

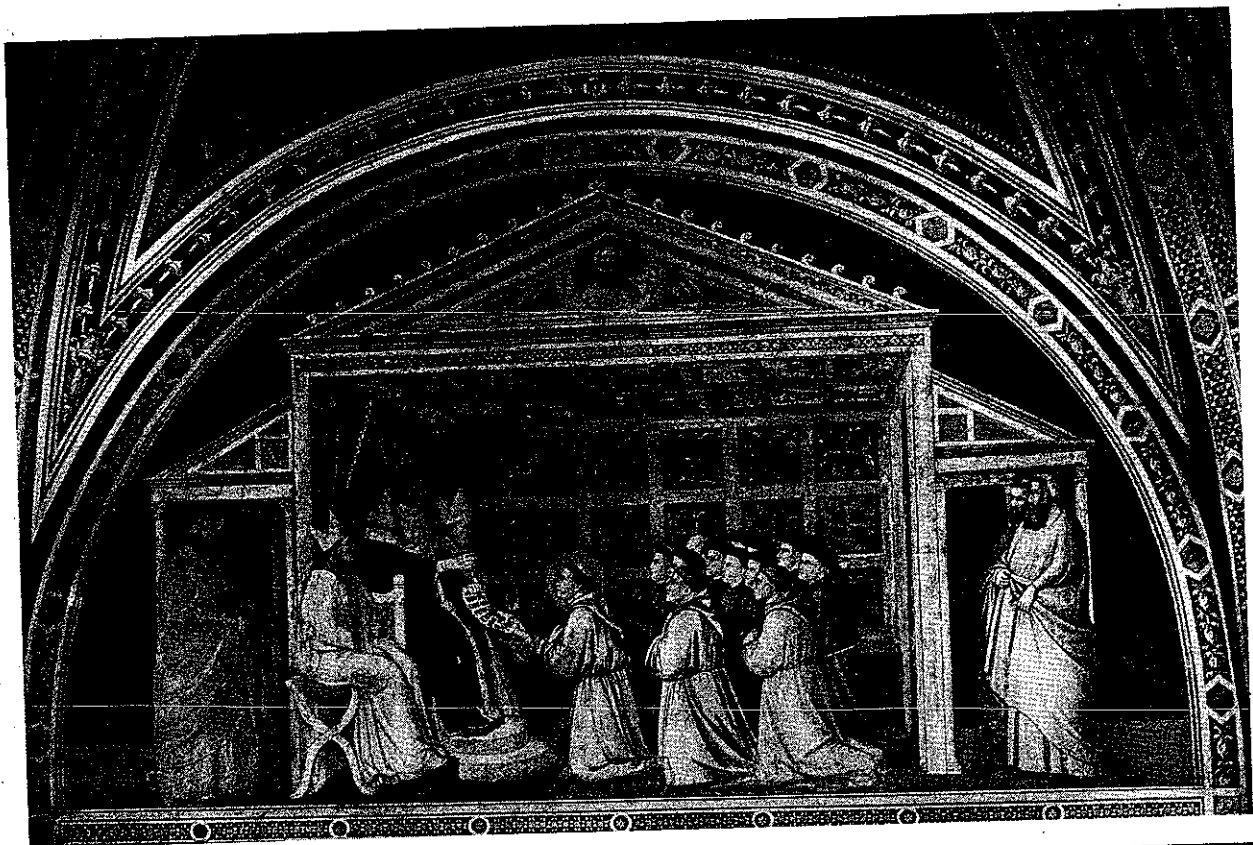
# The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita: The Portraits of Lorenzo de' Medici and His Household (1902)

*Dedicated to My Wife*

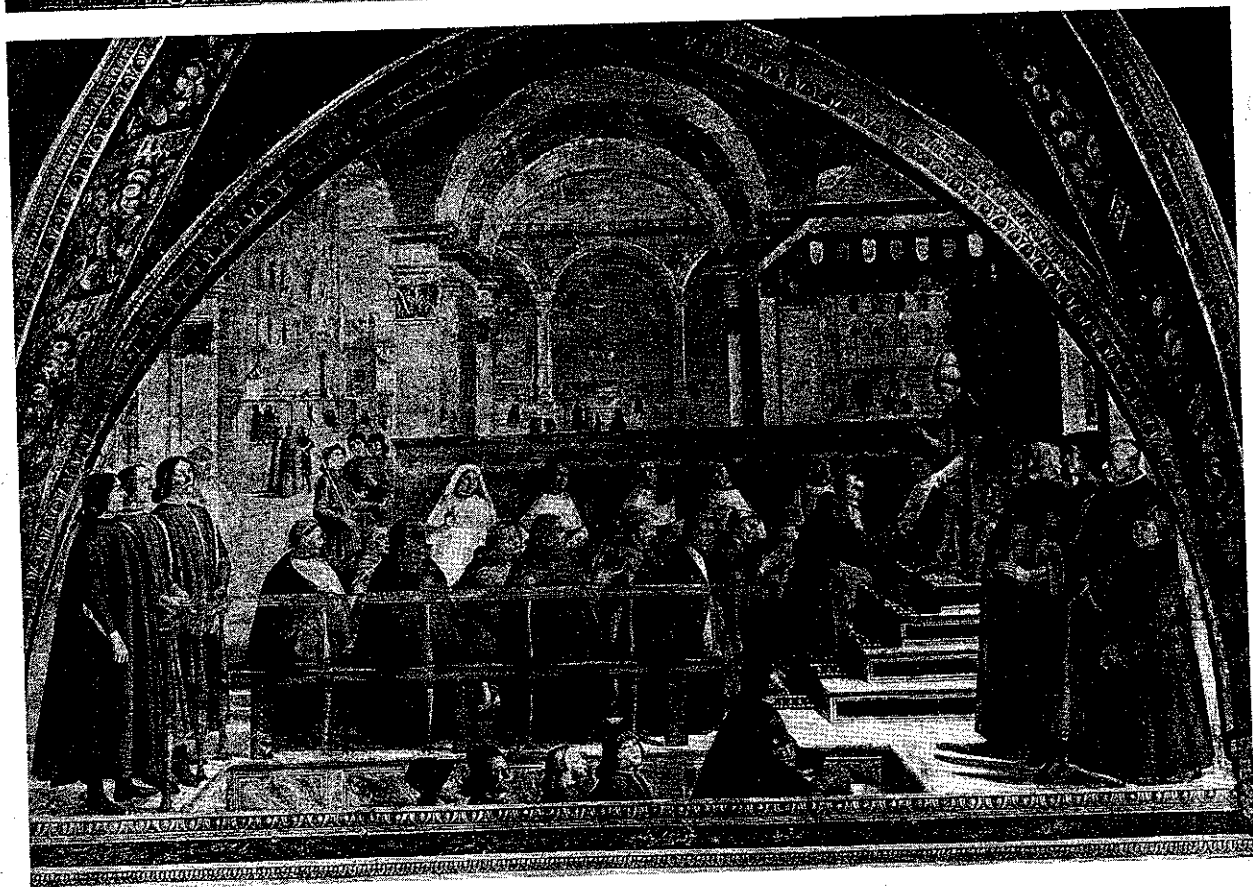
*È grande errore parlare delle cose del mondo indistintamente e assolutamente, e, per dire così, per regola; perchè quasi tutte hanno distinzione ed eccezione per la varietà delle circostanze, in le quali non si possono fermare con una medesima misura; e queste distinzioni e eccezioni non si trovano scritte in su' libri, ma bisogna lo insegni la discrezione.*

—Francesco Guicciardini,  
*Ricordi politici e civili*, vol. 6.

It is a great error to speak of the affairs of this world in absolute terms, without discrimination, and—so to speak—by rule; for they almost always involve distinctions and exceptions, because circumstances vary, and they can never be subject to one single measure. These distinctions and exceptions are not to be found in books: this must be taught by mature discretion alone.



**Fig. 24. Giotto**  
*The Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule*  
 Florence, Santa Croce (see p. 188)



**Fig. 25. Domenico Ghirlandaio**  
*The Confirmation of the Franciscan Rule*  
 Florence, Santa Trinita (see p. 188)

### *Prefatory Note*

- \* With all the authority of genius, that model pioneer, Jacob Burckhardt, dominated the field that he himself had opened up for scholarship: that of Italian Renaissance civilization. But it was not in his nature to be an autocratic exploiter of the land he had discovered. Such, indeed, was his self-abnegation as a scholar that, far from yielding to the temptation of tackling the cultural history of the period as a whole, he divided it into a number of superficially unrelated sectors, which he proceeded to explore and describe with magisterial poise and authority. On the one hand, in *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*,<sup>1</sup> he discussed the psychology of the individual in society without reference to visual art; on the other, in *Cicerone*,<sup>2</sup> he undertook to offer no more than "an introduction to the enjoyment of works of art." Burckhardt was content to do his immediate duty, which was to examine Renaissance man in his most perfectly developed type, and art in its finest manifestations, separately and at leisure, without worrying whether he would ever have time for the comprehensive presentation of the whole culture. If he could only sow the seeds undisturbed, then anyone might garner the harvest.

Even after his death, this connoisseur and scholar of genius presented himself to us as a tireless seeker: in his posthumous *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien*,<sup>3</sup> he opened up yet a third empirical path to the great objective of a synthesis of cultural history. He undertook the labor of examining the individual work of art within the immediate context of its time, in order to interpret as "causal factors" the ideological and practical demands of real life.

Our perception of the greatness of Jacob Burckhardt must not deter us from following in his footsteps. A stay of some years in Florence, researches in the archive there, the progress of photography, and also the local and chronological limitation of the topic, have emboldened me to publish, in the present paper, a supplement to Burckhardt's essay on "The Portrait" in his *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien*. Further studies of the stylistic connections between bourgeois and artistic culture in the circle of Lorenzo de' Medici—on Francesco Sassetti, both as a man and as a patron of art; on Giovanni Tornabuoni and the choir of Santa Maria Novella; on Medicean pageantry and the fine arts; and on other topics—will, I hope, follow in the foreseeable future.

To the friends, colleagues, and counselors of my years in Florence, I hope that these publications will come as a welcome expression of the same approach that Heinrich Brockhaus and Robert Davidsohn maintain in lives devoted to the close and unwearying study of the source material for the history of Florentine civilization.

Hamburg, November 1901

In a living art of portraiture, the motive forces of evolution do not reside solely in the artist; for there is an intimate contact between the portrayer and the portrayed, and in every age of refined taste they interact in ways by which both may be either stimulated or constrained. Either the patron wants his appearance to conform to the currently dominant type, or he regards the uniqueness of his own personality as the thing worth showing; and he accordingly edges the art of portraiture toward the typical or toward the individual.

It is one of the cardinal facts of early Renaissance civilization in Florence that works of art owed their making to the mutual understanding between patrons and artists. They were, from the outset, the results of a negotiation between client and executant. The idea therefore naturally sprang to mind of seeking to present the exact relationship "between portrayer and portrayed" in individual cases from the history of Florentine art, in order to grasp the universal principles behind the thought and conduct of prominent historical figures through specific acts in their real lives.

However, it is far easier to see the desirability of such an experiment, and to venture on it, than it is to bring it to a successful conclusion. In making a comparative study of the relations between artists and patrons, the history of art has only one aspect of the creative process to depend on: namely, its end product. It is rare for any part of the exchange of feelings and opinions between client and artist to reach the outside world; the indefinable, startling truth of the work of art is the gift of an unforeseen, happy moment, and so it most often evades the conscious scrutiny of the individual or of history. Eyewitness testimony being so hard to find, we must try—as it were—to prove the complicity of the public through circumstantial evidence alone.

Florence, the birthplace of modern, confident, urban, mercantile civilization, has not only preserved the images of its dead in unique abundance and with striking vitality: in the hundreds of archival documents that have been read—and in the thousands that have not—the voices of the dead live on. The tone and timbre of those unheard voices can be recreated by the historian who does not shrink from the pious task of restoring the natural connection between word and image. Florence has answers to all the questions that the cultural historian can ask—if only we never tire of asking questions, and if our questions are sufficiently narrow and specific.

The question raised above, that of the effect of the milieu on the artist, can therefore be concretely answered through a comparison between two frescoes, one of which takes the other as a model and represents the same subject, but with the conspicuous addition of portraits of individuals who may be identified as members of a highly specific circle. If we concentrate our whole attention, with the aid of archival and literary researches, on a single fresco by Domenico Ghirlandaio in the chapel of Santa Trinita in Florence, the contemporary background emerges as a participant force with great immediacy and in entirely personal terms.

The lover of art whose only concern is enjoyment, and who believes on principle that a comparative, intellectualized approach is an attempt to work

- \* with inappropriate means, may console himself, as he reads the following study, in the contemplation of the masterpieces of Italian portraiture that emerge, among them a number of hitherto overlooked child portraits that are probably the earliest in the Florentine early Renaissance.

In the church of Santa Croce in Florence, soon after 1317, Giotto decorated the chapel of the Bardi family with scenes from the legend of Saint Francis.<sup>4</sup> One of these frescoes, a lunette, shows the important moment in the saint's career when he and his twelve friars knelt before the throne of the pope, in the presence of the College of Cardinals, to receive the confirmation of his rule. A summary indication of a basilica with single side aisles, and with a pediment containing the image of the apostle Peter, establishes that the action takes place in Saint Peter's in Rome; otherwise there is no scene-setting to distract the attention. In clear outline, the principal action fills the surface of the lunette and monopolizes the viewer's attention; in either side aisle, a pair of elderly, bearded men in voluminous cloaks bear witness to the sacred scene on behalf of Christendom at large.

- Around 160 years later (between 1480 and 1486), a Florentine merchant, Francesco Sassetti, commissioned the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio and his workshop to paint the legend of Saint Francis as a series of six frescoes in the memorial chapel of his family in the church of Santa Trinita. Sassetti's primary intention was undoubtedly to pay due honor to his own namesake and patron saint; similarly, he made over his own ancient family home to the Church for the express purpose of ensuring that on all major feast days a solemn mass should be said in honor of Saint Francis.<sup>5</sup>
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- Giotto depicts the human body because the soul is able to speak through the lowly physical shell; Ghirlandaio, by contrast, takes the spiritual content as a welcome pretext for reflecting the beauty and splendor of temporal life—just as if he were still apprenticed to his goldsmith father, with the task of displaying the finest merchandise to the avid gaze of customers on the feast of Saint John. Ghirlandaio and his patron extend the donor's traditional modest prerogative of being devoutly present in some corner of the painting, and coolly assume the privilege of free access to the sacred narrative, as onlookers or even as participants in the action.
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A comparison between the two frescoes reveals how radically secularized the social life of the Church had become since Giotto's day. So massive is the change in the official visual language of the Church that even a viewer with a general knowledge of art history, coming unprepared to Domenico Ghirlandaio's fresco, would at first sight imagine it to be anything but a scene from sacred legend. He might, for instance, suppose it to be a depiction of some church festival on the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, dignified out of the ordinary by the presence of the Pope in person; for there, in the background, is the Palazzo Vecchio,<sup>6</sup> with the Loggia de' Lanzi opposite. Enlisting the aid of photography,<sup>7</sup> we then realize that this historic Church occasion is taking place in a Renaissance loggia with pilasters and arches—presumably in deference to residual ecclesiastical and historical

qualms, and to prevent the scene from merging directly into the factual Florentine background.

Even so, neither loggia nor choir stalls, nor even the balustrade behind the bench of Cardinals, can shield the pope and Saint Francis from the intrusion of the donor's family and their friends. Sassetti's action in including himself, with his young son Federigo,<sup>8</sup> his elder brother Bartolomeo,<sup>9</sup> and opposite them his three adult sons, Teodoro I, Cosimo, and Galeazzo, might be regarded as permissible, because they at least remain modestly tucked away on the periphery of the action; but to introduce, between Francesco and Bartolomeo, none other than Lorenzo de' Medici in person begins to look like an unwarranted secular incursion. There is, however, more to this than a compliment to the most powerful man in Florence: Lorenzo was a close associate of the Sassettis, for Francesco was at one time a partner in the Medici Bank in Lyons, and was later entrusted with the onerous task of setting the Lyons firm's chaotic affairs in order.

Whatever theoretical arguments there may be to justify the inclusion of members of Sassetti's *consorteria*, they do not affect the extraordinary fact that—whereas Giotto, in his rapt and lapidary simplicity, concentrates on the unsought elevation of a group of unworldly monks to the status of sworn vassals of the Church Militant—Ghirlandaio, armed with all the self-regarding culture of civilized Renaissance man, transforms the legend of the “eternally poor” into a backdrop for Florence's opulent mercantile aristocracy.

Giotto's mere earthlings dare to show themselves only under the protection of the saint; but Ghirlandaio's confident personages patronize the characters in the legend. This is no mindless arrogance: these are churchgoers who love life, and whom the Church must accept on their own terms, because they are no longer prepared to be kept in a posture of abject submission. The artist and his patron maintain the proprieties: they do not cross the border like an enemy patrol but introduce their own likenesses into the chapel *alla buona*, with casual good humor, rather as a bizarre clan of “drolleries” might claim squatters' rights over the margins of a medieval book of hours—or, better, in the edifying mood of a suppliant who, whether in gratitude or in hope, appends his own effigy to a miraculous image as a votive gift.

By associating votive offerings with sacred images, the Catholic Church, in its wisdom, had left its formerly pagan flock a legitimate outlet for the inveterate impulse to associate oneself, or one's own effigy, with the Divine as expressed in the palpable form of a human image. The Florentines, descendants of the superstitious Etruscans, cultivated this magical use of images in the most unblushing form, right down to the seventeenth century; and the most significant instance of this (hitherto unnoticed by art historians) invites examination in some detail.

The church of Santissima Annunziata afforded to the leading citizens of Florence, and to distinguished foreigners, the coveted privilege of setting up wax effigies of themselves, dressed in their own clothes, in their own lifetimes.<sup>10</sup> In the age of Lorenzo de' Medici, the making of these effigies (*voti*)

was a highly developed and highly regarded branch of art, dominated by the  
 \* Benintendi, pupils of Andrea Verrocchio, who for generations ran an extensive manufacturing business on behalf of the Church and accordingly bore the name of "Fallimagini" (image makers).

Lorenzo himself, after his escape from the daggers of the Pazzi in 1478, had Orsino Benintendi make three life-size wax figures of himself; variously costumed, these were then installed in separate Florentine churches. In a church on Via San Gallo, his effigy hung in the clothes he wore on the day of his brother Giuliano's murder, when he showed himself to the crowd from his window, wounded but alive; at the Annunziata he stood above a door wearing the *lucco*, the state dress of the Florentine republic; and he sent a third  
 \* wax portrait figure as a votive offering to the church of S. Maria degli Angeli in Assisi.<sup>11</sup>

By the beginning of the sixteenth century there were so many of these *voti* at the Annunziata that space ran out; the figures had to be suspended from the entablature on cords, and the walls had to be reinforced with chains. It was not until worshipers had several times been disturbed by falling *voti* that the whole waxworks was banished to a side courtyard, where its remnants were still to be seen at the end of the eighteenth century.

This lawful and persistent survival of barbarism, with wax effigies set up in church in their moldering fashionable dress, begins to cast a truer and a more favorable light on the inclusion of portrait likenesses on a church fresco of sacred scenes. By comparison with the magical fetishism of the waxwork cult, this was a comparatively discreet attempt to come closer to the Divine through a painted simulacrum. These were the same pagan Latins who actually contrived to interpret Dante's poetic vision of hell as a literal experience and tried to enlist the awesome poet's supposed command of the infernal arts for their own magical purposes: when Duke Visconti of Milan sought to cast a spell on Pope John XXII by an arcane ritual of burning incense before his miniature effigy in silver, the first person to whom he turned with  
 \* an—unsuccessful—request to carry out the invocation was none other than Dante Alighieri.<sup>12</sup>

When conflicting worldviews kindle partisan emotions, setting the members of a society at each other's throats, the social fabric inexorably crumbles; but when those views hold a balance within a single individual—when, instead of destroying each other, they fertilize each other and expand the whole range of the personality—then they are powers that lead to the noblest achievements of civilization. Such was the soil in which the Florentine early Renaissance blossomed.

The citizen of Medicean Florence united the wholly dissimilar characters of the idealist—whether mediævally Christian, or romantically chivalrous, or classically Neoplatonic—and the worldly, practical, pagan Etruscan merchant. Elemental yet harmonious in his vitality, this enigmatic creature joyfully accepted every psychic impulse as an extension of his mental range, to be developed and exploited at leisure. He rejected the pedantic straitjacket of

"either-or" in every field, not because he failed to appreciate contrasts in all their starkness, but because he considered them to be reconcilable. The artistic products of the resulting compromise between Church and World, between classical antiquity and Christian present, exude all the concentrated enthusiasm of a bold, fresh experiment.

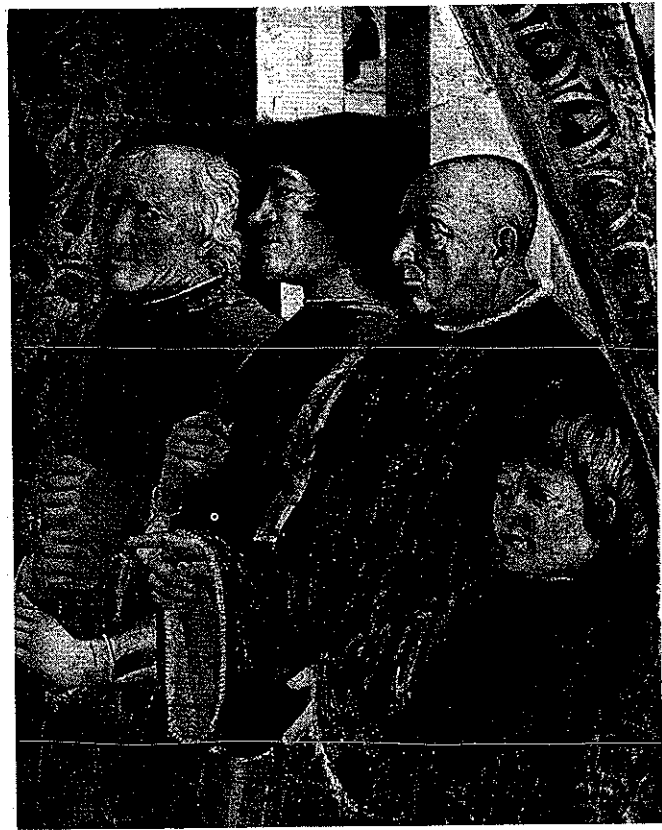
Francesco Sassetti is just such a type of the honest and thoughtful bourgeois living in an age of transition who accepts the new without heroics and without abandoning the old. The portraits on the wall of his chapel reflect his own, indomitable will to live, which the painter's hand obeys by manifesting to the eye the miracle of an ephemeral human face, captured and held fast for its own sake.<sup>13</sup>

These marvelous portrait heads by Domenico Ghirlandaio have still to receive their critical due, whether as unique documents of cultural history or, in art-historical terms, as unsurpassed pioneer examples of Italian portraiture. \* This applies even to the life-size portrait of Lorenzo il Magnifico himself, though it is the sole surviving, authentic, datable, contemporary portrait of him in the monumental fresco style by a master of the first rank. Although the work has long been known to art history,<sup>14</sup> no one has yet performed the simple, obvious duty of having a large-scale detail photograph taken, or at least subjecting the image to a thorough scrutiny. This can be accounted for, to some extent, by the fact that the fresco is very high up, seldom well lit, and even then hard to discern in detail. And yet it happens that Lorenzo's appearance is a matter of profound and universal human interest. Our just desire to have an accurate image of his outward self derives not only from a natural historical curiosity but from the mysterious nature of the phenomenon that he represents: that a man of such exceptional ugliness should have become the spiritual focus of a supreme artistic civilization—and at the same time the most irresistibly charming of autocrats, disposing of human wills and hearts as he pleased.

Contemporary writers agree in describing the grotesque deficiencies of his appearance: shortsighted eyes; a flattened nose with a bulbous, drooping tip, which in spite of its obtrusive appearance was not even equipped with a sense of smell; an extraordinarily large mouth; hollow cheeks; a pallid skin.<sup>15</sup> The other portraits of Lorenzo known to us, both in sculpture and in painting, mostly show a pinched, unprepossessing, criminal-looking face, or else the shrunken features of a man in pain; of the enchantment that emanated from Lorenzo—the nobility, the dignity, and the humanity—nothing is to be seen. It is only Ghirlandaio, in this fresco, who allows us to sense the spiritual quality that could make such demonic, distorted features so irresistibly attractive. \*

The eyebrows and the eyes are not (as they are, for instance, on the medals by Pollaiuolo and Spinelli)<sup>16</sup> gathered together into a beetling promontory; \* beneath a gently curved brow, the eye gazes into the distance with an air of calm expectancy, and not without a trace of benevolent, princely condescension. The upper lip is not ominously pressed against the lower lip but rests lightly on it, conveying an expression of effortless superiority; at the corner of





**Fig. 26. Domenico Ghirlandaio**  
*Poliziano and Giuliano de' Medici*  
 Detail of fig. 25 (see p. 194)



**Fig. 27. Domenico Ghirlandaio**  
*Lorenzo de' Medici and Francesco Sassetti*  
 Detail of fig. 25 (see p. 191)

**Figs. 28a,b. Spinello**  
*Lorenzo de' Medici*  
 Medal (see pp. 191, 203)

the mouth there lurks a combative, ready, ironic wit, softened almost into humor by the placid crease in the cheek. The whole personality breathes a sense of supreme assurance, with an unerring instinct for holding his closest associates at their proper relative distances. The right hand clasps his scarlet coat together on his chest; the left forearm is stretched out, and the hand is raised, half-startled, half-demurring.

Francesco Sassetti, too, is making a momentary hand gesture: he is pointing straight ahead with his index finger, evidently toward his three sons, who stand on the far side, in order to mark them out as members of his family.

Lorenzo's startled gesture has a different, and much more overtly surprising, motivation: the hard stone pavement of the Piazza della Signoria has opened up beneath his feet to reveal a stairway, on which three men and three children are climbing up toward him. This is evidently a deputation of greeting, whose members (although only their heads and shoulders are visible) have all the verve of a Florentine *improvvisatore*, each approaching Lorenzo, his lord and master, with his own entirely personal nuance of devotion.

So eloquent is the mute interaction between Lorenzo and this group that on close consideration one comes to see the "deputation on the stairs" as the artistic and spiritual center of gravity of the entire composition, and to wish that these lively presences could speak for themselves. Let us try, therefore, to find what these individuals—whose entrance means so much to Francesco Sassetti that he has so remarkably given over the foreground of his picture to them—may have to say. They are quite willing to talk. Only resort to a variety of subsidiary evidence—documents, medals, paintings, and sculptures—and they will begin to tell us all manner of intimate, beguiling, and curious things about the family life of Lorenzo il Magnifico, leaving Sassetti himself and his family, for the time being, firmly in the background.

The leader of the group, the man with the sharp profile, loses his anonymity at once if we compare him with his effigy on a medal. This is Messer Angelo Poliziano,<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo's erudite friend and fellow poet: Poliziano of the unmistakable—and much mocked—aquiline nose, with its pendulous, Epicurean tip; the shallow upper lip; and the full-lipped gourmet's mouth.<sup>18</sup> Lorenzo had entrusted Poliziano with the education of his children—though not without some initially effective opposition on the part of his wife, Madonna Clarice, whose sure, feminine intuition divined the lack of a firm moral backbone in the purely aesthetic, pagan idealism of this Renaissance scholar. From 1481 onward, Poliziano was back in favor. Leading the party, cap in hand, in the attitude of a devoted retainer, he climbs the stairs toward Lorenzo. He can be sure that his master will pardon the intrusion, for those whom he now brings to him are the pride of the house of Medici and a credit to his own skill as an educator: they are Lorenzo's own sons, Piero, Giovanni, and Giuliano.

We see only the children's heads and shoulders, but in Ghirlandaio's hands such universal expressive devices as the attitude of the head in relation to the body, the direction of the gaze, and the play of facial expressions become

instruments of great subtlety with which he captures the successive nuances of a princely education, from the carefree child to the ruler with a public image to maintain. Little Giuliano,<sup>19</sup> whom, as the youngest, the tutor may not yet allow to leave his side, steals a rapid and curious glance at the spectator from his brown eyes, while his mentor, Angelo, gazes upward, rapt in devotion. Giuliano knows that he must immediately face forward again.

\* Piero,<sup>20</sup> the eldest, who follows, also looks out at us, but confidently, with the arrogant indifference of the future autocrat. The proud, Roman blood of the Orsini, inherited from his mother, is already beginning to rise, ominously, in rebellion against the clever, compromising, mercantile Florentine temperament. In later life, Piero never allowed himself to be painted except as a knight in armor: a typical, and fateful, sign of the superficiality of a man who, when only good generalship could have saved his position as ruler of Florence, proved to be barely more than a decorative tournament fighter.

\* The chubby features of Giovanni,<sup>21</sup> the future Pope Leo X, still bear a child-like expression, thanks to his snub nose [fig. 29]; the fleshy lower part of the face, with its prominent lower lip, already contains the germ of the imposingly full features of Leo X.<sup>22</sup> Giovanni does not yet wear the tonsure, which dates from 1 June 1483; and as this sign of ecclesiastical dignity, so keenly desired by Lorenzo as the most visible success of his own Roman policy, would certainly not have been overlooked, this gives us the middle of 1483 as the latest date for the completion of the fresco. This would lead us to assume that Piero was then around twelve, Giovanni seven and a half, and little Giuliano four and a half, which corresponds very well to the look of the children.

It is harder to identify the two men whose heads conclude the little procession: peerless examples of portraiture that seem to unite the noblest and most distinctive qualities of both the Flemish panel painting and the Italian fresco, reflecting the inner life of the soul in a style of monumental grandeur [fig. 32].

The first of these heads is impossible to identify by reference to any contemporaneous portrait; but on internal evidence I believe that this striking face—with its shrewd but good-natured eyes, its scornfully flared nostrils, its sarcastic mouth, which looks ready for a quick verbal exchange, its remorselessly jutting chin—is that of Matteo Franco, Lorenzo's confidant, elementary schoolmaster to his children, and Poliziano's best friend.

In the letter that Poliziano wrote to Piero in 1492, to congratulate him on appointing Matteo Franco as a canon of the cathedral, he described Matteo and himself as a celebrated example of friendship.<sup>23</sup> Poliziano could find no praise high enough for the services that Matteo had performed for Lorenzo's family; and indeed they were so varied as to be hardly possible to overestimate. By profession, and in his capacity as a fellow tutor and as a cleric, he was Poliziano's colleague; but the loyal and self-sacrificing Matteo was temperamentally worlds apart from that cool, erudite, and refined man of letters. His own sole literary productions are the notoriously libelous sonnets to Luigi Pulci, still alive in Italian oral tradition, instinct with the spontaneous genius



**Fig. 29. Domenico Ghirlandaio**  
*Piero and Giovanni de' Medici*  
Detail of fig. 25 (see p. 194)



**Fig. 30. Leo X**  
Medal, Florence, Museo Nazionale (see p. 194)



**Fig. 31. Spinello**  
*Poliziano*  
Medal (see p. 193)



**Fig. 32. Domenico Ghirlandaio**  
*Luigi Pulci and Matteo Franco*  
 Detail of fig. 25 (see p. 194)



**Fig. 33. Compare della viola**  
 Woodcut from Luigi Pulci, *Morgante* (Florence, 1500)  
 (see p. 201)

of a man of the Tuscan people for whom a swearword was a contact with his native soil.

Lorenzo called this uninhibited, licensed jester "one of the first and dearest members of his household"; and when his favorite daughter, Magdalena, was married off for political reasons to a pope's son, Franceschetto Cybò, he sent Matteo along with her as a fatherly friend. He could not have made a better choice; for in Magdalena's service Matteo proved to be a man for all seasons who oversaw the household, kept a close watch on her delicate health, nursed her, even made soup for her, and whiled away the time with Florentine jokes when her husband was late home. When need arose, he even ran a spa hotel in Stigliano for her, the revenues of which formed one of Cybò's meager sources of income. It was as a reward for these services as "slave and martyr of the Cybò"<sup>24</sup> that Matteo received the Florentine canonry. An insatiable benefice hunter, he later also secured the mastership of a hospital in Pisa; but at least he did not treat this as a sinecure, for it was in the course of duty, tending his patients during an epidemic, that he died in 1494.

Corroboration of the likely presence of this earthy domestic cleric is supplied by a letter from Matteo himself. It was Ghirlandaio's unique achievement, in these monumental and yet intimate portraits, to have discovered and depicted the world of childhood; and Matteo equaled him in his subtle appreciation of the spontaneous, humorous, and endearing nature of the child's awakening soul. In a letter to his friend Bibbiena, Lorenzo's secretary, he described the welcome accorded by Lorenzo's children to their mother, Clarice, on her return to Florence from a journey to take the waters at a spa. Matteo, who was in attendance as Clarice's majordomo, wrote to Bibbiena on 12 May 1485:

Shortly after passing Certosa, we came across Paradise, full of rejoicing angels—that is to say, Messer Giovanni, Piero, Giuliano, and Giulio, in a group with their retinues. As soon as they saw their mother, they bounded from their horses, some by themselves and some with assistance. They all ran to embrace Madonna Clarice, with so much joy and happiness, so many kisses, that it would take more than a hundred letters to describe it. Even I could not remain on horseback, and I dismounted. Before they remounted, I embraced them all and kissed each of them twice, once for myself and once for Lorenzo. Sweet Giuliano said, with a long "O": "O, o, o, o, o, where is Lorenzo?" We said, "He has gone to the Poggio to meet you." He said, "Oh, never," almost in tears. You never saw anything so affecting. Piero has become a handsome lad, the best-looking boy you could find on God's earth. He has grown somewhat, and his face in profile is like that of an angel; his hair is on the long side, and more flowing than it was; it looks charming. Giuliano is as fresh and lively as a rose, as clean and shining as a mirror. His eyes look happy and very intelligent. Messer Giovanni still looks good; not much color in his face, but healthy and natural. And Giulio a healthy brown complexion. All of them, in fact, are bounding with high spirits. And so we pressed on, full of joy, along Via Maggio to Ponte a Santa Trinita, San Michele Berteldi, Santa Maria Maggiore,

Canto alla Paglia and Via de' Martegli. Then we arrived home, for ever and ever and deliver us from evil amen.<sup>25</sup>

Although this letter was written two years later than the assumed date of the fresco,<sup>26</sup> the characterization of the individual children is startlingly close to that of Ghirlandaio's faces.

The last character head, too, belongs (we surmise) to a well-known figure in the Medici circle: a man who, if he were absent, would decidedly be missed. This is Luigi Pulci.<sup>27</sup> A gaunt, pale, joyless face, looking up trustfully, if \* gloomily, to Lorenzo; a prominent nose with heavy nostrils, a thin upper lip, resting on the prominent lower lip with a hint of embitterment. A comparison is available with the portrait of Pulci in the fresco by Filippino Lippi in the church of S. Maria del Carmine in Florence;<sup>28</sup> the juxtaposition is not convincing at first sight, but it should be remembered that Filippino's portrait was painted later, probably after Pulci's death in 1484, and from a death mask: this is suggested by its lifeless look, which contrasts with all the lively-looking heads that surround it, by the hollowness of the eye socket despite the superimposed half-open eye, by the absence of hair, and by the awkwardly positioned neck. The whole lower half of the face, including the relative positions of nose, lips, and chin, together with the highly individual expression of weary resignation, is entirely the same in both heads.

Even without the portrait by Filippino, internal evidence would immediately point to Pulci. He was an intimate of Lorenzo's and his confidant in political matters; he was also the celebrated author of a humorous popular epic of chivalry, the *Morgante*, the cantos of which were performed at the Medici table (to the particular delight of Lorenzo's mother, Lucrezia). But what has kept him alive in popular memory is his famous flyting contest with Matteo Franco. The sonnets of both men are superb specimens of a courtly genre, the poetry of vituperation, that Lorenzo found vastly amusing—so much so that even little Piero, at much the same age as in the fresco, was made to declaim them for the amusement of the adults present.

Until weightier evidence or sounder hypotheses establish the contrary, we are at liberty to postulate the *concetto* that these two intimate foes meet here in the one thing in which they were profoundly united: the wish to demonstrate their veneration for Lorenzo.

It may be doubted whether even this tributary procession of his own children, with their retainers, would have been entirely welcome to Lorenzo at such a moment. However, the shrewd Poliziano surely knew just how far he could go. Lorenzo had once had occasion to make it clear to him that he was a ruler and a statesman first and foremost, and only secondarily a father, and that his children's ailments could never be a primary concern. The following exchange of letters took place in April 1477,<sup>29</sup> after Poliziano had attempted to break the news of his children's illness to him by roundabout means.

Lorenzo de' Medici to Angelo Poliziano:

I gather from your letter to Michelozzo that my little sons are in poor health. I bore that news, as befits a humane father, with heavy sorrow. You, surely foreseeing this distress, sought to fortify my soul with such a profusion of words and arguments that you appear to have fallen into the greatest doubt of my firmness of character. Although I am sure that this was prompted by your love for me, nonetheless it grieved me much more than any indication of my children's ill health. For, although children are said to be of the substance of a parent, the infirmity of one's own mind is a much more intimate concern than that of one's children. Those whose minds are sound and healthy easily find soundness in all other matters; but for those whose souls are infirm, there is never any safe haven from the tempests of fortune; there are no waters so still, no calm so serene, that they cannot be agitated by emotion.

Do you think me so feeble by nature as to be moved by such a trifle? Even if my nature is of the sort to be readily pulled this way and that by disturbances, a mind strengthened by wide experience of life has long since learned to be constant. I have known not only sickness but sometimes death in my children. The untimely death of my father, snatched away when I was twenty-one years old, so exposed me to the blows of fortune that at times I regretted being alive. For this reason you must believe that the valor that nature denied me, experience has supplied...

Poliziano replied:

It was not because I doubted your steadfastness and wisdom that I wrote to Michelozzo rather than to you about your children's health, but because I feared to seem thoughtless, if a message of some importance from me were to be presented to you at an inopportune time. For the courier often delivers a letter at the wrong time and place, whereas the secretary watches for all the critical moments...

In itself, however, the excessive fervor with which the twenty-eight-year-old Lorenzo here proclaims his stoical view of life demonstrates that Poliziano's concern sprang from a tact that was fully justified in human terms, however inadmissible at court. In later years, with the benefit of a sure self-knowledge, Lorenzo would probably not have been so quick to assert his own outward composure and dignity. He possessed, as none of his contemporaries did, the gift of an unshakable inner discretion. It was his most effective political instrument; it made Florence into a state whose friendship was sought on all sides, and Lorenzo himself into the first, unexcelled virtuoso practitioner of the balance of power.

In the person of Lorenzo, the "High and Mighty,"<sup>30</sup> a new type of ruler began to emerge from the mercantile bourgeoisie and to move toward equality with the feudal monarch. An overweening condottiere might, in time-honored fashion, hurl his sword into the balance; but a wise merchant held the balance in his own hands and kept it level: "*e pari la bilancia ben tenere.*"<sup>31</sup> Admittedly, Lorenzo's policy—a mercantile policy writ large—achieved no more than a long period of peace in Italy and a respite from the incursions of warlike and covetous neighbors.



Among Lorenzo's few faults of character, Machiavelli cites the lack of due self-esteem that showed itself in his over-protracted love affairs, in his fondness for the company of witty and caustic talkers, and in the fact that he could play with his children as if he had been a child himself.<sup>32</sup> That expert judge of human nature, to whom otherwise nothing human is foreign, here finds himself (we can imagine him shaking his head at the sight of the little deputation climbing the stairs) face to face with an irreconcilable anomaly: "If we look at his frivolous life and his serious life side by side, it appears that two different † persons are conjoined in him by a downright impossible<sup>33</sup> conjunction."

This failure to appreciate the lively and unconventional side of Lorenzo's character is characteristic of the turn from the Quattrocento to the Cinquecento. Perhaps the keen eye of that intelligent historian—usually so startlingly \* unprejudiced—was clouded by the sense of stylistic dignity that he derived from Livy, and above all by the utterly different, ideal political type whose advent he longed to see. As the fortunes of Italy fell to their lowest ebb, Machiavelli yearned for a patriotic superman with an iron fist; and to him, at such a moment, the childlike and the popular, the romantic and the artistic, inevitably looked like unaccountable weaknesses.

The truth is, however, that the genius and the power of Lorenzo il Magnifico had their roots in just these qualities; his largeness of spirit soared beyond the common measure in the range, and above all in the force, of its evolutions. This was a man who could pay pious homage to the past, relish the fleeting moment, and look the future shrewdly in the eye, all with equal vigor. By education he was an erudite reviver of antiquity; by temperament he was a lively poet in a popular vein;<sup>34</sup> by will and by necessity he was a thoughtful and pre-scient statesman.

Lorenzo's towering intellectual and human qualities were backed by a constant stream of impetuous energy; and this he derived in no small measure from the active exercise of his artistic temperament. His unaffected enjoyment of the festive pageantry of contemporary life, as a participant, as an author, and as a spectator, was a direct source of physical relaxation; on a higher level, through his poetry—and in his vernacular songs he restored the Italian language to parity of esteem with Latin—he achieved a degree of spiritual self-liberation through artistic creativity.

Lorenzo's lack of aptitude for the conventional heroics of a policy of aggression was something more than a deficiency in his own temperament. It was inherent in the evolution of the Florentine state itself. This was what made him what he was: not a conqueror but a prudent custodian of the rich inheritance of the past.

The age of Lorenzo lacked Dante's high seriousness and his monumental, concentrated power; but in the Florence of Il Magnifico an interest in art had yet to degenerate into what it has since become: the stimulus that rouses jaded but cultivated persons to tour an overfilled artistic bazaar in the hope that mere passive attention may thereby be converted into a buying mood or even a purchase. Then, the making and the enjoyment of art were no more than

successive stages in a single, organic, circulatory process, which with ever-renewed vigor impelled the Florentines of the early Renaissance to the experiment of treating and using all human qualities as the tools of an expansive art of living.

Matteo Franco and Luigi Pulci were no court dwarfs, cutting grotesque capers to amuse some torpid Serene Highness: they were personal friends of the prince, men of the people, licensed to echo in their own crude way what even their master was not always privileged to say aloud. Lorenzo had clearly inherited his love of storytelling from his mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni.<sup>35</sup> She was a poet herself, *alla casalinga*, writing homespun verses for her children in which she put into crude but vivid rhyme "The Life of Saint John" and the tales of "Tobias and the Angel," "Esther," and "The Chaste Susanna," rather as if those biblical personages had been baptized in the Baptistery of San Giovanni. She also had Luigi Pulci recount the deeds of the knights of Charlemagne, with somewhat greater refinement but still in the style of the street balladeers, for the benefit of the Medici household; and this was the origin of the *Morgante*, celebrated as Italy's first poem of chivalry.

Luigi Pulci and his brother Luca were also expected to turn their poetic talents to the celebration of the knightly exploits of the Medici themselves. The verse narrative of the *giostra* of 1469—the tournament in which Lorenzo was the victorious champion—was almost certainly composed by Luigi Pulci.<sup>36</sup> With its detailed descriptions of the participants and their caparisons, it affords us a comprehensive image of that display of mercantile chivalry.

Luigi Pulci ended his account of the *giostra* with the words: "Let that be the end; it is time to stop, because as I write our friend with the fiddle is waiting." This "friend with the fiddle" (*compare della viola*) can be seen in the woodcut tailpiece to the edition of the *Morgante* from 1500,<sup>37</sup> plying his trade, which was that of a public balladeer, recounting heroic deeds in rhyme to a raptly attentive audience in the public squares, to his own fiddle accompaniment. The *compare* referred to here was probably Bartolomeo dell'Avveduto, who as well as being a *cantastorie* (tale singer) worked as an itinerant book vendor for the Ripoli printing office.<sup>38</sup>

Even Poliziano, professor of Greek and classical philologist though he was, had his literary roots in the vernacular world. As the author of lively Italian dance and love lyrics, he was later prevailed on to follow Pulci in turning his hand to a courtly occasional poem in commemoration of another chivalric Medici occasion. In the *Giostra*, his celebrated poem on the tournament held by Giuliano in honor of Simonetta Vespucci in 1475, Poliziano captured his ephemeral theme with grace, freshness, and immediacy, while taking classical Latin models as his source. This wonderfully subtle interaction between popular spirit and classical grace gave rise to the ideal figure of the "nymph,"<sup>39</sup> who became a universal ornamental type of the female form in motion, as depicted concurrently by Botticelli in the maidens who dance, or flee from a suitor, in his *Spring*.

The poet Poliziano's involvement in Florentine life also took other, more

...For if anyone wants a brief motto for the hilt of a sword or for the emblem in a ring; if anyone wants a verse for his couch or bedchamber; if anyone wants something distinctive—I would not even say for his silver, but for his earthenware—he trots straight off to Poliziano, and you may now see every wall covered by me as if by a snail with various writings and captions. Just look: one man demands the slyness of fescennine verses for a bacchanalian feast; another, solemn speeches for public assemblies; another, pathetic ditties for his lute; another, lascivious songs for an all-night party. This man tells me—one fool telling a greater fool—about his intimate love affairs. That one requests a symbol whose meaning will be clear only to his girl, while provoking vain conjectures from other men.<sup>40</sup>

- † Even the first Italian drama, Poliziano's *Orfeo*, was first composed as a half-improvised occasional piece for the court of Ferrara. In its origins, the visual and literary art of the Florentine early Renaissance is an occasional art; and this gives it its constantly renewed power to draw nourishment from its roots, which rest in the soil of everyday life. Significantly, all of the great Florentine painters grew up in goldsmiths' workshops. The bourgeois public of the 1470s respected the artist as a master of technical tricks, born under the planet Mercury,<sup>41</sup> who could do anything and supply anything; who painted and sculpted in his back workshop, but who had a front shop in which he sold all that anyone might need: belt buckles, painted marriage chests, church furnishings, votive waxes, engravings.

It was not then the practice to visit the artist, remote and abstracted in his studio, and to strike an aesthetic pose beneath his northern light while feeling most profoundly the malaise of world-weary, civilized men. Then, people used to drag their goldsmith-painter out of his workshop into the real world whenever the cycle of life itself demanded a new form: a building, a jewel, a utensil, a festive procession.

This is one reason why the figures in the paintings of the weaker artists are all too obviously wrenched out of their proper context. They retain an almost provincial flavor; there is something about them that is stiffly, stolidly physical; even their animation is strained and stylized, redolent of dry goods and theatrical wardrobes. It is the aim and the achievement of the great artists to reduce all this bourgeois happenstance to the subtlest hint of local color.

- \* Ghirlandaio's background was the goldsmith's trade. His father, Tommaso Bigordi, was a dealer in gold articles, and was said by Vasari to owe his sobriquet of Ghirlandaio to his unique skill in making (or in having others make) garlands of metal flowers as circlets for the heads of Florentine ladies. If Vasari is to be believed, Tommaso worked as a goldsmith himself,<sup>42</sup> making silver altar lamps and votive articles for SS. Annunziata.

In the workshop of the painter Alessio Baldovinetti, Domenico learned how to paint good and rapid likenesses, and by 1480 he became the most

popular purveyor of portraits to the best society in Florence. In all his work prior to the completion of his frescoes in the church of Santa Trinita, in 1485—and this applies even to his work in the Sistine Chapel in Rome—he retained from his origins, his temperament, and his training something of the serviceable impersonality of a sought-after artisan.<sup>43</sup> He knew that no rival could satisfy the demands of Florentine society more quickly, more solidly, or more tastefully than his workshop, whose popularity was not even impaired by the presence in it of his very much less gifted brothers, Davide and Benedetto, and of his brother-in-law Mainardi—or by Domenico's own frequent absences from it. Domenico was superbly equipped to observe with a keen eye and capture with a rapid hand all that his shrewd and unprejudiced eye discerned; but he needed a strong external pressure to shake him out of his rut—or, to be more precise, he needed some personal stimulus that would divert him away from his prosaic, undifferentiated scrutiny of body, clothes, and background and toward a degree of emphasis that would evoke the spiritual quality inherent in outward appearances.

Francesco Sassetti and his sons stand right in the foreground, as large as life, but they show, by their assumption of a marginal position in relation to the pope and to the College of Cardinals, that they are aware of their modest status as lay spectators. And yet, the majestic folds of Francesco's mantle, and his reverend, age-worn features, conceal a bold taste for innovation. After campaigning with such vigor to be allowed to depict the legend of his name saint,<sup>44</sup> this same Sassetti erected in his own lifetime—and beneath the very frescoes that enshrine that legend—a pair of tombs for himself and for his wife in an entirely pagan, Roman style, with sculpture and inscriptions carefully imitated from the antique on scholarly advice.

With his clear and sure sense of the task in hand, Sassetti surely eased Domenico's departure from convention; but the real and magical inspiration stemmed not from him but from Lorenzo de' Medici. It is toward Lorenzo that the members of the little deputation ascend, like chthonic spirits rising into their master's presence. Does Lorenzo make a demurring gesture? Or is he beckoning them on? He has the air of a writer-director, standing on the set of a mystery play and improvising a spectacular contemporary interlude—entitled, shall we say, "Florence beneath the Laurel's Shade": *Lauri sub umbra*.<sup>45</sup>

It is time for a scene change: the contemporary backdrop, painted with the Palazzo Vecchio and the Loggia de' Lanzi, has already been lowered into place; in the wings, the Sassetti stock company awaits its cue. Enter, through a trap, three little princes and their professor—learned in all matters pagan, privy dancing master to the nymphs of Tuscany—together with a witty domestic chaplain and a court balladeer, all ready to launch the intermezzo. As soon as they reach the top step, even the cramped space still occupied by Saint Francis, the pope, and the consistory will be taken over as a playground for secular diversions.

Ghirlandaio and his patron can hardly have planned so tragic a collision

from the outset. The deputation climbing the steps even seems to have been added as an afterthought: this is the only explanation for the overpainting that shortens the balustrade on the right to make room for Poliziano, and for the whole device of the stairway itself, which permits the group to enter the space without masking any of the existing action. Faced with the difficult task of reflecting an abundance of vigorous life on a limited area of wall, Ghirlandaio dispenses with the ornamental treatment of the human figure and speaks, with wonderful power, solely through the expressive character of his heads.

One thing remains to be said. The concentrated assurance of these figures, so filled with individual life—portraits detaching themselves from their ecclesiastical background—carries a distinct reminder of the figures in Northern European interiors; and elsewhere I shall try to explore in detail these connections between Flemish panel painting and the artistic culture of Lorenzo de' Medici's circle.

### *Appendixes*

#### \* I. Votive Statues in Wax

In this appendix, I outline the history of wax votive images in Florence, in chronological order; and to this I add a quantity of unpublished archival material that came into my hands when, prompted by Andreucci,<sup>46</sup> I looked into the papers of that admirable local antiquarian, Palagi.<sup>47</sup>

Francesco Sacchetti, in his *Novella* no. 109, mocked the *voto* figure as a depraved and heathenish custom:

*Di questi boti di simili ogni dì si fanno, li quali son più tosto una idolatria che fede cristiana. E io scrittore vidi già uno ch' avea perduto una gatta, botarsi, se la ritrovasse, mandarla di cera a nostra Donna d' Orto San Michele, e così fece.*<sup>48</sup>

\*

Every day votive effigies like this are made, which are more a form of idolatry than of Christian faith. And I, the writer of these lines, have seen a man, who had lost a she-cat, vow that if he found her he would send her image in wax to Our Lady of Orto San Michele; and so he did.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, votive effigies seem to have gotten so much out of hand that on 20 January 1401, the Signoria found it necessary to decree that only citizens qualified to hold office in the senior guilds might erect a *voto*.<sup>49</sup> In 1447 the figures at SS. Annunziata were rearranged in an orderly fashion in the nave, to the left and right of the *tribuna*. Of course, the proprietors of side chapels found that these life-size figures, on their rostra—some of them even on horseback—blocked their view; and, after effective protests from the powerful Falconieri family, the equestrian *voti* were moved to the far side of the nave. Here is the text of the manuscript cited by Andreucci:<sup>50</sup>

1447. In questo tenpo si comincia<va> a fare in chiesa e' palchi per mettervi l' immagini. M<sup>o</sup> Tano di Bart<sup>o</sup> e M<sup>o</sup> Franc<sup>o</sup> furno e maestri che gli feciono e M<sup>o</sup> Chimenti<sup>51</sup> dipintore fu quello gli dipinse insieme con quegli di S<sup>o</sup> Bastiano, e questo fu fatto per la multitude de' voti e imagini che erono offerte e per acrescer la devotione a quegli che venivano a questa S<sup>ma</sup> Nuntziata, perche 'l veder tanti miracoli per sua intercessione da N. Signor' Idio fatti, faceva che ne' loro bisogni a lei ricorrevano: Onde in questi tempi medesimi furno fatti palchi per tenervi sopra homini ill<sup>mi</sup> a cavallo tutti devoti di questa gran' madre. Erono dua palchi uno alla destra, l' altro alla sinistra avanti alla tribuna. Ma nuovamente havendo uno fatto un poco di frontispitio d' orpello avanti la capella de' Falconieri, non gli parendo fussi veduto a suo modo, persuase alcuni padri che gl' era buono levar quel palco, e metter que' cavalli tutti dall' altra parte; cosi rimase quella parte spogliata, e senza proportione dell' altra. Idio gli perdoni.

1447. At this time the custom of making rostra for votive images was beginning. Maestro Tano di Bartolomeo and Maestro Franco were the best-known craftsmen, and Maestro Chimenti, the painter, painted them, including those in Santo Bastiano; they were designed to hold the many votive offerings and images, and to increase the devotion of those coming to pray to the Blessed Virgin of the Annunciation, because people in need were encouraged to resort to her when they saw so many miracles being performed through her intercession with Our Lord God. Rostra were set up at that time to hold equestrian figures of illustrious men, all dedicated to that Great Mother. There were two rostra, one to the right and one to the left of the front of the tribune. But recently a person who had had a kind of pinchbeck frontispiece made for the Falconieri chapel, considering that it could not be seen as he would wish, persuaded some of the Fathers to have the rostrum taken down and all the horses moved to the other side; and so that part was left bare and out of proportion with the other. May God forgive him.

In the records for 1481 I have found a contract between Vicar Antonio and Maestro Archangelo, which vividly reflects the craft activity and the division of labor in this ecclesiastical industry:<sup>52</sup>

Richordo chome in questo di 13 de zugno 1481 M<sup>o</sup> Archangelo ciraiolo di Zoane d' Antonio da Fiorenze promette a me M<sup>o</sup> Antonio da Bologna vicario del convento del Anuntziata de Fiorenze tute le volte che io voro fare ymagine de cera grande al naturale nel modo e forma che in questo ricordo se contiene. In prima chel deto M<sup>o</sup> Archangelo debia fare l' imagine in quello modo e forma e habito secondo che piacera al deto vicario o qualunch altri che fusse in luogo del priore overo priore. Item che le debia fare forte d' armadure e ben legate. Item che le dette ymagine le debia depignere e cholorire a sue spexe e de suo cholori e sue chapigliare e barbe e tute l' altre chosse che apartengono al depintore salvo che lavorare di brocato. E debia el deto M<sup>o</sup> Archangelo fare qualoncha immagine in termine de X di lavorie overo in termine di XII.<sup>53</sup> e facendo queste tute chosse promette el dito M<sup>o</sup> Ant<sup>o</sup> Vicario in nome del convento al deto M<sup>o</sup> Arcan<sup>lo</sup> ff. dui larghi per qualoncha ymagine provedendo

*el convento di cera e di tute l' altre chosse che achaderano salvo che di chollori e chapigliare. E chossi se obligo el dito M<sup>o</sup> Archangelo osservare a la pena di 25 ducati presente Mariano di Francesco di Bardino e Zanobio de Domenico del Iocundo ect. Io Archangiolo di Giuliano d' Ant<sup>o</sup> ceraiuolo sono contento a quanto in detto ricordo si contiene e perciò mi sono sottoscritto di mia mano questo di sopra.*

Memorandum to record that on 13 June 1481, Maestro Archangelo di Zoane d'Antonio of Florence, waxworker, undertook to me, Maestro Antonio of Bologna, Vicar of the Priory of the Annunziata in Florence, that he would make life-size images in wax, of the size and shape specified in this document. Firstly, the said Maestro Archangelo shall make the image in style and shape and dress to the requirements of the said vicar, or of any person acting on behalf of the prior, or of the prior himself. He shall give the images a strong armature, the separate parts well linked. He shall paint and color the said images at his own expense, providing hair, beards, and all other items pertaining to the painter's work except for fabrics. And the said Maestro Archangelo shall make every such image in the space of ten or at most twelve working days. And on his fulfilling all these undertakings, the said vicar, Maestro Antonio, in the name of the priory, promises to pay the said Maestro Archangelo the sum of two florins per wax image, the priory to provide wax and all other requisites with the exception of paints and hair. This Maestro Archangelo has undertaken to perform, subject to a penalty of 25 ducats for default. As witnessed by Mariano di Francesco di Bardino and Zanobio de Domenico del Iocundo, etc. I, Archangiolo di Giuliano d'Antonio, waxworker, am satisfied with the terms set forth in this document, and have therefore signed the above with my own hand.

On 9 April 1488 Pagolo di Zanobi Benintendi received a payment for, among other things, *voti* that had been hung aloft from the dome. Even at this early date, therefore, the *voti* were already dangling perilously over the heads of the congregation.<sup>54</sup>

\* The Florentine state archive contains a detailed inventory,<sup>55</sup> dated 1496, of the silver votive offerings (images of persons or of human limbs, listed with exact indications of weight and type), which the church was having melted down to pay a new tax. This list is an anatomical museum in itself, of the greatest interest to the historian of culture and art; but to describe it in detail would lead us too far afield. Incidentally, it contains no mention of any lamps made by the father of Domenico Ghirlandaio.

\* The interior of the church must have looked like a waxwork museum. On one side stood the Florentines (including the figure of Lorenzo il Magnifico, mentioned above, and a number of prominent condottieri, mounted and in full armor) and alongside them the popes (Leo X, Alexander VI, Clement VII).<sup>56</sup> Particular objects of pride, however, were the foreigners who, out of veneration for the Santissima Annunziata, had left their own life-size effigies in wax by way of visiting cards: among them King Christian I of Denmark, who passed through Florence in 1474, and—a particular curiosity—a Muslim Turkish pasha, who, unbeliever though he was, dedicated his *voto* figure to the

Madonna to ensure a safe journey home.<sup>57</sup> Portrait *voti* of famous women were there, too, including that of Isabella, marchesa of Mantua, which, together with that of Pope Alexander, was mentioned in 1529 as in need of repair.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps the Hofkirche in Innsbruck, with the tomb of Emperor Maximilian I and the two rows of portraits in bronze that line the nave, gives a similar impression (*mutatis mutandis*) of pagan sculpture in a Christian church; the difference is, however, that Maximilian and his counselor, Konrad Peutinger, were engaged in a deliberate reproduction of the Roman ancestor cult,<sup>59</sup> whereas what happened in Florence was a spontaneous reversion to a popular pagan custom legitimized by the Church.

The workshop of Verrocchio, which seems to have pioneered a more artistic treatment of votive figures, specialized in the art of making plaster and stucco death masks, which Vasari tells us were displayed in Florentine houses as true ancestral likenesses,<sup>60</sup> and which so often enabled Florentine painters to supply accurate portraits of the dead. Verrocchio's shop was like a surviving limb of pagan Roman religious art: its *fallimagini* and *ceraiuoli* were the makers of what the Romans called *imagines* and *cerae*.<sup>61</sup>

In the church of SS. Annunziata, as late as 1630, there were 600 life-size figures, 22,000 papier-mâché *voti*, and 3,600 paintings of miracles wrought by the Santissima Annunziata herself.<sup>62</sup> In 1665 the wax figures, "*cagione di continua trepidanza per i devoti*" (a source of constant trepidation to the faithful), were removed to the small cloister, a move that del Migliore laments in characteristic terms:

*...non sapemmo il concetto nè qual fosse l' animo di que' Padri, in spogliar la Chiesa d' un arredo tanto ricco di Voti, a risico di diminuirvi, e rendervi fiacca la devozione, che s' aumenta e mirabilmente s' ingagliardisce per sì fatto modo, ci giova credere che il Popol sagace similmente non intendendo i lor fini modesti, alla gagliarda ne mormorasse e massime i maligni ch'anno come s' usa dir' a Firenze, tutto il cervello nella lingua: e in vero apprò loro sussisto un' articolo di ragione vivissimo, perchè, non potendo lo'ntelletto nostro arrivare così facilmente a conoscere le cause alla produzione degli effetti, d'un efficacissimo mezzo son le cose apparenti di Voti, di Pitture ed altre materie simili esteriori sufficienti ad ogn' idiota per concepirne maggior aumento di spirito, di speranza e di fede più viva alla intercessione de' Santi; onde non è gran fatto, che'l Popolo se ne dolesse e stimasse privata la Chiesa d' una bellissima memoria.*<sup>63</sup>

... we were at a loss to understand the motives of the priests in divesting the Church of furnishings so rich in votive images, with the risk of diminishing and weakening devotion, which is increased and marvelously stimulated by such means—as witness the fact that the people in their wisdom, similarly failing to understand, vigorously complained, and most of all those malicious persons who, as the Florentine saying goes, keep their brains in their tongues. The truth is that they had one very powerful argument on their side, which is that, since our human intellect has difficulty in connecting cause with effect, there is great virtue in visible things such as



votive images, pictures, and similar outward objects, which suffice to strengthen any ordinary person in spirituality, in hope and in a livelier faith in the intercession of the Saints; no wonder, therefore, that the people mourn, and that they believe the Church to have been deprived of a lovely tradition.

## II. Bartolomeo Cerretani, *Storia fino all' anno 1513*

### *The Character of Lorenzo de' Medici*<sup>64</sup>

... il quale fu di grande ingegnio maximo in iudicio, eloquentissimo, haveva professione universale optima nel ministrare le cose publiche, achutissimo, et sollecito, et savio: fortunato quanto huomo de suo tempi, animoso, modesto, affabile con tutti; piacevole, co' motti destrissimi et acuti,<sup>65</sup> per uno amicho no' dubitava mettere<sup>66</sup> tempo danari et insino a lo stato, onesto, cupido del' onore et fama, liberale, onorevole; parlava pocho, grave nell' andar; amava e' valenti et gl' unichi in ogni arte; fu solo notato che era alquanto vendichativo et invidioso: fu religioso e nel governare molto era volto agl' huomini popolarani piuttosto che agl' huomini di famiglie. Era grande bella persona, brutto viso, la vista corta, le charne nere, cosi e chapelli, le ghote stiaccate, la bocha grande fuori dell' ordine e nel parlare faceva molti gesti chola persona; bella andatura grave; vestiva richamente, dilectavasi fare versi volgari e facevagli benissimo; fu suo preceptore messere Gentile<sup>67</sup> <fol. 166> charidenssi <Caridensis> huomo doctissimo il quale dapoi fe' veschovo d' Arezo perche fu d' optimi costumi e quali tutti da detto suo preceptore comprese et messe in atto; ebbe per donna la figlola del Conte Orso dell' antica casa de gl' Orssini romani delaquale n' ebbe tre figlioli maschi l' uno fu Piero, l' altro messere Giovanni cardinale di S. Ma. in Domnicha, l' ultimo fu Giuliano: Usava dire che haueva un figlolo armigero (questo era Piero) uno buono (questo era il chardinale), un savio (questo era Giuliano) et come presagiente dixे più volte che dubitava che Piero un di non fussi la rovina di casa loro il che come savio chonobbe et predixе.

He was a man of great intellect and outstanding judgment, an eloquent speaker, an able public administrator, perspicacious, careful, and prudent. As fortunate as any man of his day, courageous, modest, and gracious to all. Charming, and in his speech sharp-witted and acute. To help a friend, he was unstinting with his time, his money, and even his own position; he was desirous of honor and renown, generous and honorable. A man of few words, and of grave demeanor, he loved talented and exceptional individuals in every art. His only faults were that he tended to vindictiveness and envy. He was devout, and in government he preferred men of the people to men of the aristocracy. He was tall, with a good figure and an ugly face, shortsighted, dark-skinned and with dark hair, high cheekbones, and an uncommonly large mouth. He gesticulated a great deal when he spoke. A fine, weighty gait. He dressed richly; he took delight in writing poetry in the vernacular, and was very skilled at it. His tutor was Messer Gentile Caridensis, a man of great learning whom

he later made Bishop of Arezzo, because he was a man of excellent morals—all of which he, Lorenzo, had learned from this tutor of his and put into practice. His wife was the daughter of Conte Orso, of the ancient Roman house of Orsini, and they had three sons, the first being Piero, the second Messer Giovanni, cardinal of S. Maria in Domnica, and the youngest Giuliano. He was wont to say that he had one son who bore arms (this was Piero), one good son (this was the cardinal), and one wise son (Giuliano); and, as if gifted with prophecy, he more than once voiced the suspicion that one day Piero would be the ruin of the family—which he as a wise man knew and foretold.

### III. Niccolò Valori, *La vita del Magnifico Lorenzo*

#### *The Character of Lorenzo de' Medici*<sup>68</sup>

*Fu Lorenzo di grandezza piu che mediocre, nelle spalle largho, di corpo solido et robusto, et di tanta agilità che in questo ad alcuno non era secondo, et benche nell' altre esteriori doti del corpo la natura gli fusse matrigna, nondimeno quanto all' interiori qualità madre benigna gli si dimostrò ueramente, fu oltre a questo di colore uliuigno, et la faccia ancor' che in quella non fusse uenustà, era nondimeno piena di tal degnità che a' riguardanti induceva riuerenza: fu di uista debole, haueua il naso depresso, et al tutto dell' odorato priuato, ilche non solamente non gli fu molesto, ma usaua dire in questo proposito, esser molto obligato alla natura, conciosia che molto più siano le cose che all' odorato s'offeriscano, le quali offendono il senso, che quelle che lo diletano; ma tutti questi difetti et mancamenti, se così chiamar si possono, con le doti dell' animo ricoperse, le quali con continoue esercitationi, et assidua cura ornò sopra modo, di che fecero testimonio molti giudizij di quello.*

Lorenzo was above average height, broad-shouldered, of strong, sturdy build, and second to none in agility. Nature showed herself a stepmother to him in other outward features, but a truly kind mother in bestowing inward qualities. His complexion was olive; though his face was not handsome, his dignified air invited respect. He was shortsighted, with a flat nose and no sense of smell; he used to claim that not only was this no loss to him, but he was even grateful to nature, because there are many more things that give offense by their smell than things that give pleasure. All these defects and shortcomings, however, if such they can be called, were overshadowed by the rich endowments of his soul, which he cultivated with exceptional grace; to this, many of his contemporaries have borne witness.

### IV. Letter from Angelo Poliziano to Piero de' Medici<sup>69</sup>

*Angelus Politianus Petro Medici suo S. D.*

(Angelo Poliziano to His Friend Piero de' Medici: Greetings)

*Facere non possum, quin tibi agam gratias, mi Petre, quòd autoritate operaque tua curaueris, ut in collegium nostrum Matthaeus Francus, homo (ut*

scis) mihi amicissimus, cooptaretur. Est autem non modò isto (licet inuidi quidam rumpantur) sed quouis honore dignissimus. Prima illi commendatio contigit apud patrem tuum, sapientissimum uirum, iocorum & urbanitatis, cùm faceta illa scriberet carmina patrio sermone, quae nunc Italia tota celebrantur. Quin idem parens tuus, penè infantem adhuc te, quaedam ex his facetiora ridiculi gratia docebat, quae tu deinde inter adductos amicos balbutiebas, & eleganti quodam gestu, qui quidem illam deceret aetatulam, commendabas. Nec tamen insuauior Francus in sermonibus, usuque domestico, siue tu dicteria, siue fabulamenta, siue id genus oblectamenta alia requiras, in quæis non eius ingenium magis eminet, quàm prudentia. Nihil enim unquam scurriliter, nihil immodestè, nihil non suo loco, nihil extra rem, nihil incautè, nihil sine delectu. Quare siue rusticaretur animi causa, siue balneis operam daret Laurentius parens tuus (quod te meminisse non dubito) Francum sibi adducebat comitem, cuius lepôre quasi recrearetur. Adhibuit eum deinde consiliarium Magdalenæ sorori tuæ Romam proficiscenti ad uirum, uidelicet ut rudis adhuc puella, quæe nunquam de materno sinu se prompserat, paternum aliquem circa se haberet amicum, ad quem de re dubia referret. Hic se Francus (ut homo est eximia patientia, sed et dexteritate) sic nescio quo pacto diuersis ignotisque moribus accommodauit ut et uniuersorum beneuolentiam collegerit, et sorori ipsi tuæ facilè unus omnia paternæ domus solatia repræsentet. Gratus esse Innocentio quoque pontifici mirè dicitur, gratus aliquot è purpuratis patribus: tui certè illum ciues, qui Romæ negotiantur, in oculis gestant. Quid quòd breui causarum forique Romani sic peritus euasit, ut iam non inter postremos habeatur? Est autem omnino ingenio uersatili Francus noster, et quod rebus ac personis omnibus congruat. Caeterùm dispensatione domestica nemini cesserit, quippe gnarus omnium quæe postulat usus, non tam præscribere familiæ potest ac solet, quid quisque agat, quàm quomodo, et quatenus agat. Addam unum adhuc illius insigne, nemo diligentius amicos parat, nemo fidelius retinet. Meus certè in ipsum, contraque ipsius in me sic \* amor innotuit, ut quod gratissimum est, et nos inter rara admodum paria numeremur. Itaque bis me esse canonicum puto abs te factum, quando illum quoque nunc, id est alterum me, nostro coetui aggregasti. Non enim minus in eo mihi, quàm in meipso uideor honestatus. Vale.

I cannot but thank you, my Piero, because by your authority and effort you have seen to it that Matteo Franco—a man very dear to me, as you know—has been elected to our chapter. He is eminently worthy not only of that honor (though certain envious men may burst) but of whatever honor you like. The earliest recommendation came his way from your father, a man of great wisdom, for his jests and his urbane wit when he was writing in our native tongue those elegant poems that are now famous throughout Italy. Why, your father, when you could still barely talk, even taught you some of the more clever of these poems, for the sake of a laugh: you would then lisp them out among the friends he had assembled, and show your approval with a certain elegant gesture that to be sure suited your tender age.

Franco is no less agreeable in his conversation and private behavior, whether you want witticisms or anecdotes or other amusements of that sort, in which his good sense shines forth as much as his talent. For he never says anything buffoonish or extravagant; nothing out of place, nothing off the subject, nothing careless, nothing not deliberately chosen. And so, whether your father Lorenzo was staying in the country to refresh his spirits, or visiting the baths (as no doubt you remember), he would summon Franco to him as a companion, to be, as it were, invigorated by his charm.

And then he employed him as an adviser to your sister Magdalena when she set out for Rome to her husband, obviously so that the girl, as yet inexperienced, who had never left her mother's bosom, might have some father figure nearby as a friend whom she could consult about a problem. Here Franco (a man of remarkable forbearance, but also of adroitness) somehow adapted himself to different and foreign ways of life in such a way that he has garnered universal esteem and, for your sister herself, easily represents in his own person all of the comforting support of her father's house.

He is also said to be uncommonly popular with Pope Innocent, and with a number of the fathers in purple {cardinals}; certainly your fellow citizens who do business at Rome think the world of him. And what of the fact that in a short time he has shown himself so skilled at law and the public affairs of Rome that he is already considered among the leaders? Our Franco is a man of a thoroughly versatile genius, which adapts to all matters and persons. In his management of household affairs he yields to no one, knowledgeable as he is on every detail that occasion may call for; he can and usually does prescribe to the household staff not so much what each one is to do as how and to what extent he should do it.

Let me add one more thing that is distinctive about him: no one acquires friends more diligently, or keeps them more faithfully. Certainly my love for him, and his for me, has become so well known, most gratifyingly, as to place us among the rarest couples {of friends}. And so I think that you have made me a canon twice over by adding him, that is, my second self, to our company. For I consider myself no less honored in him than in myself. Farewell.

#### V. Letter from Matteo Franco to Piero Bibbiena of 12 May 1485

*Dipoi intorno a Certosa riscontrammo il paradiso pieno d' agnoli di festa e di letizia, cioè messer Giovanni, Piero, Giuliano e Giulio in groppa, con loro circumferenze. E subito come viddero la mamma, si gittorono a terra del cavallo, chi da sè e chi per le man d' altri; e tutti corsono e furono messi in collo a madonna Clarice, con tanta allegrezza e baci e gloria che non ve lo poterei dire con cento lettere. Ancora io non mi potetti tenere, che io non scavalcassi; e prima che ricavalcassino loro, tutti gli abbracciai e due volte per uno gli baciai; una per me, e una per Lorenzo. Disse el gentile Giulianino, con uno O lungo: "O, o, o, o, dove è Lorenzo?" Dicemo: "Egli è ito al Poggio a trovarti." Disse: "Eh mai non." E quasi piagnendo. Non vedesti mai la più tenera cosa. Egli è Piero che è fatto el più bello garzone, la più graziosa*

viso, che pare un agnolo; con certi capegli un poco lunghi e alquanto più distesi che prima, che pare una grazia. E Giuliano viuolino e freschellino com' una rosa; gentile pulito e nettolino, come uno specchio; lieto e tutto contemplativo con quegli occhi. Messer Giovanni ancora ha un buon viso, non di molto colore ma sanozzo e naturale; e Julio una cera brunaza e sana. Tutti, per concludere, sono la letizia al naturale. E così con gran contento e festa, tutti di bella brigata, ce n' andammo per Via Maggio, Ponte a santa Trinita, san Michele Berteldi, santa Maria Maggiore, Canto alla Paglia, Via de' Martegli; e ce n' entrammo in casa, per infinita asecula aseculorum eselibera nos a malo amen.<sup>70</sup>

[This letter translated in full above, pp. 197-98]

## VI. Exchange of Letters between Poliziano and Lorenzo in 1477<sup>71</sup>

*Laurentius Medices Angelo Politiano S. D.*

(Lorenzo de' Medici to Angelo Poliziano: Greetings)

*Ex literis, quas ad Michelotium dedisti, factus sum certior filiolos nostros aduersa ualetudine uexari. Id ut humanum parentem decet, grauiter molestique tuli. Quam profectò molestiam tu praeuidens, ita multis uerbis ac rationibus animum nostrum confirmare conatus es, ut in maximam de nostra constantia dubitationem incidisse uideare. Quod tametsi ab amore in nos tuo proficisci certus sum, multo tamen maiori molestia nos affecit, quam significatio ulla aduersae ualitudinis liberorum. Quamuis enim parentis substantia liberi esse dicantur, multo tamen magis propria est animi aegritudo, quam filiorum. Quibus enim integer ac sospes est animus, caeterarum facillè rerum incolumitatem consequuntur; quibus uerò infirmus, nullus unquam portus est à fortunae fluctibus tutus, nullum est tam placatum aequor, tam quieta malacia, quin perturbatione uexentur. Existimasne me adeò natura imbecillum, ut tam parua re mouear? Si uerò eiusmodi nostra natura est, ut facillè huc atque illuc perturbationibus agatur: multarum rerum experientia confirmatus animus sibi constare iam didicit. Ego filiorum non ualitudinem tantum, sed fatum quandoque expertus sum. Pater immatura morte praereptus, cum annum agerem primum et uigesimum, ita me fortunae ictibus exposuit, ut quandoque uitae poeniteret meae. Quapropter existimare debes, quam nobis uirtutem natura negauit, experientiam attulisse. Verum cum tu in epistola ad Michelotium imbecillitati animi nostri diffidere non parum uidearis, atque in tuis ad nos literis summopere uirtutem atque ingenii nostri dotes extollas, haecque simul pugnare uideantur, aut alterum falsum est, aut non ea es animi magnitudine, quam in me desiderare uideris, cum ea in tuis ad nos literis silentio praetereas, quae scripta ad Michelotium sunt, tanquam non tua à me accipienda sunt: utpote qui existimas multo magis nuncium, quam liberorum ualitudinem, mihi molestiam allaturum. Sed nolo esse in paruis longior, ut non idem incurram uitium, quod in te uitupero, neque in iisdem*

*literis et parua spernere, et prolixioribus uerbis prosequi uidear. Si quid est in epistola quod te mordeat, id totum condones amori nostro, atque exercitationi, cui, ut puto, abundantius materiam suppeditat, si in quenquam inuehimur, quàm si laudamus, multoque latior campus est in unoquoque uituperationis, quàm laudis. Gaudeo mirum in modum, Iulianum nostrum se totum literis tradidisse, illi gratulor, tibiue gratias ago, quòd eum ad haec prosequenda studia excitaueris. Tu uerò fac ut hominem ad literas inflammasti, ita sedulò cures, stimulosque adiicias, ut perseueret. Ego propediem uos reuisam, comitemque uobis in hoc felici Musarum itinere me adiungam. Bene uale, Pisis pridie Calend. Aprilis, M.CCCCLXXVII*

I gather from your letter to Michelozzo that my little sons are in poor health. I bore that news, as befits a humane father, with heavy sorrow. You, surely foreseeing this distress, sought to fortify my soul with such a profusion of words and arguments that you appear to have fallen into the greatest doubt of my firmness of character. Although I am sure that this was prompted by your love for me, nonetheless it grieved me much more than any indication of my children's ill health. For, although children are said to be of the substance of a parent, the infirmity of one's own mind is a far more intimate concern than that of one's children. Those whose minds are sound and healthy easily find soundness in all other matters, but for those whose souls are infirm, there is never any safe haven from the tempests of fortune; there are no waters so still, no calm so serene, that they cannot be agitated by emotion.

Do you think me so feeble by nature as to be moved by such a trifle? Even if my nature is of the sort to be readily pulled this way and that by disturbances, a mind strengthened by wide experience of life has long since learned to be constant. I have known not only sickness but sometimes death in my children. The untimely death of my father, snatched away when I was twenty-one years old, so exposed me to the blows of fortune that I sometimes regretted being alive. For this reason you must believe that the valor that nature denied me, experience has supplied.

But since in your letter to Michelozzo you seem to be not a little anxious about the weakness of my mind, and yet in your letter to me you greatly extol the strength and endowments of my nature, and since these two attitudes seem to contradict each other, either the second is false or you yourself lack that greatness of mind that you seem to find wanting in me; since in your letter to me you pass over in silence what you wrote to Michelozzo, as if your words are not to be received by me: as if you judge that this news will bring me much more distress than the ill health of my children.

But I do not want to be too long in trifles, lest I fall into the same fault that I reprove in you, and seem in one and the same letter both to scorn small things and to pursue them at too great length. If there is anything in my letter that pains you, may you pardon it all, out of love for me and as an exercise, for which (as I think) it furnishes matter more abundantly if we attack someone than if we praise him; and on any subject at all the field for blame is much

broader than that for praise. I rejoice greatly that our Giuliano has devoted himself to letters; I congratulate him, and I thank you for having encouraged him to pursue these important studies. But see to it that, as you have inflamed the man to letters, so do you remain vigilant and apply the goads to make him persevere. I shall see you again very soon, and attach myself as your companion on this happy journey of the Muses. Farewell. Pisa, 31 March 1477.

*Angelus Politianus Laurentio suo S. D.*

(Angelo Poliziano to His Lorenzo: Greetings)

*Non quòd tuae constantiae sapientiaeque diffiderem, propterea literas dedi ad Michelotium potius, quàm ad te de liberùm tuorum uoletudine: sed quoniam sum ueritus, ne fortè inconsultior uiderer, si grauior tibi à me nuncius alieno tempore obiiceretur. Tabellarius enim saepe literas non aptè, non loco reddit: scriba uerò temporum captat omneis articulos. Reueritus igitur iure sum Laurentium Medicem; Cui malè si palpere, recalcitrat undique tutus: Nec uerò ista repugnant, quòd hic te reuereor, ibi laudo. Non enim ob aliud reuereor, quàm quòd omni laude puto dignissimum. Molles uerò illae tuae morsiunculae, tantum abest ut me laedant, ut ipsas quoque nescio quo pacto penè mihi magis blanditias commendent. Iulianus tuus uerè frater, hoc est, ut docti putant, ferè alter, ipse sibi in studiis est non modò iam mirificus hortator, sed et praeceptor. Nihilque nobis ad summam uoluptatem deest, nisi quòd abes. Vale.*

It was not because I doubted your steadfastness and wisdom that I wrote to Michelozzo rather than to you about your children's health, but because I feared to seem thoughtless, if a message of some importance from me were to be presented to you at an inopportune time. For the courier often delivers a letter at the wrong time and place, whereas the secretary watches for all the critical moments. Rightly, therefore, did I treat Lorenzo de' Medici with deference: If you stroke him wrong, he protects himself by kicking back in all directions; nor is it really inconsistent that I show due respect for you here and praise you there. For I show no respect for anything other than what I consider most deserving of every kind of praise. As for those gentle little nips of yours, so far are they from hurting me that somehow they even commend themselves to me almost more as flattery.

Your Giuliano (truly a brother; that is, as learned men think, almost a second self) is in his studies not only his own excellent exhorter but his own preceptor. And we lack nothing for our complete enjoyment, except that you are not here. Farewell.

## VII. Luigi Pulci and the *Compare della Viola*

Luigi Pulci<sup>72</sup> concludes his *Giostra de Lorenzo de' Medici* thus: "Let that be the end; it is time to stop, because our friend, as I write, is waiting, and has already taken up his fiddle. And now, friend, strike up":

*Hor sia qui fine che pur convien posarsi  
Perche il compar, mentre ch'io scrivo, aspetta,  
Et ha gia impunto la sua violetta,  
Hor fa compar che tu la scarabelli...<sup>73</sup>*

That this friend (*compare*) with the fiddle was no mythical person, but one of those real Florentine balladeers who recounted popular tales to a hushed and attentive crowd in the open air to their own fiddle accompaniment, appears quite clearly from a woodcut that serves as tailpiece to the published edition of Pulci's poem *Morgante*.<sup>74</sup> It looks like an illustration to the closing words of Pulci's *Giostra*. The fiddler sits on a podium, and at his feet, in a public square (Piazza San Martino?), is his attentive audience. The very same designation, *compare della viola*, appears on the official lists of the members of the personal suite of Lorenzo de' Medici<sup>75</sup> and later of his son Piero.<sup>76</sup>

I believe that I have found out the first name of this *compare della viola*. A certain "Compare Bartolomeo" is mentioned in the daybook of the Ripoli printing office,<sup>77</sup> whose legends and histories he performed in public and then, as was customary,<sup>78</sup> sold in printed form. Luigi Pulci himself addressed a sonnet to one Bartolomeo dell' Avveduto, beginning with the words:

*Poich' io partij da voi Bartolommeo,  
Di vostri buon precetti ammaestrato...<sup>79</sup>*

Since I left your side, Bartolommeo,  
Well briefed by your good precepts...

These words suggest that the two were colleagues in some way, and that Bartolomeo had given Luigi something. What he had given him appears from the sobriquet by which he is addressed, dell' Avveduto. He had given to Luca or Luigi Pulci the popular nucleus of their poem *Ciriffo Calvaneo*, which is known to have been based on a verse tale, hitherto supposed to be anonymous, that was entitled *Libro del povero avveduto* (Book of the cunning pauper).<sup>80</sup> And so the chain of names leads very simply to an interesting and previously unregarded personality, and we can venture to surmise that the *compare* who has shouldered his fiddle is identical

- (a) with the "compare Bartolomeo" who worked as a balladeer and itinerant book-seller for the Ripoli printing house;
- (b) with the *compare della viola* in the Medici household; and
- (c) with the Bartolomeo dell' Avveduto whom Luigi addresses as a colleague.<sup>81</sup>

And so we see before us in person the Pulcis' purveyor and distributor of popular poetic romances of chivalry; at the same time, in the most natural way possible, we remove all those difficulties raised for the literary critic and historian by the reference to the *compare* in Pulci's *Giostra*.<sup>82</sup>



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*Poich' io partij da voi Bartolommeo,  
Di vostri buon precetti ammaestrato...*<sup>79</sup>

Since I left your side, Bartolommeo,  
Well briefed by your good precepts...

These words suggest that the two were colleagues in some way, and that Bartolomeo had given Luigi something. What he had given him appears from the sobriquet by which he is addressed, dell' Avveduto. He had given to Luca or Luigi Pulci the popular nucleus of their poem *Ciriffo Calvaneo*, which is known to have been based on a verse tale, hitherto supposed to be anonymous, that was entitled *Libro del povero avveduto* (Book of the cunning pauper).<sup>80</sup> And so the chain of names leads very simply to an interesting and previously unregarded personality, and we can venture to surmise that the *compare* who has shouldered his fiddle is identical

- (a) with the "compare Bartolomeo" who worked as a balladeer and itinerant book-seller for the Ripoli printing house;
- (b) with the *compare della viola* in the Medici household; and
- (c) with the Bartolomeo dell' Avveduto whom Luigi addresses as a colleague.<sup>81</sup>

And so we see before us in person the Pulcis' purveyor and distributor of popular poetic romances of chivalry; at the same time, in the most natural way possible, we remove all those difficulties raised for the literary critic and historian by the reference to the *compare* in Pulci's *Giostra*.<sup>82</sup>

*Angelus Polizianus Hieronymo Donato suo S. D.*

(Angelo Poliziano to His Hieronymus Donatus: Greetings)

*... Nam si quis breue dictum, quod in gladii capulo, uel in anuli legatur emblemate; si quis uersum lecto, aut cubiculo, si quis insigne aliquod non argento dixerim, sed fictilibus omnino suis desiderat, ilicò ad Politianum cursitat, omnesque iam parietes à me quasi à limace uideas oblitos argumentis uariis, et titulis. Ecce alius Bacchanalibus Fescenninorum argutias, alius conciliabulis sanctas sermocinationes, alius citharae miserabiles naenias, alius peruigilio licentiosas cantilenas efflagitat. Ille mihi proprios amores stultus stultiori narrat. Ille symbolum poscit, quod suae tantum pateat, caeterorum frustra coniecturas exerceat. Mitto scholasticorum garritus intempestiuos, uersificatorum nugas, seque, et sua de more admirantium, quae quotidie cuncta demissis auriculis perpetior. Quid plebeculam dicam, uel urbanam, uel agrestem, quae me tota urbe ad suum negotium, quasi naso bubalum trahit? Ergo dum proteruè instantibus negare nihil audeo, cogor et amicos uexare caeteros, et (quod molestissimum est) ipsius in primis Laurentii mei Medices abuti facilitate ...*

... For if anyone wants a brief motto for the hilt of a sword or for the emblem in a ring; if anyone wants a verse for his couch or bedchamber; if anyone wants something distinctive—I would not even say for his silver, but for his earthenware—he trots straight off to Poliziano, and you may now see every wall covered by me as if by a snail with various writings and captions. Just look: one man demands the slyness of fescennine verses for a bacchanalian feast; another, solemn speeches for public assemblies; another, pathetic ditties for his lute; another, lascivious songs for an all-night party. This man tells me—one fool telling a greater fool—about his intimate love affairs. That one requests a symbol whose meaning will be clear only to his girl, while provoking vain conjectures from other men. I pass over the inopportune gabble of scholastics and the trifles of versifiers, who in the usual way admire both themselves and their own creations, all of which I put up with daily, with my ears drooping. Why mention the ruffraff, whether of town or country, who drag me all over the city, like a buffalo by the nose, to attend to their business? And so, while I dare not say No to those who impudently harass me, I am compelled both to vex the rest of my friends and (this is the most annoying) to abuse the good nature of the one who means the most to me, Lorenzo de' Medici himself...

*... viva parola di uomini che da quattro e più secoli dormono nei sepolcri, ma che può destare e utilmente interrogare l'affetto.*

—Cesare Guasti, *Ser Lapo Mazzei*, iii

... the living words of men who have slept for four centuries and more in the tomb, but whom love can awaken and usefully consult.

## Notes

1. Latest (7th) ed., ed. Geiger (1899) [now *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5].
2. Latest ed., ed. Bode (1901). Also his *Geschichte der <Architektur der> Renaissance*, 3d ed., ed. Holtzinger (1891) [now *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 6].
3. Including *Das Altarbild; Das Porträt in der Malerei; Die Sammler*, ed. H. Trog (1898) [*Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 12].
4. See H. Thode, *Giotto*, 128. See our figure 24.
5. Archivio di Stato, Florence, Protocols of Andrea di Angiolo di Terranova A.381, p. 269 f. In 1487 additional gift to the chapel with express and detailed stipulation of Mass in honor of Saint Francis.
6. Still with its tall *ringhiera*.
7. See figure 25.
8. Federigo, born 1472, destined for a career in Holy Orders, and by that time already prior of San Michele Bertoldi; Teodoro I, born 1461, died before 1479; Galeazzo, born 1462; Cosimo, born 1463; Bartolomeo, born 1413; Francesco himself, born 1421. More on Francesco Sassetti and his family in the second essay in this series [pp. 223 ff.].
9. It is improbable that the person represented is his father, Tommaso, who had been dead since 1421.
10. On the *voti*, see appendix I [204 ff.]; on Lorenzo's *voti*, see Vasari, [ed. Milanesi,] 3:373 f.
11. It may be that the painted stucco bust of Lorenzo in the Berlin Museum is a replica of one of these votive effigies: the artisan quality of the painting, and the crude likeness, without any refinement of execution, would support such a supposition. Illustrated by Bode, *Italienische Porträtskulpturen des 15. Jahrhunderts* (1883), 31.
12. See Eubel, "Über Zaubermwesen und Aberglauben," *Historisches Jahrbuch* (Görres) 18 (1897): 608-31; comment by Grauert, *ibid.*, 72.
13. See figure 27. The details reproduced as figures 26, 27, 29, and 32 were taken for the first time, at my request, by Fratelli Alinari. Figure 24 is from an existing photograph by Fratelli Alinari.
14. See Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Italian ed., 7:190 f. On portraits of Lorenzo, see von Kenner, *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 18 (1897) [: 148 f.] and Müntz, *Le musée de portraits de Paul Jove* (Paris, 1900), 78. A terra-cotta bust by Pollaiuolo (?) illustrated by Armstrong, *Lorenzo de' Medici and Florence in the Fifteenth Century* (1897); portrait material for the history of the Medici reproduced by Heyck, *Die Mediceer* (1897). The basic source for Lorenzo is still A. von Reumont, *Lorenzo de' Medici il Magnifico* (1883).
15. See appendixes II and III [pp. 208 f.]: characterizations by Bartolomeo Cerritani and Niccolò Valori.
16. See figure 28a, medal by Spinelli (after Friedlaender, *Italienische Schaumünzen*; also figures 28b, 31).
17. See figures 26, 31.
18. The Spinelli medal shows him in later life; born in 1454, he was around twenty-nine years old at the time when the fresco in S. Trinita was painted. It looks to me as if Ghirlandaio has portrayed him a second time, in the same chapel, in the fresco of the

*Lamentation at the Death of Saint Francis*, where he is seen, once more in profile, to the left of the bier; later he reappears in the *Annunciation to Zacharias* in the choir of Santa Maria Novella.

19. Born 12 August 1478. The face of the child is easily recognizable in the bearded man portrayed in later years by Bronzino (Heyck [see note 14], fig. 133). By a strange irony of fate, Giuliano, the carefree child whom Ghirlandaio thus leads by the hand into Florentine art, makes his departure from it as an ideal type of prematurely spent vital power: as the duke of Nemours, on the tomb by Michelangelo in S. Lorenzo.

20. Born 15 February 1471. See figure in Müntz [note 14], 80.

21. Born 11 December 1475. See figure after Giovio in Müntz [note 14], and painting by Bronzino in the Uffizi.

22. See figure 30. Plaster cast from a lead medal in Museo Nazionale, Florence.

23. *Opera* (Basel, 1553); see appendix IV [pp. 209 f.]. On Matteo Franco, born 1447, see principally del Lungo, *Florentia: Uomini e cose del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1897), 422: "Un cappellano mediceo." Also the excellent study by Guglielmo Volpi in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 17 (1891): "Un cortigiano di Lorenzo il Magnifico (Matteo Franco) ed alcune sue lettere."

24. See letter in del Lungo [note 23], 441.

25. See appendix V [pp. 211 f.]. This Giulio, son of the murdered Giuliano, is the later Pope Clement VII.

26. I have no wish to urge the date 1483 too strongly; the present inscription, which has obviously been wrongly restored, gives 1486 instead of 1485 as the date of completion: of which more shortly, in part 2. It is known from documentary evidence \* that the chapel was free of scaffolding by the beginning of 1486, since regular masses were said there from 1 January 1486 onward.

27. Born 1432. For the literature of the Quattrocento in general, see the recent, and highly instructive, account by P. Monnier, *Le Quattrocento: Essai sur l'histoire littéraire du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle italien* (1901). Luigi Pulci's letters have been published by Bonghi (1886).

28. See fig. [195, in van Marle, vol. 12]. The first face in the deputation that I recognized was that of Poliziano, followed by that of Pulci, which I had seen in the same fresco by Filippino.

29. See appendix VI [pp. 212 f.].

30. *Magnifico* as a pure title: see Reumont, *Historisches Jahrbuch* (Görres) \* (1884), 146. But better translated as "High and Mighty" than by the far too adjectival "Magnificent."

31. Lorenzo's own words in the *Rappresentazione di S. Giovanni e Paolo*, ed. Carducci (Florence: Barbèra, 1859), 375. Compare Karl Hillebrand, "La politique dans le mystère [du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle]," *Etudes italiennes* (1868): 204 ff.

32. At the end of the *Istorie fiorentine*: "Tanto che a considerare in quello e la vita leggera e la grave, si vedeva in lui essere due persone diverse quasi con impossibile congiunzione congiunte." (If you compared his serious side and his light side, two distinct personalities could be identified within him, seemingly impossible to reconcile.)

33. "Inorganic" might be the word today. I found this passage in Machiavelli only after I had written the description of the deputation on the stairs and defined the psychology of Lorenzo's lighter side.
34. See Cerretani, appendix II [pp. 208 f.]: "*Faceva molti gesti colla sua persona.*"
35. See Levantini-Pieroni, *Lucrezia Tornabuoni* (Florence, 1888).
36. This question most recently discussed by Cesare Carocci, *La giostra di Lorenzo de' Medici [messa in rime da Luigi Pulci]* (Bologna, 1899).
37. Fig. 33. See Kristeller, *Early Florentine Woodcuts* (1897), fig. 150.
38. See appendix VII [pp. 214 ff.].
39. See A. Warburg, "Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring*" (1893), pp. 47 f.
40. See appendix VIII [p. 216] and Rossi, *Il Quattrocento*, 258.
41. See the engraving (ascribed to Baccio Baldini) of the attributes associated with the planet Mercury.
42. According to the 1480 survey, Tommaso worked purely as a *sensale* (broker) [see p. 440]. By 1486, however, Domenico was officially known by the name "del Grillandaio," which does suggest that Tommaso was directly involved with the making of jewelry. See Archivio di Stato, Florence, S. Trinita 15, fol. 27<sup>v</sup>; also Vasari, ed. Milanesi, 3:280, 264, 270, 277.
43. See the anecdote in Vasari, {ed. Milanesi,} 3:270.
44. For his dispute with the friars of S. Maria Novella, see the second essay in this series, which is to appear shortly [pp. 229 ff.].
45. *Lauro* being a pun on Lorenzo: see fig. 28b, reverse of the medal shown in fig. 28a, with the inscription "*Tutela Patriae*" ("His Country's Safeguard").
46. Andreucci, *Il fiorentino istruito nella Chiesa della Nunziata* (1857), with many valuable references to manuscript material.
47. Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. II. I. 454: "Notizie dei ceraiuoli e lavoratori d'immagini di Cera in Firenze."
48. See *Novelle*, ed. Gigli (1888), 264.
49. Andreucci {see note 46}, 86: "*non potere alcuno mettere voto in figura che non fosse uomo di Repubblica ed abile alle arti maggiori*" (no one might make a votive offering of a figure unless he was a citizen of the republic and master of the greater guilds).
50. Archivio di Stato, Florence, SS. Annunziata, no. 59, doc. 19, "Notizie delle cose memorabili del convento e chiesa della Nunziata," fol. 11.
51. Chimenti di Piero (?).
52. Archivio di Stato, Florence, SS. Annunziata, No. 48, "Ricordanze 1439-1484," fol. 131<sup>v</sup> ff.
53. That is, ten working days within a period of twelve calendar days.
54. See Ms. Palagi {note 47}. If an effigy fell, it was considered a very bad omen for the subject.
55. Archivio di Stato, Florence, SS. Annunziata, no. 50, "Ricordanze 1494-1504," fol. 18 ff. Similar material in Andreucci {see note 46}, 250 f.
56. Andreucci {see note 46}, 86.
57. See del Migliore, *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata* (1684), 286 f., who names a string of other historical personalities.

58. "1529 rifatto l'armagine <sic> di papa Alessandro e la marchesa di Mantova..." Ms. Palagi {see note 47}.
59. See Justi, *Michelangelo*, 231, n. 3. Very instructively, Stiassny, *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung* (1898), nos. 289, 290, cites a Gothic votive statue from the same source, although much earlier.
60. [Ed. Milanesi,] 3:373 and 8:87.
- \* 61. See Benndorf, *Antike Gesichtshelme und Sepulkralkmasken* (1878), 70 f., and Marquardt, *Das Privatleben der Römer* (1886), 1:242 f.
62. Andreucci {see note 46}, 249.
63. Andreucci {see note 46}, 287.
64. Never printed; Biblioteca Nazionale, Ms. II. II. 74, fol. 165<sup>v</sup>. Reumont {see note 30}, 2:420, does not seem to have used a good manuscript.
65. Added by copyist.
66. That is, *a rischio*.
67. Gentile de' Bechi.
68. *La vita del Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici il vecchio scritta da Niccolò Valori patrizio Fiorentino, nuovamente posta in luce* (Florence: Giunti, 1568), a. III<sup>r</sup>.
69. Poliziano, *Opera* (Basel, 1553), Epistolarum lib. X, 144.
70. Published by del Lungo, *Un viaggio di Clarice Orsini de' Medici nel 1485 {descritto da Ser Matteo Franco}*, Scelta di Curiosità letterarie, 98 (Bologna: {Romanogli}, 1868), and later in *Florentia* {see note 23}, 424 f.
71. Poliziano {see note 69}, 141.
72. See Carocci, *La giostra di Lorenzo de' Medici messa in rime da Luigi Pulci* {note 36}.
73. *Giostra di Lorenzo*, appendix to *Ciriffo Calvaneo*, in Giunti ed. (1572), 91.
74. Illustrated by Kristeller, *Early Florentine Woodcuts* (1897), fig. 150.
75. See the list of the retinue in del Lungo {note 70}, 7: "...2 cantori. El compare. Bertoldo scultore."
76. Archivio di Stato, Florence, Filza medic. avanti Princip., no. 104, doc. 85, fol. 583<sup>v</sup>: Piero's retinue on his journey to Rome in 1492 included "*Matteo Franco, il chonpare della viola, il chardiere della viola*." (See Reumont {note 30}, 2:353.)
- \* 77. On the daybook of this earliest of Florentine printing houses (which has yet to be adequately studied by cultural historians), see Fineschi, *Notizie storiche sopra la stamperia di Ripoli* (Florence, 1781); Roediger, "Diario della stamperia di Ripoli," *Bibliofilo* 8 (1887), 9, and 10, series unfortunately never completed; P. Bologna, "La stamperia fiorentina del Monasterio di S. Jacopo di Ripoli e le sue edizioni," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 20 (1892): 349 ff., 21 (1893): 49 ff. In the daybook we read: "1447. Entrata: a dì 3 di giugno soldi cinquanta sono per una legenda, ci vendè el compar Bartolomeo..." (1447. Entry: June 3, fifty soldi for a history, sold to us by Compare Bartolomeo). See Roediger, as above, 92.
78. See Flamini, *La lirica toscana del Rinascimento anteriore ai tempi del Magnifico* (1891), and P. Monnier, *Le Quattrocento* {note 27}, 28 f.
79. Sonnet 146, 1759 ed., "Luigi Pulci a Bartolommeo dell' Avveduto."
80. On this see, most recently, Laura Mattioli, *Luigi Pulci e il Ciriffo Calvaneo* (1900), 9. See Ms. Laur. plut. 44, Cod. 30.

81. Might this Bartolomeo be identical with the "Bartolomeo da Pisa detto Baldaccio," who is mentioned elsewhere as a book vendor or *cernatore*? (See Roediger [note 77], 134.) On 24 November 1477 he took one thousand *orationi* to sell on commission. And might not our Bartolomeo have supplied the *materia del Morgante*?

82. See Carocci [note 36], 35 ff.

83. *Opera* [see note 69], 26: "*Cal. Maias MCCCCLXXXX*" (1 May 1490).