

## FRESCOS BY VASARI FOR SFORZA ALMENI, 'COPPIERE' TO DUKE COSIMO I

by Charles Davis

In the course of the morning hours of 22 May 1566 Duke Cosimo de' Medici stabbed his favorite courtier of thirty years' standing to death — *di sua mano con quattro pugnalate*, said one of the many conflicting accounts.<sup>1</sup> By nightfall the Duke's minion lay buried, secretly and without ceremony, in the church of S. Pier Scheraggio across the way from the ducal palace known today as the Palazzo Vecchio. Haste and stealth were to little effect. Word of the Duke's ferocious deed was soon whispered about the city, spreading rapidly through the courts of Italy and to the astonished capitals of Europe.

The dead man was Sforza Almeni of Perugia.<sup>2</sup> Scarcely more than a boy, he had entered Cosimo's service at the time of the Duke's accession upon the assassination of his predecessor, his licentious distant cousin, Alessandro de' Medici. Although in his heyday Sforza conquered his prince's heart, thereby rising to the post of Cosimo's *coppiere* and *primo cameriere segreto*, few details of their relationship are recorded. In Vasari's mural painting in the Palazzo Vecchio, showing Cosimo's "Victory at Montemurlo", the young Duke *armato all'antica* receives imprisoned '*fuorusciti*' from his field commanders. In his train, among his *intrinsechi e servitori*, appears Sforza Almeni, who looks out over Cosimo's shoulder (Fig. 24).<sup>3</sup> He is suave and handsome, and perhaps his face betrays a note of Sforza's once remarked indolence, and, just possibly, a trace of the sensual dissoluteness implied in Baccio Bandinelli's letters to the Duke complaining of loud, late-into-the-night parties at Sforza's Fiesole villa, which adjoined Bandinelli's own.<sup>4</sup> Yet, when all is said, the special link between Cosimo and his courtier remains unexplained. Indeed, it is only as a courtier that Sforza emerges at all, little more than a shadow figure upon the 'beau-monde' stage of Medici Florence, his memory lost in the shame of his death. In court circles one spoke of the *accidente di messer Sforza*<sup>5</sup>, and a shroud of silence has entirely obscured the reasons for his fall from favor. *Mai si seppe veramente la cagione perche il Duca facesse questo*, writes Baccio Baldini, Cosimo's authorized biographer, in 1578, only four years after the Duke's death.<sup>6</sup>

His role at court thus obliterated, Sforza Almeni is best remembered for his protection of two artists from his native region, Giorgio Vasari of Arezzo and Vincenzo Danti of Perugia, Sforza's home town. His most visible public commission was for the painted allegorical decoration in chiaroscuro of the façade of his palace in Florence (a gift from Cosimo in 1546), executed by Cristofano Gherardi from Vasari's designs in 1554. Ironically, the work celebrated Cosimo and Sforza's allegiance to him, but, in 1566, when Cosimo came to confirm the ownership of the palace to Sforza's brother and his heirs, he could only speak cryptically of Sforza, *qui vel eius imprudentia vel potius temeritate, nuper diem suum clauxit extremum*.<sup>7</sup>

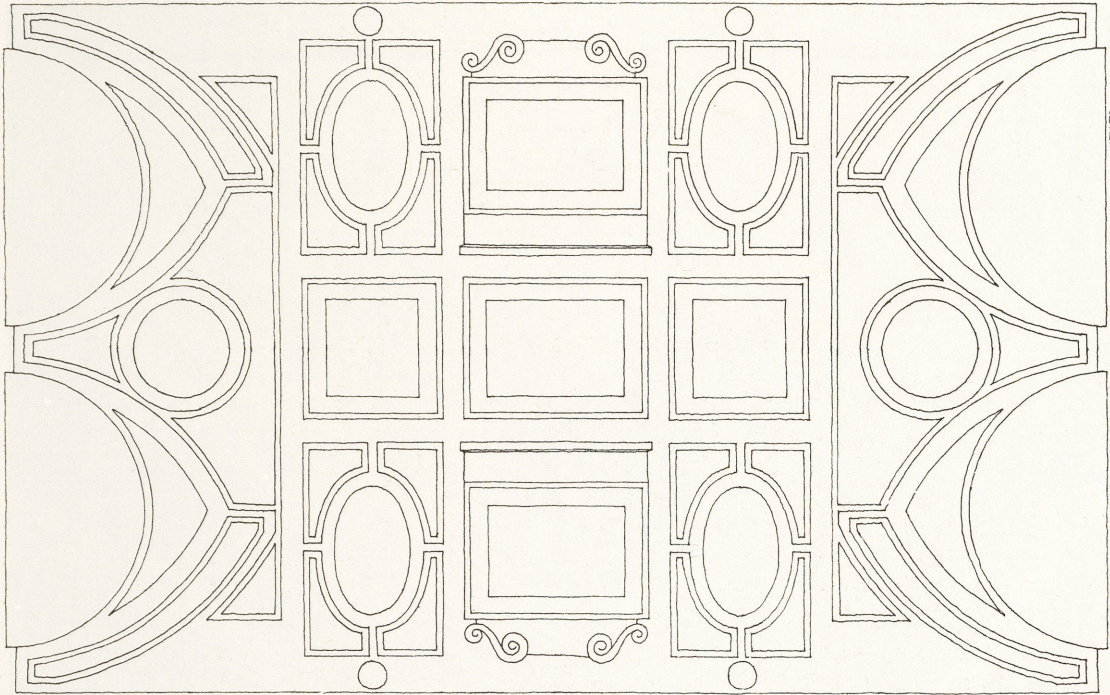
The last remnant of the façade decoration of Sforza's palace washed away nearly two centuries ago, and the work is known only from Vasari's detailed account in his "Vite" — eight pages in Gaetano Milanesi's edition. Nevertheless, the ghost of the Almeni façade has been dissected more than once by art historians.<sup>8</sup> Though the decoration is lost, the palace itself still stands at number 12 in the Via de' Servi (Fig. 1).





1 Palazzo Almeni. Florence, Via de' Servi 12.





2 Schematic Plan of Ceiling. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

It has not been noted that inside the palace, in a ground-floor room, there survives an exceptionally well-preserved ceiling that is frescoed with paintings of a manifestly Vasarian stamp. Nowhere does Vasari mention it, nor later writers on his art. Yet the sheer existence of this unknown work (Figs. 3-15) fills a large, unsuspected gap in our knowledge of Vasari and his helpers.<sup>9</sup>

By the same token the unknown fresco cycle opens many new questions concerning Vasari and his workshop, which often extend beyond the confines of the present study. In order to assess the new ceiling decoration properly, the artistic, historical, and thematic contexts in which it becomes intelligible must first be established. To begin with we must look to Sforza's palace and the salotto where the frescoed ceiling is found in order to discover its indisputable link with Vasari. Then there are further questions to consider: the palace's earlier programmes of decoration, and the patron's known connections with artists. The individual components of the pictorial iconography must be explained and their background examined. And related iconographical programmes need to be identified before that of the Almeni salotto can be reconstructed and brought to life in terms of contemporary currents of thought. All these historical and thematic aspects of the palace and its frescos sharply delimit the stylistic questions Vasari's salotto poses, and thus, at the end, we shall consider more closely the question of date and that of the artists who were working in Vasari's orbit.

Figure 2 shows a regularized plan of the Palazzo Almeni ceiling. The gilt white stucco frames and their borders, mainly in golden yellow ochre, are painted with vivid, many-colored grottesche, the entire structure rising from a handsome gray stone cornice inscribed with gilt letters. So impressive, sumptuous, and almost public a character comes as a surprise in a ground level room. Moreover, such 'luxus' on a grand scale in a space of rather





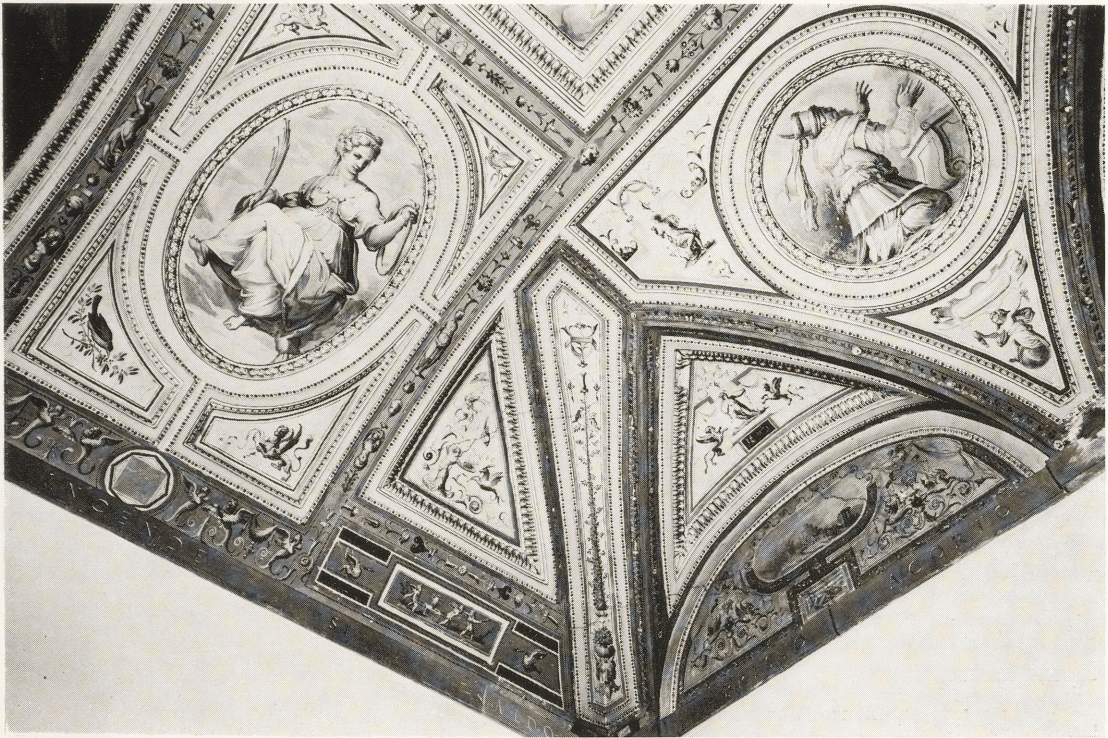
3 Circle of Giorgio Vasari, *Fermezza*. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

small extent is a puzzling reminder that its original function remains (and will remain) a mystery. Immediately adjacent to the salotto is found another anomalous feature of Sforza's palace, its exceptionally wide and spacious vestibule, so unlike the narrow entrance passages typical of Florentine palaces. Odd, too, is the poor illumination of the salotto, its low-set vault lit only by a single window opening on to the Via de' Servi.

### Inscription and Allegories

Only a very few of the figures who appear in the eleven compartments of the ceiling are easy to identify. In the center compartment of the vault (Fig. 15) the river with his lion is the Arno with the Marzocco; the woman who crowns the Arno and carries a red lily is Fiorenza, or Flora, with the *giglio rosso* of Florence, the personification of the city itself. Cupid, or Amor (Fig. 12) appears naked, with blond tresses and two immense multicolored wings, wearing a laurel wreath and holding bow, quiver, and arrows. Scarcely more difficult to identify is the young bare-breasted girl with a long-legged, long-necked bird in her hand (Fig. 10). Around her head her virtue shines in a golden aureole; her attribute — the crane who holds a rock in his upraised foot — conforms to a familiar em-





4 Circle of Vasari, Vault. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

blematic convention. This emblem, or '*ieroglifico*', as it would have been called by Pierio Valeriano, the father of Renaissance hieroglyphics and onetime schoolmaster of Vasari, stands for Vigilance.<sup>10</sup> None of the remaining figures are so simple to name, and it is fortunate that the pictures are accompanied by a text: the gilt inscription, already mentioned, that circles the salotto on the gray stone cornice. It divides four times, according to the lengths of the four walls.

FACILE AMOR PERSEVERANDO INCENDE SI SALDO  
 PRESTO ACORTO E DILIGENTE VEGLIAR  
 CHE CON BONTÀ CON FEDE ARDENTE FLORA OGNIOR PIV VER TE  
 FOCO NE ACENDE.

(The last line is shorter than the others, because at this point the cornice is interrupted by the window opening.)

Three words, AMOR, VEGLIAR, and FLORA, match three of the painted images already identified. But, read together, these words seem, by turns, meaningful, yet without sense, ordered, yet chaotic. The first step toward interpreting them requires seeing that the inscription is a quatrain, presumably drawn from a sonnet. Divided metrically the inscription is more intelligible, even if it assumes, like many occasional sonnets of its time, the character of a new miniature puzzle:

*Facile Amor perseverando incende  
 si saldo presto acorto e diligente  
 vegliar che con bontà con fede ardente  
 Flora ognior più ver te foco ne acende.*





5 Circle of Vasari, Vault. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

Nevertheless, reading the inscription again, in light of the pattern adumbrated by the three word-image correspondences, AMOR — Amore, VEGLIAR — Vigilanza, and FLORA — Flora, alerts the viewer to the potential presence among the painted allegories of Facilità, Perseveranza, Saldezza, Prestezza, Accortezza, Diligenza, Bontà, Fede, and Fuoco. But it requires much guesswork to match these names with the pictures. There is, however, to be discovered in the pages of Vasari's "Zibaldone" (the notebook where he kept the notes and written inventions his learned friends furnished him for his pictures) a sequence of nine allegories that corresponds completely to the expectations raised by the gold inscription of the Almeni ceiling: *Fede, Vigilantia, Perseveranza, Fermezza, Prestezza, Facilità, Diligentia, Accuratezza, Bontà*.

This troupe of personifications makes its appearance in the middle of a list of "Invenzioni per figure allegoriche", which contains nearly forty formulas for allegorical figures.<sup>11</sup> At first glance, the list's contents appear heterogeneous, a miscellany of iconographical recipes on the order of an abbreviated, essential Ripa 'avant la lettre'. The nine allegories that match the Almeni ceiling inscription follow one another, as a single, unbroken block within Vasari's list. Moreover, their forms correspond to the painted figures of the ceiling.

*Fede, una donna vestita di bianco cinta con una corda di minugia con una corona in testa di dodici stelle* (Fig. 7).

*Vigilantia, una donna con una grue, che tenga un piede alto dentrovi un sasso* (Fig. 10).

*Perseveranza, una donna che posto il piè sopra una gran pietra stia ferma, volta ad uno splendor celeste con devotione* (Fig. 9).

*Fermezza, un vecchio vestito di nero a sedere in su una sedia, et con una mano appoggiato sopra un asta* (Fig. 3).

*Prestezza, uno, o più giovani, veloci nello andare e con le alie* (Fig. 11).

*Facilità, una bellissima giovane, con un mazzo di giunchi in mano, et una matassa di seta, perché si piegano alle voglie dei padroni* (Fig. 14).





6 Vasari, Accuratezza. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

*Diligentia, un giovane con una face di fuoco in una oscurità, mostrando che la diligentia si ha da usare nelle cose, che son difficile a ritrovare (Fig. 8).*

*Accuratezza, una donna, con una lucerna all'antica cammina innanzi, ma si volge a guardare indietro, et ha nella acconciatura della testa una formica (Fig. 6).*

*Bontà, un sacerdote vestito all'antica, che sacrifici sopra un altare (Fig. 13).*

With the exception of three discrepancies, the fit is almost perfect. Accuratezza is missing the tiny ant *nell'acconciatura della testa*, but this detracts little from the agreement, for she strides forward, lighting her path with her *all'antica* lamp and looking back over





7 Vasari, Fede. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

her shoulder. Prestezza is painted as a young girl, not as a youth, according to the “Zibaldone” formula. Still she has wings, and she flies. Elsewhere in Vasari’s “Zibaldone”, Prestezza is described as *una donna con due grandi ali alle spalle*.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Fermezza is dressed in white and orange, not somber black. But the divergencies end here; their import dissolves under the weight of the extended correlation between the allegorical formulas of the “Zibaldone”, the words of the inscription, and the painted figures of the ceiling.

“Zibaldone”	Inscription	Paintings
Fede . . . . .	FEDE . . . . .	Fede
Vigilantia . . . . .	VEGLIAR . . . . .	Vigilanza





8 Vasari and Cristofano Gherardi, *Diligenza*. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

Perseveranza . . . . .	PERSEVERANDO . . . . .	Perseveranza
Fermezza . . . . .	SALDO . . . . .	Fermezza
Prestezza . . . . .	PRESTO . . . . .	Prestezza
Facilità . . . . .	FACILE . . . . .	Facilità
Diligentia . . . . .	DILIGENTE . . . . .	Diligentia
Accuratezza . . . . .	ACORTO . . . . .	Accuratezza
Bontà . . . . .	BONTÀ . . . . .	Bontà

This triple correspondence leads inevitably to the conclusion that in the allegorical formulas of the "Zibaldone" there survives a copy of, or more likely extracts from the





9 Circle of Vasari, Perseveranza. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

text of the iconographical programme for the Palazzo Almeni ceiling. That the programme was once in Vasari's possession constitutes a *prima facie* documentation for his association with the project.

All these circumstances require further consideration. But first, before turning to the context of the commission, to the palace where the painted ceiling is housed, and to its patron, let us look briefly at the interplay between the gilt inscription and the painted allegories.

The presence of the inscription doubtless simplified the visitor's attempts to decipher





10 Circle of Vasari (Gherardi), Vigilanza. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

the pictures' meaning. Facing the first stretch of the inscription — its beginning marked by a small ornamental scroll — one reads *FACILE AMOR PERSEVERANDO ....* Immediately above these words are the corresponding images, Perseveranza, Amor, and Facilità (Fig. 5), the link between the words and images being suggested by the obvious correspondence of the image of Amor with the inscription.

The language of the inscription is apparently Florentine and mid-sixteenth century, and thus verse and picture belong to the same time. Words and expressions such as *Amor*, *acende-incende*, *fede ardente*, and *fuoco*, as well as the painting of Amor (the *garzon crudo*





11 Circle of Vasari (Gherardi), Prestezza. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

who *sopra gli omeri aveva sol due grand'ali, di color mille, e tutto l'altro ignudo*), all point in the direction of sixteenth-century '*petrarchismo*', and perhaps to the circle of Benedetto Varchi, the movement's leading Florentine exponent.<sup>13</sup> Petrarchan sonnets were then the rage, effortlessly composed by every lady and gentleman who aspired to culture and wit. More often than not Vasari's pictures were accompanied by Latin inscriptions, but the appearance of the vulgar tongue in the Palazzo Almeni is symptomatic, for Florence was the epicenter of the '*questione della lingua*', the most debated cultural issue of the day, which had as deeply committed modernist partisans some of Vasari's and Almeni's best friends.<sup>14</sup>





12 Circle of Vasari (Gherardi), Amor. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

### Sforza Almeni: Ganymede and Maecenas

As we saw, we no longer know what kind of man Sforza Almeni really was. His historical person has been submerged in the romance of his death, and at this distance the few facts about him cannot be sifted from the legends with any certainty. What remains is a somewhat conventional Janus figure whose two roles meet in one arena, the court. From one side Sforza appears a sheer creature of the courts, the Duke's favorite, his cup-bearer, the Medici Ganymede<sup>15</sup>; from the other side he appears a Maecenas, an art collector and a patron, the friend and protector of artists and academicians at court.

One leading academician, Benedetto Varchi, wrote a sonnet addressed to Sforza extolling his valor and the favor he enjoyed at court.<sup>16</sup> But favor at court draws envy, and another academician, 'Il Etrusco', as Alfonso de' Pazzi was called in the Accademia Fiorentina, takes Sforza and the pretensions of his most grandiose artistic commission to task in a satyric verse, "Sopra la facciata di Signor Sforzo nella via de' Servi". To the 'Etrusco' the painted façade *mi par del Varchi una lezione*, and thus, *li Aretini pittori e accademici hanno cura d'insegnar le scienze con le mura*.<sup>17</sup>





13 Circle of Vasari (Gherardi), Bontà. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

It is only owing to Almeni's long friendship with Vasari (*suo amicissimo, e si conoscevano insino quando ambidue stavano col duca Alessandro*)<sup>18</sup> that we know more about Sforza's activities as a patron and collector than about his life at court. In addition to Vasari, Almeni's inner circle of artists included Cristofano Gherardi, Vasari's '*creato*'. About Cristofano, Vasari writes, *essendo molto stato carezzato da messer Sforza, che gli pose amor grandissimo*, and he goes on to describe how Cristofano took delight in the curious name of one of Sforza's household slaves.<sup>19</sup> At court Almeni apparently functioned as an arbiter of taste, which probably accounts for Bandinelli's enmity toward him, as well as Cellini's.<sup>20</sup> He was one of the principal engineers of the shake-up in Florentine court patronage in the mid 1550's sealed by the return of Vasari to Cosimo's service, a changeover which left Bandinelli and Cellini increasingly on the outside.<sup>21</sup> As often happens, Sforza put his





14 Circle of Vasari, Facilità. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

men forward, and he employed in his own service Galeazzo Alessi, the architect<sup>22</sup>, and Vincenzo Danti, the sculptor, both from Perugia. Danti lodged for a while in Almeni's house, and, *per amore di messer Sforza*, Vasari together with his influential friend, Don Vincenzo Borghini, sponsored Danti's attempts to enter the ranks of court artists.<sup>23</sup>



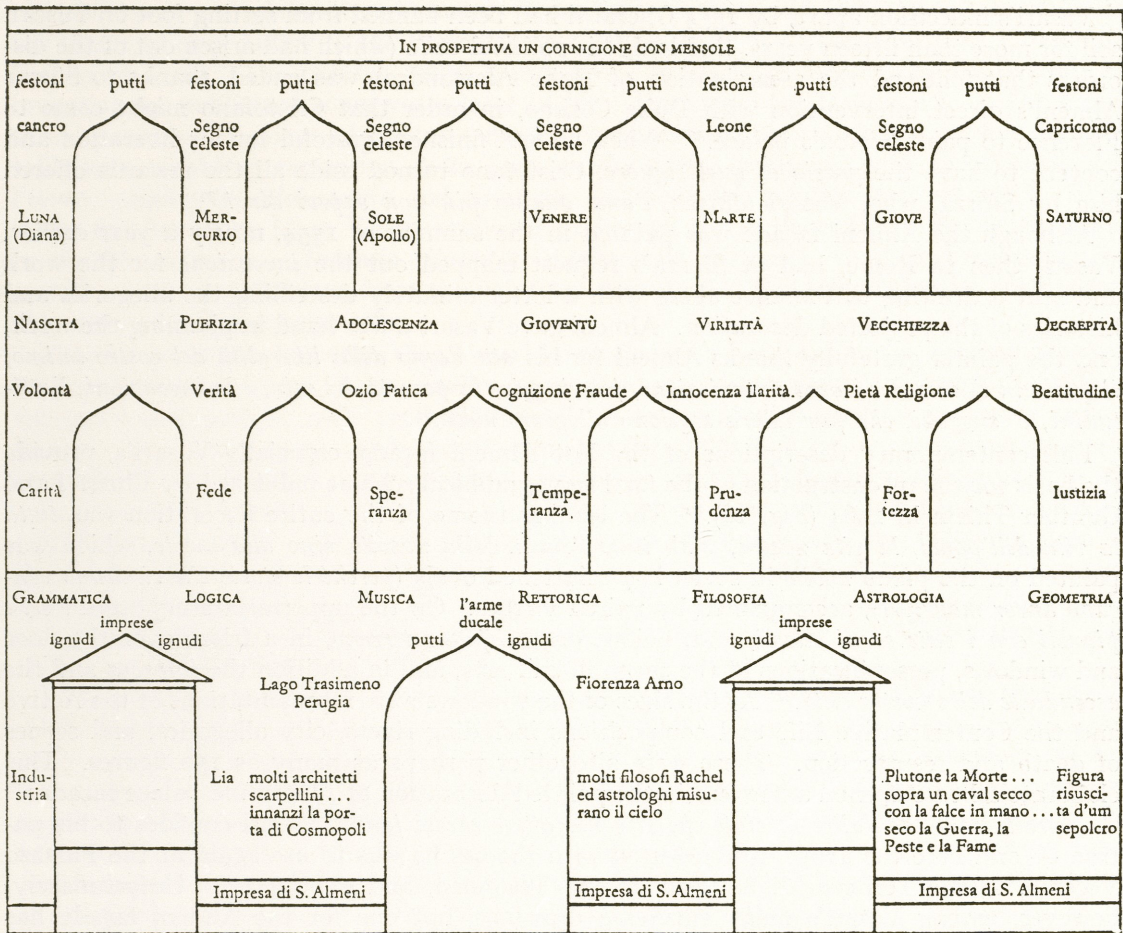


15 Circle of Vasari, Flora and the Arno. Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

Reports concerning Sforza's collections and commissions are fragmentary. Vasari relates admiringly that Giovanni Battista Strozzi, *conoscendo quanto quel signore si diletta della pittura e scoltura*, gave Sforza a family heirloom. This was Piero di Cosimo's esoteric, jewel-like painting, the "Liberation of Andromeda", now in the Uffizi, but once *in casa del signor Sforza Almeni*, who prized it highly (*egli ne tien conto grande*).<sup>24</sup> Francesco Bocchi, in his 1591 guide to the "Bellezze" of Florence, remarks upon the presence in the Palazzo Almeni of *molte pitture, e molte statue*, doubtless the remains of Sforza's collection.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, Vasari, in his notebooks, records in Almeni's possession a portrait of *Messer Francesco Accolti aretino*, a celebrated jurist of the preceding century.<sup>26</sup> Of Sforza's many statues we know only those by Vincenzo Danti, the daring white marble group, *l'Onore che ha sotto l'Inganno*, which Vasari saw *nel cortile della casa del signore Sforza Almeni nella Via de' Servi*, and, in addition, at Fiesole, the *molte ornamenti in un suo giardino ed intorno a certe fontane* that Danti made for Sforza's villa.<sup>27</sup> Although the evidence is sparse, it is unequivocal. Sforza Almeni was a man of consequence in the artistic circles of his day.

This aspect of Sforza merits closer attention than it has received, and his artistic undertaking about which we know most, the lost chiaroscuro façade decoration, provides the natural point of entry into the history and theme of the long-forgotten room that survives intact within his palace.





16 The Façade Programme of Palazzo Almeni (after Thiem).

### The Lost Chiaroscuro Façade

In the politics of Florentine art Vasari eventually became Sforza Almeni's valuable ally, but in 1553-1554 it was Sforza who, with other friends, orchestrated Vasari's return to Florence and his ultimate re-entry into the Medicis' service. The day Vasari signed onto the Duke's rolls, in December 1554, it was again Sforza Almeni who advanced him 200 *scudi*, two-thirds of his annual stipend.<sup>28</sup> The preceding months, from May to September 1554, while the decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio was still under consideration, had seen Vasari's project for painting the façade of Sforza's palace put into effect.<sup>29</sup> It created an instant sensation. Years later, in his "Vite", Vasari first credits its execution to his assistant of many years, Cristofano Gherardi. Then he hedges, *gli aiutò Giorgio, pregato da lui a fare per le facciate alcuni disegni delle storie, disegnando anco talvolta nell'opera sopra la calcina di quelle figure che vi sono*, and adds the further disclaimer, *ma sebbene vi sono molte cose ritocche dal Vasari, tutta la facciata nondimeno e la maggior parte delle figure e tutti gli ornamenti, festoni, ed ovati grandi sono di mano di Cristofano; il quale nel vero, come si vede, valeva tanto nel maneggiare i colori in fresco, che si può dire, e lo confesso il Vasari, che ne sapeva più di lui*.



Vasari's indecision apart, by 1554 Gherardi had been banned from setting foot on Tuscan soil for more than fifteen years. Suddenly his political exile (which had arisen out of the disorders that followed the assassination of Duke Alessandro) was ended, thanks to Sforza Almeni's direct intervention with Duke Cosimo, in order that Cristofano might come to Florence to paint Sforza's palace.<sup>30</sup> When he had finished, grateful for his liberation and content to have the *grazia di quel signore*, Cristofano turned aside all the rewards offered him by Sforza, who, Vasari affirms, *l'amò quanto più non saprei dire!*<sup>31</sup>

Although the Almeni façade was painted in the summer of 1554, nearly a year earlier, Vasari, then in Rome, had at Sforza's request mapped out the *invenzione* for the work and sent a drawing to Florence along with a letter minutely describing the allegories and histories of the projected decoration. Almeni gave Vasari a free hand in planning the work, and the painter gratefully thanks Almeni for his *atto degno della liberalità del vostro animo, il quale in sì nuova e libera commissione, fece fuggire la povertà del mio, e le invenzioni, l'attitudini, e' soggetti, che pur talora sogliono alloggiare meco.*<sup>32</sup>

Full contemporary descriptions of the lost Almeni façade, especially Vasari's, provide the basis for the reconstruction of the final iconographical scheme published by Christel and Gunther Thiem in 1964 (Fig. 16).<sup>33</sup> The leading theme of the entire decoration was *tutta la vita dell'uomo, la vita nostra*, with *tutte l'età ... dalla nascita sino alla morte*, which was painted on the *piano nobile* in seven large flattened ovals (*perché le storie che ci vanno vengano ancor maggiori*), accompanied by paired virtues. On the uppermost story were *i sette pianeti con i sette segni celesti*, and, below, on the *piano terreno*, in a frieze over the door and windows, personifications of the seven liberal arts, and in addition the *impresa* and the *ascendente della nostra città*.<sup>34</sup> At the sides of the windows were representations of the Active and the Contemplative Life and compositions including rivers, city allegories, and scenes of death and resurrection. There were altogether perhaps as many as 150 figures. This elaborate scheme opened a new era in the painted decoration of Florentine palace façades<sup>35</sup> — *astratto assai dall'altre facciate che si sono fatte e che si fanno*, Vasari confides to his patron — and here the artist experimented with themes he was to use again at the Palazzo Vecchio, in the Terrazzo di Saturno, in the Tesoretto, and elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, however, among Vasari's many surviving drawings, not one for the Almeni façade has been identified with complete certainty.<sup>37</sup>

After Vasari's first proposals for the programme, contained in the letters he wrote to Sforza from Rome in October of 1553, nearly eight months went by before work began, and five more elapsed before the façade was unveiled the following September.<sup>38</sup> During this time the formulation of the final iconographical scheme took a winding path. The Thiems specify over twenty changes from start to finish, without exhausting the possibilities.<sup>39</sup> By his own admission, the *invenzione* Vasari outlined in the first drawing he sent to Florence was incomplete; the histories expounding the life of man to fill the oval compartments had not been designed. Since the exact subjects were unsettled, the ovals were left empty, *a cagione che se il duca o la Signoria Vostra volessero*, Vasari explains, *ch'io mutassi invenzione, ce ne possiamo servire*. While some of these changes have been noted in passing, it remains to understand what they mean and to see what they contribute to our knowledge of Palazzo Almeni.

The key to identifying the author of the '*vita dell'uomo*' invention lies, in fact, in the genesis of the programme. It is not true, as has been said, that he is Annibale Caro, Vasari's leading Roman iconologue of the 1550's<sup>40</sup>, for, in 1553, Vasari writes of his invention, *questo nacque, pensando all'opera, che è pubblica, e al giudizio del nostro duca e a' diversi pareri dei cervelli di Firenze sopra le pitture*.

From the start the main theme of the Almeni project was the *vita nostra*, the *gradi della*



*vita dell'huomo*, an elaborate treatment of the ages of man, and it happens this was also the theme of *certe pitture* in the Florentine garden loggia of Monsignor Ferrante Pandolfini, Bishop of Troia. The painted loggia illustrated a *capriccio* of messer Cosimo Bartoli, an invention he publicized some years later in his "Ragionamenti accademici". These pictures, possibly a figment of Bartoli's literary imagination, represented, according to Bartoli's own rambling exposition, *tutta l'azione dell'uomo*, beginning with the *Nascita dell'uomo*, passing to *Adolescentia* and *Gioventù*, and then to maturity and old age.<sup>41</sup> Even if the first tentative ideas Vasari proposed to Almeni for his histories of the seven stages in the life of man — *Infantia*, *Pueritia*, *Adolescentia*, *Gioventù*, *Virilità*, *Vecchiezza*, *Decrepità* — are very different from the paintings described in Pandolfini's loggia, both reflect the same underlying conception.

There is no doubt, however, that Vasari knew Bartoli's '*vita dell'uomo*' invention before he wrote Sforza in 1553. A year earlier he received an "Inventionione di messer Cosimo Bartoli per il suo capriccio della vita dell'uomo". A fragment of it survives in Arezzo among Vasari's papers, a page on which Vasari wrote the date 1552.<sup>42</sup> It repeats numerous passages from the more extensive '*vita dell'uomo*' invention that Bartoli afterwards printed in his "Ragionamenti accademici".<sup>43</sup> Although this "Inventionione" does not figure in Vasari's initial ideas of 1553, when he actually painted the Almeni façade the following year he used it for the representation of *Decrepità*, the last stage in the life of man. The successive versions of *Decrepità* document this course of events, and a close examination of them casts an unexpected light on the entire iconographical programme for the Almeni façade.

The key text is Bartoli's "Capriccio della vita dell'uomo" of 1552:

*Il medesimo luomo già canuto in compagnia delle quattro donne saglie per una strada stretta di nugoli che si parte di cima del monte ver lo altare, et erta va verso il cielo per la quale salito arriva finalmente innanzi a Giove et ginochioni è oppresso da tanto splendore che non può alzare la vista. Giove è a sedere in un trono et a braccia aperte lo aspetta, et il medesimo huomo havendo posato il bacino con quella alia a piè del trono et aiutato spogliarsi delle sue veste dalle donne rimane ignudo, le quali veste prese dalla innocentia son gittate giù nel basso mondo il quale a guisa di una grandissima palla è dipinto giù abasso, con varie azzioni humane, et egli finalmente nudo alza le braccia al cielo et la faccia inverso Giove ("Inventionione di M. Cosimo B.li per il suo capriccio della vita deluomo, 1552").*

It bears no significant relation to Vasari's 1553 proposal for the oval representing *Decrepità*.<sup>44</sup>

*L'ultima delle sette sarà la Decrepità ... et drento all'ovato suo saranno vecchi rimbambiti, che saranno guidati da' putti ne' carrucci, et correranno con quelle farfalle, facendo mille pazzie* (Letter from Vasari in Rome to Almeni in Florence, 21 October 1553).

In contrast, the numerous extended textual parallels between the 1552 "Capriccio" and the *tutta l'azione dell'uomo* in Bartoli's "Ragionamenti accademici" (fol. 58 b) are exceedingly striking. They demonstrate the one-time existence of a common parent text, undoubtedly of Bartoli's making.

*Vedete hora il medesimo (huomo) quasi che fatto canuto, salire con questa medesima compagnia (la Fede, l'Innocentia, la Religione e la Pietà) per quella strada, che voi vedete stretta, che si parte di cima del monte; & che così erta poggia inverso il Cielo ... che si conducono mediante la religione, & la pietà, & l'altre due compagne infino al cospetto del sommo Giove; dove voi vedete costui, il quale havendo tenuto poco conto del basso Mondo, che per tutta questa historia vedete a guisa d'una grandissima palla dipinto; & pieno di infinite azzioni humane, si truovava infra tanto splendore, & infra tanta chiarezza, che vestito ancora della spoglia della carne humana, non può fiso sguardare nel volto, & nella faccia di Giove; il quale come vedete à sedere in quel trono, par che abbraccia aperte l'aspetti; & egli havendo posato il Bacino, che haveva*



*in mano a pie del Trono, e aiutato dalla religione, & dalla pietà, come vedete, a spogliarsi delle sue veste, le quali prese dall'innocenzia, sono gittate giù nel mondo, & egli rimasto totalmente ignudo, giunte le mani insieme, alza horamai libero, lo sguardo a rimirare la faccia del sommo Giove.*

Moreover, the painted oval of *Decrepità* on the Palazzo Almeni, as Vasari describes it briefly in the 1568 second edition of his "Vite", is based on Bartoli's invention.<sup>45</sup>

*Nell'ovato è la Decrepità, nella quale è finto Giove in cielo ricevere un vecchio decrepito ignudo e ginocchioni, il quale è guardato dalla Felicità e dalla Immortalità, che gettano nel mondo le vestimenta.*

These comparisons show a dramatic shift between 1553 and 1554, a shift toward elements also present in Bartoli's *tutta l'azione dell'uomo* invention recorded in the "Ragionamenti accademici". This microcosm is representative of the development of the whole iconographical scheme for Palazzo Almeni. And the possibility arises that Bartoli intervened again, in the definitive formulation of the programme, most likely following Vasari's return to Florence at the beginning of 1554, or, more simply, that Bartoli was behind the radical revamping of Vasari's initial project that took place before the façade's execution in the summer of 1554. This hypothesis is confirmed by a comparison of (1) Vasari's 1553 letter to Almeni, (2) the description of the final 1554 project in Vasari's 1568 "Vite", and (3) the 'vita dell'uomo' invention in Bartoli's "Ragionamenti accademici", which represents Bartoli's fullest exposition of his 'capriccio'.<sup>46</sup>

As we have seen, only the general theme of the 'vita dell'uomo' links Vasari's first programme to Bartoli's analogous invention in his "Ragionamenti accademici". Thus it is mainly the mutations that took place between 1553 and 1554 that require analysis.

A few preliminaries are necessary. The whole façade decoration (Fig. 16) divides into two distinct spheres. The first zone, at ground level, finds its focus in images grouped around the main portal that refer more or less openly to Duke Cosimo and Sforza Almeni. The second, more extensive zone, beginning with the liberal arts below the *piano nobile* windows and moving upward, comprises the remainder of the façade. This scheme organizes all the elements iconographically dependent on the 'vita dell'uomo' — celestial signs, planets, festoons, virtues, liberal arts, etc.

Turning to the 1553-1554 changes, we discover that in the final programme the seven liberal arts and the seven virtues (three theological and four cardinal) survive intact. The oval scenes with the seven ages of man retain their former positions and their former names, but the content of the scenes is completely new. This revision apparently resulted in a parallel revision in the uppermost tier of virtues, the *virtù che a due a due tengono i sette ovati grandi*, for of these twelve virtues exemplary of the seven ages only one is retained. In much the same way, five of the seven planets of the upper story have exchanged places, and at least two of them are represented in a new guise.<sup>47</sup>

On the *piano terreno* the initial programme holds its own better. Nonetheless, some eliminations and substitutions appear, especially in the multi-figure compositions, and the allusions to Cosimo and Sforza undergo refinements, a process that will be examined later.

The deepest transformations occur in the ovals with the histories of the life of man, and in the personifications and dieties that they govern. In this zone of the façade there is one parallel after another with the invention of Cosimo Bartoli for *tutta l'azione dell'uomo*, painted, he says, in the loggia of Ferrante Pandolfini. The textual connections between Vasari's description of his Almeni façade and Bartoli's of the Pandolfini loggia are so many and so binding that it is evident Vasari relied upon a text by Bartoli very similar to the one Bartoli published in his "Ragionamenti accademici".



To appreciate fully the parallels between Vasari's long text and Bartoli's even longer one, one needs to see them printed side by side. Nevertheless, the passages about *Decrepità*, already quoted, suggest something of the nature and extent of the relationships between the two. Although Bartoli's digressive account treats five paintings, Vasari distributes the same material over eight more condensed descriptions. Nevertheless, the progression of the ages is essentially the same, and they are accompanied by the same allegorical personifications with remarkable frequency. With the *Nascita* of man, both Bartoli and Vasari introduce the figure *mezza nuda* of *Volutta*, whom, in a telling slip, Vasari calls *Volontà*; with *Puerizia*, both give *Verità* and *Falsità*, and then passing through the remaining ages of man we meet parallel allegories of *Fraude*, of *Volontà* (now correctly named by Vasari), *Memoria*, and *Innocenza*, and of *Pietà* and *Religione*. When described, these personifications take the same form. Vasari's *Falsità* has a *viso bellissimo, ma con gli occhi cavati in dentro*; Bartoli's *Falsità*, an *assai bel viso* with *gl'occhi che paiono così sconfitti & così adentro*. Vasari's *Innocenza* is painted with *un agnello a lato*, Bartoli's with *a piedi ... un Agnellino Bianco*.

Moreover, the same actions take place: when in Vasari *putti giuocano*, in Bartoli there are *giuochi di putti*. And there are many other characteristic features in common. Vasari's *monte illuminato dal sole* corresponds to Bartoli's *monte, di cima del quale, par che scenda con un certo luminoso raggio, & che come venisse di cielo allumi il tutto all'intorno*. The *libri, strumenti da misurare, ed altre cose appartenenti al disegno, ed oltre ciò appamondi, palle di cosomografia e sfere* of Vasari's Youth are Bartoli's *libri, seste, squadre, sfera, Astrolabio, and Armilla*. Vasari's *bacino d'oro, dentrovi due ale*, held forth by *Memoria* and *Volontà*, is more fully explained in Bartoli's account of a *bacino d'oro, con due alie dentrovi, delle quali la una, e bianca, & l'altra gialla; per l'altra d'argento: l'intelletto, per quella d'oro la volontà, & per il Bacino la memoria*. Even these few comparisons begin to reveal the connections between the two inventions. When these are examined exhaustively<sup>48</sup>, they all lead to the same very definite conclusions.

The number and specific nature of the points of contact make the textual dependence of the two versions of the '*vita dell'uomo*' indisputable. Given the fuller, more articulated nature of Bartoli's text, clearly it reflects more faithfully than does Vasari's the inventions Bartoli furnished for the Palazzo Almeni façade. While Vasari's first ideas were possibly not indebted exclusively to Bartoli, there remains little doubt about the revision of the programme. Bartoli was responsible for it. And this has further implications, for it attests to Bartoli's direct participation, at Florence and in 1554, in the planning of the Almeni façade. Once Bartoli's role is established, it seems obvious. Bartoli had collaborated with Vasari on his last Florentine works before the election of Julius III<sup>49</sup>, when Vasari moved the center of his activities to Rome. But the two men kept in touch<sup>50</sup>, and when Vasari returned to Florence to serve Duke Cosimo, during his first years there Bartoli was again his principal literary collaborator. Nevertheless, more prominence has always been accorded to Vasari's relations with the Prior of the Innocenti, Don Vincenzo Borghini, who did indeed become Vasari's chief artistic adviser, but only after around 1560.<sup>51</sup> The genesis of the programme for the Palazzo Almeni's chiaroscuro façade does not exhaust the ways it can illuminate the frescos concealed inside the palace's closed doors. But before considering the façade further, the individual elements of the iconography of the salotto ceiling need to be brought into sharper focus.



## Vasari and Bartoli inside Palazzo Almeni: The Elements of the Iconography

To discover how the personifications corresponding to the Almeni ceiling in Vasari's "Zibaldone" came into being requires a closer examination of the entire list of miscellaneous allegorical formulas to which they belong. Textual parallels in other inventions by Vasari's literary collaborators need to be isolated. Moreover, the frescos themselves must be scrutinized in the light of the symbolic language employed in Vasari's other paintings. This approach provides a clearer insight into the symbolism embodied in the individual personifications, and it unmistakably reveals, once again, the elusive partnership of Vasari and Bartoli at work.

At first glance, the forty-odd figures present in Vasari's list of allegorical formulas seem to follow one another in no particular order. Nevertheless, busy artists stock their larders trusting more to choice than chance. That the Almeni allegories are grouped together gives the first inkling of a pattern. And, in fact, Vasari's list of allegorical formulas can be divided neatly into five successive sections, each distinguished by a separate source.<sup>52</sup>

Almost every one of the fourteen personifications described in the first eight entries can be traced to pictorial inventions included in Bartoli's "Ragionamenti accademici". *Iuditio* and *Felicità*, for instance, correspond to Bartoli's labyrinthine allegory of Happiness: Vasari's *Iuditio, un huomo di mezza età, con un vaso d'oro in mano, et vestito di bianco, con il cappello di Mercurio in testa*, equals Bartoli's *Buon Giudizio*, a man *di mezza età* with *quel vaso doro in mano, vestito di bianco* and *in testa il Cappello di Mercurio*.<sup>53</sup>

The source of the second set of allegories in Vasari's list is completely unambiguous. The "Zibaldone" *Gloria, Astutia, Honore*, and *Liberalità* repeat inventions Bartoli gave Vasari to paint in the Sala di Giove in the Palazzo Vecchio. The same four formulas reappear in the same order in Vasari's dialogues known as the "Ragionamenti", in which he discusses his works in the Palazzo Vecchio. Again the textual parallels are conclusive.<sup>54</sup>

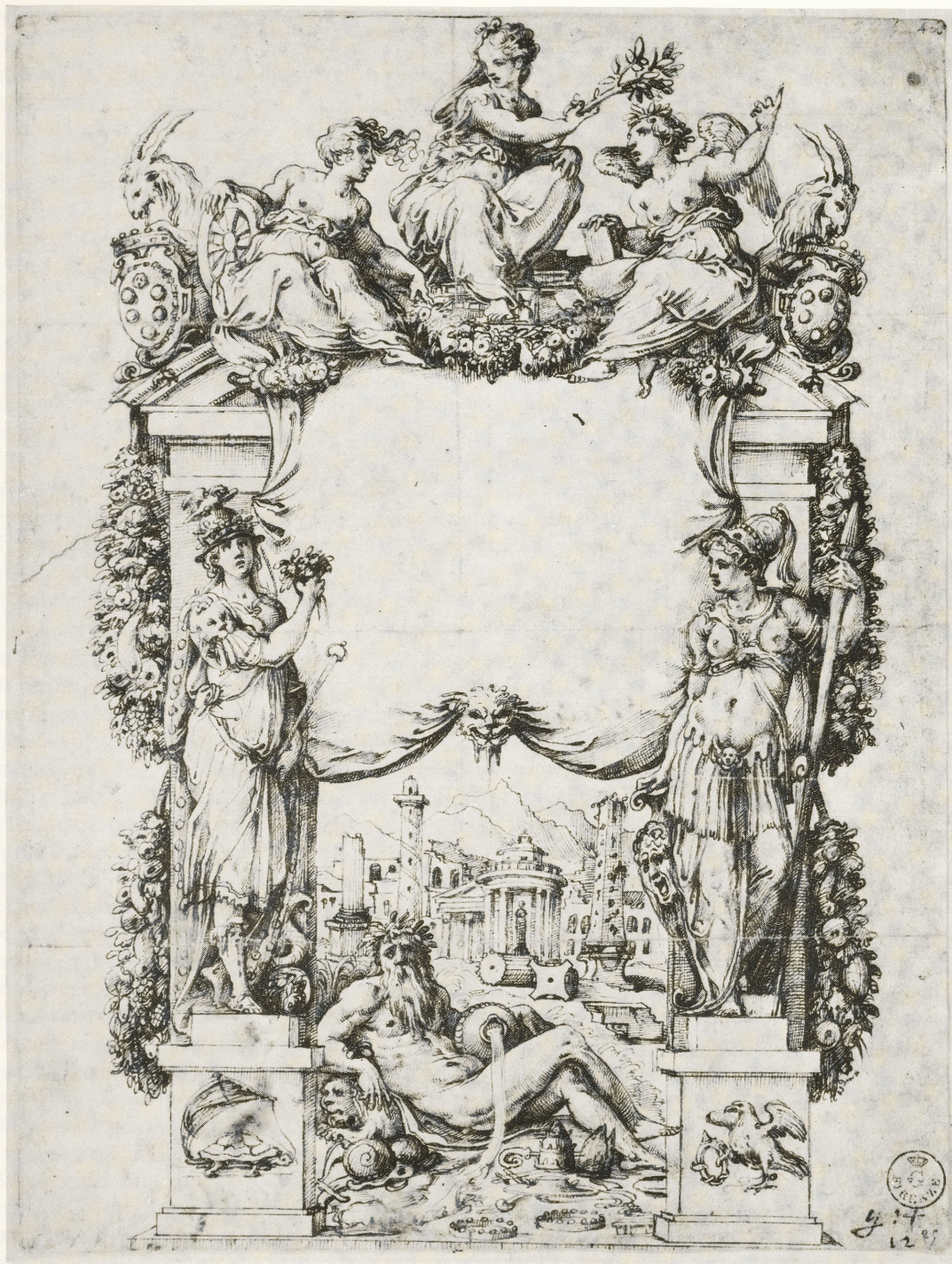
The nine allegories of the Palazzo Almeni frescos come next in Vasari's list<sup>55</sup>; then follows the fourth group of allegories — *Liberalità*<sup>56</sup>, *Felicità*, *Prudenza*, *Bontà*, *Libertà*, *Authorità*, *Sagacità*. They are the personifications planned for the Sala di Leone X in the Palazzo Vecchio, but never executed. An invention extant among Vasari's papers, "La Storia di Leone nella Sala", written in Bartoli's hand, gives all seven of these figures in the same order and in formulas practically identical to the "Zibaldone" recipes.<sup>57</sup> Thus the actual textual source survives, as is also the case with the last grouping.

These formulas, eleven in all, derive verbatim from Bartoli's letter to Vasari outlining his invention for the paintings in the *Camerina dove suol dormire Sua Eccellenzia*, the ducal bedroom in the Palazzo Vecchio. Again the allegorical formulas follow an identical sequence, without significant variation in content.<sup>58</sup>

Thus the evidence speaks in unison: the Almeni allegories apart, Bartoli is the source for all the "Invenzioni per figure allegoriche". He thus becomes the lone contender for the authorship of the iconographical programme of the frescos in the Palazzo Almeni. The rediscovery of Bartoli's role also has chronological implications, to be developed in due course, and his authorship, once established, leads back to his writings, where a number of related iconographical conceptions are to be found. Moreover, remaining doubts about Bartoli disappear when we see just what part of his original programme has been transcribed in Vasari's "Zibaldone", and how thoroughly characteristic of Bartoli's imagination the Almeni allegories are.

The formulas that correspond to the allegories on the Almeni ceiling are apparently simply excerpted from the text of the original programme for the salotto. But what of this programme has been omitted in making the incomplete transcription found in Vasari's





17 Vasari, Drawing for the 1550 Torrentino "L'Architettura" by Leonbattista Alberti, translated by Cosimo Bartoli. Florence, Uffizi 394 Orn.



notebook? The key to this apparently impossible question lies in the genesis of the other "Zibaldone" allegories, discussed above.

The relation of Vasari's allegorical recipes to the programmes from which they were originally extracted is epitomized by the last group of eleven personifications, those taken from Bartoli's letter outlining his invention for the *camera ducale*.<sup>59</sup> The "Zibaldone" personifications are all derived verbatim from the first two-thirds of Bartoli's letter, and this portion of the letter is, in turn, reduced by a half. Only what will actually be used in painting such figures is transcribed into the "Zibaldone". Everything that alludes to the general conception of the programme is omitted, emphasizing the fragmentary character of the "Zibaldone" list. Passed over in silence are Bartoli's Latin verses and mottos. Gone are the numerous reasons why just these figures appear (they all refer, in fact, to Cosimo). Missing, too, is a long, discursive sentence that sums up the meaning of the pictures for the Duke's bedroom. By analogy, what remains in Vasari's "Zibaldone" of the Almeni ceiling programme is certainly a series of partial, albeit textually accurate reflections of the inventions for the individual allegories. The thread that joins the whole, *tutta l'invenzione e concetto*, is gone.<sup>60</sup> It can, however, be uncovered by tracing the other Bartolian-Vasarian elements in the pictures of Palazzo Almeni.

FLORA AND ARNO (Fig. 15). While in the "Zibaldone" compilation we do not meet the protagonists of the centerpiece of the Almeni ceiling, Flora and the Arno, they were stock themes, and scarcely required rehearsing. Indeed, Vasari often paired the two in the course of his career. Nevertheless, Bartoli advised at several turning points in the maturation of this characteristic symbolic theme of Vasari's painting, and his advice illuminates aspects of its imagery otherwise now obscure.

Vasari had painted the Arno several times prior to the main period of his collaboration with Bartoli.<sup>61</sup> But the river Arno accompanied by a Flora that Bartoli describes minutely in his "Ragionamenti accademici" (contained in a *gran quadro* made to his order around 1550)<sup>62</sup> is much closer to the pair in Palazzo Almeni. This now forgotten picture-in-words almost perfectly mirrors Vasari's drawing for the frontispiece of Bartoli's Italian edition of Alberti's "Architettura" published in 1550 (Fig. 17): at the bottom, the Arno, at the sides, Flora and Minerva, and, above, Fortune and Virtue, and between them, Immortality.<sup>63</sup> Bartoli's interlocutor asks, who is that, at the bottom, the old man *con la barba lungha, et allucignolata* and with a *Ghirlanda di quercia in testa*? *Come voi potete da voi stessi facilmente giudicare*, answers the Bishop of Troia, *è inteso dal Bartoli per il fiume di Arno ... quella Figura ignuda che voi vedeste adiacere, la qual pareva, che con il braccio destro si riposasse sopra quella testa del Leone, et che nella mano destra havesse un Giglio, et con la sinistra tenesse il vaso, onde usciva quell'acqua, et il corno della dovizia* (Fig. 17). And, he continues, *quei calzaretti, che voi vedeste di giunchi, mostrano, che le ripe di esso fiume, giu basso dove egli quasi mette nel Mare, son piene di Giunchi*, which is more clearly represented in the Alberti frontispiece and in the Almeni fresco by the rushes rising behind the river god. And, *da una delle bande* was the figure of *Flora per Firenze*, who *posandosi sopra del pie destro, pareva, che riguardasse verso il cielo*; she has in her right hand *fiori, che porgha verso cielo*, and a *Scettro, che tiene nella sinistra più bassa che la destra*, and on her shoulder *teste di leone*, and on her head *un Berrettone alla antica Ducale col Mazzocchio attorno*, with *una Aquila* on top, all details easily recognized in Vasari's drawing (Fig. 17).

As in the frontispiece, various marks or signs of *regno*, of rule or dominion, are spread out before the Arno, among them the ducal crown or mazzocchio: *notate giu da basso intorno all'Arno, essendovi Mitrie da Papi, corone da Re, capelli, da Cardinali, da Vescovi, scettri, mazzocchi Ducali, insegne, armi, libri, e molte altre cose simili, che si puo dire, che dimostrino ... le dignità, et gl'honori, et le qualità, ch'hanno havuto così gli huomini come le donne prudenti,*





18 Vasari, Flora and Arno. Rome, Museo di Palazzo Venezia (formerly Palazzo Altoviti).

*virtuosi, et fortunati nati in su lo Arno in Firenze.* And the arms of the Medici, with the ducal crowns and the capricorns of Cosimo set on either side of the frontispiece tympanum, tell that all this is owed to the house of the Medici, that it all takes place under the protection of Cosimo's beneficent, fortunate rule.

Vasari's drawing, made for Bartoli's 1550 Alberti edition, must date around the time of the *tavola* for the *cappella della casa de' Martelli* in S. Lorenzo, a work commissioned by *Luigi e Pandolfo Martelli, insieme con messer Cosimo Bartoli miei amicissimi* entrusted to Vasari shortly before he left Florence in 1550 to try his fortune in Rome under the new Pope, Julius III.<sup>64</sup>

While in Rome, Vasari conceived two closely allied versions of the Flora-Arno theme. It is nearly impossible to say which came first, and they may indeed be two versions of one idea which he offered to two patrons in different cities. In any event, writing to Florence in mid-October 1553, Vasari proposes painting on Sforza Almeni's façade *un Arno che abbraccia una Firenze*.<sup>65</sup> In the meantime Vasari was frescoing a vaulted loggia that looked out over the Tiber in Bindo Altoviti's palace in Rome. By mid-November at the latest he had painted a small composition that in its essentials differed little from the central fresco in the Palazzo Almeni vault: the Arno here holds the *giglio rosso*, and Florence, or Flora crowns him (Figs. 18, 15).<sup>66</sup>

While Vasari does not explain his painting of Flora and the Arno for Bindo Altoviti, he does describe a series of related representations he painted in the Palazzo Vecchio in his "Ragionamenti". His explanations of these pictures clarify the symbolic references of the "Coronation of the Arno" painted on the Almeni *soffitto*. In the Palazzo Vecchio, the scenes of coronation, some of which include the *mazzocchio ducale*, the Arno, and Flora, begin in the Quartiere di Leone X, where Vasari mainly relied on Bartoli's advice, and they continue into the Salone dei Cinquecento, where, Vasari says, *mi sono stati di grandissimo aiuto ... con l'invenzione loro, don Vincenzio Borghini and Messer Giovambatista Adriani*.<sup>67</sup>

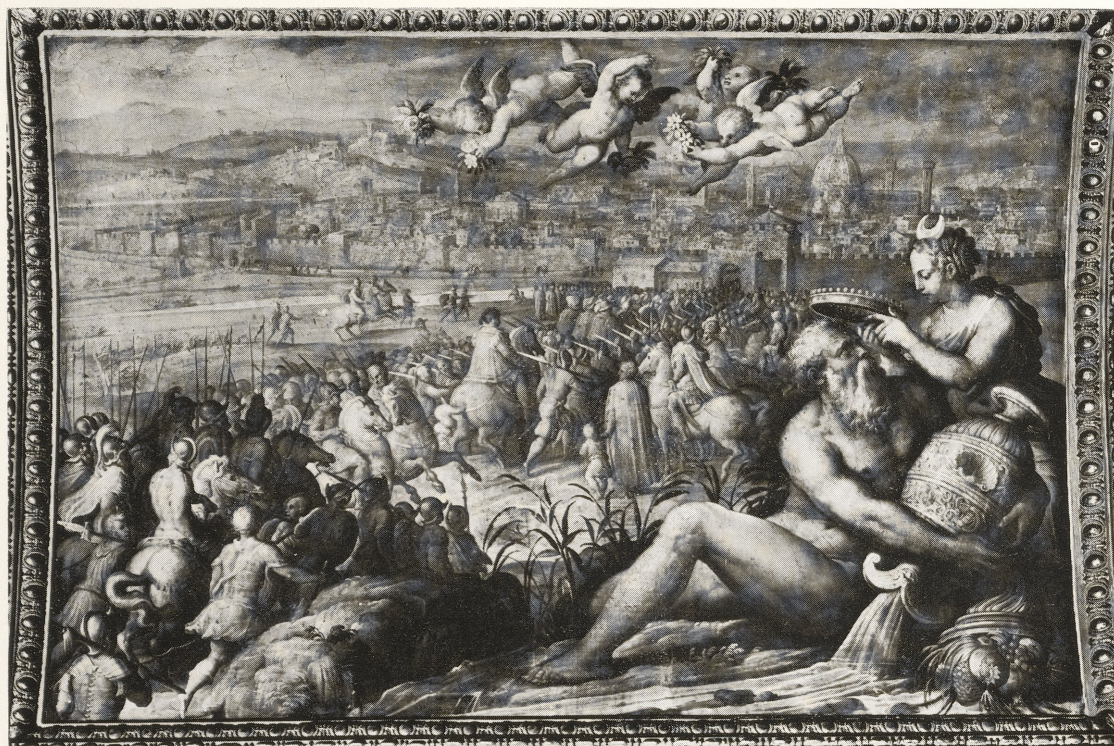




19 Vasari, Charles V Crowns Alessandro de' Medici. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.

Flora and the Arno do not appear in the first of these paintings. Nevertheless it explains what the *mazzocchio ducale* means. In the Sala di Leone X, Vasari shows the Pope giving *il governo della repubblica di Firenze* to the son of Piero il Gottoso by placing *in capo a Lorenzo il mazzocchio ducale*.<sup>68</sup> The same ceremonial use of the Florentine ducal crown reappears in the Sala di Clemente VII, where *il duca Alessandro de' Medici... riceve da Carlo V suo suocero la corona ducale ed il bastone del dominio, investendolo duca di Firenze* (Fig. 19).<sup>69</sup> Another painting in the same room — *quando il duca Alessandro torna di Germania dalla corte dell'Imperatore, e viene a pigliare il possesso del ducato di Firenze* (Fig. 20)<sup>70</sup> —





20 Vasari, Return of Alessandro de' Medici from the Imperial Court. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.

represents, in the distance, Alessandro, the youthful predecessor of Duke Cosimo, and his entourage, who are approaching the Porta S. Gallo on the northern outskirts of Florence. In the foreground, there looms large a symbolic scene of investiture. It is not Florence crowning the Arno, as has been said, because the crescent moon does not belong to Flora but to the nymph of Fiesole.<sup>71</sup> Thus it is Fiesole who, before the duke arrives to take his seat in the capital of his new duchy, lays claim to the river Mugnone, a stream that runs into Florence from the north, by awarding to the river and his lands the ducal crown.

Different actors play out the same allegorical action in the right corner of Vasari's panel in the Sala di Leone X that shows the future pope, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, on the day of his *felice ritorno in Firenze l'anno 1512* (Fig. 21).<sup>72</sup> Here it is the Arno, *che posa il braccio manco sopra la testa di quel leone, ed ha quel corno pieno di fiori, fatto e figurato per l'abbondanza del paese*, and, still following Vasari's explanation, *quella femmina — questa giovanetta adorna di fiori in testa — è Flora, la quali gli mette in capo il mazzocchio ducale — quella corona d'oro piena di gioie e di perle*. Thus Flora and the Arno show that, with the return of Cardinal de' Medici, *si stabilì per la grandezza sua il fondamento vero del governo di questa città nella casa de' Medici*. The parallel with the "Coronation" of Palazzo Almeni is now complete, even to the detail of *quel remo in mano — perché si navica ... fino a Fiorenza*.<sup>73</sup>

The same themes resurface in a slightly different guise in the Salone dei Cinquecento, where, in two *tondi* at the far ends of the ceiling, Fiorenza, in the form of a beautiful girl, flies into the sky scattering her flowers over the four quarters of the city.<sup>74</sup> These two images of Flora are echoed in the well-known *tondo* at the center of Vasari's ceiling, the





21 Vasari, The Re-entry of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici into Florence, 1512. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.

"Apotheosis of Cosimo I", a painting Vasari called the *chiave e la conclusione* of the Salone. *Il signor duca Cosimo trionfante e glorioso* is coronato da una Firenze con corona di quercia (cf. Fig. 22), while in place of the *mazzocchio ducale*, a little genius holds the new Grand Ducal crown.<sup>75</sup> The Medici duchy is personified by the living person of its sovereign, confirming the implicit presence of the Duke throughout the series of allegories of the Medici reign-and-realm in the Palazzo Vecchio.

Aligned in this perspective, the constellation of symbol and symbolic action embodied in the main fresco of the Palazzo Almeni becomes clear. Collectively the Arno, Flora, Florence's red lily, and the ducal crown speak of the Medici rule, its continuity and legitimacy, and of Cosimo and his new duchy. To all effects, a drawing in Stockholm, a preliminary study for Vasari's "Apotheosis of Cosimo" in the Palazzo Vecchio (Fig. 22), might take the place of the central image of the Almeni *salotto*.<sup>76</sup>

A review of the other personifications on the Palazzo Almeni ceiling reveals many more connections with the well-documented symbolic language of Bartoli and Vasari.

FEDE (Fig. 7). The "Zibaldone" formula for the Palazzo Almeni Fede — *una donna vestita di bianco cinta con una corda di minugia con una corona in testa di dodici stelle* — reappears in a letter Bartoli sent Vasari for the *storie* of Lorenzo il Magnifico in the Palazzo Vecchio. *Metterei la pietà et la fede*, Bartoli writes, adding in the margin, *Fede una donna coronata di stelle vestita di bianco*.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in Bartoli's 'mundus symbolicum', *vestir di biancho* stands for an *animo puro & candido*, undeceived by the *vaghezza degli altri colori*.<sup>78</sup> The *corona in testa di dodici stelle* recalls Bartoli's *Giustizia*, who wears in *quella sua acconciatura della testa, una splendissima stella* to signify her *animo volto & intento a Dio*, — *così talvolta intendevano gli antichi una Stella significare esso Dio*.<sup>79</sup> And, inevitably, the twelve star crown alludes to the Madonna, to *Nostra Donna vestita di sole, con i piedi sopra la luna, e coronata di dodici stelle*<sup>80</sup>, often represented by Vasari.

While Fede's trappings bespeak the church, her message is worldly and secular, for Fede is also Fedeltà. In another allegorical miscellanea that survives among Vasari's papers (it, too, inspired by Bartoli), the now familiar formula for Fede reappears, slightly expanded, under the rubric, *Fedeltà: Una donna vestita di bianco cinta con una corda di minugia, con una corona in testa di dodici stelle et a piedi un cane*.<sup>81</sup>





22 Vasari, Fiorenza Crowns Cosimo de' Medici. Copenhagen, Kobberstiksamling.

VIGILANZA (Fig. 10). Granted the widespread diffusion and the standard use of the crane, or *gru*, as a symbol for Vigilance<sup>82</sup>, it is nonetheless telling that Bartoli prescribes it for Vasari's decoration of the Duke's bedroom, *et li farei una grue a piedi col sasso nel piede alzato*, the same verbal formulation used in the Palazzo Almeni programme.<sup>83</sup> For the Sala di Cosimo il Vecchio, he counselled it again for the shield of Fortezza, painted with the emblem of the *grue*, *la quale si fa per la Vigilanza*.<sup>84</sup>

PERSEVERANZA (Fig. 9). In contrast to Vigilanza, the invention of Perseveranza is singularly characteristic of Bartoli's pictorial conceptions. Beneath the figure of Perseveranza is a curious squared white stone (*una donna che posto il piè sopra una gran pietra stia ferma, volta ad uno splendor celeste con divotione*).<sup>85</sup> On two other occasions Vasari employs the pictorial motif of a dressed stone platform, both times following Bartoli's instructions.



In the Palazzo Vecchio, the central ceiling painting of the Sala degli Elementi shows "Caelus' Castration", and the spectators at this grisly event sit on a large squared *pietra lunga, ... finta per il Firmamento* (Fig. 23).<sup>86</sup> This corresponds exactly to Bartoli's invention for the painting: *Fondamento*, he writes, *una grandissima pietra quadrata su la quale fussino tutte le altre cose sopradette*.<sup>87</sup> Some years earlier, for Bartoli's Alberti frontispiece, Vasari drew, under the figure of Flora (Fig. 17), a stone platform, smaller than the one in his Palazzo Vecchio "Castration" but with the same symbolic function. The related page in the "Ragionamenti accademici" reads, in the margin, *Posar di Flora sopra ... Pietra quadrata*, and, in the facing text, *sopra una stabile Pietra quadrata; come voi vedeste, che posava essa Flora; la quale pietra così fatta si piglia per la stabilità*. Then Bartoli continues, *il posar sopra del pie destro di questa figura, più che sopra il sinistra* (which doesn't touch ground except with *le punta delle dita*) signifies *la constantia che ella potrà havere in Dio*.<sup>88</sup> Thus, as with the Palazzo Almeni Perseveranza, the tip-toe foot on a stable square stone symbolizes the union of constancy and devotion.

PRESTENZA (Fig. 11). The soaring Prestenza in the Palazzo Almeni is like another Prestenza Bartoli proposed to pair with a Valore: *Per la prestenza farei una donna che caminasse et con due grandi ali alle spalle ... et se volete lettere: CAELERI VIRTUTE*.<sup>89</sup> These allegories, devised to go on either side of Vasari's "Rotta di Montemurlo", the main picture in the Sala del Duca Cosimo (Fig. 24), were never executed<sup>90</sup>, but Bartoli's personifications, as well as his letters, *Caeleri virtute*, appear to have invaded the design of the painting itself.<sup>91</sup> In a drawing (Fig. 25), Bartoli's Prestenza turns into a Victory flying above the Duke, just as he himself, *ritto e armato all'antica*, is the personification of Valor, in Bartoli's formula *un giovane armato*.<sup>92</sup>

BONTÀ (Fig. 13). The fresco of Bontà, represented as a *sacerdote vestito all'antica, che sacrifici sopra un altare*, recalls Bartoli's recurrent *sacerdote all'antica*.<sup>93</sup> However Bontà's costume is that of a biblical prophet or priest, and thus the words 'all'antica' refer to the Old Testament. Similarly, Vasari's commentary on his figure of Religion in the Sala di Cosimo il Vecchio makes an association between Old Testament sacrifice and the concept of 'bontà'. *Religione amantata* has at her side *le cose del Testamento vecchio*, among these, *the altare che abbrucia la vittima, the figura di coloro che si trasformano in Cristo benedetto, facendo sacrificio del cor loro, ardendo sempre in su l'altare delle buone opere*.<sup>94</sup> But Bontà can also be represented by *un Giove a sedere*<sup>95</sup>, a formula curiously like FERMEZZA (Fig. 3), who faces the Almeni Bontà across the room.<sup>96</sup>

ACCURATEZZA (Fig. 6). The "Zibaldone" formula for Accuratezza — *una donna, con una lucerna all'antica cammina innanzi, ma si volge a guardare indietro, et ha nella acconciatura della testa una formica* — contains a rare attribute, the near-invisible ant, which in the event was not included in the fresco of Accuratezza.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the locution, *et ha nella acconciatura della testa*, is characteristic of Bartoli. It occurs with special frequency in his long allegory of Felicità, based on Aristotle's "Ethics", in which small animal attributes are described on top of the heads of many of the Virtues and Vices. Bartoli, writes, for example, *in quella sua acconciatura della testa; sopra quella acconciatura della testa; sopra quella bella acconciatura della testa*.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Accuratezza was doubtless born from the Prudentia of Bartoli's *Trionfo della Felicità*.<sup>99</sup> In Prudentia's hair are *alcune formiche* — *perciocché a questo animalletto più che ad alcun altro, si attribuisce la prudenza* — and she has at her feet the two extremes of her virtue, the vices Ignorantia and Curiosità, the latter a *Giovane baldanzoso vestito di piume, & con infiniti occhi per tutto il dosso come se fusse Argo*.<sup>100</sup> Later, Bartoli returns to his invention when prescribing an allegory of *Accurato et accorto*. He writes Vasari, *Per mostrare l'accuratezza di sua Eccellenza farei uno Jano con due teste: ovvero un Argo con cento occhi*.<sup>101</sup> Elsewhere, in his "Discorsi storici universali",



he remarks, *la memoria, il sapere, & la accortezza, nascono dalla prudentia*.<sup>102</sup> That our Accuratezza represents an aspect of Prudence is confirmed by another Prudence Bartoli devised. She, too, carries *una lucerna antica accesa*, because *mediante la lucerna*, she sees *le cose passate, le presenti, & le future*<sup>103</sup>, thus explaining the reason for Accuratezza's flaming lamp and why she walks ahead and looks behind, *cammina innanzi, ma si volge a guardare indietro*, which have the same symbolic value as Prudence's customary mirror, or her bifrontal head.

DILIGENZA (Fig. 8). In the Palazzo Vecchio decorations Vasari and Bartoli represented Diligence as a straightforward personification with identifying attributes.<sup>104</sup> But beneath this allegory there was a scene that exemplified the virtue of diligence<sup>105</sup>, much as diligence is exemplified by the youth who searches with his torch in the Palazzo Almeni frescos.

With one exception, these are the elements of the iconography of the Palazzo Almeni ceiling. Once the individual personifications of the ceiling are brought into relation to pictures and texts by Vasari and Bartoli, many of their symbolisms become clear — aspects of their attributes, actions, costumes, and characters that are secured by well-documented connections between pictures and texts. In quantity and kind the contacts with Bartoli's characteristic recorded inventions confirm that he participated in formulating the programme of the Almeni *salotto*. Indeed, the view these contacts afford into the genesis of many of its details identifies Bartoli as the decisive mind for the ceiling programme.

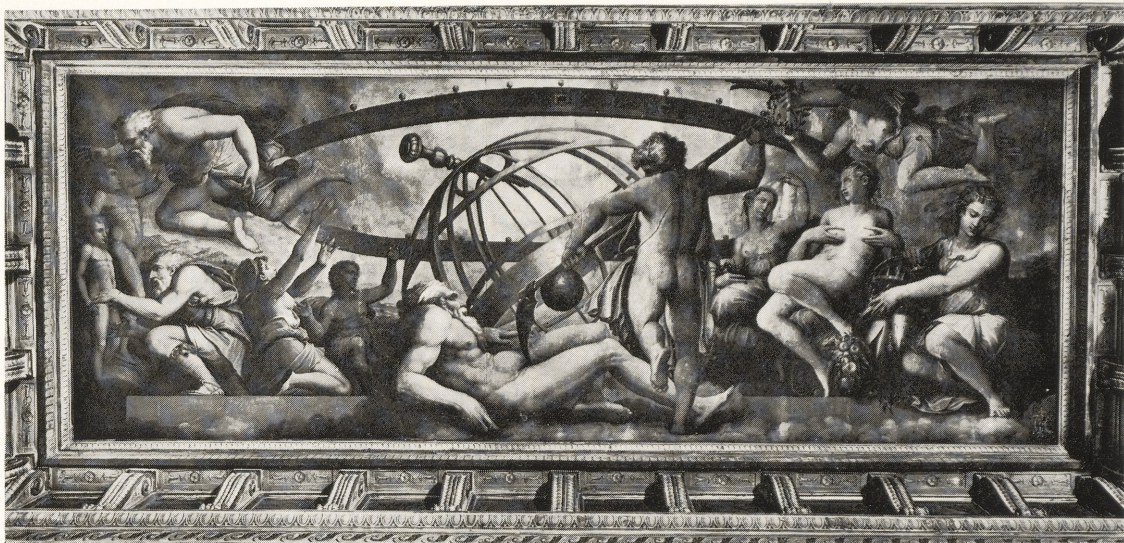
To recognize the component elements of the iconography and their author is not the whole story. This brings us back to the thread that unites the whole, to the *concetto* that, quite beyond the quatrain-inscription, the personifications, and their individual meanings, remains to be discovered.

#### ' Padroni '

The starting point in this quest is the last remaining allegory, FACILITÀ (Fig. 14). Why is she cast among Vasari's resplendent virtues, when the word 'facilità' scarcely conjures up a picture of sterling behavior? Facilità is not to be found in Cesare Ripa's vast encyclopedia of virtues. 'Facilità' may also mean *arrendevolezza*, or even *affabilità, trattabilità*, a usage deriving directly from the Latin *facilitas*.<sup>106</sup> Cosimo Bartoli makes of Facilità just such a virtue of sociability when he places her in the company of *dolcezza de costumi* and *benivolentia*.<sup>107</sup> Vasari's apparatus for Prince Francesco's wedding celebrations, in 1565, saw Facilità standing for a similar companionable manner, *una esteriore cortesia ed affabilità nel volere ascoltare ed intendere e rispondere benignamente a ciascuno*.<sup>108</sup> Another variation on the same idea is encountered in a painting once in Bartoli's father's house in the Borgo Ognissanti. It was a brightly colored *trionfo della Felicità*, where, in Happiness' train, a glad, high-spirited, handsome youth is christened *Affabilità*. He, Bartoli says, is that pleasing Affability who numbers among those who are, in their conversation, *garbati, accorti, gentili, & cortesi*.<sup>109</sup> Later Ripa will define Affability as a happy-faced, sweet-talking girl (*con faccia allegra, habito fatto nella discretione del conversar dolcemente, con desiderio di giovare, et diletare ogn'uno, secondo il grado*)<sup>110</sup> and, indeed, even our Facilità's smile echoes Bartoli's Affability, his *lieto e bel giovane*.

Against this background, the formula for Facilità's image transcribed in Vasari's "Zibaldone" takes on a new meaning. Although it begins unexceptionally, *una bellissima giovane, con un mazzo di giunchi in mano, et una matassa di seta*, it continues, *perchè si piegano alle voglie dei padroni*. While useless in painting a picture of Facilità, the latter phrase tells why she is to be painted.<sup>111</sup> Indeed it contains the glimmer of a general conception,





23 Vasari, Castration of Caelus by Saturn. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.

for it is certainly one of the explanatory elements that were systematically purged when the individual allegories of the Almeni programme were copied into Vasari's notebook, a process we have observed at work in the case of the programme for the Duke's bedroom. The phrase, *perchè si piegano alle voglie dei padroni*, has accidentally slipped by, a chance survival, no doubt a faithful textual reflection of Bartoli's invention for the pictures in Palazzo Almeni.

#### 'La Corte'

In light of Sforza's place in life's scheme, his offices of *coppiere* and *cameriere*, Facilità's bending to her master's every desire, her silken ease, positions her in a definite social context — the court. It is her home; it is where Facilità comes into her own, and where ultimately, as we shall see, she is enthroned as a capital virtue. The *formator del Cortigiano*, as Vasari terms Baldassare Castiglione<sup>112</sup>, recommends a similar affability.<sup>113</sup> Perhaps it is only a curiosity that the emblem of the ever-vigilant *gru* figures as the *impresa* of a popular mid-century printing of his "Libro del cortegiano"<sup>114</sup>, yet one half-expects, exploring further the path of courtly service, to happen upon other virtues painted on Sforza's ceiling — Fede, Perseveranza, Prestezza, and the rest, all such evident features of a life of service in the courts of princes.

Fortunately Cosimo Bartoli's own views on the courts emerge at several points in his writings. In two passages he speaks his mind on the *corti de Principi*. Once, just before his description of Affability in the "Ragionamenti accademici", Bartoli declares, in the course of an exposition on the theme of liberality:

*Ne crediate che io chiami liberale quel Padrone verso il suo servo, dal qual servitio 12, o 14, anni con quello amore, & con quella fede & affezione che per lui sarà stata possibile; aspetti di essere ricercò nelle altrui necessitati, perciocche liberale terrò io colui che conosciuto lo Amore, la fede & la bontà del servo, spontaneamente senza esserne ricercò lo previene in remunerarlo; si come io terrò anco per avarissimo colui, che non solo non remunera volontariamente un servo*



*simile, ma ricerco da quello tura le orecchie ingratamente alle necessità, & alle bontà di quel servo; & di questa sorte di huomini, cene sono pure assai, & massimo nelle corti de Principi.*<sup>115</sup>

Earlier, in a similar vein, Bartoli recounts his project, never completely realized, for the palace and garden of the Bishop Giovanbattista Ricasoli, a key figure at Cosimo's court, and a one-time owner of Palazzo Almeni. Bartoli's ill-starred project was begun, he reports, *per honore, & servizio di Monsignore* and selflessly pursued *con tanta fatica mia di animo, & di corpo, che se io havessi havuto a far fare queste cose per me, non la harei certo durata sì grande!*

Bartoli's friend, Vincenzo Martelli, who in his time had lived through the ups-and-downs of life at court in the service of Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, replies to Bartoli's lament:

*Questo so io pur troppo che hò provato ancora io, quanta sia la cura, la diligenza, la Vigilanzia, la osservatione, & lo amore che altri usa nelle cose de loro Padroni, quando altri portando loro affezione si mette a servirgli, lasciando indietro ogni cura & pensiero, non solamente delle cose nostre, ma ardirò quasi che dire della anima.*<sup>116</sup>

In a third passage on the courts, contained in a dedication to Prince Francesco de' Medici, Bartoli returns to the ideal relationship of the liberal prince and his servitors, who must not only respect and obey him, but also *come Dij Terreni grandamente amargli et sommamente reverirgli.*

Thus he continues:

*Et i sudditi havessino a porre ogni cura & diligentia nel diventare quanto più potessino virtuosi, con la speranza mediante le virtù loro, di havere ad essere gratamente da quegli raccolti, et non solamente più che gli altri accarezzati, ma con benefici & honori ancora riconosciuti. La onde la Bontà de Principi diventeria certamente divina, et le virtù de sudditi remunerate moltiplicheriano in infinito.*<sup>117</sup>

The three excerpts from Bartoli meet in an ideal vision of the reciprocal obligations of the signore and his suddito. In the Prince's court the courtier serves with *cura, diligenza, vigilanza*, and *obbedienza*. With *amore*, with *bontà*, with *fede*, he sacrifices himself in honorable, virtuous service to his prince, who with magnanimous liberality repays his virtue, according him benefits and honors. Thus closed, through the power of mutual love, the charmed circle of virtuous service and liberal goodness uniting the prince and his court, the *bontà* of the one and the *virtù* of the other multiply infinitely.

Bartoli's conception of an ideal 'servitù' draws together many features of Sforza Almeni's ceiling. Repeatedly struck, the chords, *amore - amare - affezione, bontà, fede - fedeltà*, sound a response to the verse of Sforza's ceiling. *Cura*, too, runs like a refrain through Bartoli's ruminations on courtly service. Moreover, the *liberalità* and *bontà* of his prince, Bartoli's concept of reward, the *rimunerazione* of *servitù*, is mirrored in a small figure painted just beneath the tondo of *Bontà*. She is *Liberalità*, sitting astride the ball of the earth, pouring out pieces of gold, and she, too, follows one of Bartoli's recipes preserved in Vasari's "Zibaldone".<sup>118</sup>

Bartoli's view of courtly service begins to trace the outlines of a concept that gives order to the component elements of his iconographical programme for the Almeni *salotto*. It is easy to believe that the court is the natural place for all these elements to assume their correct meaning, and this belief can be substantiated by uncovering a specific courtly strand that ran through the vanished façade decoration of Palazzo Almeni and by subsequently scrutinizing two closely analogous inventions Vasari provided Antonio Montalvo, a *gentil' huomo* who, without exaggeration, may be counted Sforza Almeni's double at Cosimo's court.





24 Vasari, Cosimo de' Medici's Victory at Montemurlo. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.





25 Vasari, Victory at Montemurlo, drawing. Florence, Uffizi 1186 E.

### 'Servitù' and the Façade of Palazzo Almeni

The true extent to which the Almeni façade celebrated Cosimo and his reign has not been noted. Leaving aside the obvious features, the ducal arms and imprese, there remain many more references and allusions to him. Vasari's letters repeatedly underscore the public character of the work. He promises Sforza that he is planning it with no fewer than five contexts in mind, *la città, il principe, la casa, il sito et voi*. Michelangelo has praised Vasari's drawing for the façade, but even more he praises Sforza's wish to render Florence more beautiful, a desire, in his view, wholly justified because Florence, through the Duke, has adorned and magnified Sforza, *ornato et imbellito et ingrandito voi*. In proposing the invention for the façade to Sforza, Vasari apostrophes him: *lei, che ha amato et servito il*



*suo signore*. Thus, predictably, the invention speaks of Sforza's 'servitù', his Lord, and his adoptive city.<sup>119</sup>

The importance of these topical references lies in the possibility that they compose a frame, a proscenium for the paintings inside the palace. This aspect of the decoration passed through two phases. They can be traced first in Vasari's initial proposals to Sforza, in autumn 1553, and then in the developments implied in his description of the finished work. Both offer a glimpse into the ideas and concerns Vasari and his patron shared as they planned what became the public face of Sforza's *salotto*.

— 1553 —

In 1553 the invocations of Cosimo and Sforza concentrate where they are easiest to see, on the *piano terreno* façade.<sup>120</sup> Over the *portone* are the ducal arms, and, on either side, two compartments forming in reality one scene, *la storia di Firenze et Perugia*.

*Nella banda ritta sarà un'Arno che abbraccia una Firenze, la quale accennerà et farà segno d'allegrezza; porgendo doni all'altra storia da man' manca, che sarà una Perugia col suo Trasimeno: Riverentemente accetterà il favore e doni, dati da detta Firenze; et le ninfe di Trasimeno si faranno intorno, presentando varii pesci al fiume d'Arno, et farà servitù à Firenze.*

In elementary terms, Florence rewards Perugia, who, in turn, pays her tribute, an allegory of 'servitù' transparently alluding to the Perugian Sforza Almeni and the Medici Duke of Florence. This keynote is sounded on dead center, at the point where the façade opens, giving onto the palace's interior.

In Vasari's 1553 plan it was to be seconded time and again. Allegories of Peace and Eternity support Cosimo's arms, and above his *stemma* a bust of Octavian combines forces with them to announce a new 'Pax Augusta'. Parallel to Augustus, over the '*finestre inginocchiate*', are set two other emperor busts (*teste d'imperatori*), Julius Caesar and Pompey Magnus. This apparently innocent arrangement had only one possible meaning in the symbolic politics of Cosimo's reign. It is an early public expression of a doctrine that said Cosimo's divinely ordained accession to the ducal throne exactly paralleled Augustus's to the *signoria della Repubblica di Roma*.<sup>121</sup> Cosimo's lucky stars, his horoscope (which was the same as Augustus's) determined the *felicità* of his reign. The identity of Cosimo and Augustus derives from a brief, but crucial coincidence in the lives of Alessandro de' Medici and Julius Caesar — the four years of Alessandro's rule and the four of Caesar's after Pompey's death — the years in which both achieved unlimited power and paved the way for the *felicità* of their successors' reigns.<sup>122</sup> Thus the conjunction, Caesar - Pompey - Augustus, together with the ducal arms borne by Peace and Eternity, cannot be dismissed as fortuitous. It affirms the institution in Tuscany, in the person of Cosimo, of a state that *meritamente si può tenere sicuro, & felice per tutto il tempo della vita sua*.<sup>123</sup>

As Vasari's letter to Sforza reels on, references to the Duke, his *coppiere*, and their native cities multiply. On the *piano nobile*, *Virilità*, a prince, *coronato et investito d'uno stato*, dispenses gifts to his servitors. At ground level, "Active Life" shows the building arts in Florence, while "Contemplative Life" shows Diogenes, philosophers, hermits, and *solitarie persone speculatrici* — *per essere Perugia sotto la chiesa*. And, finally, a battle — perhaps, Vasari suggests, Hannibal's *rotta de' Romani* at Lake Trasimene, seemingly alluding to Almeni through the victory had at Perugia by Hannibal, the *gran guerriero*.<sup>124</sup>

Sforza's architectural redecoration of the palace Cosimo gave him in 1546 antedated Vasari's 1553 proposals, and his two major exterior additions may also be seen as courtly gestures (Fig. 1). The first, a large double Medici-Toledo *stemma* joining the family arms of the Duke and Duchess, placed on the corner of the palace, announces (if we believe what



Cosimo Bartoli says about such *armi su le cantonate*) that Sforza has received *tanti beneficij dal Duca & dala Duchessa*.<sup>125</sup> And, in 1553, Vasari explicitly mentions Sforza's other main improvement to the building fabric, the two monumental '*finestre inginocchiate*'.<sup>126</sup> Arms of war — shields, swords, battle axes, quivers, lightning bolts — fill the panels between the consoles of these unusual windows. They identify the rank of the proprietor, apparently confirming a widespread opinion espoused in Castiglione's "Libro": *Quella dell'arme dev'essere la principale e vera professione del Cortegiano*.<sup>127</sup>

— 1554 —

In the definitive project for Sforza's façade, executed in 1554 and described in Vasari's 1568 "Vite", there is a substantial amplification of the courtly elements and, at times, a sharpening of their implications (Fig. 16).<sup>128</sup> New is Sforza's personal impresa, painted three times at the sides of the windows: a pyramid set on three balls with the letters IMMOBILIS. *Una Piramide con l'ali c'ha fondata la sua base sopra le Palle* is how Lodovico Domenichi describes it, and he guesses Sforza is saying that, having prudently founded his expectations (*speranze*) and his profession (*stato*) on the *Palle*, the arms of his master, and being thereby entrusted to his Duke's fortune and to his *felicità*, he is immovable and steadfast (*immobile et saldo*). Or, Domenichi adds, in a half-serious aside, perhaps Sforza wants to allude to the *servitù ch'egli ha con qualche gentildonna, la quale egli disegna che sia stabile et eterna*.<sup>129</sup> Thus Sforza publicly affirms that he builds his life on his constant devotion and fidelity to the Medici.

In the 1554 project the meaning of the double history of Florence and Perugia painted on the two sides of the main portal is recast to emphasize Perugia's tribute to Florence, putting the accent on servitude rather than reward. Around the figure of the *lago Trasimeno*<sup>130</sup> are nymphs, *ch'escono dell'acque, con tinche, lucci, anguille e lasche*<sup>131</sup>, and beside him is Perugia, who holds up a dog, showing him to Florence, on the other side of the doorway — *Perugia in una figura ignuda, avendo un cane in mano, lo mostra a una Fiorenza ... con un Arno accanto, che l'abbraccia e gli fa festa*. The reference to 'Sforza fidus' is inescapable. (Almost the same concept is expressed in Bartoli's formula for Fedeltà, already mentioned in connection with the fresco of Fede, a Fedeltà who has *a' piedi un cane*.)<sup>132</sup> The Perugian arrival is received jubilantly by his new masters, Flora and the Arno. Again Sforza announces he is the Duke's faithful servant, and again the *forestiero* Almeni defines himself in terms of the city and the court of his benefactor and master.<sup>133</sup>

The Duke's arms reappear above the portal, but no longer are they painted according to formal heraldic canons. Instead, they are unleashed in a free play of *palle mediche* — *sei palle sostenute da certe putti ignudi, che volando s'intrecciano per aria*.<sup>134</sup> The improvisation on the Medici *palle* (already present in Sforza's hybrid impresa) perhaps continued in a figure of armed Fortitude, who, *posando con atto fiero l'una delle gambe sopra un rochio di colonna, mette in bocca a un leone certe palle*.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, it is noteworthy that Vasari's definitive programme contains two new explicit mentions of Cosimo in the scenes on either side of the entrance portal. The builders in the history of "Active Life" now stand before the gates of Cosmopolis, *città edificata dal signor duca Cosimo*<sup>136</sup>, and in the history of "Contemplative Life" philosophers and astrologers measure the sky, showing that they are making the *natività del duca*, his horoscope.<sup>137</sup> Cosimo's horoscope was the basis for the earlier plan for busts of Caesar, Augustus, and Pompey, which was only another way of stating the good fortune promised by Cosimo's horoscope, the *felicità* granted by the *celesti influssi* of Cosimo's ascendant, the Capricorn.<sup>138</sup> Cosimo, as did Augustus, *fece palese ad ognuno detta sua natività, et fece battere una moneta*



*d'argento col segno del Capricorno, nel quale segno era nato.*<sup>139</sup> And, as Cosimo's most often represented impresa, the Capricorn doubtless figured among the *imprese di Sua Eccellenza* painted above the kneeling windows.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, the unusual presence of *Marte* in the house of *Leone* on the uppermost level was possibly an intentional allusion to a distinctive feature of Cosimo's horoscope (Pontormo painted it at Castello with Mars *nel segno di Leone e della Vergine*)<sup>141</sup>, although it seems unlikely that there was a systematic attempt to plot Cosimo's horoscope on the palace façade.<sup>142</sup>

Nevertheless, all these courtly elements and associations would have struck the eyes of Sforza's contemporaries with great immediacy. And they focused around leading themes of Medici panegyrics: the divinely preordained *felicità* of Cosimo, a *felicità* in which Cosimo's city was participant; the Medicean foundations of Sforza's hopes and destiny; his *servitù*; and his loyal fidelity and its reward.

### Concetti for Antonio Montalvo: 'Ben Servire' and Halcyon Days

Two further episodes illuminate ideas of courtly service current in Vasari's immediate circle. Both involve inventions made for Cosimo's Spanish-born courtier, Antonio Montalvo, who, upon Sforza's death in 1556, apparently filled the gap left in the Duke's entourage.<sup>143</sup> In 1568, Vasari identifies the *Spagnolo* as the *primo cameriere e più intrinseco al duca nostro*, the same characterization he earlier applied to Sforza Almeni.<sup>144</sup>

In the later 1560's, wanting to have the façade of his Borgo degli Albizi palace painted<sup>145</sup>, Montalvo approached Vasari for an invention, something similar to Palazzo Almeni — *essendoli soddisfatta fuor di modo quella del signor Sforza*, Vasari writes in answer to Montalvo's letter, when he sent a complex allegorical machine on the theme of 'ben servire', an invention that quite possibly reflects the experiences of the Palazzo Almeni.<sup>146</sup>

Among the thirty-odd personifications Vasari proposes figure the now familiar *Liberalità*, *Fama*, *Facilità*<sup>147</sup>, *Vigilanza*, *Fedeltà*, *Amore*, *Perseveranza*, *Sollecitudine* (much the same thing as *Pretezza*), *Prudenza* (a more general case of *Accuratezza*), and finally *Assiduità* (the mean between *Diligenza* and *Perseveranza*). In Vasari's words, the whole is a *specchio d'una servitù non vile e bassa, ma onoratissima*, and, he continues, *questo concetto mostra un'esempio del ben servire impiegato in un magnanimo ed ottimo signore*.

According to Vasari's exposition, the numerous components of the projected allegory were to be ordered according to a fairly simple mechanism. In his scheme, the personifications are disposed in four *ordini*, or levels, one set above the other in a symmetrical arrangement. At the bottom are the virtues of the *animo*, chosen from many fitting to princely service, *che convengono a questo grado di vità: Modestia e Temperanza, Prudenza, Perseveranza e Costanza, Fedeltà, Affezione or Amore, Fortezza*. These virtues constitute the foundation of 'ben servire'. Higher up, in the second order, are the *effetti* or the *pratica* of the virtues of the first order, the practice of courtly service through *Facilità, Segretezza, Obbedienza e Persecuzione, Sollecitudine e Vigilanza, Fatica, and Assiduità*. Higher still, the third order is devoted to the Duke (*vorrei che servisse tutto alla persona di detto signore*), with the Medici arms (Fig. 26), the Duke's imprese, and his medals, together with *Gloria e Onore* and *Magnanimità e Liberalità*, these to show the Duke's liberality and his *rimunerazione del ben servire* through honors and titles, which, in turn, bring fame and eternal glory. On the uppermost level are displayed the fortunate results of the first and second levels. They are the *corona* to the virtues painted on the first level and the *premio* of the *fatiche* of 'servitù' painted on the second — *Benevolenza, Contento e Allegrezza, Reputazione e Autorità, Ricchezza e Abbondanza, Riposo e Quiete, and Fama e Nominanza*. Thus the allegory moves from bottom to top, as Vasari explains in one of several examples, *dalla fortezza e vivacità*





26 Bartolomeo Ammannati, Medici Stemma. Florence, Palazzo Ramirez-Montalvo.

*dell'animo si vedesse che nasce la fatica, che gli risponde perpendicolarmente, e che prontamente si darà nel servizio del suo signore, e da questo ne viene il fine e il riposo....*<sup>148</sup>

Some years ago Eduard Vodoz noted that the Montalvo façade decoration follows an invention found in Vincenzo Borghini's papers labelled "Facciata del S. Montalvo", a text recently published for the first time by Julian Kliemann.<sup>149</sup> Vasari's letter to Montalvo embodies the identical concept of '*ben servire*' that appears in Borghini's invention, and there are also many textual resemblances. Moreover, Vasari's letter is far longer, far more discursive, and it contains many new details of iconographic interest. Its eight new personifications suggest that Borghini has inserted among his notes a reduction of Vasari's invention. But this is a too obvious conclusion drawn from *prima facie* impressions. A complete comparison of the two texts leads to the opposite conclusion: Vasari's letter elaborates Borghini's memorandum, perhaps following a path Borghini once indicated: *fiorire ed arricchire questa mia povera invenzione col vostro ottimo ingegno*.<sup>150</sup> In fact, Vasari leaves nothing of Borghini's invention out, and, although he rearranges Borghini's text, his explanation of the dynamics of the programme is not as clear. Furthermore, he introduces several demonstrable mistakes, visible proof of who came first.<sup>151</sup>



Obviously the two texts arise from different circumstances. Borghini dashes off a note to Vasari, his friend of many years; Vasari is left to make the polished presentation to Montalvo, and many of his changes stem from this new purpose. Vasari's letter also documents how confidently he participates in formulating the iconographical programme<sup>152</sup>; his authoritative revision of Borghini's memorandum sweeps away all doubts that he understood what he was painting. Thus we return with redoubled interest to the question of Vasari's substantive additions to Borghini's *concetto*.

The basic idea Borghini sketches is this: *Ben Servire*, for a magnanimous and excellent prince; not low servitude, but honorable employment in important affairs for the benefit not only of the prince but of others, too. Vasari extends and strengthens the most marked social aspects of this underlying concept as well as its strain of ethical-political idealism. The dimension *padrone - servo* becomes more courtly in a narrow sense, and it expands to embrace the entire congregation of the court. Thus, *la corte, tutta la corte, tutti, gli altri*, or even the entire world of the courts, *chi conversa e negozia con le corti*. Alongside this expansion of the social perspective, the ethical value of *Ben Servire* is intensified: courtly service, *oltre al servizio del suo signore, si dà spesso occasione di giovare a molti; chi ben serve può alla fine comandare agli altri*. And love, ultimately, becomes the true motive force of 'servitù': *la servitù sia con amore e non forzata; with assiduità, si conserva la grazia of the prince; the perfect servant comes to be amato e stimato da tutti, receiving la benevolenza* — which is not other than love — *non solo della persona che si serve, ma di tutta la corte*. In short, Vasari has given a more profound ethical rationale to the choice of the 'vita di corte' exalted in Borghini's idea of *Ben Servire*.<sup>153</sup>

When Vasari appealed to one of his *litterati*, a Borghini, a Bartoli, a Giovio, for an iconographical invention, he did not usually extend a *tabula rasa*; he had something in mind, a theme, an encomiastic aim, at times a programme *in nuce* dictated by the patron. Like many artists, he was not adverse to proposing ideas he had used previously; indeed this was an underpinning of his immense productivity.

Vasari's letter testifies to Montalvo's admiration of Sforza's façade, and, while we cannot be absolutely sure Vasari drew upon his projects for Almeni, behind his proposals to Montalvo there is a scheme startlingly similar to the pattern of ideas encountered at Palazzo Almeni. If Antonio Montalvo presented Vasari with a vaguely defined theme, it was possibly similar to an idea he had in mind in another, better documented situation, when he called on Vasari for an *impresa*.

To devise Montalvo's *impresa* Vasari drew in Borghini, and from Borghini's surviving letters it transpires that, in this instance, Montalvo had not appeared empty-handed but came with his own *concetto*, which he wanted fashioned into an *impresa* — *per esprimere un bello Gentilissimo suo concetto, per trovare una impresa ... conforme a un suo concetto*, as Borghini states the matter.<sup>154</sup>

To express Montalvo's *concetto* Borghini created an ingenious *impresa* of halcyon days inspired by the *felicità* of Cosimo. Nested halcyons under a Capricorn sky (*molti Alcioni in un nido e sopra nel cielo il segno del capricorno*) is Borghini's figure to illustrate the motto, HOC FIDUNT DUCE. Halcyons are water birds, he explains, who build their nests on the open seas, and they do it with fearless trust whenever the sun is in the sign of Capricorn — an *impresa* similar in intent to Montalvo's façade of *ben servire* planned only shortly thereafter.

Montalvo's *concetto*, which the *impresa* expressed, was the following. Having received from the Duke *infiniti benefizi et cortesie*, Montalvo wanted to show the world his gratitude, and, at the same time, that with the *grazia* and *favore* of so great a prince, under his *felice protezione*, he rests secure; he is *lieto, sicuro, contento*. Thus Montalvo's proto-programme,



even before Borghini's advice came into play, was quintessentially courtly, focused as it was on the fundamental parameter of life at court, the relation between prince and courtier.

### 'La Pittura d'Amore'

If a link between the two programmes for Almeni and Montalvo did exist, it is very likely revealed in the new elements Vasari introduced in his letter to Montalvo, possibly in the intensification of the social and ethical implications of the *concetto*, the stress on love as an animating force. This aspect of the Montalvo programme is similar not only to the *imago Amoris*, nude with great multi-colored wings (Figs. 5, 12), but also to the Petrarchan verse that circles the Almeni salotto.

In addition to its size and visibility, the placement of the picture of Love at the beginning of the decoration, above the first stretch of the inscription (*Facile Amor Perseverando Incende*), causes it to appear at first glance a leading theme of the discourse, so similar is it to Benedetto Varchi's lezione, "Della Pittura d'Amore", which was in fact a favorite theme of 'petrarchismo'.<sup>155</sup> Tender Amor, who settles into his verdant nest, is painted, in agreement with Varchi's words, *d'una carnagione rossa* that resembles the *rossezza del fuoco*, *per dimostrarne ... l'ardor suo*. Love's fire is heightened by the contrast with the cold, distant wasteland of the landscape's white cities of snow and ice. In much the same way poetic images of Petrarchan poets counterpose snow and ice to the flames of love, following countless models of the master.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, while the amorous, Petrarchistic aspect of the inscription appears, self-evidently, in the word *Amor* (the most frequent word of a distinct character in the entire "Canzoniere"), it is equally present in the words *incende*, *ardente*, *foco*, and *accende*, all expressions in the Petrarchan lexicon that belong to the ever-present matter of love.<sup>157</sup>

In the context of the Almeni ceiling this thread of love becomes intelligible within the framework of a 'servitù' interwoven with *fede*, with *bontà*, and *affezione*, and with *amore*, the conception propounded, as we have seen, by Cosimo Bartoli in his "Ragionamenti accademici". Vasari's commentary on *Affezione* maintains that *la servitù sia con amore e non forzata*.<sup>158</sup> In his "Discorsi storici universali", Bartoli expresses the identical thought in Discorso XXXVI ("Che i Principi non possono soddisfare ad ogniuno ... & debbono volere essere più amati che temuti") when he says, *è adunque bene a Principi il volere essere più amati che temuti, perché dallo amore nasce la confidentia e la benevolentia de sudditi*.<sup>159</sup> The theme of freely rendered servitude, uncoerced and love-inspired, recurs throughout Bartoli's "Discorsi".

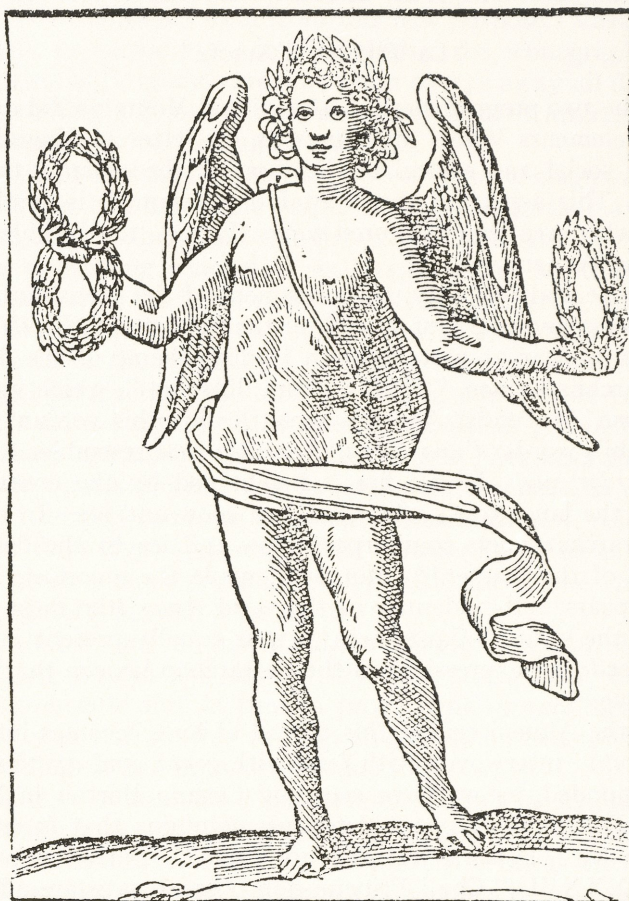
The examination of Vasari's association with the courtier Antonio Montalvo yields a double mirror of love and servitude in which to view the Almeni ceiling. The programme for Montalvo's façade (as well as for Almeni's) survives, and thus the meaning of the decoration can be confidently interpreted by reference to a rationale explicitly expressed at one point in the planning. It is not, however, the same as the half-lost, earlier programme for the paintings inside Palazzo Almeni. Yet, together with all the other clues that have emerged in Vasari's immediate neighborhood, the Montalvo invention permits isolating the main themes of the Almeni decoration.

### Loyal Service and Courtly Prudence

In the absence of the intact survival of the Almeni programme there persists a penumbra of mystery around the *salotto's* decoration. The organization of its virtues and the proper sequence of its themes remain vague. Nor do we know what claims it makes for the courtier's life. Until this point there have been solid stepping stones: the gilt inscription of the



## AMOR DI VIRTÙ.



27 Amor di Virtù (from Ripa, 1603).

*salotto*, the corresponding list of allegories in Vasari's "Zibaldone", the two phases of the Almeni façade programme, the other documented inventions of the Vasari-Bartoli team, Bartoli's own recorded views on courtly service, the surviving Montalvo inventions. At this point, with the theme of 'servitù' as a guidepost, looking beyond such explicit evidence permits further insights. It can suggest the true implications of the ceiling's emphasis on love; it can reveal the pattern that governs the virtues and thus situate them in the context of contemporary ideologies of the courts and courtly service. Indeed, we will see that the underlying *raison d'être* of Sforza's painted ceiling arises precisely from these contrasting currents of thought.

One distinctive feature of the Palazzo Almeni Amor (Fig. 12), thus far unremarked, is his large laurel crown. It is not one of the identifying marks of Cupid who sets hearts afire. Yet, in this respect, the Almeni Amor resembles Cesare Ripa's "Amor di Virtù" (Fig. 27), *un faciullo ignudo, alato, in capo tiene una ghirlanda d'alloro*, who, in turn, derives from an emblem devised by Vasari's *amicissimo*, Andrea Alciati.<sup>160</sup> Thus he is also the Amor who *infiamma gli huomini d'honore*, an *amor di virtu*, incorruptible, *anzi come l'alloro sempre verdeggia*.<sup>161</sup> Vasari and Bartoli practiced this selfsame symbolism. The latter once dressed



*Virtù* in green, *per essere sempre verde*.<sup>162</sup> Bartoli's *Apetito di honore* (painted by Vasari in Palazzo Vecchio), his head *cinta di una corona di lauro*, wears virtue's crown and fixes his unswerving gaze on glory's palm.<sup>163</sup>

Closely allied is the argument of one of Bartoli's discourses, "Che la Virtù è cosa bella et si fa Amare insino da gli Inimici, et è la vera strada per caminare alla gloria, et quel che nasca dalla benevolenzia dalla remunerazione et dallo odio".<sup>164</sup> Thus if the Almeni Amor implies the love of virtue, virtue itself elicits love and brings its own reward. Vasari, too, sets forth this idea in a memorable image that sees Duke Cosimo's breast as Vulcan's forge, where Cupid's arrows are fashioned. Leading us into the inner meaning of his fresco, the "Forge of Vulcan" in Palazzo Vecchio, Vasari confesses, *intesi quando io la feci, che anche nella fucina del petto del duca si fabbricano gli strali del beneficar le virtù, che lo fanno innamorare, ed altri innamorare delle virtù di lui*. Thus, as in the gilt inscription of the Almeni salotto where Flora ignites with the fire of love, in Vasari's image the Duke forms Love's arrows for virtue's reward.<sup>165</sup>

Similarly, Liberalità in Bartoli's vanished pictorial allegory of Happiness is dressed in red, *per dimostrare lo amore che ella porta a virtuosi, a chi ella donando ha distribuito lo oro, e le ricchezze che ella haveva in quel bacino di oro vuoto in mano*, the same motif found on the Almeni ceiling, where, beneath Bontà, Liberalità empties gold from her upturned red purse (Fig. 13).<sup>166</sup> Elsewhere Bartoli again treats the theme of the beloved, liberal prince, calling Cosimo *ottimo principe — non solamente di ogni sorte di virtù amatori, ma vero remuneratore di coloro che in esse si esercitano*.<sup>167</sup>

On the Almeni ceiling Liberalità is pendent to a chain of virtue stretching from Amor to Fede, a chain that also links Facilità, Perseveranza, and Bontà, all virtues arising from love — constancy and affability, for instance, being two manifestations of love in courtly service. These constitute one half of the ceiling's virtues, a two-fold division implicit in the symmetries of the frames — two tondos, two squares, two rectangles each accompanied by two ovals, all these, with single figures, set around one double-figure centerpiece.

Schematically the Amore-Fede half of the decoration may be expressed in the following way.

ARNO — FLORA  
FEDE  
BONTÀ (Liberalità)  
PERSEVERANZA — AMOR — FACILITÀ

Love, constancy, affability, goodness, loyalty are virtues of the heart, aimed, as it were, toward the prince. With this model in mind, the other, matching half of the virtues also assembles in a constellation of virtues employed in the practice of courtiership, in relation to the court.

ARNO — FLORA  
ACCURATEZZA  
FERMEZZA (Fama)  
VIGILANZA — DILIGENZA — PRESTENZA

In turn, this pattern appears to reflect, or be reflected in our double mirror of love and servitude.

In the second grouping the leading motive is prudence, for Accuratezza is only an aspect of prudence. Thus Bartoli writes, *l'accortezza nasce dalla prudentia*; she is her *ministra* or *compagna*.<sup>168</sup> Prudence, or '*cortigiana prudenza*', is also reflected in Accuratezza's cautious tripping advance over the top of the clouds. So, too, are Vigilanza and Diligenza



(the one the aspect of the other)<sup>169</sup>, Prestezza<sup>170</sup>, and perhaps also Fermezza, the virtuous allies of prudent execution.

‘Cortigianeria’

In this perspective, the ideas painted on Sforza Almeni’s ceiling begin to range themselves on the landscape of Cinquecento ideologies of the court and courtly service. It was from this sea of conflicting voices that Vasari’s and Bartoli’s colorful allegories arose, and without its chorus of praise and protest the ceiling would never have taken the form it did. Sixteenth-century discussion of the ‘*vita di corte*’ is preserved in an extensive *trattatistica* dealing with the court and the courtier, with few exceptions a rather neglected aspect of Italian literature.<sup>171</sup> While one current of this literature may occasionally offend modern susceptibilities with its preoccupation with social distinctions and outward forms of polite behavior, the other current, which runs counter to the courts, is intensely realistic and completely attuned to our contemporary impatience with the more repellent aspects of court life. But neither stream of thought is desperately foreign to what we today readily comprehend.

Sketching a few relationships with only two of the many treatises on the courts will afford a glimpse, but only a glimpse, of one topical reality that inspired the pictures of Palazzo Almeni. The first treatise is Baldassare Castiglione’s enormously successful “*Libro del cortegiano*”<sup>172</sup>; the second, Torquato Tasso’s “*Il Malpiglio overo de la corte*”. Completed in 1585, the “*Malpiglio*” comes later than the Almeni frescos, but it represents a mature response to questions long plaguing court life.<sup>173</sup>

Unlike most of its offspring, Castiglione’s “*Libro*” awards the element of love a crucial role. Leaving aside the courtier’s exterior qualities of nobility, good looks, grace, non-chalance, ease, culture, his skills in arms, games, music, speech, and all the rest that loom so large in Castiglione’s wayward quest for the perfect courtier, and searching for the courtier’s real purpose, it becomes clear that his justification lies in his service to his prince. In the second book, when the question of the courtier’s true role first arises, Castiglione writes, *Voglio adunque che ‘l cortegiano* — in addition to his many attractive qualities — *si volti con tutti i pensieri e forze dell’animo suo ad amare e quasi adorare il principe a chi serve sopra ogni altra cosa; e le voglie sue e costumi e modi tutti indirizzi a compiacerlo*.<sup>174</sup> The courtier must love, even adore the prince he serves above all else. And, when, after many and various disquisitions, the discussion returns, in Book IV, to the perfect courtier’s ultimate mission, he is made the *institutor del principe*, his specific goal to inspire in his prince the love of virtue, to lead him along its path. In short, he is to become the moral mentor of his prince, an office he willingly performs, prompted by the love he bears his master.<sup>175</sup>

The treatise then draws to a close with a long discourse on sacred love<sup>176</sup>, ending in Pietro Bembo’s inspired soliloquy<sup>177</sup>, itself a dazzling holy frenzy of love.<sup>178</sup> Platonic love is recommended as one of the most important and useful qualities the counsellor of princes may acquire.<sup>179</sup> It is, in essence, love of beauty, or, ultimately, of goodness<sup>180</sup>, and through Bembo’s final speech we are given to understand that divine love shows the way to heaven<sup>181</sup>, that the insight Platonic love permits into virtue and the mystical state of grace it induces uniquely qualify the courtier in his role as the prince’s guide to virtue.<sup>182</sup> It is the source of his superior desire for and knowledge of the good.

These ideas reverberate in the Palazzo Almeni ideal of courtly service. It does not matter whether Castiglione was their immediate source; his “*Cortegiano*” was the bible of the Renaissance courtier, and the unrivalled source and herald of all that was to be said and thought on its heels.<sup>183</sup>



By the same token, Love's friendly companion, *Facilità*, also matches Castiglione's affability, his agreeable courtier who aims to please.<sup>184</sup> For Vasari, *facilità* is necessary to him who *conversa e negozia con le corti*<sup>185</sup>, who, like Castiglione's courtier, converses with his prince *con ogni suo studio per farla grata*, with *una gentil ed amabile maniera nel conversare cotidiano*.<sup>186</sup> The figure of this courteous, charming, companionable conversationalist eventually inspired manuals on courtly manners, and even books devoted to the gentle art of pleasing, winning talk. But, more profoundly, *Facilità* reflects the perfect courtier's most agreeable qualities — his grace, his ease, his always remarked 'sprezzatura' — the secret of Castiglione's 'cortegiano' that ultimately allows him to win his prince's favor, his mind, and his heart, and, thus to gain ascendancy over him and lead him down virtue's path.

These do not exhaust the reflections of Castiglione in the Almeni ceiling. But at Palazzo Almeni the discourse has already subtly changed coloration. The second chain of courtly virtues headed by prudent *Accuratezza* anticipates with deadly accuracy a new atmosphere — less idealistic, with moments of artfully concealed pessimism and soft-spoken reservations about the realities of court life — that some years later was represented in the "Malpiglio", composed by Torquato Tasso while still confined, half-mad it was rumored, in the hospital of Sant'Anna in Ferrara.<sup>187</sup> *Occultando il cortigiano schiva la noia del principe, e occultando ancora par ch'egli possa celarsi da l'invidia cortigiana*, he writes, and then continues: *Dunque la prudenza è quella virtù che supera ne le corti tutte le difficoltà — la prudenza, ch'è la principal virtù de la corti*.<sup>188</sup>

More than anything else, Tasso's dialogue affirms that prudence is the most necessary virtue at court and prudence is the art of concealment, *prudenza cortigiana*; the new passwords are *occultare, celare, infingere*.<sup>189</sup> Prudence shows how to please at court, how to avoid the prince's displeasure, and how to protect oneself from the envy of the courtiers. In the last lines of the "Malpiglio", Tasso's spokesman observes that letters are important to the *gentiluomo di corte*, but not so important as *la prudenza e l'accortezza di saperle a tempo manifestare*.

Tasso's *cortigiana prudenza* is born from Prudence *scorta de la fortezza*, for without prudence *fortezza è cieca e temeraria*, but reined in by Prudence it becomes *fortezza cortigiana*<sup>190</sup>, not unlike the resolute, stabile *Fermezza* who sustains *Accuratezza-Prudenza* on Sforza's ceiling. So, too, is *Prestezza* like Tasso's *pronta ubidienza*<sup>191</sup>, and *Diligenza* like the prudence the courtier uses in *l'essercitare i commandamenti del principe*.<sup>192</sup>

The discussion of prudence culminates when young Gianlorenzo Malpiglio questions the wise *Forestiero Napoletano*, asking if indeed he means to reduce the courtier's many virtues to one. At first the Neapolitan equivocates, but then he admits that Prudence is the most important. Nor is she really separate from the others: *ma come il capitano conduce seco la sua schiera, così la prudenza è seguita da le virtù de i costumi, de le quali è lume e guida e quasi imperatrice*.<sup>193</sup>

Young Malpiglio persists, wanting to know who the others are, and the Neapolitan courtier assents to his demand, elusively explaining Prudence's company as if it were itself a painting:

*Non tutte egualmente né sempre si manifestano, ma sì come ne le pitture con l'ombre s'accennano alcune parti lontane, altre sono da' colori più vivamente espresse, così avverrà parimente de le virtù che sono con la prudenza: perciocché la fortezza e la magnanimità e alcun'altre si veggono adombrate e paiono quasi di lontano scoprirsi; ma la magnificenza, la liberalità e quella che si chiama cortesia con proprio nome e la modestia è dipinta con più fini colori ch'abbia l'artificio del cortigiano, anzi viva più tosto: parimenti le virtù del conversare, io dico la verità, l'affabilità e la piacevolezza.*



This answer seems finally to please Gianlorenzo, who responds:

*Io veggio non solo il disegno, ma l'immagine del cortigiano e 'l ritratto già colorito. E se l'altro del Castiglione fu per quella età ne la qual fu scritto, assai caro dovrà essere il vostro in questi tempi, in cui l'infinger è una de le maggior virtù.*<sup>194</sup>

Tasso's colored portrait of the courtier represents, in its way, a fulfillment of Castiglione, for Castiglione had dedicated his book, *come un ritratto di pittura della corte d'Urbino, non di mano di Raffaello o Michel Angelo, ma di pittor ignobile e che solamente sappia tirare le linee principali, senza adornar la verità de vaghi colori o far parer per arte di prospettiva quello che non è.*

### In Defense of Courtiership

It is obvious that the contrast between Castiglione's picture of the perfect gentleman and Tasso's image of the master of *infingimento* does not adequately represent the complexity of contemporary viewpoints on the courtier's role. Nevertheless, we may ask where between these two poles Vasari's portrait of courtly virtue lies.

On the Almeni ceiling the virtues of the courtier in relation to his prince — Fedeltà, Bontà, Amore, Perseveranza, Facilità — all point to the frank, open loyalty of Castiglione's courtier. Shining with the light of her virtue, Perseveranza turns devotedly toward a *splendore celeste* above (Fig. 9).<sup>195</sup> Bontà lifts his hands over his flaming altar and looks upward through the light as if to God above (Fig. 13). Fede, too, looks to God, the soul of unswerving *fedeltà* (Fig. 7). Above them all, Florence is invested with the divinely ordained *felicità* of Cosimo's reign (Fig. 15). He is, in Bartoli's phrase, a prince given by God to mortals, and his subjects shall greatly love him and highly revere him like a terrestrial god, a *Dio Terreno*.<sup>196</sup>

Yet, even granting the legitimatization of Cosimo's rule through its cosmic, Capricornic preordination, the tone has become more servile. The decoration begins to turn toward the more closed spirit of Tasso's court, and toward his more personal and total '*servitù*'. We saw that his oblique prudence lives in Accuratezza's wary, watchful progress (Fig. 6) and in the other virtues the courtier uses in the practice of his service, in his prudent, protective execution of the affairs of his master.

As critics of the courts never tired of pointing out, in addition to all its other adversities, *servitù* entailed the loss of liberty. For Lodovico Domenichi, *servitù* was no better, no different than slavery — *essendo in ogni modo servitù la vita cortigiana, & non havendo ella altro nome, che quel che portano seco gli schiavi, & venduti in catena* — and his views are wholly typical of one school of thought.<sup>197</sup>

The tradition of diatribes against the courts antedates Castiglione's idyllic apotheosis of court life by almost a century<sup>198</sup>, but even afterwards the press of reality did not abate. The torrent of attack, if anything, increased, the polemic spurred on by such implacable indictments of the courtier's lot as Pietro Aretino's "*Ragionamento delle corti*".<sup>199</sup> In this inevitable context, Almeni's decoration in praise of courtly service becomes an apologia. In Vasari's explicitly documented allegory of '*ben servire*' the traces of this defense can be clearly detected, and his position is, at this point, opposed to Tasso's covertly expressed reservations about the courts. Indeed, Vasari's claim that who serves well can in the end *commandare agli altri* rings as an advance refutation to the charge, levelled in the "*Malpiglio*", that the free citizens of a republic can themselves aspire to rule, while at court the courtier can only serve.<sup>200</sup> Among the rewards of '*ben servire*' Vasari places *benevolenza*, not of the prince alone, but of *tutta la corte*. For Tasso, too, the *benevolienza de i cortigiani* must be a prime aim of the courtier — it serves to protect him against *l'invidia cortigiana*, according to all detractors among the court's greatest perils.<sup>201</sup>



All the arguments against the courts were of long standing, and, in general terms, the concept of 'ben servire' answers Domenichi's equation of 'servitù' and 'schiavitù', the imputation of servility, by stressing the worthiness of its service (*onoratissima, degna, stimato*) to a *magnanimo ed ottimo signore*. This is praise calculated to counter criticism.

The portrait of courtly virtue in Palazzo Almeni is, naturally, a portrait of Sforza's perfect courtiership, even if there is not a single overt reference to him. By the same token, no pictorial motif of Bartoli's invention for the Duke's bedroom explicitly invoked the Duke, yet every image meant to refer to him — the virtues are his virtues, the ancient *exempla*, exemplary of his actions.<sup>202</sup>

Vasari's allegory of service contains the promise that courtly virtue will find its reward, but the verse inscription, while it promises favor and even love, also admonishes. "Vegliar!", it says to Sforza, and to the court of Florence, "practice care, diligence, and charm". Did its caution fall on deaf ears? What courtier, even if more infatuated than Gianlorenzo Malpiglio with Castiglione's courtly ideal, would ever forget the diabolic, letter-juggling twist Aretino had given the word 'Corte': *Io ho inteso da le croniche che la Corte si chiamava Morte, e perché la ciurma impaurita da sì crudel suono non si poteva far trottare a servirla, la Riverenza sua messe il C in luogo de lo M.*<sup>203</sup> And Lodovico Domenichi was even closer to the mark when he wrote, *Ira del Principe è il più pericoloso scoglio della corte.*<sup>204</sup>

#### Epitaph for a Courtier

For Sforza Almeni the words of Aretino and Domenichi were prophetic. His life had been played out on the court's stage, in the dependency of his prince. It is hardly credible that Sforza made his own the mission Castiglione assigned the courtier, to become the *institutor* of his prince. Yet contemporary reports suggest that he tried to discourage Cosimo's then all-absorbing liaison with the young Eleonora degli Albizi.<sup>205</sup> But in the wave of gossip that followed upon Sforza's death everything was speculation and nothing clear about the initial reason for the Duke's sudden displeasure.<sup>206</sup>

In contrast, the terms of the punishment Cosimo first imposed upon Sforza are unequivocal: exile, banishment. *Sforza*, he said, *togliliti davanti & partiti dello stato mio senza indugio & non far mai più capital di me in cosa alcuna.*<sup>207</sup>

Exile was the one sentence Sforza could not accept, and he returned from the Duke's villa at Castello to Florence, where he lived out his remaining, numbered days. After a lifetime of conformity, standing on the side of order and privilege, he found himself an outcast. As a pure courtier, he was ill-equipped to exist outside the court; no trade, no profession, he had only his skills of graceful performance at court. His one defining bond of loyalty broken, we better understand Sforza's course of action. The hour was too late, his star had risen too high to seek another court, and thus follow Castiglione's solution of voluntary exile. Faced with, and refusing, his courtly demise, an exile tantamount to death, he then met his death at the hand of the prince to whom he had forever pledged his life. *Immobilis!* Had Sforza, Cosimo is reported to have said, *preso le porte ed itosene a Perugia, non avremmo fatto altro risentimento.*<sup>208</sup>

But owing to his imprudence, or rather his rashness, Sforza's life was cut short — so said the subsequent legal pronouncements.<sup>209</sup> Sforza's death disavowed all his painted ceiling affirmed. Yet, paradoxically, by his actions, by his inability to forsake the court, he laid bare his hopeless belief in all it stood for. But, for the world at large, what now were all his courtly virtues worth? In the light of events their personification in painted images became a further embarrassment added to the humiliation of his death.



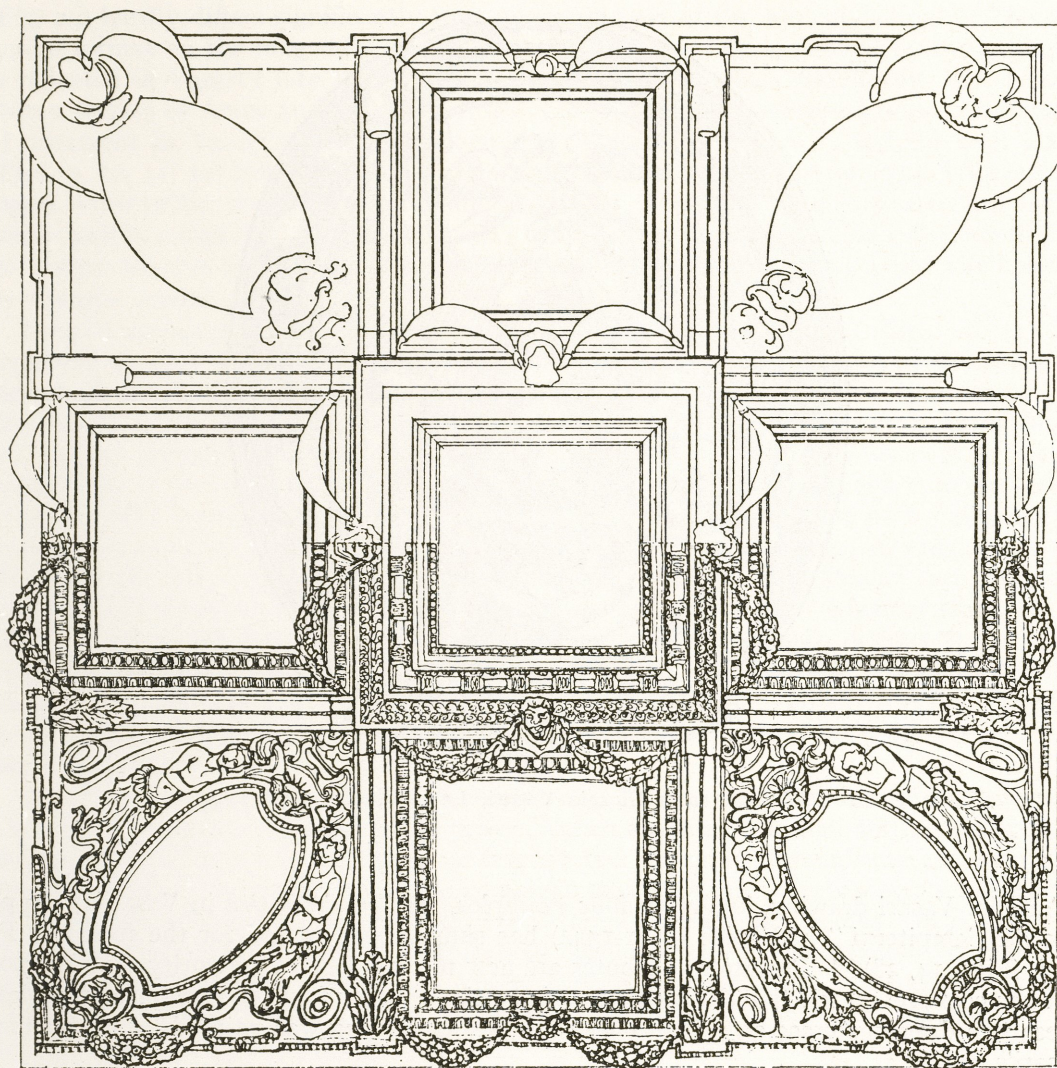


28 After Vasari, Terza Ora. Formerly Milan, Finarte.

### Artists and Dates

Leaving Sforza's courtiership and its shipwreck on the shoals of the court behind, it remains to consider some of the specific artistic questions his painted ceiling raises. First the question, 'who?'. Then, 'when?'. Until this point the survival of extracts from the





29 Plan of Tesoretto Vault. Florence, Palazzo Vecchio.

original text of the Almeni ceiling programme among Vasari's papers, added to his well-known close ties to Sforza and the obviously Vasarian character of the decoration, have served to document his responsibility for the project. The iconographical programme showed how intimately the themes of the ceiling are tied up with the working partnership of Vasari and Bartoli. By placing the programme first, the question of attribution nearly falls by the wayside; it need be considered only within a very narrow range — execution within Vasari's immediate circle.

The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne owns an autograph drawing by Vasari, first identified by Gunther Thiem. It was obviously made for the fresco of Bontà (Figs. 13, 31). The drawing is a 'modello', squared for execution, and the fresco was executed from it. At the top is written, in Vasari's distinctive calligraphy, *Bontà / una vitto*. Stylistically the drawing belongs to the 1550's.<sup>210</sup>





30 End page from Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite*. Florence 1550.

Another Vasari drawing, known in four examples, for the *Terza Ora* in Vasari's "Apparato dei Sempiterni" in Venice (1541-1542) has simply been reused for the fresco of *Facilità* (Figs. 14, 28).<sup>211</sup> *Facilità*'s attributes are new to mark her new identity, but her pose and her costume match the *Terza Ora* drawings, the drapery fold for fold, pleat for pleat. These two drawings erase any doubts that the Almeni ceiling was painted by members of Vasari's studio.

A more exact answer to the question 'who?' will help answer the question 'when?'. But the years can be narrowed, too. The outside limits for the execution are 1554, the year Vasari returned to Florence from Rome, and 1566, the year of Sforza's death — little more than a decade. These dates converge with another set, arrived at in a different way, 1554-1560, the period of Vasari's most active collaboration with Bartoli, or, more cautiously stated, 1549-1562, effectively the outer limits of their documented collaboration on pictorial schemes.<sup>212</sup> Each set of dates suggests slightly different lists of names, the current members of Vasari's team of helpers. But, in every case, the first name is Vasari.<sup>213</sup>

Concerning Vasari's role there are three main questions: his responsibility for the design of the ornamental framework of the ceiling, the extent to which the figures follow his conceptions, and his actual participation in the execution.<sup>214</sup>

Many of Vasari's project drawings for painted vaults recall the main outlines of the Almeni decoration.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, the elegant effect of the large white expanses, lightly traced with colored *grottesche*, and white, richly gilt stucco frames (Fig. 4) is completely to Vasari's taste. In plan the smaller white vault of the Tesoretto in the Palazzo Vecchio



(Fig. 29) hardly differs significantly from the main part of the Almeni ceiling.<sup>216</sup> The basic design format on the long sides of the Almeni vault, a rectangle flanked by ovals (Fig. 5), is repeated in Vasari's late Vatican chapel decorations.<sup>217</sup> More specifically, the elaborate stucco frames of Amor and Diligence (Figs. 5, 8) find exact correspondences in the wealth of ornament in Vasari's recently reassembled "*Libro de' disegni*", and the oval frames (Figs. 9, 10, 11, 14) follow the same pattern as the stucco frames of his 1553 Villa Altoviti loggia, even in the ornamental birds and griffins.<sup>218</sup> Thus the '*scompartimento*' of the Almeni vault is completely typical of Vasari's ceiling projects. Elegance and distinction mark its design; there is no example of comparable scope and quality by any artist who belonged to Vasari's studio.

Vasari's drawings that served for the frescos of Bontà and Facilità (Figs. 28, 31) both represent designs met elsewhere in his work.<sup>219</sup> Much the same is true of the remaining figures of the Almeni ceiling, for his designs lie behind all the frescos. Prestezza follows the figure of Virtù in the central panel of the Sala del Camino in Vasari's Arezzo house, a recurrent formula in his art and one seen, schematically rendered, even in a woodcut book plate he designed for the 1550 edition of his "*Vite*" (Figs. 11, 30).<sup>220</sup> Perseveranza is an equally common Vasari type: the characteristic configuration of her drapery and pose is met at the Casa Vasari, in the Palazzo Vecchio, in drawings, in engravings after the Villa Altoviti, and elsewhere.<sup>221</sup> Bare-breasted Vigilance is a similar case, appearing in very many variations in Vasari's work, even in the 1550 "*Vite*" woodcut (Figs. 10, 30). Diligence most resembles the frescos Gherardi executed on Vasari's designs at Cortona.<sup>222</sup> Fermezza's design is patterned on more than one seated male figure at the Villa Altoviti.<sup>223</sup> And Fede is, once again, a distinctively Vasarian formula repeated many times, for instance, in the Alberti frontispiece (Figs. 7, 17), or in the Calliope of the Duke's *scrittoio* in the Palazzo Vecchio.<sup>224</sup>

The elegant, unhesitating style and execution of Accuratezza (Fig. 6) represents in many respects the qualitative peak of the cycle. Vasari's oeuvre contains many similar lightly running figures, many figures that run through the sky or fly through the air, their draperies blowing in the wind, even robust figures that step with Accuratezza's light agility — for instance, in the background of Vasari's large "*Doubting Thomas*" in S. Croce, the girl who runs with the same delicate step of Accuratezza.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless Accuratezza is also a distinct personage with her own distinctive appearance. She has the air of a fresh invention. Elsewhere I have shown that she appears in identical form but in a different pose in a drawing for a lost tapestry of the Sala di Cerere in the Palazzo Vecchio, dating from 1555.<sup>226</sup> Together with the novelty of the motif and the sureness of movement, the fluent, controlled, refined drawing and the soft, pure handling betray Vasari's hand. Accuratezza's face reflects a type Vasari often uses; its simple, transparent beauty modulated by a meditative expression is found in the best examples of his work; its surface is delicately and subtly varied, and the modelling lines follow the curvature of its forms as in Vasari's most beautiful heads. Here we are far from the more weakly modelled figures of Palazzo Almeni such as Amor or Perseveranza. A characteristic detail such as the repeated rounding of the forms, for instance, in the rings around Accuratezza's neck, reflects a fundamental element of Vasari's design regularly neglected by his helpers. This feature is most evident in his autograph drawings, where it frequently extends to an ornamental rounding of the body contours (Fig. 17). It can even be observed in some of his most freely sketched drawings, often seemingly composed of one continuous circling line.

The same refined modelling and drawing is completely realized again only in Fede (Fig. 7). She is meant to be a picture of soul-filled beauty, of a kind Vasari frequently painted and drew, for example, in the frames for his "*Libro de' disegni*" (cf. Fig. 17).<sup>227</sup> The





31 Vasari, Preparatory drawing for Bontà. Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum.

insistent curving of the figure's contours and the subtly drawn lines of the modelling are Vasari's own, and the distinctive conception of drapery is his, too.<sup>228</sup> The logic of the long, narrow folds is perfectly crystallized. While the underlying design of the drapery in *Vigilanza*, *Perseveranza*, and *Prestezza* is quite apparent and derives from well-known Vasari patterns, in none of these figures does it come into the clear, transparent focus of *Fede*'s garment. In the almost unfinished *Perseveranza* we recognize what the configuration of her drapery means to be only because we know its pattern more clearly expressed elsewhere in Vasari's art. This failure to master the underlying idea, or to give it adequate expression, speaks for studio execution.





32 Circle of Vasari (Gherardi), Bontà (with quadrettatura strengthened). Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

It is likely that Vasari intervened in other frescos — he explicitly states that on the Almeni façade, *di mano di Cristofano*, there were *molte cose ritocche dal Vasari*.<sup>229</sup> In *Diligenza* (Fig. 8) the design of the drapery is more consolidated than in the remaining figures, the modelling more secure and solid, and there is a refined, almost intellectual play of reflected light from the youth's flaming torch, all factors suggesting Vasari's presence. The remaining frescos speak less clearly. The question of their execution is complicated by a number of factors exceedingly difficult to evaluate, indeed by unknowns: the nature of the original design and its transmission; the method of *trasfer* of the model to the wall; the degree of supervision; retouching.<sup>230</sup> Nothing suggests that these factors were constant





33 Vasari and Gherardi, Melchisedec. Cortona, ex Chiesa del Gesù (Museo Diocesano).



34 Gherardi, Melchisedec. Florence, Uffizi 7087 F.

for each fresco. With the publication of the Almeni frescos, new drawings may emerge to shed light on these situations. Meantime the drawings for Bontà and Facilità afford a starting point.

In the Cologne drawing (Fig. 31) Vasari sketches the figure of Bontà rapidly, but with unfaltering certainty; in contrast, the fresco, interesting as it is, is a failure. Who is responsible for it?

In the fresco (Fig. 13) a barely visible grid of squares appears beneath the painted image, corresponding exactly to the 'quadrettatura' of the Cologne drawing. The traces of this network allow its complete reconstruction (Fig. 32). While the drawings' total effect is very different from the fresco's, it was, nevertheless, transferred quite accurately. Even the alternation of colors in Bontà's painted costume follows the washes unerringly. Indeed, the practical necessity of maintaining control over two colors simultaneously in a changeant scheme confirms the initial impression of a work painted at a lightning pace, with the *furor dello artefice*.<sup>231</sup>

In discussing fresco technique, Vasari neglects to mention this obvious direct transfer method of enlargement 'a occhio' that dispenses with a full-scale cartoon.<sup>232</sup> But he knew it because, under his supervision, Gherardi used this method to paint the Old Testament sacrifices at Cortona.<sup>233</sup> These scenes each contain a single figure kneeling before an altar (Fig. 33), essentially the idea of the Bontà fresco. Their highly charged colors — sharply keyed contrasts in combination with pastel tones — match the half-clashing changeant chromatic conception of the Bontà, its blazing pink fire, mustard yellow nimbus, red shot



with aquamarine, lavender with yellow and deep purples. The colors, the rapid execution (Vasari was himself astonished by Cristofano's incredible *pratica e prestezza* in fresco)<sup>234</sup>, the transfer technique all point to Gherardi, not surprisingly, since he executed the Almeni façade and Sforza was devoted to him.

With matching squares drawn on the two images of Bontà the differences between Vasari and the executor of the fresco can be objectively evaluated (Figs. 31, 32). The fresco figure expands, more nearly to fill the round field, and the composition's center of gravity shifts slightly, but noticeably leftward. These distortions in the execution cause the rhythm of the drawing to dissolve. In addition, control over the figure's proportions is far less sure, and it loses the cohesion that renders its movement and disposition in space intelligible. The fresco's painter also refuses to bring the drawing's shorthand to full realization; consider the conventional turbaned helmet, the schematic reduction of the altar, the simplified sleeve, the straightening out of the skirt's fur-tipped hem. Finally, the quickly painted image is consolidated with large outline strokes and heavy hatchings. The corollary of this approach is, paradoxically, a multiplication of detail. The drapery, for instance, is broken into many smaller, less clear folds and pleats. Vasari's distinctive drapery pattern nearly disappears, though its ghost remains. These are the negative features of the fresco.

Very many of them reappear in the sacrifices, which Gherardi painted at the Gesù in Cortona according to *certi schizzi* Vasari gave him.<sup>235</sup> Vasari held the contract for this project, which was executed between October and December 1554. Apparently here he insisted that Cristofano finish his work with the *diligenza e finezza* he had long encouraged him to use<sup>236</sup>, for an entirely different degree of care has been expended on the Cortona frescos (Fig. 33). The self-evident difference in finish apart, there is a similar pedantic development of detail in the costumes: complicated sandals, elaborate headgear, garments criss-crossed by multiple, redundant folds that contribute little to the figures' intelligibility. Moreover, draperies hang somewhat inarticulately, or move without consistent flow or rhythm; figures are vaguely wooden, slightly malproportioned, flatly set in space. These are tendencies present in varying degree in all the sacrifices; they are all relative weaknesses that illustrate Gherardi's limitations under one set of circumstances.

Incomprehension, indifference, and resistance are only three of the potential conflicts inherent in workshop execution, a practice that rarely produces totally unambiguous results. While at Cortona these conflicts are masked by a superficial finish, at Palazzo Almeni, in the Bontà, they are resolved through Gherardi's *prestezza*, which lacked, Vasari said, a *certa fine che avesse perfezione*.<sup>237</sup>

The Uffizi drawing cabinet preserves a set of twelve drawings closely related to the Cortona sacrifices (Figs. 34, 35, 36).<sup>238</sup> Presently most critics view them as preparatory drawings, not by Vasari (the traditional attribution) but by Gherardi. Nevertheless, in striking contrast to the Cortona frescos, the drawings are not squared for transfer, and they show many of the characteristic features of Vasari's design, even many of his graphic mannerisms. This situation is parallel to the tondo of Bontà. Compared to the frescos, the drawings are notably superior in the way the figures are placed upon the sheets, in the construction of figure, pose, and drapery, and in the evocation of space and movement, in short, in '*disegno*', precisely what Gherardi lacked. There are macro-changes, too: in the frescos, Moses and Nehemiah exchange identities, and altars, attributes, costumes, and even backgrounds are revamped.

What then are these drawings? The absence of squaring and the changes in content indicate that they are not the drawings transferred onto the Chiesa del Gesù lunettes. Can they be '*modelli*' submitted to the Jesuits?

Upon examining Gherardi's Cortona frescos, even more puzzling (if the drawings are





35 Gherardi, Jacob. Florence, Uffizi 7092 F.



36 Gherardi, Cain. Florence, Uffizi 7089 F.

his, too) is the disappearance of many features clearly present in the drawings, features characteristic of Vasari's conceptions, especially of drapery: the billowing succession of circular curves, the rhythms of windblown waving, the long, looping indentations, the knobbed needle-eye turns, the slight inward bending of many long, straight contours. In the drawings, the faces, too, are sometimes distinctly more Vasari like, e.g., the sloping profile of Jacob (Fig. 35).

Yet other features are unheard of in Vasari's drawings: the cutting pen stroke, the ubiquitous bleeding. And, the lively character of the drawing has been praised as too inspired for Vasari.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, the drawing is, at a glance, dazzling, so dazzling, in fact, that critics have failed to see that the calligraphy is rather coarse in touch. It is busy, it outlines, it curls, it scratches, it zig-zags, it spirals around itself, often indifferent to the task of drawing a human figure, bent instead on embellishment (Fig. 36).

It seems that what is being embellished is a swiftly copied model, or, perhaps more likely, the light pencil sketch now nearly hidden by the ink lines and the washes. The conceptions belong to Vasari; the drawing obscures them. Visible proof lies in the fact that several figures, the Melchisedec (Fig. 34) and the Nehemiah (*Neemie*), to mention two, existed fully developed in Vasari's ready stock of figures.<sup>240</sup> The execution is doubtless Gherardi's; the line is that found in many of his autograph drawings.<sup>241</sup>

The merits of the drawings apart, several, Aron, Melchisedec, Nehemiah, and Samuel, have an intensity of expression foreign to Vasari's urbane imagination. This new note reappears, not in Vasari's drawing (Fig. 31), but in the fresco of Bontà, where the kneeling





37 Vasari and Gherardi, Conversion of Saul. Cortona, ex Chiesa del Gesù (Museo Diocesano).

priest urgently lurches forward (Fig. 13). The expressive effect is enhanced by the introduction of a new face unlike the Cologne drawing, the intense countenance of Gherardi's Melchisedec at Cortona, a face similar to his Aron or Abraham there, and to the related drawings (Figs. 33, 34). Its double appears in Gherardi's works without Vasari, in the Perugia *pala* and in the recently rediscovered Recanati "Madonna and Saints".<sup>242</sup>

The transfer method, the colors, the representational consequences of rapid execution, the new intensity, the facial types, the filiations with Cortona — all these factors speak for Gherardi's presence in Palazzo Almeni.<sup>243</sup>

The network of squares on the Bontà fresco does not appear in the other paintings, and more care has been taken in their execution. This does not mean Gherardi did not have a hand in them. The words at the top of the Cologne drawing *Bontà / una vitto* seem to refer to Gherardi's payment (Fig. 31): quite possibly he lived in Sforza's household, his expenses paid, similar to an arrangement he had with Bernardetto de' Medici in 1554.<sup>244</sup> Thus the words at the bottom of the Bontà drawing, *Amore / una vitto*, lead to the fresco of Amor.

This picture of naked pagan Love contrasts markedly with Bontà, a Hebrew high priest (Figs. 12, 13). But, initial appearances apart, both exhibit the same broken treatment of drapery, the same defective proportions, and the same perfunctory drawing (compare Bontà's altar with Cupid's quiver) and broad wash-like shadows. Amor's landscape, too, with its pink and yellow streaked sky, is that of the Cortona sacrifices. More closely, Amor recalls Gherardi's pathetic, ephebic nudes, many placed in leafy landscape settings, at the Castello Bufalini at San Giustino. Similar, too, are the pastel angels in the Perugia *pala*, sweet, soft creatures with tender, averted glances, who, in their swirling garments of minute folds, are totally characteristic of Gherardi's art.<sup>245</sup>



One further, highly apparent detail of Amor's execution marks him as certainly Gherardi's: the scratched in drawing and markings distributed over the figure — the small curly hatchings, the woolly fleece-like lines, the small hook marks, the patches of repeated parallel strokes, the short, quick marks made of successive curves (Fig. 38). These peculiarities all occur in the Cortona drawings, and they are tantamount to a signature: many of Gherardi's drawings bear them (Figs. 34, 35, 36).

Still more remarkable is an extension of this trait, the tubular modelling of the torso, the limbs, and even the fingers — wide contour washes linked with drawn outlines and densely repeated strokes of parallel hatching that organize the colored surface, the same system of outlining and hatching that is confidently applied to the landscape and trees (Figs. 12, 38).

Among Gherardi's many accomplishments as a decorator, he was a practiced master of *sgraffito* decoration, the incised chiaroscuro painting of palace façades, a sort of painting Vasari calls *disegno e pittura insieme*. The Amor can be seen in similar terms, a colored drawing, one that uses the '*tratteggio*' of the *sgraffito* painter, together with his washes (*acquerello ... come si desse a una carta*).<sup>246</sup> The method is that of the chiaroscurist. And, no doubt, the chiaroscuro woodcuts, then in vogue, figured in the wares of the vendors of *leggende e pitture stampe*, among whose fair stalls Cristofano delighted to wander the whole day long on holy days, more often than not, Vasari reports, forgetting at one counter what he had just bought at another.<sup>247</sup> In any event, the tendency toward both patches of hatching and hatched modelling runs through Gherardi's known drawings and paintings.

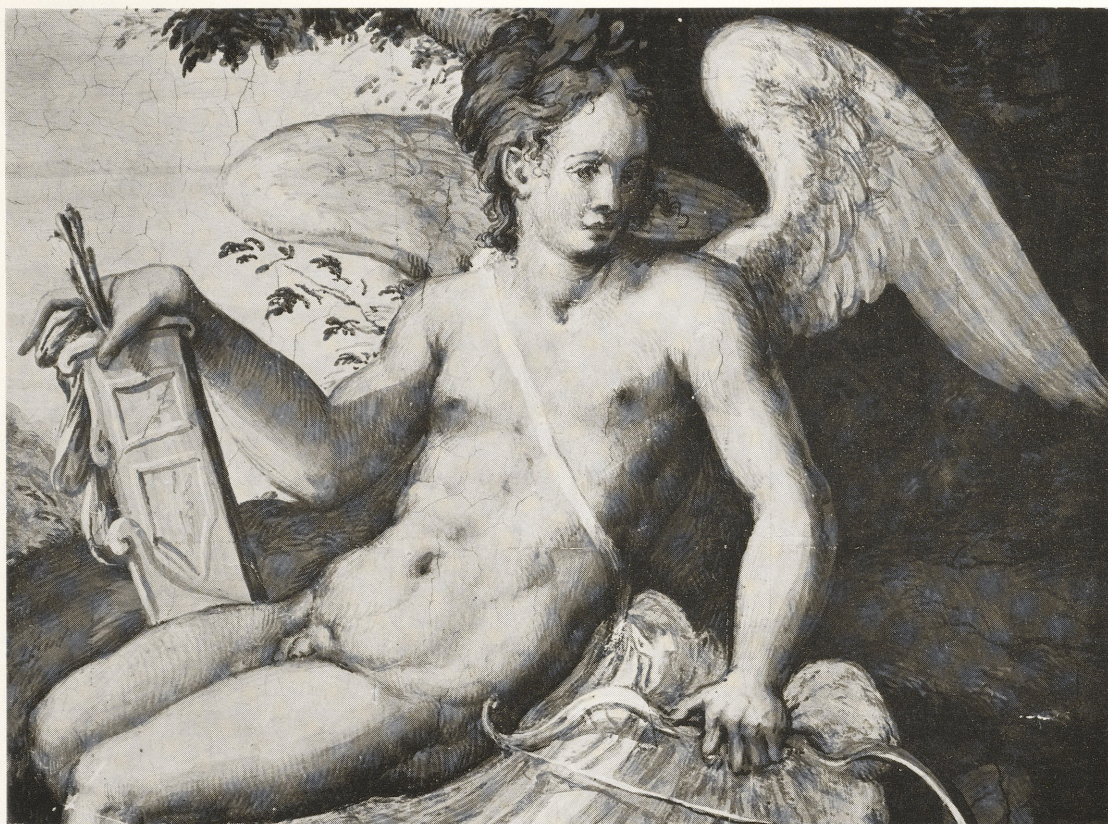
These features draw Prestezza and Vigilanza into Gherardi's net, and along with them, they bring Perseveranza, who without her full complement of over-drawing seems almost a colored '*bozza*'.<sup>248</sup>

The fresco of Diligenza (Fig. 8), too, belongs with this group, and it illustrates how high Gherardi's methods, employed with care, could rise. The shiny, highlighted curls, the red-green changeant billowing sash, the sturdy back, the silhouetting, all lead to Gherardi, in a figure that is only a modified variation on his Cortona sacrifices. And Diligence's face is identical to the young soldier in the Cortona "Conversion of Saul" (Fig. 37), painted by Gherardi, but painted closer to Vasari's design than the lunettes of the side walls. Nevertheless, the modelling of Diligenza is brushed in with finer strokes, perhaps partly *a secco* for much of the tunic's modelling has fallen away. Are these *ritocchi* Vasari's? The question is not now, nor will it perhaps ever be, easily answered, but here, it seems, Gherardi effectively becomes Vasari and does his will. In any event, these paintings open many new perspectives on Gherardi's role in Vasari's work that await exploration.

One of the three remaining frescos, Facilità (Fig. 14), manifests perhaps the most distinctive style of the entire ceiling, the product of an artistic personality so pronounced that it makes itself felt even while executing, ostensibly correctly, Vasari's drawing (Fig. 28). The bold, audacious spirit and the emphatic, rapid drawing contrast sharply with Cristofano's milder talent. And his hatched modelling technique is replaced by a broader chiaroscuro. Facilità's light, luminous colors are held together by an almost linear design, a rapid, fluent, schematic technique bordering on the caricatural that betrays the hand of Marco Marchetti da Faenza.<sup>249</sup> The turgid anatomy is what distinguishes his work in Palazzo Vecchio. Other very characteristic details are the tousled hair, the shameless gaze, and the shadowed eyes. Less fettered, Marco's hand can perhaps be seen also in the Fermezza and in the center panel of Flora and the Arno, the least attractive of all the paintings.

The rich profusion of ornamental motifs that covers the ceiling means other painters almost certainly worked here, too.<sup>250</sup> Nonetheless, three names seem certain — Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi, and Marco da Faenza. Their names help answer the final question, 'when?'.





38 Gherardi, Amor (detail of Fig. 12). Florence, Palazzo Almeni.

In 1554 Gherardi together with Vasari painted the façade of Palazzo Almeni for their common benefactor, who died in 1566. Before 1554 Gherardi had been banned in Florence for more than a decade and a half. Scarcely more than two years later, in April 1556, Gherardi's death brought his career to an abrupt end.<sup>251</sup> As for Marco da Faenza, he arrived in Florence from Rome first in May of 1555, which means that the Almeni project, though conceivably at a standstill, was not yet complete. And Marco stayed in Florence until around 1558, when he first disappears from view.<sup>252</sup> The connections of the Palazzo Almeni decoration with the Palazzo Vecchio, of Accuratezza with the tapestries of the Sala di Cerere, and of Flora and the Arno with paintings in the Quartiere di Leone X suggest that the inception of the Almeni ceiling postdates the Cortona frescos, executed at the end of 1554, immediately after Sforza's façade was unveiled the preceding September. Thus, all of 1555 and until April 1556, are the probable dates, and, in fact, from late May to September 1555 Cristofano was absent from Vasari's payroll in Palazzo Vecchio.<sup>253</sup> Possibly some of the frescos and part of the ornamentation were not finished when Gherardi died, but this remains hypothetical. What seems certain is that the project falls largely in a very narrow time span, the years 1554-1556.

In conclusion, it might be added that the most important question that these new works pose for Vasari studies is the following. If one accepts that Amor (Fig. 38) is painted by Cristofano Gherardi, largely according to his own lights, and that Accuratezza



(Fig. 6) is an autograph work by Vasari, then is it not inescapable that Gherardi *pittore* has remained the painter he always was, the painter he had already shown himself to be at the Castello Bufalini (San Giustino), where he worked alone? It follows also that attempts to assign whatever seems fresh and appealing in Vasari's *œuvre* to Gherardi deserve to be greeted with critical scepticism, especially since such a position accords so poorly with the ample evidence afforded by Vasari's autograph drawings.

## APPENDIX

### A Text for the 1550 Frontispiece of Alberti's *Architettura*

Documented connections between pictures and texts are of signal interest for iconographical studies. The hitherto unnoticed existence of Cosimo Bartoli's discussion, in eight closely printed pages ("Ragionamenti accademici", pp. 22b-26a; see above, p. 150), of a painting that corresponds in detail after detail to the frontispiece of his 1550 Italian edition of Alberti's "De re aedificatoria" therefore deserves attention.

Left and right in Bartoli's description of the painting agree not with the printed frontispiece but with Vasari's preparatory drawing for it in the Uffizi (Fig. 17), which Wolfram Prinz identified some years ago.<sup>254</sup> This, despite some puzzling features of Bartoli's *pittura*, cautions against dismissing Bartoli's description as merely a fictionalized account of the frontispiece, an impression supported by the existence of several small discrepancies between the *pittura* and Vasari's drawing, as well as by Bartoli's explicit statements concerning colors, size, time, and location. Bartoli places his painting in a palace in Via del Cocomero, now Via Ricasoli, where the Martelli owned a palace, and, around 1550, Bartoli was in close contact with several of the family, Nicolo, Vincenzo, Luigi, and Pandolfo.<sup>255</sup>

While the excerpts from Bartoli's description that follow are no substitute for the original text, his account is too long to reprint completely, and, indeed, its rambling character causes confusion on first reading. The parts reproduced below follow the lead of Bartoli's marginal notations (e.g., *Virtù come fatta*), giving only the 'how' and not the 'why', thus concentrating on the visual aspect of each figure. For the many allegorical explanations and the learned digressions, the reader must consult Bartoli's now rare book. Nevertheless, the selections printed here document the near total identity of the frontispiece and Bartoli's *gran Quadro*.

As the description draws to its close, one of Bartoli's interlocutors sums up the picture, neglecting to mention Fortuna: *Adunque in quel quadro era lo Arno Flora, Minerva la Virtù, la Immortalità, et il tempo.*

Fiume di Arno come fatto: *Figura ignuda ... adiacere ... con il braccio destro si riposasse sopra quella testa del Leone, et che nella mano destra avesse un Giglio, et con la sinistra tenesse il vaso, onde usciva quell'acqua, et il corno della dovizia, ... con la barba lunga, et allucignolata, ... quel ramo di albero, che nel mezzo lo cingeva quasi a guisa di cintura, ... quel poco del Manto sbiadato ch'egli si vedeva intorno, ... quei calzarette, che voi vedeste di giunchi ...*

Flora per Firenze: *da una banda molto bella; la quale posandosi sopra del pie destro, pareva, che riguardasse verso il cielo; & haveva quei fiori nella destra, & quello Scettro nella sinistra? ... le Braccia armate, ... quei Fiori, che ella pare che con la destra porgha verso il Cielo, ... lo Scettro, che ella tiene nella sinistra piu bassa che la destra, ... il posare sopra del pie destro di questa figura, piu che sopra il sinistro ... non toccando ... terra, se non con le punta delle dita, ... con il pie destro, sopra una stabile Pietra quadrata ... la quale pietra così fatta si piglia per la stabilità, ... quel velo argentato che usciva di sotto à quelle due teste del Leone sopra delle spalle, ... quello drappo ... che sembrava quasi che un broccato d'oro, ... in Testa ... un Berrettone alla antica Ducale col Mazzocchio a torno, ... ancora sopra ... una Aquila ...*

Minerva: *quell'altra Donna, che armata, le era al dirempetto; per una Minerva, ... quella Testa di Medusa ... nello scudo di pallade o di Minerva, ... con la Celata in testa et con una Coraza in dosso alla Antica, et con una lancia in mano ...*

Virtù come fatta: *la altra vestita di verde, con un Libro in una del le mani, et con una Girlanda di fiori in testa alzava l'altra mano in verso del Cielo, et che haveva l'Alie dietro alle spalle ... per la virtù ...*

Fortuna come fatta: *l'altra, che stando a sedere si riposava con il Braccio destro sopra di una Ruota, et che haveva i Capelli, che dal vento pareva; che fussino stati spinti dallo Lato dinanzi, et vestita di un cangiante, che appariva di tanti colori che non si discerneva così facilmente ... è la Fortuna ...*

Immortalità: *quella altra donna, che sedendo sopra quel cumulo delle armi, et di libri aperti, piu elevata che le altre, haveva nella destra mano, una palla descrittovi dentro il mondo, et nella sinistra un ramo di Lauro, et in dosso una vesta di un colore cangiante ...*

Tempo: *... la Immortalità ... che sedendo sopra le armi, et i libri ella premeva con il destro piede le spalle, et il collo ad un antico vecchione, il quale pareva, dimostrasse di stare mal volentieri sotto a' detti libri, et alle dette armi, calcato massimo dal piede, et dal peso della Immortalità, che altro non è che il Tempo.*





39 Virtù, Immortalità and Tempo, and Fortuna, Frontispiece, "L'Architettura" by Leonbattista Alberti, Florence 1550 (detail).

Azzioni in Firenze: ... giù da basso intorno all'Arno, essendovi Mitrie da Papi, corone da Re, capelli, da Cardinali, da Vescovi, scettri, mazzocchi Ducali, insegne, armi, libri, et molte altre così simili ....

Bartoli's description, especially when read in its entirety, poses many interesting new questions. But two points need immediate comment.

In the frontispiece the image of 'Roma antica' behind the Arno seemingly urges us to apply the allegorical frame of figures to Alberti's "Architecture". Perhaps Alberti is the new 'Vitruvio Fiorentino', as Vasari said, or Florence, the new Rome.<sup>256</sup> Or, does the title page disclose the architectural outlook that inspired Bartoli's Alberti translation? Such questions are doubtless worth asking. Nevertheless, Bartoli's description of his painting contains no reference to an image of Rome, and indeed no reference to Rome at all, or even to architecture. The figures of the frame apparently have a self-sufficient meaning.

The most significant novelty in the frontispiece has no immediate connection with Alberti's work; it is the vast magnification of the Medicean elements implicit in Bartoli's description. We see Cosimo's imprese, his arms, his crown, his Capricorns. Bartoli's theme, the *azzioni che si fanno adesso in Firenze*, now develops under Cosimo's fortunate star.

When Bartoli was sent to Venice as the Medici resident in 1562, the original block remained at Lorenzo Torrentino's press, where it continued to do service for books on widely divergent themes.

Bartoli, too, was enamoured of his invention, and, in 1564, when his "Modo di misurare" was printed in Venice, he had the Alberti frontispiece copied and a new block cut.<sup>257</sup> The new frontispiece reverses that of 1550, but there are hardly any significant differences. Behind the Arno are added an armillary sphere, an ink pot, books, rules and compasses, and a plumb square, small concessions to the theme of the new book. Again, in 1569, Bartoli used the same frontispiece for his "Discorsi storici universali", a topic far removed from architecture. In a few 'de luxe' impressions, he introduced a third version of the frame, engraved by Martino Ruota da Sebenico in 1568 (Fig. 40), which in the center of the allegories has a large portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici, perhaps the most telling commentary of all on Bartoli's intentions.<sup>258</sup>

The reuses of the Alberti frontispiece do not mean it did not have an exact application when it was first made. But Bartoli's possibly earlier painting apparently indicates that this application was not the main theme of his invention.

The principal difference between Vasari's drawing (Fig. 19) and the Alberti frontispiece occurs in the figure of Immortality.<sup>259</sup> Vasari draws her with a laurel branch in her right hand and an hour-glass underfoot. Bartoli's painted Immortality instead held a globe of the world in her right hand and the laurel branch in her left, and underfoot an *antico vecchione*. In the event, the *oriuolo* remained (cf. "Zibaldone", p. 8: *un oriuolo o una testa d'un vecchione*), but, before the block was cut, Vasari's drawing was corrected according to Bartoli's plans (Figs. 19, 39). Here, after the iconographical invention was translated into a drawing, it was re-submitted to the artist's literary adviser for approval and correction. In this case, of course, adviser and patron were one.<sup>260</sup>





- 40 Martino Ruota, Frontispiece for presentation copies of Cosimo Bartoli, *Discorsi historici universali*, Venice 1569.



## NOTES

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In addition to the usual abbreviations of the 'Mitteilungen', the following are used for often cited works:

Bargellini = P. Bargellini, Scoperta di Palazzo Vecchio, Florence 1968.

Barocchi, Complementi = P. Barocchi, Complementi al Vasari pittore, in: Atti dell'Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere "La Colombaria", XXVIII, 1963-64, pp. 253-309.

Barocchi, Pittore = P. Barocchi, Vasari pittore, Milan 1964.

Bartoli, Disc. = C. Bartoli, Discorsi storici universali, Venice 1569 (Genoa 1582, with identical pagination).

Bartoli, Rag. = C. Bartoli, Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante, Venice 1567.

Frey-Vasari = K. Frey, Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris, 3 vols., Munich and Burg b. Magdeburg 1923-40.

Thiem = Chr. and G. Thiem, Toskanische Fassaden-Dekoration in Sgraffito und Fresko 14.-17. Jahrhundert, Munich 1964.

Zibaldone = Lo Zibaldone di Giorgio Vasari, ed. A. Del Vita, Rome 1938.

<sup>1</sup> G. B. Ristori, Di una casa in Via dei Servi, in: *Arte e storia*, XXV, No. 5-6, 1906, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> For Sforza Almeni: B. Baldini, Vita di Cosimo Medici, Florence 1578, p. 71 f.; F. Bocchi, Le bellezze della città di Firenze, Florence 1591, p. 201; R. Borghini, Il Riposo, Florence 1584, p. 520; G. Carocci, I dintorni di Firenze, vol. I, Florence 1906, p. 116 f.; B. Cellini, Opere, ed. F. Tassi, Florence 1829, ad Indicem; C. Conti, La prima reggia di Cosimo I, Florence 1893, pp. 38 f., 271; Frey-Vasari, ad Indicem (vol. I: "Sforza", vol. II, III: "Almeni"); J. Gelli, Divise motti e imprese, Milan 1928, No. 964; A. F. Grazzini (Lasca), Rime, vol. I, Florence 1741, p. 26; D. Heikamp, Rapporti fra accademici ed artisti nella Firenze del '500, in: *Il Vasari*, XV, 1957, pp. 154-56, 161; F. Lapini, in: G. Bottari, Raccolta di lettere, ed. S. Ticozzi, vol. I, Milan 1822, No. 26; D. Mellini, Ricordi intorno al Gran Duca Cosimo I, Florence 1820, pp. 27, 89-91; L. Pascoli, Vita de' pittori, scultori ed architetti perugini, Rome 1732, p. 139; Ristori, op. cit. (see n. 1); G. E. Saltini, Tragedie mediche domestiche, Florence 1898, pp. 195-209; B. Varchi, Sonetti, pt. II, Florence 1557, p. 29; idem, Opere, vol. II, Triest 1859, pp. 881, 920; Vasari-CdL, ad Indicem; Vasari-Gottschewski/Gronau, vol. VI, pp. 181ff., 390; vol. II, p. 191; Vasari-Milanesi, vol. IV, p. 139; vol. VI, pp. 230-37, 243; vol. VII, pp. 631, 696; vol. VIII, p. 191. Many other scattered mentions of Almeni contain little new; see also the literature on Palazzo Almeni, below n. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VIII, p. 190 f.; Foto Brogi 17 359: Almeni is immediately behind Cosimo, his collar inscribed SFORZO ALMENI.

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication of D. Heikamp.

<sup>5</sup> Ristori (see n. 1), p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Baldini (see n. 2), p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Saltini (see n. 2), p. 207.

<sup>8</sup> For Palazzo Almeni: Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VI, pp. 230-37; vol. VII, pp. 631, 696; vol. VIII, pp. 304-314; Frey-Vasari, vol. I, No. 196, 198, 200, 208; vol. II, pp. 871-72. Further: L. Biadi, Antiche fabbriche di Firenze, Florence 1824, p. 240; M. Fossi, Bartolomeo Ammannati architetto, Naples 1967, p. 196; Ginori-Lisci, vol. I, pp. 64, 439-42; Limburger, No. 250; Richa, vol. VIII, p. 47; H.-W. Schmidt, Vasaris Fassadenmalerei am Palazzo Almeni, in: *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Hertzianae*, Munich 1961, pp. 271-74; Thiem, pp. 35-37, 131 f.; G. Vasari, Vite, ed. G. Bottari, Rome 1759, vol. II, p. 632; Venturi, vol. XI, 2, p. 324; E. Vodoz, Studien zum architektonischen Werk des Bartolomeo Ammannati, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, VI, Heft 3/4, 1941, p. 91; Istituto di restauro dei monumenti, Università di Firenze, Studi e ricerche sul centro antico, vol. I, Pisa 1974, p. 85 f.

<sup>9</sup> The Almeni frescos were presented by the author in a public lecture, *Il "Ben Servire": Allegorie cortigiane nella cerchia del Vasari*, at the Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz, 30 May 1978, and were subsequently discussed in a talk at the Villa I Tatti on 6 December 1979. For a brief anticipation of the present study: Ch. Davis, *New Frescos by Vasari: "Colore" and "invenzione" in mid 16th-century Florentine painting*, in: *Pantheon*, XXXVIII, 1980, No. 2, pp. 153-57. The only previous reference to the frescos is the phrase of Ginori Lisci, vol. I, No. 64: *un buon dipinto che adorna tuttora una sala terrena, e che può ritenersi eseguito nella seconda metà del Cinquecento*. The vestibule vault contains a painted allegory within a *pietra serena* surround, apparently belonging to the Vasarian phase of decoration.

<sup>10</sup> See H. M. v. Erffa, *Grus vigilans*, in: *Philobiblon*, I, 1957, pp. 286-308, with further literature.



- <sup>11</sup> Zibaldone, pp. 7-10.
- <sup>12</sup> Zibaldone, p. 80; cf. *ibid.* p. 76: *dipignierei un giovane o una giovane...*, *ibid.*, p. 83: *una donna o un giovane nudo*.
- <sup>13</sup> For 'petrarchismo' see three recent books on the topic: L. Baldacci, *Il petrarchismo italiano nel Cinquecento*, new enlarged ed., Padua 1974; A. Quondam, *Petrarchismo mediato*, Rome 1974; M. Guglielminetti, ed., *Petrarca e il petrarchismo*, Turin 1977. See *Petrarca*, Trionfo d'amore, cap. I, 22-27.
- <sup>14</sup> Vasari's verses in: U. Scoti-Bertinelli, *Vasari scrittore*, Pisa 1905; his appeal for verses: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 262, 291. Language: F. Foffano, *La questione della lingua*, Florence 1908; C. Grayson, *A Renaissance Controversy*, Oxford 1959. Modernist partisans in Vasari's circle: B. Varchi, C. Lenzone, P. F. Giambullari, G. B. Gelli, C. Bartoli. Vasari's opinions: *Frey-Vasari*, No. 134; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 727.
- <sup>15</sup> Cosimo himself was the true Medici Ganymede: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 575; vol. VIII, p. 70. Suzanne Brown Butters showed me two unpublished letters that reveal Cosimo's interest in Sforza's origins. On 5 August 1545 the duke directs Pier Francesco Riccio, his *maior domo*, to see *minutamente d'intender chi fussi il padre di Sforza nostro cameriere, a quello attendessi e che sorte di casa sia la sua in Perugia. E tucto vogliamo sia fatto senza alcuno strepito ...* (ASF, Mediceo 638, c. 115, autograph). Riccio's reply of 8 August 1545 reports that *in Perugia sono le sottoscritte sorte d'huomini, gentilhuomini, nobili, cittadini nobili, cittadini (or cittadini assoluti) et artigiani*. And, he relates, *Di questa quarta spetie d'huomini della città di Perugia fu il padre di messer Sforza cameriere di Vostra Eccellenza, et in vita sua fece arte di lana, la quale hoggi esercita un fratello di detto messer Sforza, et lasciò poche substantie*. The duke comments, *tucto si è inteso e sta benissimo* (ASF, Mediceo 613, cc. 43-44). By 1546 Cosimo saw that Sforza was elected *cavaliere della Religione di Cristo dal Re di Portogallo*: Saltini (see n. 2), p. 197.
- <sup>16</sup> Varchi, 1557 (see n. 2), p. 29.
- <sup>17</sup> Heikamp (see n. 2), p. 155.
- <sup>18</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 230.
- <sup>19</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 231, 243.
- <sup>20</sup> See above nn. 2, 4. Suzanne Brown Butters has found a letter of Sforza to Cristiano Pagni, ducal secretary, dated 19 May 1548, which reports on the progress of Cellini's Perseus (ASF, Mediceo 387, c. 434).
- <sup>21</sup> *Frey-Vasari*, No. 189-208.
- <sup>22</sup> Long mistakenly attributed to Ammannati, recently the kneeling windows of Palazzo Almeni have been convincingly assigned to Alessi by Howard Burns (lecture, Villa I Tatti). See the coming publication: Burns, *Cinquecento Architecture in Florence and Venice: Exchanges, Differences, Similarities*, in: *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, vol. II, Cinquecento, eds. S. Bertelli, N. Rubinstein, and C. H. Smyth, Florence 1980 (postpublication issue). Varchi (also Danti's friend) addressed a sonnet to Alessi: *Opere* (see n. 2), vol. II, p. 841. Also note 260, below.
- <sup>23</sup> Danti-Almeni-Vasari: *Frey-Vasari*, vol. I, p. 757; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 631. Also: *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, pp. 5, 74, 144, 209, 548, 579, 779, 784; vol. III, pp. 5-7, et passim; Ch. Davis, Cellini and the Scuola Fiorentina, in: *North Carolina Museum of Art, Bulletin*, XIII, No. 4, 1976, p. 62, Doc. IV.
- <sup>24</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. IV, p. 139; cf. p. 138: Piero's *libro d'animali* that Bartoli gave the Duke.
- <sup>25</sup> Bocchi (see n. 2), p. 201.
- <sup>26</sup> Accolti: Zibaldone, after p. 260; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. III, p. 684; vol. VIII, p. 116.
- <sup>27</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 631; Carocci (see n. 2), vol. I, p. 116 f. A 1568 letter speaks of marble heads of *uomini illustri* still in Sforza's *casa* (ASF, Mediceo 537, c. 284).
- <sup>28</sup> *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 871 f.; cf. vol. I, p. 511 and No. 189; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 696.
- <sup>29</sup> Principal sources for Almeni façade: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 230-37; vol. VIII, pp. 304 f., 306-310, 313 f. (= *Frey-Vasari*, No. 196, 198, 200, 208; Vasari's 1553 letters to Almeni, and 214). In the following account all quotations not otherwise identified derive from these two sources. Modern literature: see above n. 8, mainly Schmidt and Thiem, p. 131 f.
- <sup>30</sup> Gherardi *ribello dello stato di Firenze* (i.e., Tuscany): *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 218 f., 226, 229, 231, 237.
- <sup>31</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 237; *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 871.
- <sup>32</sup> See n. 29.
- <sup>33</sup> Thiem, p. 36; see n. 29.
- <sup>34</sup> Lapini (see n. 2), p. 67.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. Thiem, p. 35, and *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 307: *questa di ricchezza non cederà a nessuna, nè anche di componimento nè di continuazione di storia ...*
- <sup>36</sup> See also Schmidt (see n. 8), p. 271; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 617: *dieci panni d'un salotto, nei quali è la vita dell'uomo*.
- <sup>37</sup> Visual aspect of Almeni façade: Uffizi 68 Orn., proposed by Schmidt (see n. 8), p. 273, rejected by Thiem, p. 132. Compare Uff. 68 Orn. with Vasari's ornamental drawing in S. Jacob, *Italienische Zeichnungen der Kunstbibliothek Berlin*, Berlin 1975, No. 89, Pl. 21, which has striking analogies to the paintings inside Palazzo Almeni (jewelled borders, birds, smoking suspended lamps, 'all'antica' landscape with tempietto and colossus, vignette with kneeling adorants before a flaming altar. A copy of Berlin 89 in the so-called "Libro del Vasari", Soane Museum, London, fol. 86, a volume



collecting many patterns current in Vasari's studio. Vasari's description of the Almeni façade is clearly based on the written programme, not the executed work. Likely reflections or anticipations of the façade or its planning include:

- (1) Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, No. 741 (illus. in *Barocchi*, *Complementi*, fig. 26), almost certainly a plan for the oval *Nascita* (cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, pp. 20-21);
  - (2) Bologna, S. Michele in Bosco, "Four Horsemen of Apocalypse" (illus. in *Barocchi*, *Complementi*, fig. 48), a forerunner of *la Morte ... sopra un caval secco ...* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 237);
  - (3) Rome, Villa Altoviti (destroyed), Venus and Cupid (see engraving in *Ch. Davis*, *Per l'attività romana del Vasari nel 1553: Incisioni degli affreschi di Villa Altoviti e la Fontanalia di Villa Giulia*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XXIII, 1979, p. 203, fig. 8); cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 235: Almeni Venus, *la quale avendo abbracciato Amore, lo bacia*;
  - (4) New York, Collection Janos Scholz, drawing for vaulted ceiling decoration: *FLORA* corresponds to Vasari's *Luna* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 234), illus. in *K. Oberhuber and D. Walker*, 16th-century Italian Drawings from the Collection of Janos Scholz, New York-Washington 1973, No. 28.
- <sup>38</sup> Dates in Vasari's *Ricordi*: *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 871, Ric. 222. Here 1555 should read 1554. From *Ricordo 215* (p. 871) forward, for many years, the dates of Vasari's *ricordi* are one year ahead of their actual times, and they frequently conflict with information contained in other sources. Cf. *Lapini* (see n. 2).
- <sup>39</sup> See also *J. Rouchette*, *La Renaissance que nous a léguée Vasari*, Paris 1959, pp. 30-32. The '*vita dell'uomo*' inventions are, in part, an extension of the ages of man-months/seasons correlation common in Vasari's work: Arezzo, Casa Vasari; Rome, Palazzo Altoviti; Palazzo Vecchio (Sala di Opi, Terrazzo di Saturno). Note the comment on the Sala di Opi: *Certamente che mi avete mostro tutta la vita nostra in breve tempo* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 51).
- <sup>40</sup> A. Caro: *Thiem*, p. 35; *Frey-Vasari*, No. 207. Caro's advice perhaps indirectly reflected in planetary gods and *segni celesti*; cf. *Davis*, 1979 (see n. 37).
- <sup>41</sup> *Bartoli*, Rag., pp. 54a-59a. The date Bartoli's dialogues were composed, ca. 1550-1552, is established in: *Ch. Davis*, Cosimo Bartoli and the Portal of Sant'Apollonia, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XIX, 1975, p. 266. Palazzo Pandolfini: see *Ginori Lisci*, vol. I, p. 507 ff. and fig. 412. Note also the cartoons Stradanus made for *dieci panni d'un salotto, nei quali è la vita dell'uomo* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 617) — *fatti con ordine e disegno di Giorgio Vasari* (*C. Conti*, *Ricerche storiche sull'arte degli arazzi in Firenze*, Florence 1875, p. 51).
- <sup>42</sup> *Zibaldone*, p. 151.
- <sup>43</sup> *Bartoli*, Rag., pp. 58b-59a; this correspondence previously noted in *Davis*, 1975 (see n. 41), p. 266.
- <sup>44</sup> See n. 29.
- <sup>45</sup> See n. 29.
- <sup>46</sup> See above notes 29, 41.
- <sup>47</sup> Jupiter and Venus, see n. 37 (3).
- <sup>48</sup> Vasari's *vita dell'uomo* and Bartoli's *tutta l'azione dell'uomo*: Vasari's ovals and allegories, *Infanzia*, etc., described in *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 234-36; compare corresponding descriptions in *Bartoli's* *Ragionamenti accademici* — *Vasari's Infanzia*: *Bartoli*, pp. 55a, 55b; *Puerizia*: pp. 55b, 55a; *Adolescenza*: pp. 55b, 56a, 57b, 56b; *Gioventù*: pp. 56a, 56b; *Virilità*: p. 57b, cf. pp. 49a, 9b; *Vecchiezza*: p. 58a; *Decrepità*: pp. 58b, 59a.
- <sup>49</sup> Martelli Chapel, S. Lorenzo: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 691; *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 868, Ric. 196; vol. I, No. 130, 137, 140, 142, 198; also notes 64, 116 below. The 1550 Alberti frontispiece: see Appendix, pp. 186-87 above.
- <sup>50</sup> *Frey-Vasari*, No. 127, 130, 137.
- <sup>51</sup> Bartoli and Borghini: Their respective roles are often confused by *K. Frey* (*Frey-Vasari*, vol. I, passim). For the correct assignment of authorship of various inventions, consult *A. Del Vita*, in: *Zibaldone*, pp. 11, 61 f., 65, 68, 70, 74, 78. *Frey-Vasari*, vol. I, No. 289 (14 Dec. 1559) — with (4), pp. 529-31, wrongly ascribed to Borghini (cf. *Zibaldone*, p. 11) — marks a moment of equipose between Vasari's two mentors. I have discussed Bartoli's role elsewhere, see above notes 23, 41, and *Ch. Davis*, Pitfalls of Iconology, in: *Studies in Iconography*, IV, 1978, pp. 79-94, and below, n. 67. The advice of Bartoli and Borghini almost certainly overlapped more than is usually recognized. In the Quartiere di Leone X in Palazzo Vecchio (where Bartoli was the principal adviser), there are also characteristic Borghini motives, particularly in the topographical allegories of the Sala di Cosimo I, described in Vasari's *Ragionamenti* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 192-97), none of which are included in the text of Bartoli's invention (*Zibaldone*, pp. 80-82), with the exception of the first, Pisa and *Studio* (p. 192 f.), which, in turn, is partially derived from Bartoli's text (p. 82). On the other hand, an unsuspected, but limited role for Bartoli in the Salone dei Cinquecento may be indicated by Bartoli's phrase in the same invention, *Quanto al Duca farei nel mezzo, volendo serbare la guerra di Siena per la sala grande ...* (*Zibaldone*, p. 80). Note also Bartoli's long forgotten dedication to Vasari of his translation of Alberti's "Della Pittura" (in *Opuscoli morali*, Venice 1568, p. 306), containing lavish praise of the new Salone: ... *& ultimamente la stupendissima & lodevolissima gran sala del Regal Palazzo di loro altezze, fatta con tanta arte, & con sì mirabile iuditio dal purgatissimo ingegno vostro, ecc.* Bartoli sent copies of this book to Florence on 11 Feb. 1568 (ASF, Mediceo 2978), but first saw the new Salone in Oct. 1568, when he came to Florence (ASF, Mediceo 2979, c. 61r). See also n. 90 below.



- <sup>52</sup> Zibaldone, pp. 7-10.
- <sup>53</sup> Zibaldone allegories and Bartoli's inventions (I): *Il Tempo*, cf. Rag., pp. 55b, 56a, 56b, and Zibaldone, p. 81; *La Verità* = Rag., p. 56a; *La falsità*, cf. Rag., p. 56a; *La fraude*, cf. Rag., pp. 56a, 56b, and Zibaldone, p. 81; *Iudicio* = Rag., p. 49a; *Felicità* = Rag., p. 53b; *Immortalità* = Rag., p. 25b; *Dilectione*, cf. Rag., pp. 46a-b, 55a-b, and *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 234 (*Carità* and *Volontà-Volutta*).
- <sup>54</sup> Zibaldone and Bartoli (II): *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 64. The text of Bartoli's invention is lost, but see the statement at the end of his "Inventioni di Opi": *Di Giove parlerem altro volta ...* (Zibaldone, p. 73).
- <sup>55</sup> Zibaldone and Bartoli (III): See above p. 148.
- <sup>56</sup> The first occurrence of *Libertà* is a mis-copying of *Liberalità* (Zibaldone, p. 9).
- <sup>57</sup> Zibaldone and Bartoli (IV): Cf. Zibaldone, p. 9 with pp. 61-63.
- <sup>58</sup> (V): Compare Zibaldone, p. 9f. with pp. 11-15.
- <sup>59</sup> See notes 58, 51.
- <sup>60</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 316.
- <sup>61</sup> Arno: For example, the 1541 apparato of the Sempiterni, Venice: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 286.
- <sup>62</sup> Flora and Arno: Bartoli, Rag., pp. 22b-26a, esp. p. 25b; see also below, Appendix. Compare the similar concept of the Sala di Opi: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 46 f.
- <sup>63</sup> L. B. Alberti, *L'Architettura*, tr. C. Bartoli, Florence: L. Torrentino, 1550.
- <sup>64</sup> See above n. 49. Also Frey-Vasari, vol. II, p. 858, Ric. 115. See N. Martelli, Lettere, Florence 1546, pp. 55b, for the *Lauro et l'Arno, felicissima impresa* of the Accademia Fiorentina, with *Capricorno con le sette stelle* above, in a *ricca Tavola di basso rilievo*.
- <sup>65</sup> 1553: Frey-Vasari, No. 200.
- <sup>66</sup> Davis, 1979 (see n. 37), pp. 201-02, 211-12, with literature.
- <sup>67</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 219; above n. 51.
- <sup>68</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 139; illus. in Bargellini, fig. 150.
- <sup>69</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 181.
- <sup>70</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 182.
- <sup>71</sup> Fiesole: See Bargellini, p. 167, also fig. 83. See n. 37 (4), above, and for *una luna, che è antica insegna de' Fiesolani*, *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 77, 85, cf. vol. VIII, pp. 205, 207.
- <sup>72</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 133.
- <sup>73</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 134.
- <sup>74</sup> Illus. in Bargellini, figs. 55, 64.
- <sup>75</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 221.
- <sup>76</sup> R. Harprath, Eine Studie Vasaris zur Glorie Cosimos I., in: *Kunstmuseets Aarsskrift*, LXI, 1974, pp. 58-65.
- <sup>77</sup> Fede: Zibaldone, p. 67; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 108, and Bartoli, Rag., p. 23b: *Et quel velo argentato? ... Il bianco è sempre inteso per la fede*.
- <sup>78</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 49a.
- <sup>79</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 53a.
- <sup>80</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 677.
- <sup>81</sup> Zibaldone, p. 313 (7); cf. p. 109: *con le mani giunte verso il cielo*. Del Vita attributes these *Figure allegoriche* to Borghini (Zibaldone, p. 312); however, they all correspond to documented inventions of Bartoli. Compare also Fede with Bartoli's *Virtù* (Rag., p. 25a).
- <sup>82</sup> *Vigilanza*: See Erffa (see n. 10). Also: L. Volkmann, Hieroglyphik und Emblematis bei G. Vasari, in: Fs. K. W. Hiersemann, Leipzig 1924, pp. 407-19; A. Henkel and A. Schöne, *Emblemata*, Stuttgart 1967, col. 820 f.; G. de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane*, Geneva 1958, col. 206 f.
- <sup>83</sup> Zibaldone, p. 13 (cf. pp. 8, 10); *ibid*, p. 109: *Vigilanza ... ai piedi una grù, con un piedi in terra l'altro alzato con il sasso* (cf. p. 312 f., and above n. 81).
- <sup>84</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 90. See also W. Körte, *Der Palazzo Zuccari in Rom*, Leipzig 1935, Pls. 13, 14b.
- <sup>85</sup> *Perseveranza*: Zibaldone, p. 8. *Perseveranza's* brilliant gold aureole (*splendore celeste*) is invisible in black and white photographs. See also Körte (see n. 84), Pl. 13, and *Tervarent* (see n. 82), cols. 208, 233.
- <sup>86</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 21; see Davis, 1978 (see n. 51).
- <sup>87</sup> Zibaldone, p. 76.
- <sup>88</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 23b; see below Appendix.
- <sup>89</sup> *Prestezza*: Zibaldone, p. 80; cf. Bartoli, Rag., p. 25a: *Virtù ... l'Alie dietro alle spalle*. Also: *Tervarent* (see n. 82), col. 9-12 (i, ix).
- <sup>90</sup> Montemurlo: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 190 f. Also not executed were Bartoli's *Provvidentia*, *Bellona*, *Innocentia*, and *Verità-Insidie* (Zibaldone, p. 80 f.), although Vasari says he painted a *Concordia*, an *Innocentia*, a *Bellona*, and a *Prudenzia* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 190, 192), figures in fact omitted, probably *per la strettezza del luogo* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 190, 192). Compare also Bartoli, *Disc.*, p. 173 (*celerità*), with *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 190 f., with the same *capitani* and *prigionieri* at Montemurlo in both.
- <sup>91</sup> Mixing histories and allegories: Bartoli's side allegories were apparently introduced in disguise into



- the central compositions in two other instances in the same ceiling: (1) Fortification of Elba (*Nec-tunno* and *Sicurtà*: Zibaldone, p. 80; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 191); (2) Cosimo and Artists (*un Mercurio* [ingenium?] and *una dedalo* [ars?]: Zibaldone, p. 81; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 192; Tribolo and Tasso). For the Cosimo tondo and similar questions: Davis, 1976 (see n. 23), pp. 65-68. Cf. Bartoli's advice for this room: *E quando pure la cosa dei Cardinali vi piaccia voi potete fare più abbondante la storia delli ingegneri mescolandovi queste cose* (di Pisa) (Zibaldone, p. 82).
- <sup>92</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 190; Zibaldone, p. 80. The inscription, *Caeleri virtute*, on Uffizi 1186 E (Pen, ink, and wash, 390 × 270 mm) is absent from the painting, but described in Vasari's *Ragionamenti*.
- <sup>93</sup> Bontà: Bartoli, Rag., p. 58a.
- <sup>94</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 99 f. Here Vasari follows a pattern for Religion he had used before, e.g., Naples, Monteoliveto; Rome, Cancelleria. Compare Vasari's "Bontà" at Monteoliveto: illus. in J. Kliemann, *Zeichnungsfragmente aus der Werkstatt Vasaris und ein unbekanntes Programm Vincenzo Borghinis für das Casino Mediceo in Florenz*, in: *Jb. der Berliner Museen*, XX, 1978, p. 179. Also, beneath *Religione, sacerdoti ebrei antichi, che fanno sacrificio ...* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 103).
- <sup>95</sup> Bartoli, in: Zibaldone, p. 62.
- <sup>96</sup> Bontà-Fermezza: Cf. a curiously similar invention in Bartoli, Rag., pp. 58a-59a.
- <sup>97</sup> Accuratezza: cf. *Tervarent* (see n. 82) ad vocem, "Fourmi", col. 195, and Davis, 1980 (see n. 9), note 18. Also L. Dolce, *Dialogo nel quale si ragiona ... dei colori*, Venice 1565, c. 55r, *FORMICA: Significherebbe la providenza: percioche questi animalletti la state provvegono per il verno, portando il grano alle loro case ...*; P. Valeriano, *I ieroglifici*, ed. Venice 1625, Bk. VIII, "Della formica ..."; further: E. Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs*, Copenhagen 1961, pp. 69-70, for F. Colonna's singular hieroglyphic emblem of ants and elephants.
- <sup>98</sup> Bartoli, Rag., pp. 49b, 50a, 52a, 53a.
- <sup>99</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 54a.
- <sup>100</sup> Bartoli, Rag., pp. 53a-53b.
- <sup>101</sup> Zibaldone, p. 13.
- <sup>102</sup> Bartoli, Disc., p. 324.
- <sup>103</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 57a. For further aspects of Accuratezza, see Davis, 1980 (see n. 9).
- <sup>104</sup> Diligenza: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 103; Zibaldone, p. 79.
- <sup>105</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 104: *orefici, miniatori ed oriolai, che conducono le diligenti opere loro*; cf. p. 99: *cose di orefice lavorate sottilissimamente per il dosso*.
- <sup>106</sup> Facilità: *Orazioni scelte del secolo XVI*, ed. G. Lisio, Florence 1957, p. 73.
- <sup>107</sup> Bartoli, Disc., p. 325.
- <sup>108</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 563.
- <sup>109</sup> Bartoli, Rag., pp. 51a-51b (cf. p. 39b): *un giovane molto bello, molto honorato, & molto lieto, vestito di un cangiante rosso & giallo*. Compare Bartoli's *Primavera*, in: Zibaldone, p. 72: *una donna giovane lieta ridente con fiori in ambe le mani ... baldanzosa et bella ...*
- <sup>110</sup> C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, Rome 1603, p. 8.
- <sup>111</sup> Zibaldone, p. 8.
- <sup>112</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. V, p. 531.
- <sup>113</sup> Castiglione, *Il Libro del cortegiano*, III, 5 (8); also in the dedication Castiglione describes *messer Alfonso Ariosto ... giovane affabile, discreto, pieno di suavissimi costumi ed atto ad ogni cosa conveniente ad omo di corte*.
- <sup>114</sup> Venice 1559.
- <sup>115</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 51a. Several of Bartoli's letters written to the court of Florence from his post in Venice in 1571-1572 are variations on the same theme, e.g., ASF, Mediceo 2980, cc. 191, 251; Mediceo 2981, cc. 145, 185.
- <sup>116</sup> Bartoli, Rag., p. 21a. For Vincenzo Martelli, see Davis, 1976 (see n. 23), p. 66, n. 36. In his dedication to Ferrante Sanseverino of his translation of *Boethius*, *Della consolazione de la filosofia*, Florence 1551, Bartoli remarks on his talks with V. Martelli about the court of Salerno.
- <sup>117</sup> L. B. Alberti, *Opuscoli morali*, tr. C. Bartoli, Venice 1568, dedication.
- <sup>118</sup> Liberalità-Fama: *Libertà* (= Liberalità) follows *Bontà* in Vasari's list of allegories, Zibaldone, p. 9: *una donna con un bacino vuoto da una mano, et dall'altra una borsa aperta*; cf. p. 61. *Fama*, beneath *Fermezza* (Fig. 3) is very like *Fama* in the Sala di Cosimo Vecchio: *la Fama ... con le ale aperte, e con dua trombe, una di fuoco (= fuoco del male), l'altra d'oro (= la fama del bene), a cavallo in su la pala del mondo ...* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 101; cf. Zibaldone, pp. 66, 80, 108, 313).
- <sup>119</sup> Vasari's 1553 letters to Sforza: *Frey-Vasari*, No. 196, 198, 200, 208 (= *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 304 ff.).
- <sup>120</sup> 1553: These proposals (see note 119) are mainly in *Frey-Vasari*, No. 198, 200.
- <sup>121</sup> M. Matasiliani, *La felicità del Serenissimo Cosimo Medici*, Florence 1572, p. 13. The doctrine of Cosimo's *felicità*, present already in the first years of Cosimo's rule (*ibid.*, p. 31), receives its fullest explanation in this book. See also *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 22, 32, 50, 66, et passim.
- <sup>122</sup> *Matasiliani* (see n. 121), pp. 13, 17 f., et passim.
- <sup>123</sup> *Matasiliani* (see n. 121), p. 18, also A<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup>-A<sub>2</sub><sup>2</sup>: *Per ordin fatale ... così il S. DIO, habbia concesso à punto alla Città di Firenze, il gran COSIMO de MEDICI, acciò con l'istessa fortuna, & felicità di*



- Ottaviano ponesse fine alla discordie, si mantenesse, aumentasse, & stabilisse una perpetua felicità alla città di Firenze, & popoli di Toscana, & apportasse la pace di Ottaviano al Mondo. The façade was a public work (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 304), and Vasari repeatedly manifests his interest for the Duke's opinion concerning his proposals (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 304, 306 f., 313 f.).
- <sup>124</sup> Cf. F. Bocchi, *Discorso della maggioranza del primo Guerriero*, Florence 1573, pp. 40, 59.
- <sup>125</sup> Bartoli, Rag., pp. 6a-6b: arms of the Duke and Duchess on *le cantonate of bozzi ... bassi con un' dito solamente di rilievo — beneficato dal Duca*. The Palazzo Almeni double stemma, illus. in Ginori Lisci, vol. I, p. 440; cf. vol. I, p. 65.
- <sup>126</sup> Frey-Vasari, No. 200.
- <sup>127</sup> Arms and courtier: Castiglione, I, 17-18; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 183 ff.: Sala del Signor Giovanni de' Medici; and Bargellini, figs. 216-219.
- <sup>128</sup> 1554: The definitive Almeni façade described in: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 230-37.
- <sup>129</sup> IMMOBILIS: L. Domenichi, *Ragionamento nel quale si parla d'imprese d'arme e d'amore*, Lyons 1574, p. 258; cf. F. Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, Milan 1653, Bk. 16, Chap. 13, and V. Borghini, in: Bottari-Ticozzi (see n. 2), vol. I, p. 152: *piramide ... dedicate alla perpetua e stabile felicità e gloria della casa de' Medici*.
- <sup>130</sup> Cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 193; Bargellini, fig. 203 (*lago Trasimeno*).
- <sup>131</sup> In 1554 Cosimo grants Sforza the right to import fish from Lake Trasimene to Florence: Saltini (see n. 2), p. 199. On 13 December 1562, Cosimo writes *alla Depositaria*: *Non è per altro questa nostra che per dirvi che paghiate a Sforza Almeni nostro cameriere scudi cento a conto della pensione che egli deve sopra il Lago di Perugia* (ASF, Mediceo 216, c. 158; at c. 180 there is a letter to Sforza of 9 January 1562; both noted by Margaret Daly Davis. Also Mediceo 504, c. 344).
- <sup>132</sup> Fedeltà: Cf. Borghini: *dico Fede non per quella che è virtù teologica, ma per quella, che altrimenti si chiama fedeltà, e ... si chiamavano anticamente in Toscana Fedeli, per dimostrar la divozione e sincera servitù della città inverso il suo signore* (in Bottari-Ticozzi [see n. 2], vol. I, p. 143). L. Dolce, 1565 (see n. 97), pp. 47-48, gives the cane for fedele, comparing him to a courtier: *Sono adunque fedeli i cani ai signori loro, ma sono anco adulatori; perchè, se bene hanno delle percosse, non restano di accarezzargli, e di far loro vezzi*.
- <sup>133</sup> Cf. Rome, Palazzo Altoviti: F. Hermanin, *Il Palazzo di Venezia*, Rome 1948, pp. 177-79.
- <sup>134</sup> Medici arms: Compare the vault of the staircase leading from the Sala di Leone X, Bargellini, figs. 270, 271.
- <sup>135</sup> Medici arms and imprese: *Fortezza medicea* (double allusion to Marzocco and *palle*) is a 'blind' allegory, cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 236. Clement VII's impresa possibly alluded to the Medici *palle*: M. Perry, *Candor Illaesvs*, in: *Burl. Mag.*, CXIX, 1977, pp. 676-86; see further: H. M. v. Erffa, *Meditationen über die Palla Medicea*, in: *Fs. Ulrich Middeldorf*, vol. I, Berlin 1968, pp. 392-401 (on the usual separation of heraldic and emblematic elements); *idem*, *Addenda zu Scipione Bargagli's Meditationen über die Palla Medicea*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XVII, 1973, pp. 166-72, for attempts to invent imprese based on Medici balls. For unnoted *palle medicee* as elements of Cosimo I's personal imprese, "PERCVSSA RESILIVNT" and "AEQVO LEVIORES", see *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 34. The *palla medicea* in a mottoless impresa of Cosimo: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 60 (Bargellini, fig. 200); cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 25, 32, and vol. VI, p. 218 (non-heraldic uses of the *palle*; for other examples see: D. van Sasse van Ysselt, *Il Cardinale Alessandro de' Medici committente dello Stradano 1585-1587*, *Flor. Mitt.*, in this vol. pp. 203-36). An unnoted mottoless impresa of Clement VII: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 119.
- <sup>136</sup> Cosmopolis: *molti fabbricanti, architetti e scarpellini ... innanzi la porta di Cosmopoli ... nell'Isola dell'Elba, col ritratto di Porta Ferrai* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 236) was surely the prototype for tondi in the Sala di Cosimo I; cf. W. C. Kirwin, *Vasari's Tondo of Cosimo I in the Palazzo Vecchio*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XV, 1971, pp. 105-15. Further: Frey-Vasari, No. 200; Zibaldone, p. 81 f.; *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 192 ff., and above n. 91.
- <sup>137</sup> Cosimo's horoscope: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 237: *molti filosofi ed astrologhi misurano il cielo e mostrano di fare la natività del duca*. Similar inventions: Bartoli, Rag., p. 56a; Bargellini, fig. 143.
- <sup>138</sup> Felicità-Capricorno: *Matasiliani* (see n. 121), p. 7. P. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'imprese militari et amoroze*, ed. Lyons 1574, p. 58: Capricorn with motto, "FIDEM FATI VIRTUTE SEQVEMVR" — *Quasi che voglia dire, Io farò con propria virtù forza di conseguire quel, che mi promette l'horoscopo*; cf. the laurel impresa of Cosimo, "VNO AVVLISO NON DEFICIT ALTER" (*ibid.*, p. 59).
- <sup>139</sup> See also RDK, vol. VII, col. 1152 ff., ad vocem "Felicitas". *Matasiliani* (see n. 121), p. 29 f.; cf. pp. 6, 17, 31.
- <sup>140</sup> Lapini (see n. 2): *l'impresa, e l'ascendente della nostra città*. Also on the façade: *Saturno ... che si mangia i figliuoli ... ha sopra il segno del capricorno* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 236; cf. vol. VIII, p. 22). Note Terrazzo di Saturno: *ibid.*, vol. VIII, p. 38 f., *la generazione in questa illustrissima casa*.
- <sup>141</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 283; cf. J. Cox-Rearick, *The Drawings of Pontormo*, Cambridge, Mass. 1964, pp. 302-08.
- <sup>142</sup> Mars' well-known signs are the *Ariete* and *Scorpione*. An intention to paint a horoscope is adumbrated in Vasari's 1553 letter to Sforza (Frey-Vasari, No. 200); regarding *Infantia* he writes, *sopra in quel tondo ... vi va uno de' dodici segni del cielo, secondo l'influsso, il quale sarà ascendente di quella natività, trovandosi allora quel segno nella casa del Sole. