

THE EARLIEST GUIDE TO FLORENTINE ARCHITECTURE, 1423

by Creighton Gilbert

We are told by Schlosser¹ (correctly, of course) that Albertini in 1510 produced the earliest guidebook to Florence or any Italian city, and that his nearest preceding equivalents are the Roman guide-books for pilgrims which, however, emphasize relics and indulgences and say little of works of art. It is thus extraordinary to find a guide to the buildings of Florence written nearly a hundred years before Albertini, which has been twice published, which emphasizes the secular rather than the church buildings, and which is further distinguished by the vividness of its descriptions and judgments of aesthetic quality.

This earlier guide naturally is not a book, but about four pages in a chronicle of the city, the *Istoria di Firenze dal 1380 al 1405* of Goro Dati.² But it is not because it is so short that it has been omitted almost totally³ from the consideration of art historians; were that so, we should also not know Filippo Villani's familiar essay on Giotto and his pupils, which oc-

¹ Julius Schlosser *Magnino*, La letteratura artistica, Florence-Vienna, 1964, p. 212, with reference to earlier discussion of pilgrims' guides. The truest predecessors of the text presented in this essay seem to be Pausanias and the medieval guides to Constantinople, briefly discussed by Schlosser in his opening pages. There exists an attractive possible connection between these guides to Constantinople and the guide to Florence in which we are interested, though it can only be suggested as a speculation. It is a letter which Manuel Chrysoloras sent to Florence from Rome in 1411, which was a rhetorical comparison between "old and new Rome," i. e. between ancient Rome and Constantinople (mentioned by Michael Baxandall, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 28, 1965, p. 197).

² Two editions, ed. Giuseppe Manni, Florence, 1735, pp. 107-111, and ed. Luigi Pratesi, Norcia, 1904, pp. 114-119. Only the modern edition should be used. It collates the numerous manuscripts and their unusually many and significant variants while maintaining a coherent text. (An additional Ms. has recently been acquired by the Biblioteca Forteguerriana, Pistoia). Manni's most startling error occurs in the description of the statues at Orsanmichele which is the key to the date of the text. The mss., apparently without variation, say: *e in quale ve n'è quattro, e due n'è di bronzo*, but in 1735 this is printed as: *e quale d'alabastro, e quale è di bronzo*. Manni's reliability is impugned (in another connection) by Luigi Passerini, *Curiosità storico-artistiche*, Florence, 1866, p. 125.

³ Dati's lines on the Ponte Vecchio were characteristically noted by the eighteenth century scholar who wrote on it, Domenico M. Manni, *Della vecchiezza... del ponte vecchio, ecc.*, Florence, 1763, p. 18, and as a result are quoted in the slight and highly specialized literature of the Florentine bridges. Pietro Franceschini, *L'Oratorio di San Michele in Orto in Firenze*, Florence, 1892, pp. 71-72, briefly noted Dati's phrase recording external frescoes there, which apparently are not known in any other way, but this reference has not been retained (the frescoes are not mentioned by Paatz). It is likely that other lines of Dati's have been similarly noted in the monographs on other particular buildings, which are often as admirable as they are obscure, but clearly this has not happened often enough to make his text a familiar resource. The widest use is by Wolfgang Braunfels, *Mittelalterliche Stadtbaukunst in der Toskana*, Berlin, 1953, who cites the phrases about the streets being straight (his p. 101), the streets being clean (p. 107), the cut stone used in the bridges (p. 186) and the term "rocca" used for the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio and the size of its bells (p. 201). Then while speaking of the Bargello he calls Dati's text as a whole "die schönste Stadtbeschreibung des alten Florenz" and lists the buildings it mentions (p. 189). For our present purpose the chief drawback of this treatment is its emphasis on the similarity of Dati to the earlier city descriptions, Villani's and the anonymous one of 1339. Since art historians know these earlier descriptions, which are not guides but either surveyors' reports or accounts of civil administration, they will suppose Dati to be a later example of the same (as in the remarks on straight streets and cleaning) and not be induced to hunt him up. The present study will suggest that Dati is grounded in this Villani tradition but creates a new and special extension from it, thus creating the aesthetic and "guidebook" aspects. But Braunfels' study is the most valuable tool for reconstructing his intellectual background.

cupies one page in a set of similarly short lives of Florentine citizens. We have rather omitted it as a result of a certain emphasis in our research. During the preparation of this commentary and discussions with colleagues, it became conspicuous that the most frequent interest expressed was in whether the unknown text included useful information such as names and dates connected with buildings. It includes none, and its own date has to be inferred from just such useful information recorded elsewhere. One might go so far as to say that this absence of names and dates could be deduced from its having remained unknown, since our investigations of the sources of that sort of information have been so thorough, that none previously published have been added to our stock for many years. *Dati* adds instead to a quite different stock of knowledge, one which we have indeed often felt we would like to develop better, but which in practice we have not explored with the thorough hunt for materials that would be needed to evolve answers. It relates to such problems as: how did Florentine citizens respond to their art, did they understand its exceptional character, how did they link it to their ordinary lives and interests, did they treat its products as tools of various purposes or isolate their aesthetic qualities, did they adopt modern styles rapidly or not? They are of the category sometimes called "social background," but perhaps more aptly described as history of aesthetic psychology. Some of them have been discussed in Friedrich Antal's pioneering "Florentine Painting and its Social Background," but his answers have generally not been found satisfactory, and the absence of documentary points of departure for his arguments has rightly been criticized.⁴ Antal has a reasonable excuse, in that direct knowledge of patrons' feelings had not been provided by the philological specialists on whom he could normally expect to draw for the inferences of a general book, so that assumptions had to be based on indirect analogies. But the materials do exist; this lacuna in our enquiries made it possible for me a few years ago to present for the first time the views on painting of a key figure for the attitudes of quattrocento patrons,

⁴ See the definitive review by *Millard Meiss*, in: *Art Bulletin*, 31, 1949, pp. 143-150. *Antal* mentions *Dati*, and also mentions St. Antonino (whose ideas on painting are discussed *infra*) and Cardinal Giovanni Dominici, whose ideas on the utility of painting I presented in a previous study (*Art Bulletin*, 34, 1952, pp. 206-207), but he cites in all cases their ideas on other questions, such as usury, and relates those ideas to the art of the period, without mentioning that these authors spoke of art themselves. In contrast to *Antal*, rich documentary material is offered in the study of artist-patron relationships of *Martin Wackernagel* (*Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der florentinischen Renaissance*, Leipsic, 1938) but, perhaps by the same token, its accumulation is followed by almost no larger inferences. The single chapter which might contain a definition of the taste of the period ("Der allgemeine Kunstsinne - Das Publikum und die Künstler", pp. 292-302) refers only to the period of Lorenzo il Magnifico and later. As to the earlier period, the Introduction discusses the important stimuli to patronage, religion and fame, and adds: "Das Verlangen nach geschmackvoller Schmuckprächtigkeit... und das Geniessen solcher Qualitäten, ist zunächst nur ein kaum bewusster unausgesprochener Antrieb..." (p. 12). He would then evidently consider it anachronistic to attribute to the early quattrocento conscious attitudes of the kind we shall see in *Dati*. Like *Antal*, he does not mention the ideas on art of Dominici, *Dati* or St. Antonino.

