx, and De Robertis 2016,

2.1. Giovanni di Bicci (*c.* 1360-1429) and Piccarda di Edoardo (1368-1433)

The *Sagrestia Vecchia* was built between 1422 and 1428 as a funerary chapel to celebrate the Medici.[5] It was designed by Brunelleschi and decorated by Donatello.[6] An important precedent was no doubt the sumptuous funerary chapel built for Nofri di Palla Strozzi (1345-1418) by his son, the eminent merchant, statesman, patron of the arts and humanist Palla Strozzi (1372-1462) in the sacristy of the basilica of S. Trinita, designed by Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, with an altarpiece by Gentile da Foligno in 1418-1423.[7] The Strozzi sacristy might itself have been inspired by the sacristy of the House of Cavalcanti in S. Maria Novella, built in 1380. Both the Strozzi and the Medici were related by marriage to the Cavalcanti.[8]

The free-standing sarcophagus of Giovanni di Bicci and Piccarda di Edoardo, as such quite exceptional in fourteenth-fifteenth-century Italy,[9] was made by Andrea Cavalcanti, also known as il Buggiano (1412-1462) and collaborators, possibly on a design by Donatello. It did not house the bodies, buried in a pier supporting the floor of the sacristy.[10] Both the sarcophagus seeming to carry the weight of the marble table, complete with a protruding disk in imperial porphyry, used by the priests to prepare for mass,[11] and the actual burial place may be construed as demonstrating Giovanni di Bicci's eminent role as a benefactor and supporter of his parish church even beyond death.[12]

[5] Kragelund 2021: 123; Davies 2019 interestingly tackles the site itself from the devotional point of view.

[6] See Davies 2019, 15-16.

[7] On Nofri Strozzi, see Tognetti 2019; on Palla Strozzi, see Sanzotta 2019; for the building history of the chapel, also see Davisson 1976, 318, and Tognetti 2019; for Nofri's tomb, an *arcosolium*, typical of Florentine men of power with the knightly status, see Butterfield 1994, 61-66. For the rivalry between the Houses of Strozzi and Medici, see e.g. Merisalo 2023.

[8] Davies 2019, 6-8.

[9] Butterfield 1994, 54.

[10] For the sarcophagus, see Kragelund 2021, 126, and Davies 2019, 16-17; for Cavalcanti, see Hyman 1997.

[11] For the vesting table, see Davies 2019, 20-24.

[12] As convincingly argued by Davies 2019, 16-19.

Fig. 6 The sarcophagus of Giovanni di Bicci and Piccarda di Edoardo. Inscription in prose on a parchment roll held by putti. Photo Sailko, GNU Free Documentation License

The sarcophagus presents two inscriptions, the one in prose providing biographical data on the committents and the deceased, and another in elegiac couplets with the funeral poem proper. Both the prose inscription,[13] on a parchment roll held by putti, just as in the epitaph to John XXIII (Figs 2 and 3), and the one in elegiacs,[14] inscribed on a Classicising *tabula ansata* also held by putti,[15] present the same kind of capitals without serifs but an attempt at shading by thickening of strokes (Fig. 1). The oblique strokes of *M* do not

[13] For the text, see Kragelund 2021: 126, who points out the possible influence (presence of both prose and elegiacs, linguistic details) of the first-century AD Atimetus Anterotianus monument (CIL 6.12652, IG 14.1892 and EDR 108740, http://www.edr-edr.it/ edr_ programmi/res_complex_comune.php?do=book&id_nr=edr108740, 14 September 2023), the inscription of which had been copied by Cyriac of Ancona in Rome, was known to Alberti, who was to quote it in his *De re aedificatoria*, and frequently found in humanist manuscripts.

[14] For the text, see Kragelund 2021, 127.

[15] This is the first known example of a *tabula ansata* with elegiac couplets in Florence, Kragelund 2021: 124.

touch the base line, just as in the John XXIII epitaph (also cf. the monument to Cosimo the Elder, Fig. 11). The *P* with a slightly open loop and the *R* hark back to Roman Republican-era inscriptions.[16] The remarkably regular spacing and the use of abbreviations by suspension are further Classicising elements. It should also be noted that this is the first attestation in Florence of the Roman dating with the name of the month as an adjective in the accusative (prose inscription, l. 5: *X Kal. Martias*).[17]

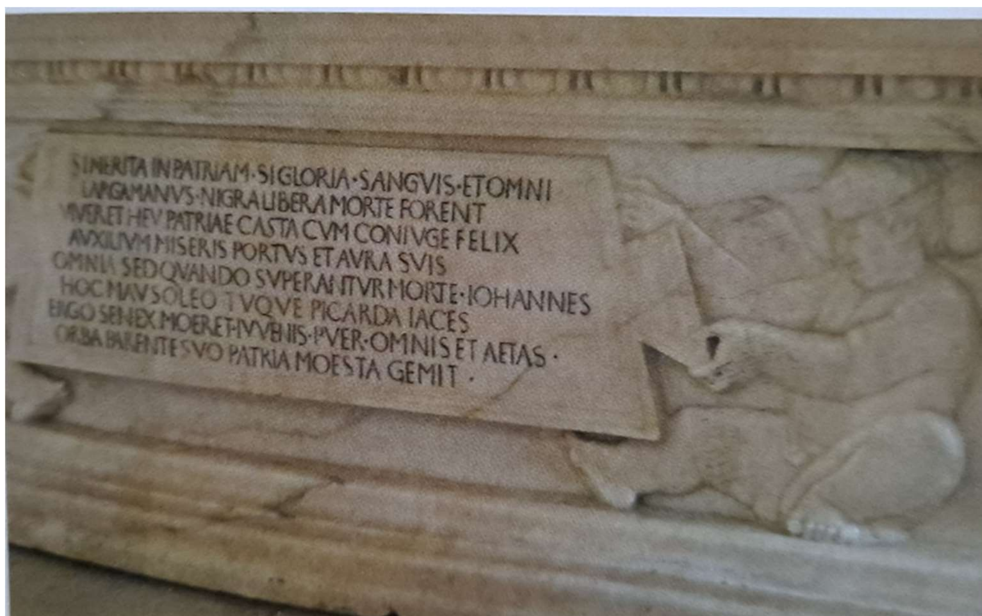

Fig. 7 The sarcophagus of Giovanni di Bicci and Piccarda di Edoardo. Inscription in elegiacs on a *tabula ansata* held by putti. Photo P. Kragelund (Fig. 7.3-4, Kragelund 2021: 129)

3. Humanism of the second half of the fifteenth century

3.1. Humanism and Humanistic script *c.* 1450-1500

It is well known that antiquarian studies (epigraphy and archaeology) dominate the Italian humanism of the second half of the fifteenth century. The centres for cutting-edge scholarship move from Florence to the North, Padua, Verona and Venice.[18] An important event is Donatello's stay, mentioned above (p. 13) at Padua in 1443-1454. The inscription on the

[16] As pointed out by the late Marco Buonocore at the colloquium.
[17] Kragelund 2021, 128.
[18] Zamponi 2010, 66.

pedestal of his statue of Gattamelata in Piazza del Santo of Padua, *OPVS DONATELLI .FLO(RENTINI)* (Work of Donatello the Florentine), datable to 1447-1453, exhibits fully-fledged Augustan-type capitals geometrically designed and complete with shading, a significant departure from the lettering previously used in monuments designed by him.[19]

It

Fig. 8 Donatello, monument to Gattamelata. Padua, Piazza del Santo (post 1447-ante 1453). Photo Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli

It is likely that he drew inspiration from the antiquarian experimentation in course, sponsored by such figures as Pietro Donato, bishop of Padua 1428-1447, who had an important library with epigraphical volumes, and Fantino Dandolo, bishop of Padua 1450-1459. The felicitous collaboration of the medical doctor Giovanni Marcanova (1410/1418-1467),[20] interested in epigraphy, the scribe Felice Feliciano (1433-1479) and the painter Andrea Mantegna (*c*. 1431-1506) gave a decisive spin to the dissemination of the new approach.[21] Between 1451 and 1460, this transformation is visible not only

[19] Zamponi 2010, 67.
[20] For Marcanova, see Gionta 1997 and De Robertis 2020, 538.
[21] De Robertis 2020, 538.

in manuscripts and inscriptions but also in paintings featuring display texts by Mantegna, Giorgio Schiavone (*c*. 1433/36-1504) and their teacher, Francesco Squarcione (*c*. 1395 - after 1468), among others.[22] The *antiqua* script takes a new form, with a writing angle of 90 degrees instead of the slightly right-inclined Florentine version. A new cursive, the *italica*, also makes its appearance. In addition, the Roman Augustan-era geometrical capitals are restored, just as are largely ancient abbreviations.[23] Around 1460, Felice Feliciano wrote a short Italian-language manual on how to proceed in creating the geometrical forms and shading, transmitted in Vatican City, BAV, Vat.lat. 6852 (Fig. 9).[24] The new script is disseminated in Rome in particular by Bartolomeo Sanvito (1437-1511) from the early 1460s onwards.[25] The Florentine model was finally eliminated by the 1480s. Print characters were to derive from the Northern *antiqua*, the *italica* and the restored Classical capitals.

Fig. 9 Felice Feliciano, Vat.lat. 6852, f. 1. By permission of the Vatican Library

[22] For Schiavone, see Shaw & Shaw 2003, and the controversial figure of Squarcione, Tolley 2003, and De Robertis 2020 538.

[23] De Robertis 2020, 538.

[24] Also known as *Alphabetum Romanum* (a title not figuring in the manuscript), see https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.6852, 14 September 2023. For the manuscript, see Feliciano 1985, 22-36, and on Feliciano's hand, De Robertis 2019, 540, 544.

[25] For Sanvito, see De la Mare & Nuvoloni 2009; concisely, De Robertis 2019, 538-543.

4. The tomb of Cosimo the Elder (*c.* 1468)

Cosimo the Elder's (1389-1464) funeral monument by Andrea del Verrocchio (1435-1488)[26] belongs to this period of transition. Andrea designed it between 1465 and 1467. Cosimo's tumulation took place on 22 October 1465.

Cosimo's monument was built in front of the high altar of S. Lorenzo, with a multi-coloured (imperial porphyry, white marble, green serpentine and bronze) arrangement featuring two inscriptions placed in classicising *tabulae ansatae*, on the one hand, and in the crypt below, on the other, where a sarcophagus with an inscription seems to carry out the same function of sustaining the church as Cosimo's parents' monument and actual burial place did.[27] Cosimo had furthermore secured exclusive burial rights in the central nave, thus maximising the visibility of the upper part of his monument.[28] Upon the Republican revolution of 9 November 1494, when the Medici were exiled from Florence, part of the upper inscription (*decreto publico // pater patriae*, by public decree, father of his country), suffered a *damnatio memoriae*, only to be restored on the return of the Medici in 1512, again eliminated in 1528 and restored after their definitive return in 1530.[29]

Fig. 10 The central nave of S. Lorenzo. Photo S. Bauer, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic

[26] For Andrea del Verrocchio, see Even 2003 and Grassi 1961.
[27] Davies 2019, 18.
[28] Davies 2019, 28.
[29] Kragelund 2021, 131-134; for the events of November 1494 and their consequences, see e.g. Merisalo 1999.

Fig. 11 The subterranean part of Cosimo the Elder's tomb. Photo https://palazzo-medici.it/mediateca. Public domain

The lower part of the monument, supporting the central nave floor, is a sarcophagus with an inscription on a *tabula ansata*: PETRVS MEDICES // PATRI// FACIVNDVM CVRAVIT (Pietro de' Medici had [this monument] made for his father).[30] The spacing is relatively regular and the lettering consists of regular capitals with an attempt at shading through thicker lines but without serifs.[31] As in Giovanni di Bicci's and Piccarda di Edoardo's inscriptions, there is a high *M* (l. 1), but also, more classically, an *M* with the central strokes touching the base line (l. 3). Consequently, and expectedly,

[30] Kragelund 2021, 134.
[31] As the late Marco Buonocore pointed out at the colloquium, *P* and *R* are typically Republican, not Imperial.

the capitals are still of the traditional Florentine style, with but little evidence of the cutting-edge Northern style.

The upper, sixteenth-century inscriptions are again eminently classicising in form, COSMVS MEDICES // HIC SITVS EST // DECRETO PVBLICO // PATER PATRIAE (Cosimo de' Medici lies here, by public decree, father of his country) and VIXIT // ANNOS LXXV // MENSES III // DIES XX (he lived for 75 years, 3 months, 20 days). *Decreto publico* might refer either to the classical burial formula *hic situs est*, reminiscent of Pompey's tomb, among others, or to *pater patriae*, a hallowed Roman title accorded to such heroes as Camillus and Cicero, and which the state bestowed upon the late Cosimo in 1465.[32] It is no wonder that the title should have been eliminated after the first overthrow of the Medici.[33]

Fig. 12 The upper part of the tomb, with the inscription, presented as a *tabula ansata*, datable to after 1530 in regular sixteenth-century capitals. Photo Sailko, Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported

[32] For the title, see Kent 2009, and parallels, Kragelund 2021, 133.
[33] Kragelund 2021, 134 and n. 217.

5. The tomb (1469-1473) of Piero di Cosimo (1416-1469) and Giovanni di Cosimo (1421-1453)

The monument to Cosimo the Elder's sons, Piero and Giovanni, was also designed by Andrea del Verrocchio 1469-1473 and placed in the wall between the *Cappella delle reliquie* (or the chapel of Saints Cosmas and Damian) and the *Sagrestia Vecchia*, and consequently highly visible.[34] Again, typically for Andrea, the monument is multi-coloured with porphyry, white and green serpentine marble as well as elements in bronze.[35] There are inscriptions on both sides. Palaeographically, the monument harks back to the Florentine tradition, although with some elements possibly pointing to awareness of the new, Northern style.

Fig. 13 Piero and Giovanni di Cosimo's tomb. Photo P. Kragelund

[34] Davies 2019, 28.
[35] For Andrea's use of colours and materials, see Even 2003.