Our wish in studying history to relate art to the rest of cultural history in each period naturally presses us to adopt the relatively closest texts we can find in each age with which to make analogies. But it may be disturbing that the sort of text emphasized to clarify contemporary art in one age may be rejected in the study of a later age, as soon as it provides us with another sort that seems more apt. Thus in the romantic period, studying its intellectual approach to art through Baudelaire, we will scarcely accept the obviously remote remarks of John Stewart Mill on economics, or Cardinal Newman on theology, at least without many glosses taken from Baudelaire-like contexts to prevent the very general analogies between Mill and art from being wrongly read. But without such safeguards we quote Ficino, or contemporary theologians, to illuminate fifteenth century art, without debating whether in this period too they may be in a context remote from art. The pressure to use Ficino etc. is understandable and probably irresistible, and after warning of the dubiousness of the procedure the only practical remedy seems to be to search out the texts that do refer to art directly. These are more numerous than has been supposed, and turn out indeed to have hardly any terms in common with Ficino, naturally enough since art did not interest him.

the Archbishop St. Antonino (1389-1459). He turns out to be angry at the International Gothic, and a supporter of paintings that are plain and unornamented and at the same time naturalistic in bodily forms, which bring us to his contemporary Masaccio.⁵ Goro Dati's architectural preferences are quite different.

Gregorio di Anastagio Dati (1362-1435), always alluded to as Goro di Stagio, has the best possible credentials as a typical leading figure in Florentine merchant society. He was "mayor" or *gonfaloniere* in 1428-29 and earlier "city councilman" or *priore* in 1425, and had ten times been a "director" or *console* of his guild, the *Arte della Seta*, a post with incumbency for a year. All this we know from the lucky preservation of his private memorandum books⁶, which reveal marvelously many sides of his character and activities, including his many trips to Spain, his four marriages and many children, and even his resolutions for moral self improvement.⁷

⁵ See Art Bulletin, 41, 1959, pp. 75-87, for Antonino's text and a discussion of the implied attitude toward painting styles in his time.

⁶ *Gregorio Dati, Il Libro Segreto*, ed. Carlo Gargioli, Bologna, 1869, 200 copies printed. He records one accomplishment during his term as Gonfaloniere, which is civic and architectural, the transfer of a column from the Mercato Vecchio to the Piazza San Felice (p. 110). This record is the unexpected clue solving a Donatello mystery. The transfer of a column from a major to a minor *piazza* suggests as its most plausible cause some project for remodelling the major one, and there is general agreement on the late twenties as the date of Donatello's *Dovizia*, his most important secular work in Florence, which stood on a column in the Mercato Vecchio. But the basis for the date has been disturbingly vague (all materials assembled by *Hans Kauffmann*, Donatello, Berlin, 1936, note 118). The only base generally used by the Donatello literature is a curious appearance of Donatello as a character in the *sacra rappresentazione* "Nebuchadnezzar" in which he says he is busy with the *Dovizia* and the Prato pulpit; the latter was commissioned in 1428, so the former must be of the same moment. This is obviously loose, unauthoritative, and perhaps later (the play is sometimes dated ca. 1450). *Ferdinando Leopoldo Del Migliore*, Firenze, Città nobilissima illustrata, Florence, 1684, p. 515, stated that Donatello's column was erected in 1428, but despite the coincidence his unsupported remark has been given no weight. According to *Guido Carocci* (Il Mercato Vecchio di Firenze, Florence, 1884, p. 31) a document of 1431 authorizes the transfer of a stone column from the *Operai del Duomo* to the *Uffiziali della Torre* to place in the Mercato Vecchio; in a later publication *Carocci* described the document a little differently, adding that it was to replace an old column there (Il Centro di Firenze, pub. anonymously, Florence, 1900, p. 8, note 1). This report has been cited by some later writers but *Kauffmann* was not able to find the document and so it has been passed over by recent writers. Goro Dati's record of his action as Mayor (March-April 1428-29) is happily consistent with the other three and unlike them is firm. The Mayor and Council's removal of the old column no doubt follows a plan of ca. 1428 to set up a new one, a plan reflected in the "Nebuchadnezzar" play (which must be within a very few years of this date) and echoed in Del Migliore's slightly too positive allusion; thereafter the new column indeed arrived in 1431. We can thus not only date the statue but associate it properly with the city government, of which the *Uffiziali della Torre* were a minor agency. Since Dati mentions that he and his Priori moved the old column *con deliberazioni* it may well be that documents elucidating the purpose of the statue remain to be found.

When prior, earlier, in 1425, Dati served with the Gonfaloniere Lorenzo Lenzi, the probable patron of Masaccio's *Trinity* in the same year. They also served together as *consoli* of the Silk Guild still earlier in 1413 and later in 1428 (*Libro segreto*, pp. 105, 109). They are further linked through the Silk Guild's role as supervisor of the Spedale degli Innocenti. Goro served as an *operaio* there as we shall see. Since the *consoli* of the Silk Guild by law appointed the staff of the hospital, the hospital *camerlengo* in 1420 named Piero di Lorenzo Lenzi can presumably be identified as a son of the same Lorenzo di Piero Lenzi, the board member. This Piero, serving under Goro Dati, in turn paid out Brunelleschi's wages (see *Commentari*, 17, 1966, pp. 99, 100). At a later time, Lorenzo's son Bartolommeo was the patron of an altar of the Spedale church (*W. and E. Paatz*, Die Kirchen von Florenz, II, Frankfurt, 1941, p. 449).

⁷ On May 8, 1403 (*Libro Segreto*, p. 60), Dati married his third wife, *Ginevra figliuola fu d'Antonio di Piero Pivichesi Brancacci*. The marriage was not in the Carmine, but in 1473 and 1506 that church still kept a damask hanging with the Brancacci and Dati arms, presumably woven for this wedding (*Jacques Mesnil*, in: *Rivista d'Arte*, 8, 1912, p. 40; the misreading of the marriage as in 1452 is a token of Goro Dati's absence from the art historian's repertory). The marriage document, noting that the bride's father is dead, is the basis of a well known conclusion, that Vasari was wrong in calling Antonio Brancacci the patron of Masaccio's frescoes (*Vasari-Milanesi*, II, 296, with data from *L. Passerini*, dating the marriage 1402). To this Goro Dati's *Libro segreto* adds that her very large dowry was arranged by Felice di Michele Brancacci. Since he was first cousin to her father Antonio, this establishes a fact helpful in studying the Brancacci Chapel, that all her other male relatives nearer than Felice

Two of his connections are extremely relevant to his comments on architecture. The first is his closeness to his brother Leonardo, well known as the only Florentine ever to become General of the Dominican Order (with his bronze tomb by Ghiberti in the middle of S. Maria Novella). Their family had been obscure, their father being the first to hold guild office and Goro himself the first to hold civic office. The most startling appearance of Leonardo in Goro's private book is his *gift* to Goro, when he had business reverses, of 2330 florins up to 1420, and more later.⁸ Since the only source of Leonardo's income throughout his life was his position in the order, our speculation on the origin and handling of this large sum can only enhance our sense of the family's closeness.

The second connection appears when he notes under May 1, 1419 that he became a director of the guild for the ninth time, adding that these directors also served as "building commissioners" or *operai* of the new Spedale degli Innocenti which the guild was then creating, that he himself had been in charge of buying the land for it (a purchase which we know occurred on April 8, 1419)⁹ and that the other directors included Francesco della Luna. Indeed they were active as *operai*, and these facts explain a document recently published, for which there had been no firm explanation, showing an expenditure for materials at the hospital on April 4, 1420, *per detto di Ghorò e di Francesco dela Luna*.¹⁰ It was these *operai* also who, in all likelihood, appointed Brunelleschi as the architect of what is well called the first Renaissance building. Brunelleschi's name first is recorded in 1421, but he had clearly been at work in 1420, and his presence is implied in a document of March 24, 1419-20, while Dati and Francesco were still *operai*.¹¹ It has not previously been known what persons or committee of the guild chose

were dead too, e. g. his father Michele. Felice is also the only person toward whom Dati expresses personal friendship in more than thirty years of memoranda (p. 63). But this perhaps did not outlast Ginevra's death and Dati's fourth marriage in 1420.

⁸ Libro Segreto, p. 118. So far as *Stefano Orlandi's* rich documentation goes (Necrologio di S. Maria Novella, Florence, 1955, II, 161) Leonardo Dati was the only monk in that convent's history whose estate required management. The third of it that went to the convent may have paid for the cloister inscribed with his name, and a posthumous date that has been vaguely suggested for it (cf. *Paatz*, III, Frankfurt, 1952, p. 769, note 72) seems to fit its Renaissance forms better than 1424, which is only based on a mistaken date for Leonardo Dati's death (op. cit., p. 698). For his death and tomb by Ghiberti see *infra*.

It is certainly noticeable that slight enquiry into Goro Dati leads at once to a remarkable series of the great contemporary artists: Brunelleschi worked under him as *operaio*, Ghiberti modelled his brother's tomb, Donatello worked on a civic monument when he was the Gonfaloniere, Masaccio worked for his best friend and probably also for his close associate in the Silk Guild. We know too little of Florentine society to decide whether this merely reflects the smallness of the town and would happen often, or whether Goro Dati belongs to the group near the focus of modern art. Either answer allows us to infer that our "guide" was written in a very knowing ambient.

⁹ *Giul. Richa*, *Notizie storiche delle chiese fiorentine*, VIII, Florence, 1759, p. 116.

¹⁰ *Manuel Cardoso Mendes Atanásio and Giov. Dallai*, *Nuove indagini sullo Spedale degli Innocenti a Firenze*, in: *Commentari*, 17, 1966, pp. 85, 101.

¹¹ Regular records of the *operai*, their names and terms, begin in 1421 (*Cornel v. Fabriczy*, Filippo Brunelleschi, Stuttgart, 1892, p. 560). They always take office on May 1 for a year, just like the *consoli* of the Guild who appoint them. Prior to May 1, 1421, there is only a passing mention of two *operai* named in a payment document of August, 1420 (*Fabriczy*, p. 557); no doubt these served from May 1, 1420 up to April 30, 1421 when the regular lists begin, and were preceded in turn by the *consoli* serving also as *operai*, in the first year of activity from May 1, 1419, to April 30, 1420, these being Goro Dati, Francesco della Luna and their colleagues as we have learned from the Libro Segreto. (*Fabriczy*, having no information on the *operai* of the first year, rather awkwardly assumed [p. 579] that those mentioned in the payment document of the second year had already been serving in the first, since August 1419 when we have our first records of building activity.) Brunelleschi first appears in 1421 (*Fabriczy*, p. 558) paid for work in an unspecified part of 1420. The natural assumption that during the first year 1419-20, when only foundation labor was being done, there was already a *capomaestro*, directing the kind of foundations wanted, and designing the portico that was begun immediately afterwards, and that this *capomaestro* was Brunelleschi, seems happily consistent with a reference on March 24, 1419-20, to foundations in the place *dov'ano a stare le cholone del porticho* (*Fabriczy*, p. 557). To the extent that this is probable, we can say that Brunelleschi was appointed by the *consoli* of 1419-20, including Goro Dati and Francesco della Luna.

Brunelleschi, and the information seems of special value in making the role of Francesco della Luna clearer.¹² When after a year the Silk Guild separated the duties of *consoli* and *operai*, Goro di Stagio Dati reappears as an *operaio* for the year 1422-23¹³, but this office he did not consider distinguished enough to record in his memorandum book.

At the end of his life Dati was among the small group of citizens who pushed the new S. Spirito, his parish church, into existence, and is so mentioned in the "Manetti" life of Brunelleschi.¹⁴ Modern study has inferred that he was an *operaio* there.¹⁵ But since this occurred long after the "guide" was written, we cannot pause over it.

These intimate connections with Leonardo Dati (himself responsible for building at S. Maria Novella, such as the papal apartments) and with the Spedale degli Innocenti, amply show

¹² This person has been subjected to a transformation from rich merchant to minor builder that cannot be called one of our successes. He was the richest silk merchant in Florence (1427 tax records discussed by *Florence de Roover* in: *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, III, 1966, p. 226) and the ninth largest taxpayer of any kind (*Lauro Martines*, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists*, 1390-1460, London, 1963, p. 372) and as such his prominence among *consoli* and *operai* is normal enough. In the later years of the hospital construction he was an *operaio* continuously. The brief account of the Spedale degli Innocenti in the "Manetti" Vita (ed. *Elena Toesca*, Florence, 1927, pp. 56-57) emphasizes a story of how Brunelleschi, when temporarily absent, left verbal instructions how to continue with the *maestri di murare e agli scalpellini* and also with *certi cittadini capi della Arte ed operai deputati a tale cosa*. They proceeded to make mistakes in various mouldings and framing elements, but when Filippo returned and explained this, they, and especially one *operaio* who had taken the lead, *non sapeva che si dire*. The allocation of blame is unambiguous and might happen today: it is assigned partly to the masons and mostly to the lay officials who try to manage affairs too independently when the architect is not about; there is no suggestion at all of an assistant *capomaestro* or any sort of architect, on the contrary. The leading *operaio* mentioned here might well have been the Francesco della Luna we know in the documents. Vasari, repeating the story, so identified him. But he describes him not as a merchant or *operaio*, simply as an "*amicissimo*" of Brunelleschi, who defended his mistake, claiming his moulding was copied from the Baptistery, whereupon Brunelleschi replied that he had chosen the one mistake in that building! Vasari has made the story better, and in the process, perhaps to help its sharpness, has by omission falsified Francesco's status. He thus turned into the "Werkmeister, Freund und Schüler des Brunelleschi" of *Thieme-Becker*. He has remained so ever since in historical opinion, unaffected by increasing information about him. Thus *Fabriczy* recorded that his tax report showed that he owned four houses, but drew no inferences, nor have others; it is not a clue so long as we are familiar only with artists' tax reports. Naturally he never appears, in a long life, in documents of other buildings. We continue to ask the documents of his presence as *operaio* to call him an architect. Thus a newly published record is paraphrased as stating that Francesco "ha fatto rifare" some work at the Hospital that had been badly done (*Mendes and Dallai*, art. cit., 1966, p. 85) when it actually states that the work was done *cho chosentimento di Francesco dela Luna* (p. 101). This tendency has been encouraged by several accidental aspects. One is Brunelleschi's having been an *operaio* of the Hospital himself, representing the Goldsmiths' Guild, which in the absence of comparative study seemed to suggest that it was a role for architects; I would surmise instead that it is a unique development similar to his selection in 1425 as a *priore* of the city government, I believe the only architect, sculptor or painter so named in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. It was due to his coming from an eligible family, which is also unique among artists. Another accident is that, as recently as 1964, the record of the end of Brunelleschi's work at the hospital in 1426 just preceded the first known appearance there of Francesco della Luna in 1427 (a point emphasized by *Guido Morozzi*, in: *Commentari*, 15, 1964, p. 197) so that he looked like his successor. Recently the small document of April 4, 1420, has shown he was there early, but did not define his role narrowly. Now from Goro Dati's book we see that he was there before Brunelleschi was, in a higher rank (not just *operaio* but *console*), and probably one of those who appointed him. But the greatest encouragement to call Francesco a real architect of some sort has been a weakness in our approach to archives: we go to them hoping to find artists, and so we do whether they are there or not. *Operai* have been especially affected by this tendency to overread, e. g. Goro Dati, when *operaio* at S. Spirito later on, is recorded by the indexer of *Paatz* as "Dati, Goro di Stazio, Steinmetz." Neither belongs in a "Lexikon der bildenden Künstler."

¹³ *Fabriczy*, op. cit., p. 560.

¹⁴ Vita, ed. *E. Toesca*, 1927, p. 77.

¹⁵ *Paatz*, op. cit., V, Frankfurt, 1953, p. 164.

that Coro Dati was in an admirable position to know *churchly* building and *modern* building. Therefore the emphasis in his “guide” on *secular* building and on *old* building (not just in the choice of buildings, but in aesthetic embrace of them) should be considered not casual, but a choice following upon broader experiences. There is really no contradiction between his liking for the secular and the old, and his links with the hospital and with his Dominican brother, for in the details of these links we repeatedly see the motivating force in his interest in his guild and his business.

Goro’s guide can be narrowly dated from internal evidence. The “two bronze statues” at Orsanmichele are of course Ghiberti’s St. John and St. Matthew. The critical document is of December 17, 1422, recording that the base of the second of these, the Matthew, still required some revision.¹⁶ The statue was therefore installed after that date, though it is possible that it had been installed a few weeks before (not more, as other documents report earlier phases) and taken down again. Aside from that proviso, 1423 becomes our earliest date for the guide. In May, 1423, the third bronze statue for Orsanmichele, Donatello’s St. Louis of Toulouse, was far enough along so that arrangements were made “to permit it to be finished” and was presumably in place in 1427, when it is absent from the list of works in the Donatello and Michelozzo tax returns on which their accounts are not closed. Unluckily we do not have its full records.¹⁷ The fourth statue, Ghiberti’s St Stephen, was finished February 1, 1428-29.¹⁸

The date of the guide may be narrowed still more by negative evidence. The praise of the Baptistery for its external marble walls and internal mosaics, which we read along with the references to all the important outdoor sculpture cycles in Florence, at the Cathedral, the Campanile, Orsanmichele, and even the minor one of the Loggia dei Lanzi, must have been written before Ghiberti’s bronze doors were installed on April 19, 1424. Since it is so easy to draw doubtful conclusions *ex silentio*, especially from the texts of lay chroniclers who were not much concerned with our sort of enquiry, a well known but ever tempting fallacy, I hope the rich attentive tone of Dati’s whole description of the buildings around him may be treated as evidence that such a gap would be strange. A curious point may be added, based on the very fact that the guide is in a chronicle, and that other chronicles contain no such descriptions of monuments as his. Yet it happens that other chronicles blind to all works of art do by exception report the installing of the doors in 1424, an event as strangely bunched among battles, treaties and epidemics as it would be today on the front page of a newspaper, and with the same implication of a civic event. An anonymous chronicler transcribed by Giovanni Cambi reports the collapse of one of the porphyry columns beside the Baptistery door on April 11, 1424, and continues:

*A’ di 20. detto vi si misse quella bella porta di metallo dorato, dove sono dette cholonne, e chostò più di 12. m. scudi. Lavorolle Lorenzo di Bartoluccio anni 44.*¹⁹

¹⁶ Richard Krautheimer, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Princeton, 1956, p. 408.

¹⁷ Horst W. Janson, The Sculpture of Donatello, Princeton, 1957, II, p. 46.

¹⁸ Krautheimer, op. cit., p. 411.

¹⁹ In the chronicle of Giovanni Cambi (1458-1535) (in: *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, ed. Fr. Ildelfonso di San Luigi, voll. XX-XXIII, Florence, 1785-86), the text is preceded, as the editor notes (XXIII, p. xiii), by copies of older chronicles, “faithfully transcribed” by Cambi so that at several points the phrase “and I the writer was present” occurs with different writers’ names attached. Hence we may call this passage of 1424 (XX, p. 160) a contemporary notice rather than saying that Cambi later in the century noted the event, as Krautheimer does (p. 16). On the other hand, as Cambi copied he inserted glosses, and the puzzling statement that Ghiberti worked forty-four years may be explained as one. The phrase certainly is not meant to say Ghiberti was forty-four years old in 1424, as Krautheimer whimsically proposes to indicate the oddity of the remark. I suggest it follows from the emphasis on the *place* of the doors, beside the important columns, a place occupied later of course by the Doors of Paradise. A later lay writer might well look at Ghiberti’s two sets of doors as a continuing effort to

Another chronicler of the period, Domenico Boninsegni (1384-1465), writing later and getting the date wrong, remembers:

1421. si posono a San Giovanni le porte seconde dell'ottone, fatte condurre, e fare in circa vent'anni passati per l'Arte di Calimala de' danari di S. Giovanni, a Lorenzo di Bartolo Fiorentino, eccellentissimo maestro d'intaglio, quanto sia stato in molte centinaia d'anni, nelle quali è scolpita la storia del nostro Sig. Gesù Christo...²⁰

Dati like these men is a chronicler, but unlike them interested in buildings and sculpture, and he speaks of the adornments of this Baptistery. His silence on the doors is comprehensible only if they were not yet there. If still further evidence is wanted, it is that in 1425 the tomb of Dati's brother was begun by Ghiberti.²¹ We may thus date the guide between early 1423 and April 19, 1424, or in round numbers ca. 1423.²²

adorn this main entrance, the first relatively modest result being at once brushed aside. A dovetailing fact is that exactly forty-four years after beginning the first door in 1403, Ghiberti received in 1447 the final payment on his contract for the second ones (*Krautheimer* doc. 259). There followed at once a new contract with the firm of Lorenzo and Vittorio Ghiberti to make the framing elements and small heads. Lorenzo might well have felt, and been quoted as saying, that at this point he had completed *his* task.

²⁰ *Domenico Boninsegni*, *Storie della Città di Firenze dall'anno 1410 al 1460*, Florence, 1637, p. 17.

²¹ Leonardo Dati died on March 15 or 16, 1425, and Ghiberti's tomb had been finished at a date earlier than July, 1427, when Ghiberti was still owed ten florins of its fee. Two years from start to finish on a bronze relief is exceptionally rapid work, as the careers of Ghiberti and Donatello show, so that this tomb must have been begun during 1425. For the date of Leonardo Dati's death we have two excellent and independent sources, his brother's notebook (*Libro Segreto*, ed. 1869, p. 105, as March 16, 1424, or 1425 by our reckoning, duly quoted by *Krautheimer*) and the *Necrologio di S. Maria Novella* (1955, I, p. 151; II, pp. 158-59, as March 15, 1424-25). This is worth citing since false dates continue to be cited by excellent authors, probably affected by the ambiguity of Florentine dates in March: "1423 or 1424" by *Paatz* (op. cit., III, p. 702 etc.), 1423 by *Janson* (op. cit., II, p. 76, with a reasonable deduction that Ghiberti's work on the tomb was *slow*), 1426 by *Sergio Samek Ludovici* (II "De Sphaera" estense e l'iconografia astrologica, Milan, 1958, p. 18).

²² This conclusion differs completely from that of *Hans Baron*, *Humanistic and Political Literature in Florence and Venice at the Beginning of the Quattrocento*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1955, Chapter III, "The Date of Gregorio Dati's *Istoria di Firenze*," pp. 62-68. Dati's work falls into three parts: Books 1-7 the history proper of the wars of 1380-1406; Book 8 including a sketch of Florentine history in ancient and early medieval times, our "guide," and discussions of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the morality of a war against the Pope, and the effects of the Florentine conquest of Pisa; Book 9 an analysis of the structure of government administration which is the one well known element. *Baron* takes Books 1-8 as a group, and finds that the manuscripts, though all somewhat later, differ little among themselves, while Book 9 instead was evidently brought up to date constantly by its scribes for use as a handbook. (Hence the earlier proposal by *Pratesi* to date the "Istoria" from elements in Book 9 must be abandoned.) He finds that Books 1-8 were written shortly after the events chronicled, and look forward to peace and prosperity on the basis of the taking of Pisa; they should therefore precede the next war, with Naples, ca. 1413-14, and a reference to the growth of Florentine territory omits Livorno which was purchased in 1421. We might try to fit our data to this by detaching from Books 1-7 (the pure history which the scribes would leave alone) our Book 8 containing the "guide", and supposing that it was subject to updating for the same reasons as Book 9. But we are stopped first because *Baron's* points mainly come in fact from Book 8, a few pages after the guide, and, more importantly, because the guide does not show such updating as is found in the governmental analysis of Book 9 (sometimes including innovations of ca. 1500). The latest datings we can detect in our guide are the lines on the Cupola and on the Zecca, which occur in the same Ms., and only in one; these still refer to events during Dati's life, and the descriptions are in his graphic, enthusiastic style. But even that Ms. agrees with all the others in failing to update by including the Baptistery doors or the later bronze sculptures at Orsanmichele, to take the most obvious candidates for addition; all saw *two* bronzes, so *all* use a redaction of 1423. *Baron* gives weight to the 1735 edition as using a good early manuscript, and there as we saw *one* bronze at Orsanmichele is mentioned. We reject this version, because in the same sentence its meaningless word *alabastro* is clarified only as a mistake for the version found in all the mss., *ve n'e quattro*, an elegant example of the sort of correct words that an uninformed scribe decides to emend because they are puzzling to him. But even accepting it does not help *Baron's* dating, since the one bronze at Orsanmichele dates the text after 1415. We must conclude that the text was written in 1423, or that all our Mss. go back to a text of 1423, which is a distinction without a difference. This really does not run counter to any firm evidence of *Baron's*. Our hypothesis would

Three sorts of study of the text of the guide suggest themselves. Philological study of the text of the many manuscripts has happily been done at length, with a detail producing variant readings in every sentence. No doubt a full second study would produce a few more amendments, but I have undertaken neither that nor a study of the individual buildings to determine what in Dati's reports is new to us. This is evidently a task that would be done better in the future by students of each building; that is, it seems more effective to relate Dati's statements on the Bargello to other aspects of a study of the Bargello than to Dati's remarks on other buildings. While perfectly emphasizing the value of these other approaches, this note will be concerned only with a third element, which seems to be the aspect in which Dati has the most exceptional value, his documentation of aesthetic interest.

His great addition to our knowledge of the extent of such interests in his time appears first, for example, in the description of the Ponte Vecchio. When he says that the shops on both sides make it seem *not a bridge*, except at the center where there is a piazza with parapets, which *show off* the river above and below, we must be struck not only with his accuracy, but with a verbal articulateness about the environing spatial units, and a pleasure in observing these visual qualities, that is hard to match at an earlier date. In this case he is pointing out a view of nature, the river, as it is heightened by a man-made frame, allowing us to see it only at one point and then in a way that concentrates our eyes. Exactly this quality is evoked in one other well known text of about 1460, Pius II's description of his building activities in Pienza, in which he emphasizes that he arranged the doorways of his palazzo to present the view of the hills. The special consciousness of "view planning" there was well analyzed by Heydenreich, who naturally took it to be the earliest instance.²³ But when we find it evoked not only by a literary pope, but a generation earlier by a silk merchant, we must consider that it may have been a more widespread concept. We may then in turn relate it to the contemporary developments in landscape painting, including the equally new and fresh river view through a window and over a bridge in Jan van Eyck's Rollin Madonna. As painters realized such images, Dati's description allows us to think that they were consciously aware of them as distinct visual units, contemplated for pleasure, and that some of their patrons and spectators were as well.

Dati is surprising again in describing the Palazzo Vecchio. Older medieval descriptions had given similar specifications of parts or construction. But Dati suggests how the observer's eye moves, one might say kinaesthetically, over the surface from bottom to top, and his series of parts with alternating repetition of terms, *a-b-a-b*, creates from these "rhymes" a unity of which he was surely aware. First there is the strong stone building sixty *braccia* high, then the balustrade with brackets and battlements, then the tower also sixty *braccia* high, then another balustrade with brackets and battlements, and finally the great bells. The description of a pattern (with measurements that seem to be incorrect) is clearly a statement of the writer's *pleasure* in the architectural qualities he picks out. Dati is consistent at Orsanmichele, when he again emphasizes the top with the brackets and arches, and angels painted different colors, more consistent than we who rarely look *up* at this building, and so suggests what its original formal emphasis was. A series of swift upward motions of the eye, each ending in a decorative release, seems to me legitimately comparable to an experience often mentioned in other chronicles of the period, i. e. fireworks. The analogy is intimately linked to Dati's basic approach, because the fireworks were at this time a specifically *civic* expression, like the Palazzo Vecchio.

be that Dati indeed is looking back over the years to the wars that ended in 1406, ignoring the intermediate Naples war and the purchase of Livorno as relatively minor (which indeed they were). This is well supported, I suggest, by his remark on page one, saying that he has *chosen* these wars as his theme because they are the most *important* event of recent times.

²³ Ludwig H. Heydenreich, Pius II. als Bauherr von Pienza, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 6, 1937, pp. 109-110. Pius' brief descriptions of Nurnberg and Strasbourg are also comparable to Dati.

Since they were certainly an expression of civic pleasure, in celebrating fortunate events²⁴, the obvious quality of pleasure in the vertical image of the civic building is paralleled. Since Dati is writing in the early fifteenth century about buildings of the fourteenth, it also does not seem to stretch a point if we treat these expressions of vertical pleasure as exceptional articulations of a Gothic aesthetic.

No other building is described with the strictness of pattern applied to the Palazzo Vecchio, whose special civic importance is, I will suggest, echoed in its special aesthetic celebration. Numbers recur in the measurements of the Cathedral, but elsewhere Dati prefers the imagery of surface richness of color, sculpture, and arcading, the *pilastri volti in archi con intagli di pietra* of Orsanmichele, the *quattro archi di notabile bellezza volti in su tre colonne con lioni e altri intagli maravigliosi*, of the Loggia dei Lanzi, the *marmi nero rosso e bianco e di porfido con intagli di figure e storie* of the Campanile. (It is interesting that Dati “sees” the dark green marble as black, just as he calls the Baptistery a “*ritondo*” in the same breath in which he records its eight sides). He does not see the city in any sort of abstract geometry, as Leonardo Bruni did when he made it into a series of concentric circles around the hub of the Palazzo Vecchio, with walls and hills.²⁵ While Bruni’s unity of geometric composition with all detail subordinated, might be compared to the architectural imagery of the new perspective, with its first dated example Donatello’s Siena relief begun in this year 1423, or to Brunelleschi’s views of two Florentine *piazze*, Dati’s instead might be compared to the older images of the city, as in the Biadaiuolo miniatures about 1340, or in their latest example the Bigallo fresco of 1445. In these, as in Dati, a series of colorful surfaces distinguishes each delightful building from the next with a casual clarity that is readable enough, giving each its striking personal features, and sometimes wrapping them all as he does within the important walls.²⁶ Unlike Brunelleschi, the *piazze* themselves develop no character, they consist of the buildings that bound them. Streets are praised for straightness, and they meet *almost* in the middle of the city, as the Arno passes *almost* through the middle and the Piazza della Signoria is *almost* in the middle, and even these qualified evocations of a symmetrical city plan are by exception derived from the earlier account of Villani, as we shall see.