The formula-wise eminently classicising upper inscription on the side towards the *Cappella delle reliquie* is placed in a round shield of serpentine marble with an oak wreath in bronze. The spacing is again relatively regular, and the lettering presents traditional capitals with attempt at shading and devoid of serifs: PETRO // ET IOHANNI DE // MEDICIS // COSMI P(atris) P(atriae) F(iliis) // H(oc) M(onumentum) H(aeredem) N(on) S(equetur) (To Piero and Giovanni de' Medici, sons of Cosimo father of his country. This monument will not go to the heir).[36] The inscription running round the white marble base is palaeographically somewhat nearer to the new, Northern style, in classicising capitals with an attempt at shading but still without serifs: (1) LAVRENT(ius) ET IVL(ianus) PETRI F(ilii) (2) POSVER(unt) (3) PATRI PATRVO QVE (4) MCCCCLXXII [Lorenzo and Giuliano sons of Piero erected (this monument) to their father and uncle in 1472].

Fig. 14 Detail of the tomb in the *Cappella delle reliquie*. Photo P. Kragelund

[36] Kragelund 2021, 134-135.

Fig. 15 The tomb from the *Sagrestia vecchia* side. Photo P. Kragelund

The upper, formula-wise classicising inscription is again placed in a round shield in serpentine marble with an oak wreath in bronze: PET(rus) VIX(it) // AN(nos) LIII M(enses) V D(ies) XV // IOHAN(nes) // AN(nos) XLII M(enses) IIII // D(ies) XXVIII (Piero lived for 53 years, 5 months, 15 days, Giovanni 42 years, 4 months, 28 days). The spacing is relatively regular, and the lettering consists of traditional capitals with attempt at shading, again without serifs. For the base, see above, (3) and (4).

6. Conclusion

From the 1410s onwards, there is evidence for Florentine experimentation of monumental use of epigraphic capitals. The models for the antiqua book script were eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts, whereas those for inscriptions even went back to the Carolingian age and exhibited great variation in the first decades of the century. Giovanni di Bicci and Piccarda di Edoardo's sarcophagus, just as Cosimo the Elder's monument, present the expected traditional lettering, with increasingly classicising elements of

presentation, as yet untouched by the antiquarian innovations of 1450-1460s Northern Italy, which restored the fully geometric classical monumental capitals, adopted the classical abbreviations and ancient formulae. Thanks to mobile Northern scribes, such as Bartolomeo Sanvito, the Northern style was disseminated in Central Italy, gaining Rome in the 1460s. Florence offered more resistance, which is visible in the inscriptions of the sarcophagus of Piero and Giovanni di Cosimo, which essentially represent traditional lettering with only few elements pointing to the new trend. In the early 1470s, the Northern style had indeed not yet eliminated the Florentine epigraphical style. The Medici monuments described above are in stark contrast to the inscription, datable to 1495, on the base of Donatello's statue of Judith and Holophernes from 1455-1457/1460?, which represents the fully-fledged Augustan-type geometrical capitals as described by Felice Feliciano.

Fig. 17 Donatello, Judith and Holophernes, 1455-1457/ 1460? Inscription from 1495. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio. Photo O. Merisalo.

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A FAILED PROJECT

Captions and Inscriptions for Giorgio Vasari's Medici cycle in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence*

By Henk Th. van Veen

This article shows that there existed an advanced plan to provide the paintings by Giorgio Vasari and his helpers in the Quartiere di Leone X in the Palazzo Vecchio with captions and inscriptions. The article shows that some of the most renowned scholars of Florence were involved in this project and it discusses the problems it faced. It also goes into the question why eventually the project was abandoned. Finally, the article argues against rejecting the idea that Vasari's Ragionamenti *(also) served as a guide to the paintings it comments on.*

In 1554, immediately after joining duke Cosimo I de'Medici as court artist, Giorgio Vasari was commissioned to create richly decorated appartments on the two floors of the new south-east wing with which the duke had had the Palazzo Vecchio extended. In the upper apartment – known as the Quartiere degli Elementi – Vasari applied a series of paintings dedicated to the theme of the Genealogy of the ancient gods. In the lower apartment, the Quartiere di Leone X, he painted a cycle which had as its subject the feats of the most important Medici scions from Cosimo il Vecchio to Cosimo I.

Numerous studies have appeared over time on Vasari's paintings in these two Quartieri and in 2017 Fabian Jonietz published a monumental book on them, *Das Buch zum Bild: die* Stanze nuove *im Palazzo Vecchio, Giorgio Vasaris* Ragionamenti *und die Lesbarkeit der Kunst im Cinquecento*.[1] Since this book deals with almost every conceivable aspect of the paintings in question, it is striking that it pays only marginal attention to the initial, very serious plan to add inscriptions to Vasari's paintings in the Quartiere di Leone X, a plan that ultimately came to nothing. This plan is evident from Vasari's correspondence as well as the perfected drawings he made for the paintings on the ceilings of the various rooms of this Quartiere.

The inscriptions were made and delivered to Vasari by the Florentine humanist, philologist, publicist and translator Cosimo Bartoli (1503-1572). Bartoli, a prominent member of the medicean Accademia Fiorentina, was also responsible for the inventions for the paintings Vasari and his assistants made

* For Jan L. de Jong
[1] Jonietz 2017.

in the Quartieri. An undated letter from Bartoli to Vasari contains inventions for the scenes that were to be installed in the rooms of Cosimo il Vecchio, Duke Cosimo and Giovanni delle Bande Nere.[2] The letter shows that by the time it was written the layout of the pictures over the ceilings had already been determined and no doubt the same was true for the ceilings of the other three rooms of the Quartiere, those of Lorenzo il Magnifico, Leo X and Clement VII respectively. The five vaulted ceilings and the one wooden (that of the room of Leo X) were each to be given five narrative scenes, one in the centre and the others surrounding it. The four surrounding scenes were flanked by allegories of virtues. Bartoli makes suggestions for the content of the scenes and indicates which pair of allegories of virtues should go with which scene. Since the scenes at the centre of the ceilings had no room next to them for separate allegories of virtue, Bartoli suggests that those allegories should then be integrated into the relevant scenes.[3]

For each of the scenes of a ceiling, Bartoli proposes a motto in Latin. The mottoes clarify how the corresponding allegories of virtues are exegeted in the scenes. For example, Bartoli suggests that the scene with Cosimo il Vecchio as church builder should be accompanied by *Diligentia* and *Religione* and suggests as mottoes DILIGENS IN RELIGIONEM PIETAS (caring dutiful piety) or DILIGENS IN DEOS RELIGIO (dutiful piety towards the gods).[4]

It is clear from Bartoli's letter no. CCXXXII that when he committed his mottoes to paper, no final decision had yet been made to add texts to the ceiling scenes in the Quartiere. Indeed, Bartoli writes: "et se lettere vi volete, vi metterei ..." (and in case you want inscriptions, I would put …).[5] Bartoli's epistle describing the scenes and the accompanying allegories of virtues that were to be painted on the ceiling of the room of Lorenzo il Magnifico doesn't mention the mottoes these scenes were to have.[6] It is therefore quite conceivable that originally this writing was followed by a, now lost letter in which the scenes were again briefly resumed, but now with their mottoes attached, analogous to the way this is done in Bartoli's letter on the scenes for the rooms of Cosimo the Elder, Cosimo I and Giovanni delle Bande Nere.[7] In the letter he wrote on the rooms of Clement VII and of Leo X, Bartoli gave

[2] Vasari 1923, No. CCXXXIV, 439-442.
[3] Vasari 1923, 437.
[4] Vasari 1923, No. CCXXXIV, 439.
[5] Vasari 1923, No. CCXXXIV, 439.
[6] Vasari 1923, No. CCXXXII, 437-438.
[7] Vasari 1923, No. CCXXXIV, 439-442. Therefore, contrary to Frey's opinion (p. 442), not No. CCXXXII will have formed a whole with No. CCXXXIV, but this later, no longer extant letter containing the mottoes.

his inventions for the five scenes for the one and the five scenes for the other room and makes suggestions for their mottoes.[8] The wording of the letter shows that when it was written, the decision had actually been taken to provide mottoes for the scenes on the ceilings of the Quartiere di Leone X.[9]

Attached to the letter just mentioned are diagrams of the two projected ceilings (figs. 1 and 2). In the diagram of the ceiling of the room of Clemens VII below the five scenes Bartoli inscribed their respective mottoes and above them added their titles in Italian. Four of the eight sections where Bartoli had imagined the allegories of virtues he proposed remained empty in this diagram and in the remaining four Vasari inscribed – in Italian – the titles of yet more scenes that remain unnamed in Bartoli's letter and that are not provided with mottoes.[10]

In the diagram of the ceiling of the room of Leo X below all of the nine scenes it contains Bartoli has captioned the corresponding mottoes and above these scenes another hand (Vasari's?) has added the titles in Italian. Remarkably, in this diagram all the allegories of virtues Bartoli mentions in his letter are ignored and the space of the sections where, according to Bartoli, these allegories should have been placed was devoted to four more scenes, scenes of which Bartoli makes no mention in his letter but for which he nevertheless provided mottoes. In the paintings as executed on the ceiling of Leo X's room, in accordance with the diagram for this ceiling, no virtue allegories were included.

For the ceiling decorations for the Quartiere di Leone X, except for that for the room of Clement VII, Vasari's finished studies have survived.[11] They can be considered a group as they are identical in size, technique and function. In the finished drawing for the ceiling of the room of Cosimo il Vecchio, the names of the allegories of virtues are given underneath them in Italian in specially designed oval cartouches.[12] As far as the themes for the five planned

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[8] Vasari 1923, nr CCXXXVI, 447-451.

[9] Again, this argues against Frey's assumption that letter nr CCXXXIV formed one entity with letter CCXXXII.

[10] As to allegories of virtues, Vasari writes the names *Concordia* and *Religione* (Bartoli had proposed *Fortuna* and *Constantia*) in the frame above the scene with Clemens' return to Rome and the names *Salute* and *Prudentia* in the frame above the scene with Alessandro being appointed duke. It was apparently Vasari's intention to confine himself to mentioning the names of these virtues and not depict their allegories. In the paintings as executed on the vault of the room of Clement VII, the eight allegories of virtues proposed by Bartoli were returned to and additional sections were created for the four scenes that Vasari wanted to see added to Bartoli's invention.

[11] See Härb 2015, No. 240, 390 (Leo X); No. 255, 405 (Cosimo il Vecchio); No. 257, 408 (Lorenzo il Magnifico); No. 262, 414 (Cosimo I); No. 268, 421 (Giovanni delle Bande Nere).

[12] Härb 2015, No. 255, 405.

scenes are concerned, Vasari followed Bartoli's suggestions, but remarkably enough only to a very limited extent where his mottoes are concerned. Underneath only two of the scenes, he placed the mottoes Bartoli had provided for them; the other three were left without any motto at all. The first of the two adopted mottoes is the one accompanying the central scene showing Cosimo's return from exile. On the frame below it is written: DVCE VIRTVTE COMITE FORTVNA (with virtue leading and luck as companion).[13] The second is the scene with Cosimo in the midst of his *literati* under which the motto VBIQVE SEMPER (everywhere always) is inscribed. It is notable, however, that he does not place this motto directly under the scene in question, but under the medallion located below it, the medallion in which the portrait of Lorenzo il Magnifico was to be placed. This was probably not accidental because it had been Lorenzo who, as Vasari writes in his *Ragionamenti* (about which more will be said later), had added the motto SEMPER to the already older Medici impresa of the diamond with the three feathers.[14] Because Vasari located the medallion with Lorenzo's portrait right above the entrance to the room, the impression is that he wanted the motto VBIQVE SEMPER to refer to the entirety of the scenes on the ceiling of the room.

In Vasari's finished drawing for the ceiling of the room of Cosimo I, four of the five scenes Bartoli suggested were adopted – amongst them the central scene – and of the mottoes he proposed, only the one for the central scene made it: CAELERI VIRTUTE (with swift courage). Instead of the allegories of virtues Bartoli came up with, the finished drawing gives allegories of cities dominated by Cosimo.[15] Vasari's finished drawing for the ceiling of Giovanni delle Bande Nere's room shows an even more rigorous intervention. Bartoli's suggestions for the scenes were adopted, but none of his mottoes (though underneath the main scene, the title is captioned in Italian). The names of the allegories of virtues are mentioned though, in Italian, in cartouches drawn underneath them.[16] Also in the finished drawing for the ceiling of Lorenzo il Magnifico's room, none of the mottoes proposed by Bartoli made it through.[17] Underneath the central scene, Vasari gives its title, in italian: "Presente del soldano e daltri principi" (Present of the sultan and of other princes). In this finished drawing, too, the Italian names of the allegories of

[13] In the scene itself, as Bartoli had suggested, the formula PA/TRIE / PATER / SAL/VE was recorded on the banner on the left.

[14] Vasari 1906, 25.

[15] Härb 2015, No. 262, 414.

[16] Härb 2015, No. 268, 421.

[17] Härb 2015, No. 257, 408.

virtues are inscribed, again in cartouches underneath. In the finished drawing of the ceiling of the room of Leo X four of the suggestions for scenes made by Bartoli in his letter to Vasari were adopted, but no mottoes were inscribed. The latter also applied to the four corner scenes that replaced in the diagram the virtue allegories that Bartoli had put forward in his letter. Under the central scene, the title was captioned: "La Cacciata d'Franzesi a Milano", and some of the other scenes were also provided with brief indications of their respective themes.[18] The finished drawing that Vasari must undoubtedly have made for the ceiling of Clement VII's room has not survived. Judging by the finished drawings for the ceilings in the other rooms, it can be assumed that in the finished drawing for this ceiling Vasari also omitted all or almost all of Bartoli's mottoes.

Although at some point it was decided to add mottoes to all the scenes on the ceilings in the rooms of the Quartiere di Leone X, this decision was apparently called into question again in a follow-up stage of the design phase, as Vasari's finished drawings show. In these, as we saw, only three of the mottoes Bartoli had composed for the scenes in the Quartiere di Leone X appear to be inscribed, two of them for central scenes. Perhaps Vasari retained the corresponding mottoes for these last two scenes because he had ignored Bartoli's advice to include the allegories of virtues that the latter had suggested for them in the scenes in question themselves.[19] By ignoring this advice Vasari made it extremely difficult for the viewer to fathom which virtues these central scenes exemplified. As to the absence in the perfected drawings of mottoes in the case of the scenes that surround the central scenes, was the thought maybe that the viewer would be sufficiently helped on his way by the allegories of virtues by which these were flanked, and which were identified by their names. Yet, by omitting their mottoes, the accessibility of these scenes was considerably impaired, and this omission would have taken its toll especially on the ceilings in the rooms of Leo X, Clement VII and Cosimo I, where all or almost all of the allegories of virtues were cancelled.

[18] See for these indications Härb 2015, 390.

[19] However, as the painted panel in question shows, also in the case of the room of Cosimo il Vecchio Vasari ignored Bartoli's suggestion to include the two allegories of virtues (i.c. *Virtus* and *Fortuna*) in the central scene. See Vasari 1923, no. CCXXXIV, 439. The same goes for the central scene on the ceiling of the room of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, for which Bartoli had suggested *Marte* and *Victoria* as allegories of virtues. As for the central scene in the room of Lorenzo il Magnifico, 'The Sultan's gift to Lorenzo il Magnifico', Vasari did incorporate the two allegories of virtues proposed by Bartoli, *Prudentia* and *Magnanimità*, into the painted scene itself. Jonietz 2017, 120, points out that *Magnanimità* is depicted as *Fortezza*, with column namely. Vasari did this because he was recycling an earlier work of his here.

At some point, construction and decoration work in the rooms of the Quartiere di Leone X had progressed to the point where it had to be decided what to do with the mottoes. Vasari's correspondence shows that, of all six rooms, this moment presented itself first to that of Cosimo il Vecchio. On 13 November 1556, Vasari writes to duke Cosimo that this room is nearing completion.[20] Only Il Grasso [Mariotto di Francesco], who is applying the gold leaf, has not quite finished, but in a few days everything will be completed (this turned out to be wishful thinking, by the way).[21] Vasari continues: "Vero è che le lettere, che vanno a quelle storie et nella fascia di pietra, dove la volta si posa intorno alla stanza, le desiderei finire, prima che si calassi il palco dove si lavora; accio con più comodità si dello averle a intagliar' nella pietra come avere à scriverle col pennello negli ornamenti delle storie, … (to complete the inscriptions that come with that *storie* and in the stone band, where the vault rests on the walls, before taking down the scaffolding on which they are working; if the scaffolding remains, it will be easier to both chisel the inscriptions into the stone and write the mottoes with the brush in the ornaments of the *storie* …)."[22] Vasari writes to Cosimo that he didn't know "se queste, che io ho, son di quella bonta che contentino et V.E.I. et chi intende ... (whether the inscriptions he has are of such a quality that they can satisfy Cosimo and those who know about them). Hence Vasari has decided to send the captions to Cosimo, so that if they please him he will either formulate them in his way or let Vasari know that the latter will let them rest until Cosimo will have returned and thus the ceiling will not be spoiled, which Vasari would regret.[23] The captions Vasari says he has and that he intends to send to Cosimo can hardly be other than the mottoes Cosimo Bartoli had sent him. At this stage, the intention was apparently still to apply all the mottoes supplied by Bartoli for the ceiling. The mottoes were to be applied by brush to the ornamental frames of the panels (and apparently cartouches were therefore provided for this purpose), but there is remarkable mention of inscriptions that were also to be chiselled all around into the pietra serena architraves of the ceiling vault. There was no mention of these inscriptions in the inventions provided by Bartoli.

Vasari thus felt uncertain about both the mottoes and the four inscriptions, and he assumed Cosimo still wanted to interfere with all this personally. In a

[20] Vasari 1923, No. CCXLIII, 456-458.

[21] Vasari 1923, No. CCXLIII, 456

[22] Vasari 1923, No. CCXLIII, 456.

[23] "Onde mi risolvo à mandarle a Quella, accio piacendovi, le formi a modo Suo o mi si mandi a dir, che io le lassi cosi fino al ritorno di Quella senza guastare il palco, il quale mi da noia …".

rescript from Cosimo, his secretary Lelio Torelli let Vasari know: "Habbiamo inteso tutto; e sulla lettera delle iscrittion' diciamo quello Ci occorre" (We have understood everything and about the words of the inscriptions we will say what we think is right]).[24]

That there was a problem with the mottoes and inscriptions to be applicated in the room of Cosimo il Vecchio becomes implicitly clear from some letters from Vasari's correspondence a year later. On 8 October 1557, Vasari writes from Florence to Cosimo's secretary Jacopo Guidi in Pisa. What this letter makes clear is that by that time the situation around the mottoes and inscriptions for the room of Cosimo il Vecchio had reached a precarious stage. Apparently, Vasari had indeed sent Bartoli's mottoes to Cosimo but had not yet had a response. He did not dare to burn his fingers on it any further. Strikingly enough, however, in the meantime an alternative set of texts, written in Italian – presumably for both the mottoes and the inscriptions – had been produced by Jacopo Guidi, no doubt in close consultation with Cosimo. In Italian, because presumably Guidi's and Cosimo's knowledge of Latin fell short. Vasari had wanted to have this set translated into Latin by certain 'signori dottori', but they wisely declined: they were even more afraid of it than of the disastrous flood ('piena') that had hit Florence in the same year. In the extreme, Guidi's mottoes and inscriptions were to be affixed in the room of Cosimo il Vecchio just as they were.[25]

One of the 'signori dottori' mentioned by Vasari was undoubtedly Piero Vettori, the greatest humanist and Latinist Florence had at that time. A letter from Vasari to Guidi dated exactly one month later, i.e. 8 November 1557, shows that for Vettori it was not so much a matter of unwillingness or apprehension to convert Guidi's Italian texts into proper and appropriate Latin. Vettori had simply not succeeded doing it, and then Vasari had stopped reminding him and left it at that and reported back the situation to Cosimo.[26] Since Vettori had failed to come up with the required translations, Vasari had, probably in desperation, on 7 November 1557, enlisted the help of his good

[24] Vasari 1923, 459.

[25] See Palli d'Addario 1985, 370-71 (No. 3): "non ci è nessuno di questi signor dottori che mi abbia ancor voluto dare nessuna traduzione delle volgari inscrittioni della camera di Cosimo Vecchio et credo che loro eccellentie aranno più paura delle dette che della piena, sì gli trovo smarriti, onde mi son risoluto rimandare a vostra signoria i vostri et insieme con questa mia salutarlo et pregarlo che non si smarrischa quegli che io vi mando, a ciò ci possa pur metter qualcosa."

[26] Palli D'Addario 1985, 374 (No. 5): "… come il Vettori che à fuggito la scuola, che non ò auto forza farli un segnio; credo forse che non gli è parso coi primi che e' fecie satisfar a suo modo; basta che io me ne son tolto giù. Hora io ho scritto per ciò al Duca ,..".

friend, the learned philologist and historian Vincenzo Borghini.[27] But now that Vettori with all his expertise had given up, it was not surprising that Borghini too, as he confesses to Vasari, had not really been able to resolve things. He sends Vasari "come interviene delle cose cattive, raddoppiati et interzati" (as it goes with bad things: duplicated and inserted [words]). He has great sympathy for the view of 'sua eccelentia', with whom Borghini presumably means Vettori, that, with regard to the texts for the room of Cosimo il Vecchio, one should "reduce specific cases to general concepts", but he is not sure whether he has managed to capture this premise in the words he proposes.[28] Vettori's view, which Borghini so approvingly quotes here, may have implied the criticism he – and thus also Borghini – had of Bartoli's mottoes, which then caused Guidi to compile an alternative set. Borghini continues his letter to Vasari by saying that for the purpose of the mottoes, he had formulated written texts above and below each other, of which it remains to be seen which will be most pleasing to the person who will read the words.[29] Some specific insight into Borghini's interference with the mottoes for the ceiling of the room of Cosimo il Vecchio offers his comment regarding the scene "Cosimo il Vecchio reveals his lineage to Santi Bentivoglio so that he may govern Bologna". Apparently, the Italian texts by Guidi that Vasari had forwarded to him mentioned the existence of *amicitia* between this Medici and Santi. Borghini suggests something to do with the word *patroni* here, as this better reflected the nature of the relationship between Cosimo and the much younger Santi.[30]

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[27] Jonietz 2017, 112, assumes that the letters Nos. CCXXXII and CCXXXIV were not written by Bartoli but by Borghini. However, this is unlikely. In that case, Vasari would have expressed (in No. CCXLIII) his doubts to Cosimo about his best friend's creations, which is unlikely. It is also unlikely that Borghini started translating new Italian motti into Latin after the Latin motti he had previously supplied had been set aside. Nor does Borghini's letter to Vasari of 7 November 1557 show that he had previously been involved in making motti for the chamber of Cosimo the Elder. Incidentally, Jonietz also observes that much: "Möglicherweise wird Borghini auch erst beteiligt, als Vasari nicht die erwünschte Hilfe anderer Personen erhält".

[28] Palli d'Addario 1985, 383 (No. 12): "El giuditio di sua eccelentia, nel senso che vi vuole mi piace sommamente: di ridurre i casi particolari a concetti generali; ma non so come harò saputo mantenere il suo concetto con le mie parole".

[29] Palli d'Addario 1985, 383 (No. 12): "dove è più d'una voce, l'una sopra l'altra, vo'dire che l'una voce e l'altra si può usare, qual più a chi leggerà".

[30] Palli d'Addario 1985, 383 (No. 12): "al 3., mi occorreva mettervi in consideratione che ho aggiunto un terzo motto "patroni" etc., a questo fine, che quella voce "amicitia" non potre' parere a qualchuno che non cadessi neben nella persona di Cosimo il Vecchio et di Santi, troppo giovane, però andatela un poco considerando anche voi che l'amicitia è proprio infra li equali, ma fra l'inequali è servitù, osservanza, cleintela et simili, secondo i rispetti."

In this same letter Borghini also makes mention of “L’ultima fascia che comincia ‘memoriae’” (the last band which begins with ‘memoriae’). He is probably referring here to a subsequent paragraph in the proposals he makes. However, it is notable that Vasari, in his letter to Cosimo of 13 November 1556, refers to the architrave in which the inscriptions were to be carved as *fascia*. If Borghini does indeed mean that architrave here, then his suggestion for the inscriptions to be carved into it was to seek inspiration from “certain public memoriae from the time of Diocletian or slightly earlier” that Borghini had seen in Rome. This way of expressing oneself, according to Borghini, can be called sensible and good.[31] Borghini was obviously referring here to inscriptions that could be found on public Roman buildings or monuments, commemorating their builders and the glorious deeds they had performed. Applied to the architrave of Cosimo the Elder’s room, such a *memoria* would not so much have specifically commemorated his building activity, but more generally his deeds and virtues, in what would apparently be a kind of summary of what the scenes, allegories of virtues and mottoes on the ceiling of this room conveyed.

At the end of the letter, Borghini confided to Vasari that what he had touched upon herein were all things better judged by Vettori (“sua eccellentia illustrissima”) “che in queste cose per experientia et dico de cuore che ha ottimo giuditio, talché nelle cose mie volenterissimo me ne porterei al giuditio suo” (who has experience in these things and – I say it from my heart – excellent judgment, so I am very happy to comply with that judgment).[32]

Already the day after receiving Borghini’s suggestions, Vasari forwards them to Guidi. The accompanying letter reveals more concretely what challenge Vettori’s wish that “specific cases should be reduced to general concepts” had posed for Borghini when faced with translating and editing Guidi’s Italian texts. Vasari writes: “Ora mi scade per obligo e promessa mandarvi in mano quel che à fatto lo Spedalingho degli Innocenti con tutte quelle fatiche che à potuto interpretare sopra: ‘l’invidia della virtù’ et ‘la pietà nella religione e la gloria nella eternità’” (Now I am obliged to you and have promised you to send into your hand the interpretations the Administrator of the Ospedale degli Innocenti [Borghini], with all the effort he was capable of,

[31] Palli d’Addario 1985, 383 (No. 12): “L’ultima fascia che comincia ‘memoriae’ etc., questo modo l’ho veduto in Roma in certi (sic) memoriae publiche, ma non antichissime, credo circa a’tempi di Diocletiano (o poco prima), ma il modo del dire è ragionevole e buono”.

[32] Palli d’Addario 1985, 383 (No. 12).

gave of [the phrases] 'the enviousness of virtue' and 'piety in religion and the glory in eternity').[33]

Together with Borghini's Latin mottoes, Vasari sent Guidi back the Italian mottoes Guidi had made, to which Borghini, as we saw in the case of the scene with Cosimo il Vecchio and Santi Bentivoglio, had made some changes during translation. To Guidi the request to send everything to Cosimo for review, so that thereafter either Borghini's Latin mottoes and inscriptions or Guidi's Italian ones would finally be placed "dove àno a stare et che presto mi si dia l'ordine che si ponghino, perché alla stanza ora non mancha altro che questo, ve gli raccomando" (where they should be and [I hope] I will soon be instructed to place them, for this is the only thing missing from the room and I recommend this to you).[34] However, Vasari would never get that assignment. Borghini's labour was set aside by Cosimo and nothing was done with Guidi's Italian texts either. This happened not only in the room of Cosimo il Vecchio, but also in the other rooms of the Quartiere di Leone X. This much becomes clear from Vasari's finished drawings for the ceilings of those rooms. The drawings show that Bartoli's mottoes were reverted to anyway, albeit extremely sparsely and with many hesitations.[35] According to the drawings, as we noted earlier, those mottoes would only be used where the central scenes were concerned, and in the rooms of Giovanni delle Bande Nere and Clement VII they even would not be used at all. The rooms as they were executed show that a radical decision was finally taken: inscriptions, mottoes and titles were abandoned altogether.[36]

Even the cartouches underneath the allegories of virtues were no longer filled with their names, but with small scenes referring to those virtues. The ultimate reasons for this remarkable decision are difficult to gauge. Perhaps a factor was that during the design phase, the initially followed system of scenes flanked by virtue allegories was increasingly broken (i.e. in the rooms

[33] Palli d'Addario 1985, 374 (No. 5). "La pietà nella religione" was clearly based on what Bartoli had proposed for the central panel of the ceiling of the room of Cosimo il Vecchio (DILIGENS IN RELIGIONEM PIETAS or DILIGENS IN DEOS RELIGIO) and in the "gloria nella eternità" Bartoli's VBIQVE SEMPER was accounted for. Borghini's Latin interpretations of Guidi's phrases are not included in this letter.

[34] Palli D'Addario 1985, 374 No. 5 (8 november 1557). Evidently Borghini's attempts were not resubmitted to Vettori.

[35] Unlike for the virtue figures, no text cartouches are provided on the finished drawings for the scenes.

[36] In a letter to Cosimo, dated 12 May 1558, regarding the proposed marriage of Cosimo's daughter Lucrezia to Alfonso d'Este, Vasari describes the rooms of Cosimo the Elder, Lorenzo il Magnifico, and Cosimo I as "finite et dipinte sino in terra" (finished and painted from top to bottom). Vasari 1923, No. CCLXVI, 502. It must therefore have been decided before this date not to apply names, mottoes and inscriptions to these rooms.

of Leo X, Clement VII and Cosimo I) and hence also the system of mottoes and names. Hesitations about language may have played a role as well. During the problems that arose with the Latin translation of the mottoes and inscriptions, the option of applying them in Italian to the chambers was left open. Remarkable in this respect is that in the finished drawings (and on the diagram of Clement VII's room) the names of the allegories of virtues are consistently inscribed in Italian.[37] The same goes for the titles inscribed above the scenes in the diagrams of the ceilings of the rooms of Leo X and Clement VII. A more far-reaching problem that may have come up concerned the identification of the scenes. The allegories of virtues that the scenes exemplified would be identified by their names, but what exactly were the deeds by which these virtues were demonstrated? Viewers who belonged to the Medici family itself or to their intimates, will have recognized these, because they must have been aware of the highlights of the family history. Although even with them one might wonder whether they would have known about, for instance, the various feats of arms of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, feats of arms about the course of which Vasari had to consult still living eyewitnesses before he could paint them.[38] For the somewhat wider circle of visitors presumably intended to be targeted it must have been especially difficult to understand what all those scenes in the Quartiere di Leone X represented, no matter how much effort Vasari had made to render them as historically accurate as possible. This wider circle of visitors would have appreciated titles to the narrative scenes, and the fact that titles (in Italian) are appended to all of the scenes in the two diagrams and to some of them in the perfected drawings indicates that Vasari and his advisers thought of providing this service. However, the question they must have asked themselves was whether adding titles would really help the visitors understand the connection between the mottoes and what was presented. Even those who did not need a title to see what was depicted would struggle to fathom in exactly what deeds the virtues extolled in the accompanying mottoes were expressed. Indeed, there was a gap between what the mottoes extolled and what the scenes showed. The mottoes referred to deeds and events that were to remain unexhibited in the epic concentration to which the painted scenes had to resort. It was as if they were emblems whose *anima* could not adequately cover their *corpus*. A good example to illustrate this is the scene in the room of Cosimo il Vecchio that shows the protagonist going into exile. For this scene, Bartoli had proposed as motto: FORTES PRVDENTIA FATI

[37] Incidentally, they are so too in Bartoli's letters.
[38] Jonietz 2017, 150.

NECESSITATEM SVPERANT (the strong overcome their destiny by prudence). By destiny is here meant that Cosimo's enemy Rinaldo degli Albizzi would have ensured that he was sentenced to death. *Prudentia*, flanking the scene on the left, refers to the tact and prudence with which Cosimo managed to get the death sentence commuted to exile and the apparent obedience he showed by going into exile. *Fortezza*, on the right side of the scene, referred to the strength Cosimo showed on his return from exile, when, in a new guise, he rewarded his friends and chastised his enemies. All this we learn from Vasari's *Ragionamenti.*[39] Looking at the scene in question now, we merely see Cosimo leaving the city on horseback and with a small retinue. A way out of the dilemma of the incongruity between motto and image might perhaps have been what apparently Vettori had in mind and which Borghini made a futile attempt to do, namely "di ridurre i casi particolari a concetti generali". However, if the mottoes had been generalised even further than Bartoli had already done, there would have been little point at all in creating different mottoes and different scenes to extol the virtues of the Medici. All these dubitations may have prompted the radical decision to dispense with texts altogether in the Quartiere di Leone X, accepting the fact that the cycle became considerably less accessible to the unprepared and even to the prepared visitor. But then, there had been, as we saw, hesitations about applying text to the paintings right from the very start of the project.[40]

About the paintings in the Quartiere degli Elementi and the Quartiere di Leone X, Vasari wrote a fictional dialogue between himself and Prince Francesco de'Medici, entitled *Ragionamenti sopra le invenzioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel palazzo di loro altezze serenissime*. Vasari began writing this work in 1558 and he never quite finished it. His nephew completed it and published it in 1588 with a dedication to Grand Duke Ferdinando I de'Medici. The genesis and intent of this work has been much debated by art historians.

Having long been regarded as essentially a guide to the paintings it discusses, since the appearance of Elizabeth McGrath's seminal article "Il senso nostro: the Medici allegory applied to Vasari's mythological frescoes in the Palazzo Vecchio" (1985), the tendency has been predominantly to see the *Ragionamenti* more as disconnected from the paintings.[41] Paola Tinagli

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[39] Vasari 1906, 88-90.

[40] In connection with Vasari's paintings in the Salone dei Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio, Cosimo wrote Vasari: "oltre che son necessarie ancora in ogni historia qualche motto o parole, per maggiore espressione del figurato." Vasari 1923, No. CDI, 735: Cosimo to Vasari, 14 March 1563. See also Jonietz 2017, 125. in the case of the Quartieri di Leone X, Cosimo apparently thought otherwise in the end.

[41] McGrath 1985. See also Jonietz 2017, 253.

related Vasari's initiative to start writing the Ragionamenti to his construction that year of a wooden model in which he made the whole of his work in the palazzo Vecchio comprehensible to the duke ("accordare tutto il palazzo insieme"). Tinagli wants to "collegare a questo momento di riflessione sulla qualità ed importanza dei lavori, e a questo nuovo corso, la decisione di elaborare significati celebrativi inizialmente non contemplati nei programmi, 'accordando' insieme i due appartamenti in senso programmatico e non solo architettonico, e di rendere pubblici sia la materia che i significati (connect to this moment of reflection on the quality and importance of the work, and to this new course, the decision to elaborate celebratory meanings that were not initially contemplated in the programmes, 'tuning' the two appartments together in a programmatic sense and not only architecturally, and to make both the material and the meanings public).[42] According to Tinagli, the *Ragionamenti* should be regarded as part of the historical literature that was being produced in Florence in those years as a panegyric on Cosimo and his regime.[43] Agreeing with Tinagli, Steven Stowell states that: "the *Ragionamenti* appears … to be a literary work that to some degree stands alone from the paintings and is in essence a kind of celebration of the Medici and of Vasari's work."[44] Jonietz argues that Vasari wanted his *Ragionamenti* to immortalise his paintings in the Quartieri – and thus himself – by erecting a literary monument to them.[45] Jonietz also compares the *Ragionamenti* to the descriptions that were made of apparati of solemn entrances at the time and aimed at preserving their memory for posterity.[46] However, it seems wise not to completely abandon the assumption that the *Ragionamenti* were also written down with the intention of guiding the viewer through the paintings. Indeed, it is hard to deny that an important purpose of the *Ragionamenti* was to fill the comprehension gap that arose when, in 1558, the plan to provide the paintings with texts was finally abandoned. Now that it had been made difficult for visitors to the Quartiere di Leone X to gather what precisely the Medici's rhetorical praise there entailed, this was explained to them in the *Ragionamenti*.

[42] Tinagli Baxter 1985, 87.
[43] See Tinagli 2000 and Tinagli 2001.
[44] Stowell 2015, 320-21.
[45] Jonietz 2017, 168.
[46] Jonietz 2017, 197 and 198.

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Figures

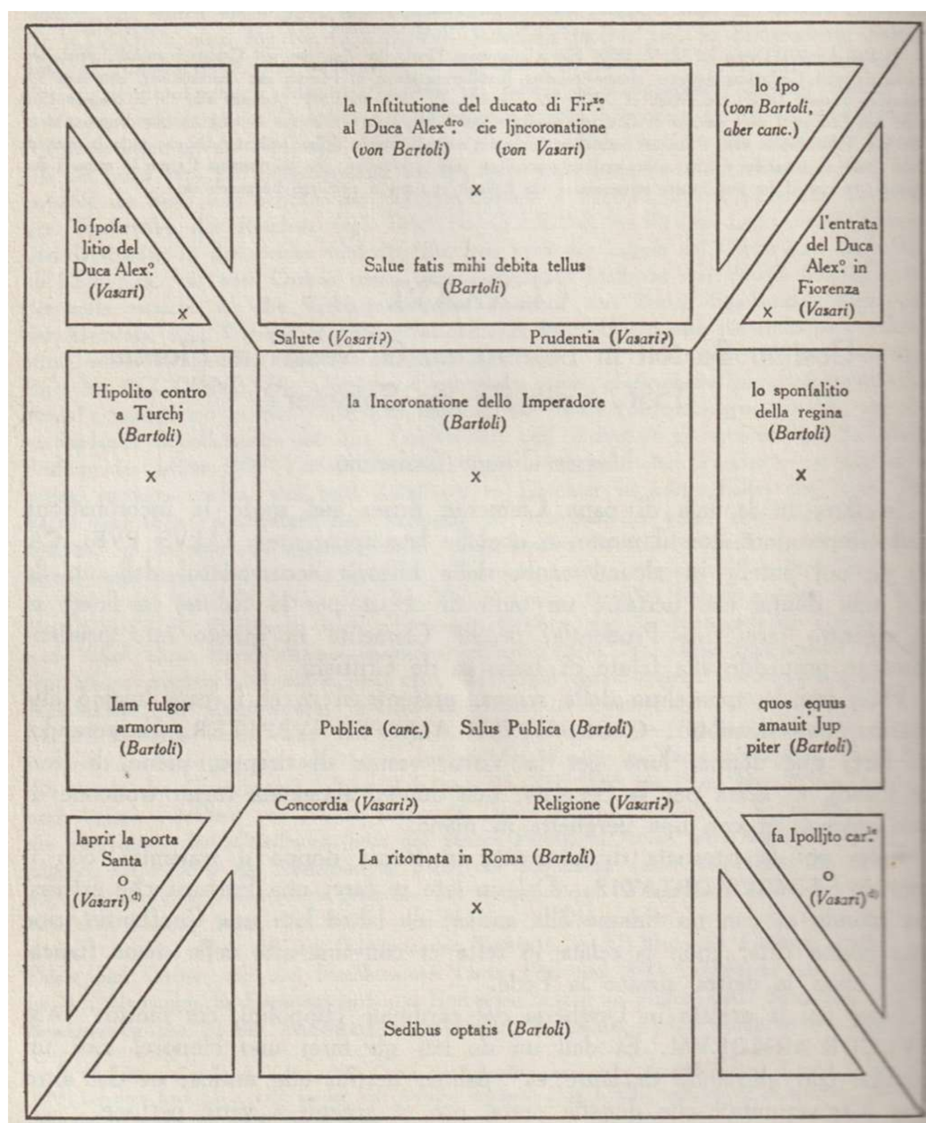

Fig. 1 Diagram of the design for the ceiling decoration of the room of Clement VII
Source: Vasari 1923, 448

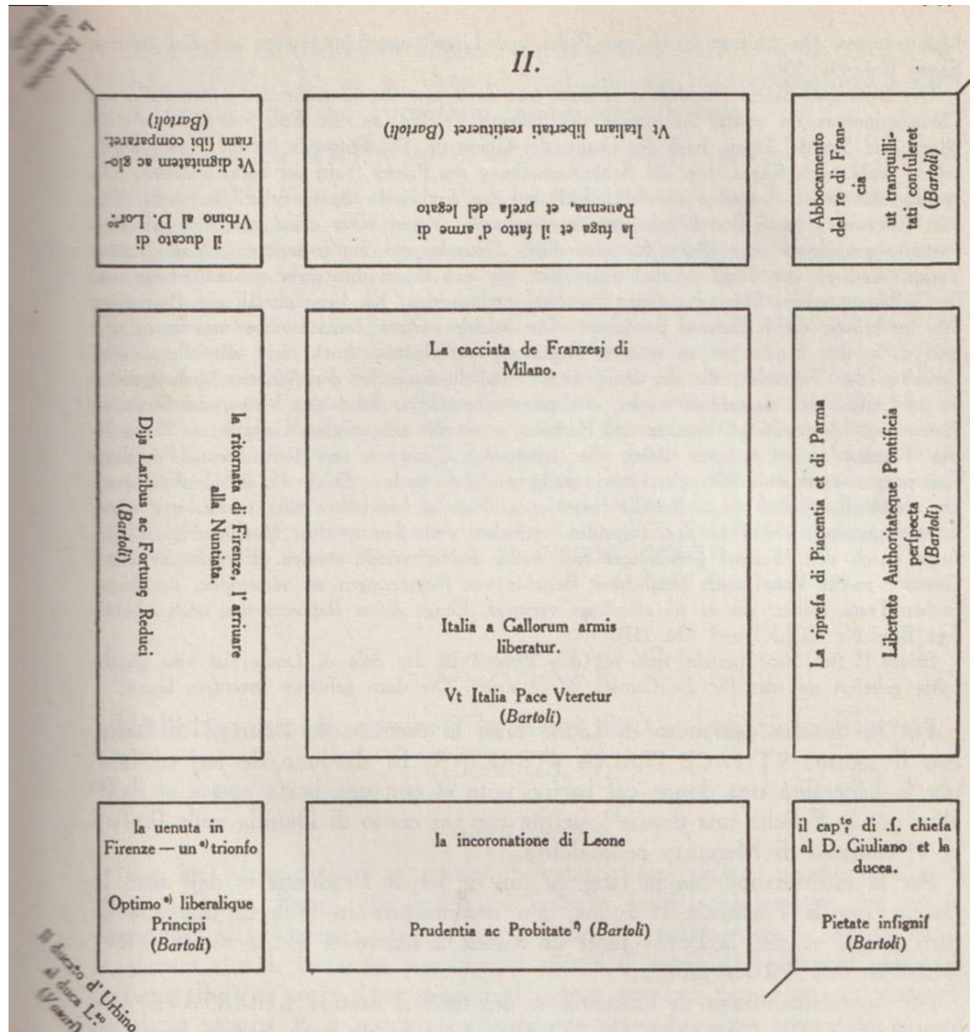

Fig. 2 Diagram of the design for the ceiling decoration of the room of Leo X. Source: Vasari 1923, 449

Latin Inscriptions in Medici Florence and the Early Modern Viewer

By William Stenhouse

Early modern authors took a keen interest in inscriptions, including the Latin examples in Medici Florence. Guidebooks quoted famous texts, travellers to Florence recorded inscriptions that they saw in the city, and the editors of collections of famous epitaphs or notable inscribed verses included plenty of Florentine examples. This article examines which texts these authors chose to reproduce and what attracted them: their selection celebrated the cultural achievements of fifteenth-century Florence at the expense of later examples, and at the expense of the Medici family who did so much to promote themselves using this medium.

One of the great pleasures of Patrick Kragelund's *The Latin Inscriptions of Medici Florence* is that it reminds us just how much inscriptions mattered in early modern Europe. This period was 'L'âge de l'inscription', as the title of Florence Vuilleumier Laurens and Pierre Laurens' study of the phenomenon rightly puts it.[1] Inscriptions celebrated and commemorated, entertained and informed. Practised epigraphers produced manuals that promised to teach the ability to write an incisive, witty, and elegant inscription and rulers employed scholars who mastered the skill: Piero Vettori, who promoted Cosimo, was just one example.[2] As Kragelund shows, Vettori used inscriptions to establish a connection between his patron and the Roman Emperor Augustus. This points to one fundamental reason for inscriptions' significance: composed and inscribed appropriately, they were an effective way of evoking ancient Rome. In Florence and beyond, they are an important indication of the spread of humanism.[3]

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[1] Vuilleumier Laurens and Laurens 2010.

[2] Kragelund 2021, esp., 175-77.

[3] Kragelund 2021, 8-9.

One index of inscriptions' centrality in the early modern intellectual world is the number of collections of examples on paper that survive from the era. Travellers made transcriptions of the inscribed texts that they saw; their friends copied material for their own notebooks; and publishers printed what these people had gathered. This is a phenomenon that has been widely studied for the ancient inscriptions disseminated in this period: modern ancient historians and archaeologists have long mined early modern records for evidence of monuments that have since been damaged or lost. But as many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *curiosi* copied and published contemporary inscriptions as they did ancient ones, and their work has attracted less modern attention.[4] Just as in the case of ancient Roman inscriptions, early modern collectors of medieval and contemporary inscriptions gathered these texts for a variety of reasons. Some wanted examples of good latinity; others wanted records of famous people, culled from their tombs; others wanted historical or cultural information about the place in which inscriptions were to be found. For people interested in an elegant verse, or in a pithy summary of a distinguished artist, seeing the text or examining its setting were not important, and often – as far as we can tell today – they derived their information from previous printed collections. Their records of material from Florence tell us about cultural preferences, and about the fame of Florentine Renaissance men, but little about the actual city and its stones. Other collections, however, made by residents of Florence or visitors to the city, are more likely to be based on transcriptions made *in situ*, and can give us some idea of how inscriptions appeared to contemporary viewers, and which caught the eye of contemporary guides.

In what follows I will look at some examples of how early modern visitors and writers recorded the inscriptions of Florence, especially in print, why they did so, and which examples they chose to record: their work provided one route through which information about the city was disseminated across Europe, and their choices played an important role in shaping armchair travellers' perceptions of the city and its scholars. No one in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries published a collection of inscriptions from Florence alone: there is no early modern equivalent to *The Latin inscriptions of Medici Florence* – though there are rough parallels for Padua and Treviso, which cited Latin texts on stone from antiquity to the present, and extracted

[4] Important exceptions include Sparrow 1969; Petrucci 1993; Kajanto 1994; Petrucci 1998; and Hendrix 2018.

information about the histories of their cities from them.[5] But plenty of scholars included material from Florence in their books, and these fall into two obvious categories: travel guides and travel accounts that mention the city; and works collecting inscriptions on various themes.

Travel guides and *journals de voyage*

From around 1550, trips to Italy became increasingly popular among the learned elite from north of the Alps. Many of these proto-grand tourists kept records of where they went and what they saw, and some published their impressions, offering an opportunity for their fellow northerners to learn what they had done. At the same time, speculative authors and publishers began to produce guidebooks to let visitors know what to do and see.[6] Clearly there is some overlap between the two genres, as when a traveller's *journal de voyage* provided recommendations for his peers who were about to undertake a similar trip. Some accounts dealt with trips across Europe, and some focused on Italy.[7] Some guidebooks aimed at an international learned readership and were in Latin; more were in the vernacular.[8] There are also three widely-distributed early modern guidebooks to Florence, all in Italian: Francesco Bocchi's *Le bellezze della città di Firenze* (1591, and revised by Giovanni Cinelli for a 1677 edition), Ferdinando Leopoldo del Migliore's *Firenze città nobilissima* (1684) and Raffaello del Bruno's *Ristretto delle cose più notabili della città di Firenze* (1689).

One problem with studying guidebooks and travel narratives is that the guidebooks tend to be written with one eye on their predecessors, and visitors tend to go to see what those guidebooks tell them to: as a result, a canon of sites can form quickly. And it is true that some early modern guidebooks copy material from others, particularly when a writer is producing something in a different language from his source or when he has not actually been to all the places he covers. In addition, many early modern tourists were escorted by local guides, who presumably would direct them on an established itinerary. Given this general pattern, the variety in how travel writers and guides

[5] Scardeone 1560; Burchelati 1583.

[6] Schudt 1959 remains an invaluable guide to this literature; for some reflections on the genre, see Hendrix 2014. The series "Biblioteca del viaggio in Italia", published by the Centro interuniversitario di ricerche sul Viaggio in Italia, includes useful edition of many accounts of travel to Florence. For English travellers, see also the survey by Giosuè 2004, and various works by Edward Chaney, including Chaney 2014.

[7] For examples of the former, see Moryson 1617, Coryate 1611, or Ray 1673 in English, and Spon and Wheler 1678 or Monconys 1665 in French; examples of the latter include Raymond 1648 and Lassels 1670.

[8] E.g., Schott 1600 and Pflaumern 1628; for a German example, Kranitz 1599.

approach inscriptions is striking. Some writers ignore them; some have information that suggests that they have read them; some refer explicitly to them; and some quote them.

Responses to Florentine inscriptions illustrate this variety. John Evelyn, for example, the famous English diarist who visited Florence in 1643, referred to Cosimo I's bronze statue inscription without quoting it, and the Frenchman Jean Antoine Rigaud talked about the four bronze tablets on the statue and their contents – for example, that the Pope made him Grand Duke – but did not cite the words.[9] Jacques de Villamont quoted only one inscription, and wrongly, recording "Decreto publico patriae" from the monument to Cosimo de'Medici in San Lorenzo, missing out the "pater" and so denying Cosimo his patriarchal authority.[10] Martin Zeiller, who visited Italy in 1628 and 1629, published his *Itinerarium Italiae* in 1640, which blurred travel account and travel guide. He did not actually visit Florence, but he provided his readers with a thorough account of what he had managed to learn; he cited a few inscriptions directly, and sent the reader to his sources for further details.[11] One of Zeiller's sources was Johann Heinrich von Pflaumern, who had first published his account of his travels, the *Mercurius Italicus*, in 1625.[12] On the Duomo in Florence, von Pflaumern wrote that "Monumenta clarorum hominum in hoc templo non pauca exstant, quae ego non omnia, praecipua duntaxat memoro" (a considerable number of monuments to famous men survive in this church; I will not recall them all, just the most prominent), before giving the inscriptions to Ficino, Dante, Brunelleschi, Giotto, and then the memorial to Pope John XXIII from the Baptistery.[13] Pierre Bergeron, an early seventeenth-century French visitor,

[9] Evelyn 1955, 92-93; Rigaud 1601, 77-78 ("à l'un y est escriteau à la teste faisant mention de celuy qui l'a faicte eriger à l'honneur de Cosme de Medicis premier Grand Duc de Toscane. A celui du costé droit est figuré lors qu'il fut fait grand Duc à Rome par le Pope Pio…") on Kragelund 2021, IX.41-44. See also, e.g., the anonymous French visitor whose account of Florence in early 1612 is in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Fr. 19013, 232v-233r, who refers to tombs and their elogia, and lists some of the people buried, but does not quote the texts.

[10] Villamont 1604, 2r, on Kragelund 2021, VII.2. Thomas Lambton, an English traveller who came to Florence in the late 1640s, had a similar approach: he mentions, e.g., 'a Monument of a Patriarch of Constantinople' in Santa Maria Novella (Joseph II, Kragelund 2021, II.14b), but only quotes the Cosimo inscription in San Lorenzo, correctly, and the epitaph to Pico della Mirandola (Kragelund 2021, VII.5; New Haven, Beinecke Library MS Osborn b74, 109 and 111).

[11] E.g., Zeiller 1640, 113, citing Schraderus 1592 and Chytraeus 1594 as well as quoting the inscription from the tomb of Pope John XXIII (Kragelund 2021, II.9).

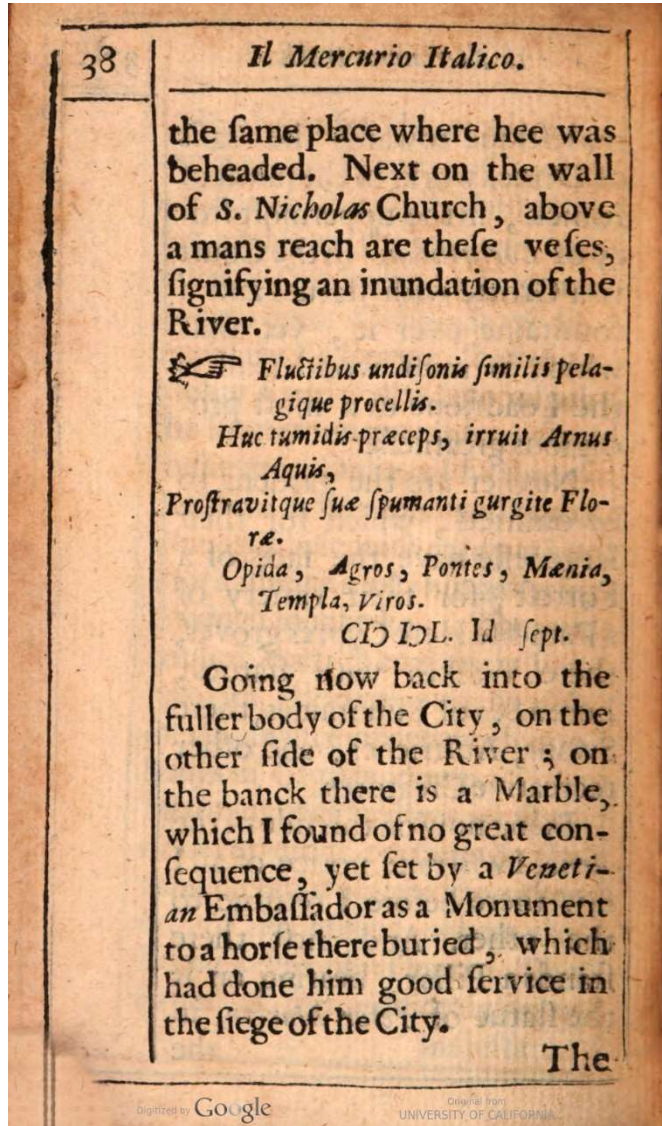
[12] For an introduction to this figure, see Pflaumern 2010, 470-79.

[13] Pflaumern 1628, 143.

took a similar approach, quoting the inscriptions to Bruni and Michelangelo from Santa Croce, to Pico della Mirandola from San Marco, but mentioning the memorials to the Medici in San Lorenzo.[14]

Von Pflaumern, Zeiller, and Bergeron quoted the inscriptions in lower case, and did not reproduce the shape of the letters, or, often, their arrangement in lines, unless they were in verse. Their approach was typical for publications of this period, even when, as in the cases of von Pflaumern and Bergeron, writers had probably seen the texts themselves. Richard Colebrand, who was to become a chaplain to King Charles II of England, visited Florence in 1659, away from England during the last years of the Commonwealth. In his diary he gave a relatively short account of his stay. He recorded an inscription to Ferdinand II, one to Cosimo II, and Michelangelo's epitaph, all in lower case, showing no interest in the form or arrangement of the letters.[15] One exception is the effort made by John Raymond's printer to reproduce the hand illustrating the height of the water in the inscription recording the 1557 flood. Unfortunately, he showed the hand, using a manicule resembling those contemporary annotators used to highlight passages in their texts, without demonstrating how it appeared half-way up the inscription, and then either he, or Raymond, mistranscribed the date and misspelled "oppida" (fig.1).[16] Despite the mistakes, the inclusion of the hand and the rarity of this text in other sources are strong evidence that Raymond saw it himself. Later on the same page, Raymond summarized, rather than quoting, the epitaph for a horse: "there is a Marble, which I found of no great consequence; yet set by a Venetian Embassador as a Monument to a horse there buried, which had done him good service in the siege of the City."[17]

[14] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Fr. 5560, 19v-20r = Bergeron 2005, 86-87.
[15] New Haven, Beinecke Library MS Osborn b266, pp.154-57.
[16] Raymond 1648, 38 on Kragelund 2021, I.2.
[17] Raymond 1648, 38 on Kragelund 2021, IV.13.



38 *Il Mercurio Italico.*

the ſame place where hee was beheaded. Next on the wall of *S. Nicholas* Church, above a mans reach are theſe veſes, ſignifying an inundation of the River.

☞ *Fluctibus undiſonis ſimilis pelagique procellis.*
Huc tumidis præceps, irruit Arnus Aquis,
Proſtravitque ſuæ ſpumanti gurgite Floræ.
Opida, Agros, Pontes, Mœnia, Templa, Viros.
CIↃ IↃL. Id ſept.

Going now back into the fuller body of the City, on the other ſide of the River; on the banck there is a Marble, which I found of no great conſequence, yet ſet by a *Venetian* Embaſſador as a Monument to a horſe there buried, which had done him good ſervice in the ſiege of the City.

The

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Fig. 1 The inscription recording the level of the Arno's flood in 1557, in Raymond 1648, 38. The date is mistranscribed[18]

Von Pflaumern, Colebrand, and Raymond seem to have looked out for inscriptions, therefore, and quoted some that they had seen when they prepared their accounts for publication. Other travellers went further: they had more of what Harald Hendrix has termed the "epigraphical gaze", and made an effort to document what they read more widely, or more precisely.[19] Arnoldus Buchelius, for example, a visitor from the Low Countries whom

[18] For more information about the figures, see Illustrations below.
[19] Hendrix 2018, 391.

Hendrix discusses, included many ancient and modern inscriptions in the *Diarium* he kept of his voyages from the 1580s and 1590s; Florisel de Claveson, who visited Italy in 1608, used capital letters in the fair copy of his journal de voyage to represent the select inscriptions that he recorded.[20] Between 1663 and 1666, the Englishman Philip Skippon travelled around Europe with his teacher John Ray and two other Cambridge students. He kept a detailed journal of what they saw, and made sure to include many inscriptions, both ancient and modern. In Florence, he gave the texts from the Porta Romana, recording the entries of Leo X and Charles V, the Medici family epitaphs in San Lorenzo, and inscriptions from the monuments to Michelangelo, Aretino, and Carlo Marsuppini in Santa Croce.[21] Ray also recorded his impressions of the trip, which he published and dedicated to Skippon, and like Skippon he copied down many texts: inscriptions recording the building and dedication of the Duomo, and well as the 1438 memorial of the general Council, and the inscriptions to Marsilio Ficino, Giotto, and Filippo Brunelleschi; the epitaphs of Michelangelo, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Giambologna; and the text from the monument to the Medici family in San Lorenzo.[22]

The guidebooks to Florence specifically also vary. Francesco Bocchi was attentive to art and architecture, and his work played an important role in promoting Florence as a centre for artistic excellence, which made it attractive to visitors such as von Pflaumern, who was particularly interested in buildings and referred to Bocchi regularly in his *Mercurius*.[23] Bocchi tended to describe monuments without citing the texts on them. In his section for the Duomo, for example, he quoted Poliziano's verses in praise of Giotto, but mentioned the monuments and achievements of Marsilio Ficino and Antonio Squarcialupi, using information from the inscriptions but not quoting them.[24] Cinelli's revision of Bocchi kept the same approach. Bruno cites only one inscription, from Cosimo's statue.[25] Migliore, in contrast, both cites inscriptions and, unusually, gives comments on them. Before quoting the memorial to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, he pointed out the references to

[20] Buchelius, Utrecht Universiteitsbibliotheek MS Hs. 798, e.g., fol. 83r-83v; Claveson, Paris Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Clairambault 1006, e.g., fol. 19v. Claveson's work appears in a modern edition, Claveson 2001. On Buchelius' description of Florence, which he visited in 1588, see de Jong 2002.

[21] Skippon 1732, 632-36; see Daly Davis 2009, a modern edition, with useful introduction, and Sparti 1998 for an account of Skippon in Italy.

[22] Ray 1673, 326-31. On Ray's work, see the brief note in Cianflone 2014.

[23] On Bocchi, see the introduction to Bocchi 2006, 3-22.

[24] Bocchi 1591, 49-50.

[25] Bruno 1689, 94.

the Tagus and the Ganges, saying that the inscription "expressed with a metaphor his most striking quality."[26] He argued that Cosimo had the letters of the inscription from the Mercato nuovo gilded, to demonstrate that "all the things that are left by the sovereign rulers are of gold."[27] This detail of the inscription's appearance is unusual, and good evidence of Migliore's first-hand research. He invited readers to appreciate the gravity of the inscription in honour of Pope John XXIII, which "in a few words says much, keeping away from that unpleasant prolixity, that sometimes debases the actions of distinguished men instead of illustrating them," and again confirmed his attention to the details of the text by confirming that "così stà" beside the reading "FLORENTIE".[28] When he looked at the column inscribed with details of Saint Zenobius's miracle of the elm tree, Migliore acknowledged that the wording and the style of the lettering did not match the date of events that it described, as Vincenzio Borghini had noticed: but there was no doubt, he went on, that a column was erected at the same time as the miracle, or just after. Using Villani and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, he argued it had been restored after the floods of 1333.[29]

What are we to make of this variety? The range of responses suggests that inscriptions were important to many curious visitors to Florence, but that they were not part of a "must-see list". Some visitors were more interested in relics and religious ceremonies, some in art and architecture, and some in the temporary pageantry and spectacles that the city offered; others, humanistically-trained tourists, who would have been aware of Roman models and were very familiar with Latin, would have been more likely to take note of texts on the city's walls and floors. But it is hard to generalize, in part because the reasons for travellers' voyages varied; several went to Italy for primarily religious reasons. And why did the people whose eyes were drawn to texts copy what they saw? Some of the visitors to Florence give us an idea. Inscriptions offered testimony for famous early modern figures. Ray,

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[26] Migliore 1684, 218: 'L'iscrizione è la seguente, esprimiendo assai sotto metafora, la notissima qualità di lui', on Kragelund 2021, VII.5.

[27] Migliore 1684, 562: '…che quelle lettere fossero messe d'oro, come d'oro son tutte le cose che da' Principi sovrani si staccano', on Kragelund 2021, IX.18.

[28] Migliore 1684, 96: 'Notisi la gravità dell'Iscrizione intagliata nella Cassa, appropriata a quel lodevol vso praticato in que' tempi con tanta lode, in poche parole dir molto, recedendo da quella prolissità odiosa, che in cambio d'illustrare, rende a vil talvolta l'azzioni, per altro d'Uomini celebratissimi,' on Kragelund 2021, II.9. He makes similar comments (311-12) on Vincenzio Borghini's epitaph.

[29] Migliore 1684, 115. See Kragelund 2021, II.4 and, Paolini, *Repertorio ad loc.* (http://www.palazzospinelli.org/architetture/stampa.asp?ID=2090, consulted October 21, 2022).

for example, introduced his transcription of Ficino's memorial in the Duomo as follows: "Some Monuments also I observed in this Church: the Inscriptions whereof they being of considerable persons it may not be amiss heer to set down."[30] They could be admired for their linguistic and rhetorical prowess: del Migliore said that Poliziano's memorial to Giotto was worthy of inclusion "for the loftiness of its style, its conception, and the appropriate register of speaking in the language."[31]

Collections of inscriptions

Ray and del Migliore were not the only early modern readers to look to inscriptions as evidence for style and celebrity. A series of early modern publications of inscriptions provided testimony for famous personalities or offered epigrammatic texts for pleasure and imitation. In addition, some editors collected inscriptions alongside other jokey and light-hearted texts for diversion and entertainment; some explicitly presented collections of epitaphs alongside funerary odes as opportunities to reflect on fate and death, of both the prominent and the obscure; and others included genuine examples in manuals advising how to compose inscribed texts. Some of the people involved in these books had been to Florence, but most had not. They used the evidence that travellers and published guidebooks provided, and built on each other's compilations. These works spread information about Florentine inscriptions across Europe and cemented the cultural importance of the city, without usually contributing any real information about her monuments. Almost inevitably, given the way they were put together, these books also spread errors in their transcriptions.

The three fullest collections were Laurentius Schraderus's *Monumentorum Italiae… libri* of 1592, Nathan Chytraeus' *Variorum in Europa itinerum deliciae seu… monumenta* of 1594, and Franz Sweerts' *Selectae Christiani orbis deliciae* of 1608; Chytraeus' and Sweerts' books were subsequently reprinted in several editions. Each of these authors arranged their material geographically, so armchair travellers could roam between major cities, and each included sections devoted to Florence: these books include around 95, 60, and 50 post-classical examples, respectively. Schraderus went to Italy in the 1550s, and again in 1567, where he collected material himself. Although he had travelled, Chytraeus selected some examples from Schraderus, and Sweerts readily admitted to using both.[32] Their dependence on one another is

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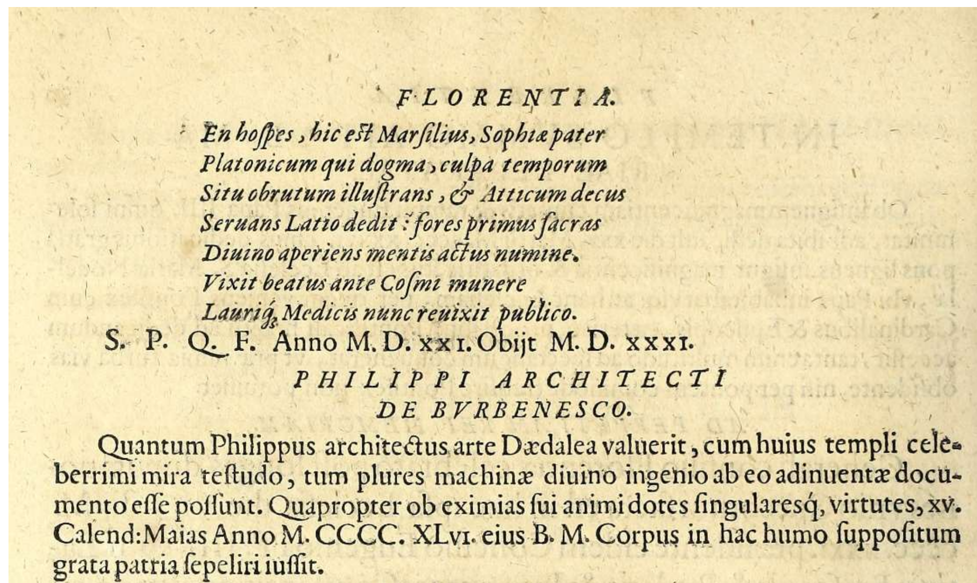
[30] Ray 1673, 327.

[31] Migliore 1684, 18: "degna per l'altezza dello stile, per il concetto, e del proprio modo del favellare in quella lingua," on Kragelund 2021, VI.7.

[32] On Chytraeus, with useful comments on the genre in general, see de Jong 2019.

clear from the way in which they record the epitaph of Filippo Brunelleschi in the Duomo, which caused them problems because it gave his name only as Philippus. Schraderus recorded it under the title "Philippi Architecti de Burbenesco", and then gave the first few words correctly as "Quantum Philippus architectus arte Daedalea valuerit" (Just how successful Filippo was in the art of Dedalus). Perhaps he misread his notes, or misheard a guide explaining who the Philippus was (fig. 2); but it is also possible that he found the inscription in Vasari, who included Brunelleschi's epitaph in the first edition of his *Vite*.[33] In 1594, Chytraeus gave the first line as "Quantum Philippus de Burnebesco Architectus arte Daedalea valuerit," combining Schraderus's title and first line, and swapping the N and B, and then in 1608 Sweerts gave the same reading as Chytraeus.[34] Neither Chytraeus and Sweerts necessarily have any value as independent witnesses to inscriptions from Florence, therefore, but when they gave them correctly, they were important transmitters of information about the city's texts to a learned public.



FLORENTIAE.

En hoſpes, hic eſt Marſilius, Sophiæ pater
Platonicum qui dogma, culpa temporum
Situ obrutum illuſtrans, & Atticum decus
Seruans Latio dedit: fores primus ſacras
Diuino aperiens mentis actus numine.
Vixit beatus ante Coſmi munere
Laurióq; Medicis nunc reuixit publico.
S. P. Q. F. Anno M. D. xxi. Obijt M. D. xxxi.

PHILIPPI ARCHITECTI
DE BVRBENESCO.

Quantum Philippus architectus arte Dædalea valuerit, cum huius templi celeberrimi mira teſtudo, tum plures machinæ diuino ingenio ab eo adinuentæ documento eſſe poſſunt. Quapropter ob eximias ſui animi dotes ſingulareſq; virtutes, xv. Calend: Maias Anno M. CCCC. XLvi. eius B. M. Corpus in hac humo ſuppoſitum grata patria ſepeliri iuſſit.

Fig. 2. The reproduction of Brunelleschi's funerary epitaph in Schraderus 1592, 80v

Several Florentine inscriptions regularly turned up in more focused collections of modern epitaphs.[35] Many books responded to a thirst for information about famous men in the second half of the sixteenth and

[33] Schraderus 1592, 80v, on Kragelund 2021, VI.5; Vasari 1550, 331-32.
[34] Chytraeus 1594, 142; Sweerts 1608, 238.
[35] On the composition of epitaphs in this period, see Kajanto 1993.

seventeenth centuries.[36] Some authors provided portraits or summaries of people's achievements, Marco Mantova Benavides' illustrated collection of lawyers, for example, or Fulvio Orsini's edition of portraits from antiquity.[37] The most famous example of this genre, Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*, included his subjects' epitaphs, where available, at the end of each biography; given the centrality of Florentine artists to Vasari's account, Vasari's work is likely to have played an important role in distributing and popularising the texts of funerary inscriptions for those figures who were buried in Florence, and in prompting visitors (such as Schraderus, above) to look for them. Seyfried Rybisch and Tobias Fendt's 1574 *Monumenta sepulcrorum cum epigraphis* was the first printed collection devoted to illustrations of funerary monuments; the authors included the tombs of humanists, lawyers, and writers ancient and modern. Rybisch was a Silesian who had undertaken a *peregrinatio academica* around Europe between 1548 and 1554, including a stop in Florence in 1554 on his way back home to Breslau.[38] A long time after Rybisch's return, Fendt engraved some of what he recorded, and combined that with material from other sources to create a collection of illustrated memorials.[39] The book includes the monuments to Ficino, Leonardo Bruni, Pico della Mirandola, Angelo Poliziano, and Paolo Giovio from Florence; Rybisch had copied the dedications to Ficino and Giovio in the notebooks from his trip, but had only mentioned the monument to Pico, and had not included any information about Bruni, suggesting Fendt's information about these two came from elsewhere.[40] Wherever he found them, Fendt's were decent sources; his renditions show that he, the engraver, was interested in some aspects of the settings as well as recording the texts accurately, if not the letter shapes (figs. 3 and 3a). The contraction of -qve in line 3 suggests that Fendt was working from a manuscript copy of the text made by someone accustomed to abbreviations.[41] This work, printed in the relatively minor publishing centre of Breslau, is testament to the market for epitaphs in early modern Europe: it was reprinted in 1584, and then issued in new editions in Frankfurt (1585 and 1589), Amsterdam (1638), and Utrecht (1671).

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[36] Guthke 2003 (revised and translated as Guthke 2006) provides an essential account of the history of epitaph collecting, with details on many of the figures mentioned here; Guthke 2001, 25-37 is a useful introduction.

[37] Giovio 1546, subsequently reprinted in 1549, 1551, and 1554; Benavides 1566; Orsini 1570. See, in general, Hagedorn 2020.

[38] Hiernard 2017, 19-57.

[39] For details of the contents, see Hiernard 2017, 395-99.

[40] Hiernard 2017, 383-94, Temps modernes 74 and 75.

[41] I am very grateful to the anonymous reviewer for making this point.

Fig. 3. Bernardo Rossellino's tomb for Leonardo Bruni, in Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23

Fig. 3a. Detail of the epitaph on Rossellino's tomb

Rybisch and Fendt's work was extremely unusual in giving a sense of the monuments to famous men as objects. Most other collections simply gave the texts with no sense of how they physically appeared. Part of the reason for this was pragmatic, clearly: texts were easier to copy and reproduce. And as I suggested above, this probably also reflects the philological backgrounds of the humanists who recorded them. But it also is a reminder of an important aspect of the way in which early modern intellectuals celebrated and remembered the dead. Vasari wrote that after Michelangelo died, "great minds, of which there have always been many in Florence, began to attach above [his] sepulchre verses both in Latin and Italian… those compositions that were printed at that time were only a small part with respect to the many which were written."[42] In some cases, the epitaphs that Vasari included himself in

[42] Cit. and tr. by Wellington Ghatan 2011, 1.

his biographies seem to have come from the tomb, but for some figures he gave more than one epitaph, or couplets that were written on painters' deaths, or verses that he had commissioned himself.[43] One reason for Paolo Giovio's fame, and so for his inclusion in Rybisch and Fendt, was his published *Elogia* of famous men, which included verse tributes that would have accompanied the men's portraits in Giovio's museum; there were not necessarily epitaphs, and some figures received multiple poems. Early modern scholars, therefore, would have been used to reading several verse tributes to notable deceased men, and the editors of collections of epitaphs, like Vasari, often included more than one example, inscribed or not.

We can see how this could affect the transmission of inscriptions when we look at the way editors presented funerary tributes to two Florentine cultural giants, Angelo Poliziano, and Giovio himself. In his *Elogia*, Giovio gives three epitaphs for Poliziano: one composed by Poliziano's pupil Pietro Crinito and, Giovio tells us, attached to the tomb; a very interesting poem on Poliziano's death by Pietro Bembo, entitled "Politiani tumulus"; and then a couplet by an unknown author, playing on Poliziano's name and linguistic ability, as follows: "Politianus in hoc Tumulo iacet Angelus, unum/ Qui caput, & linguas, res nova, tres habuit" (Angelo Poliziano lies in this tomb, who had one head and – a new phenomenon – three tongues).[44] The first of these seems to have been a temporary addition, around the time of Poliziano's funeral, and the third was inscribed on the tomb in S. Marco. The couplet appears in Rybisch and Fendt (fig. 4); the rendition of his name as Policianus, rather than Politianus, could again suggest that Fendt was using a hand-written copy as his source. In Schraderus's version, there are two further lines of verse, after a date: "Obiit anno M.D.IX Sept XXIIII./ Angelus hic clausit cineres varia arte politus/ Ut vix inveniat Ausonis ora parem" (He died on 24 September 1509. Angelo left his ashes shut away here, who was so distinguished in a range of arts, that the Ausonian land can barely find an equal). Chytraeus, Franz Schott, and Philippe Labbe all followed Schraderus in giving the longer version.[45] Sweerts included the first, two-line version, along with a different date ("M.CCCC.XCIIX. Septemb. XXIV. Aetat. XLIV" [24 September 1498, at the age of 44]), and then Crinitus' tribute; Pietro Andrea Canoniero gave the two-line version, and another couplet: "Pieridum columen, Phoebeae gloria turbae/ Angelus

[43] Wellington Ghatan 2011, 5.

[44] Giovio 1546, 25r-25v. For the appended epitaph, see Wellington Ghatan 2015; for Bembo's poem, see Castagna 1995; and more generally on Bembo, Giovio, and the afterlife of Poliziano, Stewart 1997, 8-19.

[45] Schraderus 1592, 82v; Chytraeus 1594, 146; Schott 1620, 301; Labbe 1666, 188.

hoc saxum Politianus habet" (First of the Muses, glory of the host of Phoebus,/ Angelo Poliziano has this tomb).[46] In his guide to Florence, Migliore recorded the two-line version, which he said was behind a confessional; he wrote that Poliziano died in 1498, but had 1499 in his transcription, along with a different form for his age ("MCCCCLXXXXIX. SEPT. XXIV. AETATIS VIL" [24 September 1489, at the age of 44], fig. 5).[47] By the early eighteenth century, French visitors could identify Poliziano's tomb, but claimed that it had no epitaph.[48] The tradition thus preserved a variety of testimonials in verse, along with more than one death date, and suggested that the problems were insoluble. Friedrich Otto Mencke, who wrote a biography of Poliziano in 1736, was understandably exasperated, especially as he had read letters from Poliziano's colleagues recording his death in 1494. But he established that the second couplet that appeared in Schraderus actually derived from collections of *etiosticha* (chronograms) published by Joseph a Pinu and Bernhard Sturm, who wrongly posited that Poliziano died in 1509.[49] Then he discovered from his brother Karl Otto, who, luckily, was in Florence, that the first two lines, along with a date of 1484, and giving Poliziano's age as 40, did actually exist on a small stone, by the much larger epitaph of Pico della Mirandola (fig. 6).[50] By reviewing the tradition, Mencke the historian was able to reject, to his satisfaction, the "dubiae fidei Epitaphium" from Schraderus and others.[51]

[46] Sweerts 1608, 242; Canoniero 1613, 19 and 484.

[47] Migliore 1684, 218.

[48] De Rogissart 1707, 272. See also the account of Jean Mabillon (1724, i.176), who visited in 1686, and claimed that in the vicinity of Pico's tomb "sepultus est, sed sine inscriptione, Angelus Politianus, Johannis amicus, qui obiit anno M. CCCC. XCIV" (Angelo Poliziano, friend of Giovanni, was buried, but without an inscription, who died in 1494). Poliziano's bones had actually been moved in 1663, and the small inscription created then: see Chiaroni 1939, 483.

[49] Mencke 1736, 464-65 on Pinu 1561, C3r and Sturm 1580, vi.13.

[50] Mencke 1736, 466. See also the earlier discussion in Clausius 1718, 66-70.

[51] Mencke 1736, 464.

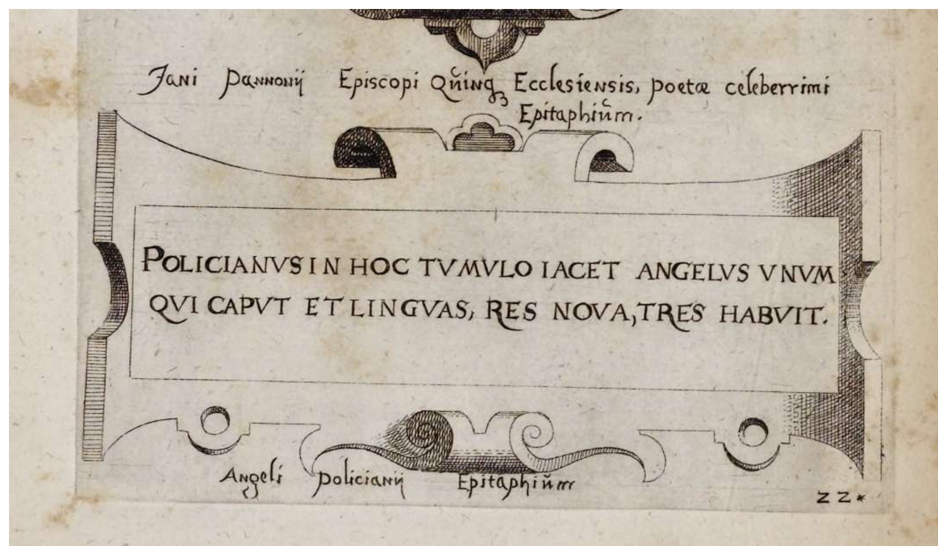
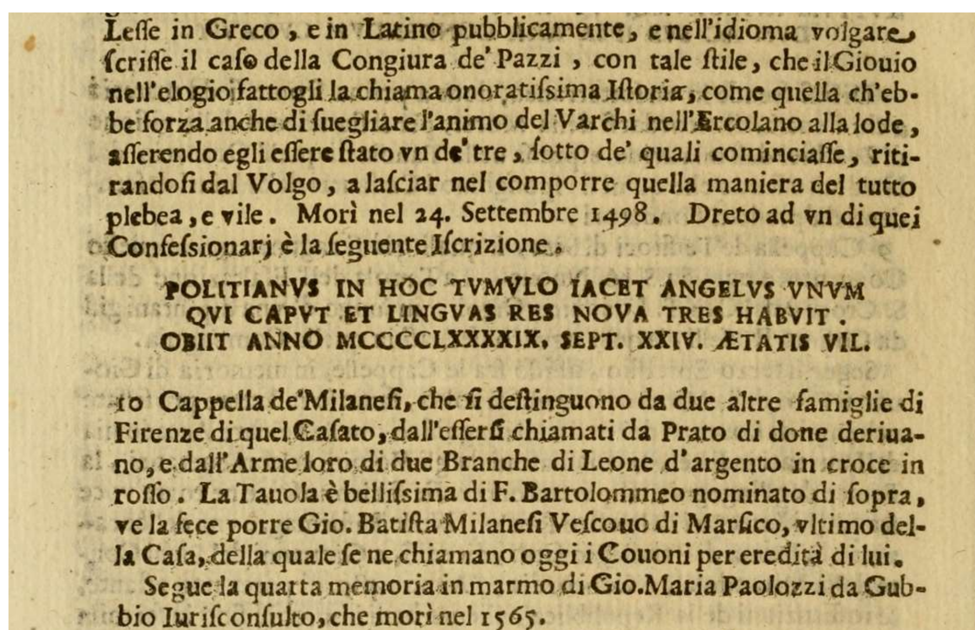


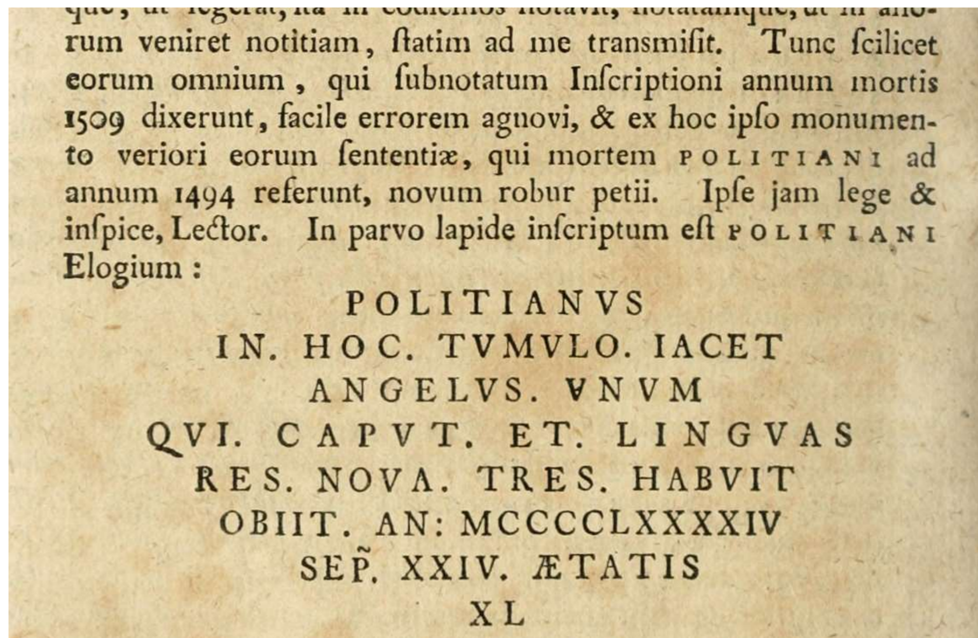
Fig. 4. Poliziano's funerary epitaph. Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23, detail


Lesse in Greco, e in Latino pubblicamente, e nell'idioma volgare
scrisse il caso della Congiura de' Pazzi, con tale stile, che il Giouio
nell'elogio fattogli la chiama onoratissima Istoria, come quella ch'eb-
be forza anche di suegliare l'animo del Varchi nell'Ercolano alla lode,
asserendo egli essere stato vn de' tre, sotto de' quali cominciasse, riti-
randosi dal Volgo, a lasciar nel comporre quella maniera del tutto
plebea, e vile. Morì nel 24. Settembre 1498. Dreto ad vn di quei
Confessionarj è la seguente Iscrizione.

POLITIANVS IN HOC TVMVLO IACET ANGELVS VNVM
QVI CAPVT ET LINGVAS RES NOVA TRES HABVIT.
OBIIT ANNO MCCCCLXXXXIX. SEPT. XXIV. ÆTATIS VIL.

10 Cappella de' Milanesi, che si destinguono da due altre famiglie di
Firenze di quel Casato, dall'essersi chiamati da Prato di done deriua-
no, e dall'Arme loro di due Branche di Leone d'argento in croce in
rosso. La Tauola è bellissima di F. Bartolommeo nominato di sopra,
ve la fece porre Gio. Batista Milanesi Vescouo di Marsico, vltimo del-
la Casa, della quale se ne chiamano oggi i Couoni per eredità di lui.
Segue la quarta memoria in marmo di Gio. Maria Paolozzi da Gub-
bio Iurisconsulto, che morì nel 1565.

Fig. 5. Poliziano's epitaph in Migliore 1684, 218, detail



rum veniret notitiam, ſtatim ad me transmiſit. Tunc ſcilicet eorum omnium, qui ſubnotatum Inſcriptioni annum mortis 1509 dixerunt, facile errorem agnovi, & ex hoc ipſo monumento veriori eorum ſententiæ, qui mortem POLITIANI ad annum 1494 referunt, novum robur petii. Ipſe jam lege & inſpice, Lector. In parvo lapide inſcriptum eſt POLITIANI Elogium:

POLITIANVS
IN. HOC. TVMVLO. IACET
ANGELVS. VNVM
QVI. CAPVT. ET. LINGVAS
RES. NOVA. TRES. HABVIT
OBIIT. AN: MCCCCLXXXXIV
SEP̃. XXIV. ÆTATIS
XL

Fig. 6. Poliziano's epitaph in Mencke 1736, 466, detail

Giovio, who did so much to preserve Poliziano's memory, died in 1552. Soon after, a temporary inscription commemorating him appeared, recording where his bones were at rest "donec… dignum erigatur sepulcrum" (until a suitable monument was built), with a couplet recording his eloquence (fig. 7).[52] Francesco da Sangallo then created a statue of Giovio, which he completed in 1560. In 1574 that was installed by the entrance to the Biblioteca Laurenziana in the Chiostro dei Canonici, with the new inscription placed underneath that is still there today. (Fig. 8; Shortly after it was installed, Nicolas Audebert copied the text, and commented that Giovio's statue had "a thin face, and was of a very simple nature, entirely different from how his writings present him.")[53] When Rybisch and Schraderus visited Florence, in the 1550s, they both saw the temporary inscription, and so recorded that. This meant that it became part of the tradition, and so even when the 1574 inscription replaced it, both continued to appear in collections. Sweerts, for example, has both – with the useful note under the second that "ibidem hodie

[52] Price Zimmerman 1986-87.

[53] Audebert 1983, i.255: "le pourtraict est un visage maigret, et comme de nature fort simple, tout aultre que ses escripts ne le demonstrent."

legitur" (today, there, it reads thus) – but Labbe, in 1666, only the first.[54] Thus an inscription recording its impermanence won immortality.

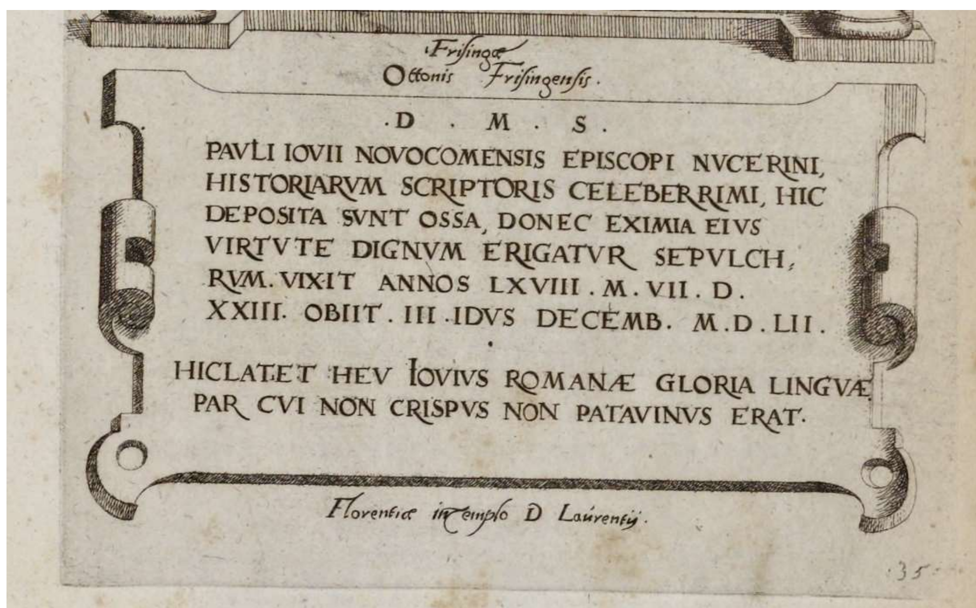


Fig. 7. Temporary inscription recording Paolo Giovio, San Lorenzo. Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23, detail

What motivated this gathering of epitaphs? The editors of other collections did not limit themselves to famous cultural figures, and their works give us a sense of why else people might have been interested in works in this genre. Pietro Andrea Canoniero published a *Flores illustrium epitaphiorum* in 1613, in which he argued explicitly, and stoically, that his collection would be helpful in assuaging the fear of death. He dedicated this to a Florentine patrician, Leonardo Bontempo, and included various epitaphs from the city, including those to Giotto, Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola, Giovio, and Carlo Marsuppini.[55] Despite the fact the texts are organised geographically by city, and despite the Florentine connection – Canoniero had visited the city – in his book he gives no indication that he had seen the texts himself, and on the inner titlepage he records that they came "Ex quodam qui Italica collegit"

[54] Sweerts 1608, 240; Labbe 1666, 204.
[55] Canoniero 1613, 18-19.

Fig. 8. Francesco da Sangallo, Statue of Paolo Giovio, in the cloister of San Lorenzo, Florence

(from someone who collected Italian examples).[56] Gaspard Meturas presented his *Hortus epitaphiorum selectorum, ou iardin d'epitaphes choisis* as an opportunity to witness epitaphs to all sorts of people – young and old, dévot and libertine, husband and wife – and reflect on our mortal condition.[57] Building on the success of his 1608 general collection, however, Sweerts took a more irreverent approach. He published a selection of epitaphs which he called *Epitaphia ioca-seria* (1623), aiming to provide pleasure: he included the epitaph to Bruni, perhaps attracted to the line "Historia luget, eloquentia muta est" (History mourns, eloquence is mute).[58] In his *Thesaurus epitaphiorum* (1666) Philippe Labbe similarly claimed to want to entertain his readers, giving them Florentine examples including the memorials to Pico, Ficino, Bruni, Marsuppini, and Giovio, but also the dedication celebrating the mule's role in the construction of Palazzo Pitti, from the courtyard of the palace. In his *Theatrum funebre* in 1673, Otto Aicher presented his material as a sort of dramatic performance, highlighting the dead from across the social spectrum, among them the tomb of the Greek patriarch from S. Maria Novella (in the section on cardinals, archbishops, and bishops) and the inscription from the equestrian statue of Cosimo I (in the section on dukes and princes).

We can see from other guides and general collections that readers, like del Migliore, looked to epigraphy for examples of eloquence and poetry, and tried to identify famous authors of individual texts. In his 1600 guidebook, Franz Schott identified the memorial to Giotto as being by Poliziano; the fact that he did not provide his readers with a transcription suggests that he was highlighting the celebrity of the writer, as well as that Poliziano's role was well known.[59] Authors who included the Giotto memorial in their general collections of inscriptions also tended to record Poliziano's authorship.[60] Not surprisingly, when authors composed manuals aiming to teach how to write inscriptions, they included genuine examples. Jakob Masen, for example, a Jesuit from Cologne, cited the epitaph of Pico in his 1649 *Ars nova argutiarum honestae recreationis*.[61] Only very occasionally do we get a sense of how people might have read epitaphs. For example, the Portuguese physician to the Medici grand dukes, Stephanus Castrensis, wrote a letter to

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[56] Canoniero 1613, 1. On Canoniero, better known as a political theorist interested in Tacitean reason of state, see D'Alessio 2013.

[57] Meturas 1648.

[58] Sweerts 1623, 124.

[59] Schott 1600, 174. Repeated in e.g., Pflaumern 1628, 144 and Bocchi 1677, 50.

[60] E.g., Labbe 1666, 288.

[61] Masen 1649, 205.

Paganino Gaudenzio, a fellow professor at Pisa, on the elegiac couplet celebrating the Palazzo Pitti mule. He was not wholly impressed: "Ingenue loquar, arte poetica non admodum elaborata mihi carmina visa sunt." (speaking frankly, these verses did not seem to me to be sufficiently worked out with poetic art).[62] Before he left the palace courtyard, Castrensis' muse "gave birth to – or rather miscarried" eight other options, which he provided for Gaudenzio's enjoyment.[63] Perhaps he felt able to criticise a memorial to an animal in ways that he would not for a human subject.

When editors presented inscriptions as examples of wit or striking sentiment or expressive power, they tended to divorce them from their historical context. The site in which the inscription was to be found, and even the identity of the dedicatee was not necessarily important. As we saw above, Schraderus's mistranscription of Brunelleschi's name was repeated in later collections of inscriptions (guides to Florence, however, identified his memorial correctly).[64] Carlo Marsuppini, whose surname also did not appear in his epitaph, became simply *Carolus poeta* in Schraderus, and in those authors who took material from him, such as Sweerts and Canoniero; Labbe described his inscription as "Carori [sic] poetae et philos."[65] In these collections, inscriptions from Florence become less Florentine inscriptions than diverting texts. But early modern historians sometimes cited fifteenth- and sixteenth-century inscriptions as evidence. Paolo Mini, for example, in his 1593 *Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze*, simply quotes lines from the memorial to Marsuppini, but cites the epitaph of the humanist Niccolo Niccoli to illustrate his importance in reviving the study of Greek, and the epitaph of Luigi Marsili, dedicated by the "Florentina civitas" for his exceptional eloquence; unfortunately Mini claims that this Luigi Marsili (d.1394) demonstrated his skills in the Council of Florence (1431-49).[66] In his genealogical history of Tuscan and Umbrian families, which he began publishing in 1668, Eugenio Gamurrini cited plenty of inscriptions, and recorded the coats of arms of prominent clans; his examples tend to come from outside Florence, a testament to Medici power within the city, though

[62] Castro 1639, 25.See Kragelund 2021, I.5, with photograph.

[63] Castro 1639, 25-26.

[64] E.g., Ray 1673, 328, introduces the inscription in the Duomo thus: "Of Philippo Brunelleschi, a famous Architect, who designed the Cupola of this Church, and also that of S. Laurence's."

[65] Schraderus 1592, 84r; e.g., Sweerts 1608, 245; Labbe 1666, 241. Skippon (1732, 636) also knew him as "Carolus, a poet", but Bocchi (1591, 164) was well aware who he was.

[66] Mini 1593, 109; 92-93; 89. For the Marsigli inscription, see Kragelund 2021, VI.2. A Luigi del Sala Marsili was present at the council: see McManus 2008, 253. For the context of Mini's work, see van Veen 2005.

he includes, for instance, the epitaph to Ferdinand Pandolfini in the city.[67] Non-Florentine historians used inscriptions from the city to chart lineages: *Le mausolée de la toison d'or*, for example, a 1689 collection of aristocrats' memorials, includes Cosimo I's epitaph and the inscription from his equestrian statue to illustrate the honours that he received from Pope Pius V.[68]

And finally, which inscriptions?

Which texts caught the eyes of travellers, or were reprinted in inscription collections? Given the ways in which authors of works mentioning Florence the city and editors of inscription collections cite inscriptions – sometimes mentioning them, sometimes quoting them from autopsy, sometimes taking them from other published collections – it is impossible to produce simple tallies from the material that I have surveyed. As the examples that I have mentioned so far suggest, however, these works undoubtedly tend to cite inscriptions related to cultural figures, and mainly figures from the fifteenth century: texts mentioning Brunelleschi, Bruni, Poliziano, Marsuppini, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and others. We can draw two simple conclusions. First, visitors and inscription enthusiasts seem to have preferred to record the memorials of poets, artists, and scholars than those of rulers – in Florence, that is, than those mentioning members of the Medici family. One clear exception is Pierre le Monnier, a notary from Lille, who wrote about his travels through France, the Italian peninsula, and back through German-speaking territories, in 1614. In Florence, his eyes seem to be drawn to famous historical figures and the way in which the Medici appropriated public spaces; he copied the inscriptions on the Porta Romana, for example, recording the triumphal entries of Leo X and Charles V, but not epitaphs in churches.[69] But most visitors and editors focused on the cultural sphere, with the regular exception of the epitaph of Cosimo the Elder and the statue of the Cosimo the Grand Duke. Second, already by the seventeenth century, the canon of notable Florentines focuses on the Quattrocento; the only sixteenth-century figures whose memorials feature regularly are Giovio and Michelangelo. Later erudites and poets – Benedetto Varchi, Vincenzio Borghini, and Piero Vettori most notably of all – do not appear, whether as authors or dedicatees of elogia. Already, perhaps, these collectors of inscriptions suggest Florence's most golden age had passed. Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century works maintain the same basic

[67] Gamurrini 1685, 127.
[68] *Le mausolée* 1689, 159-60.
[69] Le Monnier 1614, 76.

focus, despite more material becoming available.[70] Ironically, policies to present Florence as a great renaissance cultural centre seem to have been all too successful, in that they occluded the political achievements and cultural patronage of the sixteenth century Medici.

The early modern period was indeed the age of the inscription, a genre that delighted baroque sensibilities, and served as a fundamental tool to record, celebrate, and commemorate notable figures. The number of books that quoted inscriptions gives some idea of the fascination that they commanded, a fascination that is largely alien to the twenty-first century. Early modern readers turned to inscriptions to appreciate sentiments well expressed, to reflect on the lives of famous people, and to ponder death. As *The Latin Inscriptions of Medici Florence* makes clear, the Medici and their followers devoted much effort to celebrating the regime and their city by carving texts in stone; the accounts of early modern visitors and early modern inscription collections make clear that they were only half successful. Viewers eagerly transmitted inscriptions that evoked the triumphs of Quattrocento humanism, and that made apparent the artistic riches of Florence; but they had less time for the rulers who did so much to promote her.

[70] See, e.g., Mabillon and Germain 1687, 165-72, and the extra examples in Mabillon's notebook, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Lat. 14187, 123r-124v; Veryard 1701, 240-44; and De Rogissart 1707, i.263-75.

Illustrations

Fig. 1: The inscription recording the level of the Arno's flood in 1557, in Raymond 1648, 38. The date is mistranscribed (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31822038212411&view=1up&seq=82 [consulted 3 November, 2022]). For the original, see Kragelund 2021, fig 1.2 and https://schedaturalab.altervista.org/epigrafe-con-indicazione-della-piena-dellarno-del-1557/ (consulted 3 November, 2022).

Fig. 2: The reproduction of Brunelleschi's funerary epitaph in Schraderus 1592, 80v, detail (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t8nd3742t&view=1up&seq=162 [consulted 3 November, 2022]).

Fig. 3: Bernardo Rossellino's tomb for Leonardo Bruni, in Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23 (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t6838x19z&view=1up&seq=75 [consulted 3 November, 2002]). We can compare the representation of the lettering with the original.

Fig. 3a: Detail of the epitaph on Rossellino's tomb (Wikimedia Commons, © sailko CC-BY-SA-3.0).

Fig. 4: Poliziano's funerary epitaph. Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23, detail (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t6838x19z&view=1up&seq=73 [consulted 3 November, 2022).

Fig. 5: Poliziano's epitaph in Migliore 1684, 218, detail (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t5p85mq0w&view=1up&seq=246 [consulted 3 November, 2022).

Fig. 6: Poliziano's epitaph in Mencke 1736, 466, detail (HathiTrust, Public Domain; [consulted 3 November, 2022).

Fig. 7: Temporary inscription recording Paolo Giovio, San Lorenzo. Rybisch and Fendt 1574, 23, detail (HathiTrust, Public Domain; https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t6838x19z&view=1up&seq=99 [consulted 3 November, 2022).

Fig. 8: Francesco da Sangallo, Statue of Paolo Giovio, in the cloister of San Lorenzo, Florence (Wikimedia Commons, © sailko CC-BY-SA-3.0).

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