The one building to be given plan measurements is the cathedral. The aim in recording its length and breadth is to emphasize its large size, but it must be admitted that this attempt lacks the lively picture created by the vertical measurements of the Palazzo. It is evident that Dati had quite little interest in churches, and similarly was not drawn to interior spaces.

The contrast between this aesthetic and Brunelleschi’s can be expressed in diametric terms. While Brunelleschi is chiefly an architect of interiors, Dati loved exteriors; Brunelleschi was a

²⁴ Thus in 1426 *si fè fuochi* when the Venetian army entered the first circuit of the walls of Brescia, and November 20 of the same year, when the whole city was taken, *fessene el quinto ed ultimo fuoco* (Giov. Morelli, Ricordi, in: *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani*, cit., XIX, pp. 69, 73).

²⁵ For these circles see the excellent analysis by H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, Princeton, 1955, I, p. 170. Baron compares this approach to Dati’s, and curiously enough finds them alike. But he is not comparing Bruni and Dati in their descriptions of Florence (he does not use Dati’s “guide” at all, as the problem of his dating indicates, see note 22). Instead he compares Bruni’s idea of Florence to Dati’s descriptions of armies besieging a city. More broadly, Baron analyzes Dati’s whole way of looking at history as very modern and empirical for its time, a first step toward Machiavelli, but less firm in referring to principles than Bruni. This detailed and authoritative analysis by Baron seems to me to illuminate well the status of his sense of the city, more visual than Villani but less organized than Bruni. Dati’s “guide” may also be compared to his own most famous achievement, also a first of its kind, the explanation of Florentine government administration that occupies Book 9. Both express the structure of the city in fine expository prose and with optimism.

²⁶ We define Dati’s view of the city as a cumulation, rather than a subordination, not only through the implications of his whole text, but explicitly from his comment on the houses outside the walls, so thick *che pare tutta una città*. If the continuous but unordered buildings of the surrounding hills *seem a whole city*, a city may seem to be like them.

church architect, Dati was interested in secular architecture. And we have seen that the new style of Brunelleschi is alien to Dati's *trecento*, verticalizing, Gothic taste. This contrast is remarkably reinforced when we think of the one most important secular building by Brunelleschi, which is at the same time the one most important exterior by him, and also his earliest work. We may say that here Brunelleschi is working within the social norms that belong to Dati's taste, but of course has destroyed the corresponding stylistic expressions of it. Since Dati was actually one of the clients of Brunelleschi's hospital, and as an *operaio* in 1422-23 had just been staring at Brunelleschi's colonnade and passed on his drawings, we are entitled to say that even before any Renaissance buildings existed, the articulation of Dati's taste was made in the light of the existence of a very different taste. He had, besides, while admiring the sculptures at Orsanmichele and its brackets with little arches, probably had before him also the new niche for Donatello's Saint Louis.

No qualities are more conspicuous in Dati's taste than his preference for the *trecento* and for the *secular*.²⁷ His guide is thus a new support for the analysis of the early quattrocento Renaissance in Florence, which observes that the modern art is chiefly religious, and the secular art is retardataire. Thus church buildings are in advance of all private palazzi in Brunelleschi's time, and are matched by just a few public buildings. Likewise Masaccio and Donatello work almost entirely for churches, in contrast not only with a secular art limited to minor furniture painters, but also in contrast to other places less Renaissance-minded, where great artists such as Pisanello and Jan van Eyck give much of their attention to secular work. (The contrast is especially striking in the attitudes to portraits.) Likewise, the Florentine humanists' vast writings say little of art and then show an old fashioned taste, while humanists elsewhere happily praise Pisanello.²⁸ These observations are contrary, to be sure, to the handbook view of the origins of the Renaissance, in which art and humanism go hand in hand, but which tends to stay with generalities and owes much to a nineteenth century progressivism, where the anti-clerical, the scientific and the classical were linked by what seemed axiomatic harmony. (Perhaps its one specific support is in the figure of Alberti. Since Alberti was unique and eccentric as a humanist at the same time an architect, a role inconceivable for Poggio or Valla,

²⁷ Dati's secular emphasis emerges not only from the relative amount of space, the placing of the secular buildings first, the interest in relatively minor secular buildings like the Zecca and the skimming or omission of major religious ones like Santa Croce and the Badia, but also from his remark that he will omit hospitals and monasteries, after which he indeed omits monasteries but discusses hospitals, and most intimately of all from his secular approach to religious buildings, the greatest interest in any church being in the half-secular Orsanmichele, and the account of the Baptistry emphasizing the role of the Arte there.

²⁸ The classic study of E. H. Gombrich, "Apollonio di Giovanni" has pointed to the rapport in a following generation between a cassone painter who worked "as if Masaccio or Donatello had never lived and the International Style, as exemplified by Gentile da Fabriano, had been allowed to develop, undisturbed" and the humanist who described him as another Apelles (Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 18, 1955, pp. 23 and 17). These cassoni in a Gothic style, pleasing to humanists because of their classic themes, only emerge at a late date. The supposition that earlier humanists were a fortiori attached to the International Gothic when it was not so retardataire, is hard to confirm in Florence because humanists there do not talk about their artists. Elsewhere, "More laudatory poems were addressed by the humanists to Pisanello than to any other artist of the fifteenth century, though this has not inhibited very much the art-historians' equations between 'humanist' values on the one hand and the painter's austere application, on the other, to perspective and proportion." (Michael Baxandall in: Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 28, 1965, p. 193). The context of humanist poems on Pisanello is the ducal courts to which both belonged; Florentine humanists and artists worked for the same civic commissions of merchants, and the humanists wrote much about civic glory, but were silent on the artists. The occasional ties of humanists to works by the major artists tend to be to their church works, which most of their major works are: Traversari's role in having Ghiberti's reliquary casket ordered, Bruni's proposed program for Ghiberti's doors, the Aragazzi tomb. The later classical cassoni are in this period preceded by cassoni of civic festivals, which certainly would please Goro Dati.

and since his taste, writing, and friendship are part of this same pattern in him, it seems reasonable without special pleading to urge that his case should not be taken as an example of the taste of humanists.) In this context the modernism of St. Antonino may be contrasted with Goro's "Gothicism."

Since we have emphasized Goro's articulate pleasure in visual forms, we may later tend to discount it by pointing to the strong nonaesthetic elements in his "guide." The mixture of his building critique with the lions and their keepers, the mills and their consumption of flour, or the management of the Baptistery's income, is of great value in indicating how Goro's pioneering text came into being.

These other elements are to be found in earlier writings. Giovanni Villani under the year 1324 (Book 9, Chapters 256-257) provides an account of the walls of Florence that reminds us of the first sentences of Dati's guide, but is much longer and wholly devoted to measurements and to the location of gates, while it omits Dati's picturesque sketch of the "foredoors around, such that each one looks like a castle". The measurements continue with the size of the city and the number of bridges and churches. In 1339 (Book 10, Chapter 94) he speaks of the city as "*ricca e bella*" with its fine churches and houses. More interesting still is the anonymous description of Florence in 1339²⁹, which has an extremely modern tone as one might see it in a commercial consultant's precis, recommending the location of a branch factory. It too begins with the walls, the bridges and the churches as a group, the Palazzo Vecchio and the Bargello, and then moves easily into social information: the population, the class divisions with *their* population, the arrangements of governmental administration, the guilds and industries, the wealth, temperament and even physiognomy of the citizens, and their support of churches and charities. All this is clearly the type of statement which is Dati's point of departure, and he owes much of his emphasis and method to it, but if we take his remarks as another late example of the same sort of description (as we might after reading Braunfels' discussion) we would err. Dati indeed belongs intimately to this tradition, and from it we can learn even more than from his own words that he looks at his city from the point of view of administration, of "political science" in the routine everyday sense. It is for that reason that he is concerned about the flour mills and the interest on government bonds. His comments on buildings start (before they grow into something else) from this base of pride and pleasure: the city he is describing has buildings that, to start with, work well. Even the fact that he writes a guidebook in the most literal sense, as a *cicerone* with foreign tourists, as when he says that Orsanmichele is five hundred paces from the Palazzo Vecchio, has its origin in the same tradition. A hundred years earlier Dino Compagni had announced that *molti di lontani paesi la vengono a vedere* (Firenze) *non per necessità, ma per la bontà de' mestieri e arti, e bellezza e ornamento della città*.³⁰ Such persons are already tourists, and in their presence Dati's guide is implicit. The most curious indication of his administrative attitude to the city (and his non-churchly attitude) is his alteration of the names of the churches, when he speaks not of Santa Croce but San Francesco, not of Santa Maria Novella but San Domenico, not of Santo Spirito but Santo Agostino. Of course he knew the correct names; if there were any doubt, it is removed by the references in his private memorandum book to the family burials at Santo Spirito.³¹ But the

²⁹ Published by *Carl Frey*, *Die Loggia dei Lanzi zu Florenz*, Berlin, 1885, p. 119 ff.

³⁰ Dino Compagni, *La Cronaca fiorentina*, ed. Prato, 1846, p. 4. While on the one hand the administrative elements in Dati's guide follow Compagni's reference to visits stimulated by the *bontà de' mestieri e arti* and would interest travelling merchants, on the other hand the purely tourist aspects following Compagni's reference to visits stimulated by the *bellezza e ornamento della città* include not only Dati's exposition of the handsome buildings but also the visits to the Republic's lions and the large bells. Such things any good *cicerone* would include in a tour today.

³¹ For example that of his wife Ginevra Braccacci (*Libro Segreto*, p. 93).

changes consistently drop the proper name of the church in favor of the name of the *order* to which it belongs, the same interest that leads him to explain the role of the guild in administering the Baptistery.

These emphases are ordinary and to be expected. The aesthetic interest is easy to develop out of it — already Villani said the buildings made the city beautiful, and stopped there — but Dati's special quality is that the civic administrative interest leads into an aesthetic interest that extends itself so far beyond its original base that it supersedes it, and Dati differs from Villani in giving the larger part of his space to the new interest. Thus for us the importance of the mixture of administrative and aesthetic elements is that, Dati being the first guidebook writer in his tradition, he allows us to see the stimuli that led to it. Civic pride and pleasure is becoming autonomous aesthetic pleasure; a hundred years later the next step is taken, and the guidebook will stand alone. A parallel development is the evolution of the collective biography from Filippo Villani (one artist among many lawyers, writers, etc.) to Antonio Manetti (a majority of artists) to Giorgio Vasari. In this historical stream the question of whether the artistic motivation is pure or not is artificial.

In the text that follows, Pratesi's text of 1904 is followed; variants from other manuscripts which he indicated in his apparatus are presented (*in parentheses and in italics*) when they make an addition that is not merely verbal.

The passage is preceded by a briefer account of Florentine history, emphasizing the enlargements of the walls. It is followed by praise of the inhabitants and particularly the beauty of Florentine women.

APPENDIX

Come Firenze è situata

La città è bene murata tutta di pietra viva con forti torri nelle dette mura, con dieci porte aperte e tre serrate, di molta grandezza, con antiporti intorno che chiascuna pare uno cassero (*bello*); le vie dentro sono diritte e larghe e tutte aperte e con uscita; e gira il cerchio intorno fuori delle mura sette miglia; la via che muove da una porta, va diritta a un'altra per lo diametro della terra ed è lunga due miglia; un'altra via di traverso che fa croce in sul mezzo della città o quasi, cioè in sul Mercato Vecchio, e dall'una porta all'altra altrettanto, e così ve ne sono più altre che vanno da una porta a un'altra per diritto, e per lo mezzo della terra, o quasi, passa il fiume d'Arno; e nel suo principio sono in sul fiume, dalla parte di mezzo, di molte mulina di maravigliosa (*nobile*) bellezza e di magisterio di pietra; poi nella città sono quattro ponti tutti di pietra concia lavorati molto gentili e intra gli altri ve n'è uno in sul quale da ogni parte sono bellissime botteghe d'artefici, lavorate di pietra, che non pare che e' sia ponte se non in sul mezzo d'esso, dove è una piazza con le sponde, che dimostra il fiume sopra e di sotto; poi al fine della città, dalla parte di tramontana, sono in sul fiume dentro alla città molte altre mulina che tra tutte quasi macinerebbono quanta farina bisognasse alla città dentro, che al presente ne bisogna ogni dì cento moggia o circa. Quasi nel mezzo della città in su una gran piazza (*ammattinata*), sta il palagio della abitazione e residenza de' Signori Priori, il quale è tutto di pietra di maravigliosa fortezza e bellezza, alto braccia sessanta, e sopra il suo ballatoio di beccategli e merli è una rocca alta sopra il palagio altre braccia sessanta, e nella sua sommità è uno bello ballatoio sopra beccategli e poi coperto e merlato; e in su esso sono le campane del Comune, cioè la campana grossa, che pesa 22 migliaia di libre (*di peso libre ventiquattromila, e gira ditta campana nell'orlo di sotto palmi XXIII*) che non ha pari al mondo, e quella del Consiglio (*un'altra bella e grossa campana, e in cima è un'altra campana grossa che suona per oriole*) e quella dell'Oriolo, la quale si sente per tutta la città sonare l'ore del dì e della notte; di dietro al detto palagio stanno due palagi dove sta il Capitano e l'Esecutore, che sono due rettori forestieri sopra le cagioni criminali, e dietro a loro è una gran casa con uno grande cortile, dove stanno sempre assai lioni che figliano ogni anno (*ed ora quando mi partii ve ne lasciai ventiquattro tra maschi e femmine*) e al governo di detti lioni sono deputati tre uomini i quali sono dal Comune salariati di fior. 12 il mese per uno, e uno vestire di fior. 25 l'anno, e danno ogni dì una volta mangiare loro e questo è ne la mattina; che solo costa l'anno al Comune di carne ogni dì denari 16, e quando più e quando meno, secondo quanti lioni vi si trovano,

perchè ogni liono vuole il dì libre 12 di castrone, si che questo costo sarebbe l'anno fior. 1240, i quali paga la Camera dell'Arme.

In sulla piazza del Palagio è una magnifica e grande loggia di pietra conca tutta insino al suolo, in su quattro archi di notabile bellezza, volti in su tre colonne di pietra conca con lioni e altri intagli maravigliosi, *(e da altra parte, un poco più oltre a questa, è la Zecca dove si battono li Ducati grossi e altre più minute monete, tutta di pietra lavorata con bellissime finestre ferrate che è una bellezza a vedere, e dall'altra parte un poco più oltre verso levante)* poco fuori della detta piazza, è uno bellissimo palagio dove sta per sua residenza il Podestà, che è una casa molto *(signorile e)* singolare, tutta di pietra *(e alto e merlato con una torre sul canto e le campane che suonano al detto palagio)* sotto il quale sta la Camera del tesoro del Comune, e coloro che tengono conto dell'avere e dell'entrata e uscita d'esso Comune e del debito del Comune co' suoi cittadini al Monte, dove si danno a' detti cittadini le provisioni del danaro hanno scritto per la loro ragione a' libri del Comune, de' quali hanno fior. 3½ per cento, in tre paghe. Ogni hanno quando la terra sta in pace e grandissima spesa al Comune e grande entrata a' suoi cittadini, pero che fior. 100 di contanti ve ne da scritti fior. 500 e quando più.

Oratorio d'Orto san Michele

Appresso del detto palagio de' Signori, a cinquecento passi, e uno Oratorio di maravigliosa bellezza lavorato di pietra conca e scarpellato *(lavorato di figure di marmi e colori a onore di Nostra Donna, il quale si chiama Orto San Michele)* posto su pilastri volti in archi con maravigliosi intagli in pietra, e dalla parte di fuori di detti pilastri v'è dentro un santo di marmo intagliato, e in quale ve n'è quattro³², e due n'è di bronzo di maravigliosa bellezza, e di sopra detto Oratorio è *(un palagio tutto di pietra, lavorato molto notabile e molto riccamente adornato e bene uficiato)* tutto a beccategli con archicciuoli, ne' quali in ciascuno e dipinto un angioiolo di differenziali colori, dentro tutto storiato di maravigliose figure e con infiniti occhi di vetro intagliati di diverse storie maravigliose. Nel quale Oratorio v'è dentro una cappella tutta lavorata di marmo, nella quale è l'immagine di Nostra Donna, nella quale il popolo ha grandissima devozione, che cercando tutto il mondo non se ne troverebbe una pari a quella.

Di Santa Reparata

Poi più oltre *(appresso a quella a passi 500) (verso settentrione)* è la chiesa del Duomo, cioè di santo Giovanni, ritondo in otto facce, di fuori tutto di marmi bianchi e neri, e dentro adorno d'opera musaica, che cercando tutto l'universo non si troverebbe pari della sua qualità *(al mondo mai fu maravigliosa e bella cosa)*. E apresso è uficiato per cotanti preti e quivi ogni mattina si dice messa, e i salari di detti preti e cantori e altri uficiali pagano una Arte, la quale si chiama l'Arte de' Mercatanti, i quali hanno in governo detto Oratorio e le sue entrate. Di contro al detto Duomo, che è in mezzo d'una piazza, è posta la chiesa di santa Maria del Fiore, e per molti si dice santa Reparata, perchè v'era una chiesa antica di questo nome. Questa è la chiesa cattedrale e ivi si lavora di continuo, e non è compiuta; di fuori è tutta di marmo bianco e porfido con figure di maravigliosa bellezza intagliate; e dentro è tutta di pietra lavorata in su fortissimi pilastri, larga passi sessantasei e lunga passi dugento quaranta *(con una cupola sopra al coro altissima che pare una montagna)* la quale chiesa di grandezza e di bellezza per tempo avanzerà tutte l'altre che si truovano nel mondo o che mai si ricordino, con uno campanile tutto lavorato di marmi nero, rosso e bianco e di porfido, con intagli di figure e storie, e gira braccia cento il tondo overo le sue quattro facce *(ed è quadro in quattro facce ed ogni faccia e braccia 24)* e alto braccia cento venti, che *(chi non lo vede)* non si potrebbe immaginare sua bellezza; e nella detta chiesa, o vogliamo dire Duomo, vi sono calonici, notabili uomini e ciascuno con buono beneficio, e più v'è cappellani.

Sopra i grandi e notabili Oratorj che sono a Firenze

Poi vi sono tante maravigliose e singolari chiese che sarebbe troppo lungo nominare, la bellezza e grandezza delle quali e cosa incredibile; molto maggiore è il cerchio della chiesa di santo Francesco *(santa*

³² These four statues in one pilaster are of course the Santi Quattro Coronati of Nanni di Banco, not to be confused with the four bronze statues in four pilasters mentioned elsewhere.

Croce dove stanno i frati) e di santo Domenico (*un'altra che si chiama santa Maria Novella dei frati*) di santa Maria de' Servi e di san Marco, di santo Agostino e di santa Maria del Carmelo, e di molte altre chiese le quali a raccontare è numero infinito che non è in altre parti il cerchio d'una città delle buone. Or non ti voglio nominare i monasteri, nè simili gli ospedali, come si è santa Maria Nuova, le monache da Montecatini e quello di messer Bonifazio Lupi e quello di san Paolo e più altri, i quali danno ricetta continuamente a ogni forestiere che ammalato fusse; ivi è governato con molta diligenza e sollecitudine, e più v'è ancora più Ospedali i quali ricettano i fanciulli nati celatamente, de' quali l'uno è di santa Maria della Scala; l'altro è quello di san Gallo, e quello che è in sulla piazza de' Servi titolato Spedale Nuovo; e questi tali danno ricetta a ogni fanciullo o fanciulla e tutti gli mandano a balia e nutriscono, e quando le femmine sono grandi tutte le maritano e i maschi pongono ad arte, che è una cosa stimabile. La spesa che i detti Spedali hanno l'anno e qualunque di questi sarebbe in sè una città, e simile i palagi de' cittadini che non ha il mondo palagi reali che li vantaggino, e tutta la città è piena di belle e ornate abitazioni. Le vie sono tutte lastricate di pietre piane e uguali che sempre istanno nette e pulite più che in uno altro luogo, e le camere de' casamenti bellissime, con volte sotterra da riporre per l'anno il vino, e copiose di notabili pozzi di perfette acque vive, donde ne possono avere insino in cima della casa; e di fuori delle mura della città sono bellissimi orti e giardini con abitazioni di casamenti e palagi spessi che pare il contado tutta una città; che a pigliare tutte le belle ville, cioè palazzi de' cittadini, che sono intorno a Firenze a dieci miglia, si farebbe due altre Firenze; e di più è adornato il contado di castella murate maravigliose e infinito numero e spesse e piene d'abitanti oltre a maraviglia, che non è uno palmo di terreno che sia ozioso, e questo conviene che sia il più fruttuoso paese del mondo e le migliori cose vi nascono che in niun'altra parte.

RIASSUNTO

L'articolo tratta del testo di una descrizione degli edifici di Firenze, specialmente quelli civici, contenuta nella Cronica di Goro Dati, pubblicata ma ignorata dagli storici d'arte. All'inizio si insiste sull'importanza del Dati, il quale rivela una concezione estetica e visiva e una finezza critica finora inesistenti in testi dell'epoca. Il suo gusto è ancora gotico, quindi la descrizione acquista il valore di una delle fonti più importanti per la consapevolezza dell'architettura gotica europea. Si conferma così che, contrariamente alla concezione tradizionale dei manuali, a Firenze nel primo quattrocento l'arte moderna rinascimentale era in rapporto soprattutto con la cultura religiosa, mentre la cultura laica si esprimeva nel tardogotico.

Gli archetipi di questa descrizione si trovano nella cronica del Villani e altrove. In essi prevale un vanto civico con elementi d'informazione statistica e sociale; mentre nel Dati, pur rimanendo molte tracce degli stessi interessi, si fa un passo verso la creazione della guida artistica.

Il testo fu scritto dopo il 1422 e probabilmente prima dell'Aprile del 1424. La biografia del Dati risulta dal suo quaderno privato, in cui figura come patrono del Brunelleschi, operaio dello Spedale degli Innocenti nel 1419-20. Nelle note si rileva che il quaderno del Dati, fonte anch'essa ignorata, aiuta a confermare la datazione della Dovizia di Donatello verso il 1431 e a chiarire la figura di Francesco della Luna, mercante e patrono e non architetto né maestro di fabbriche.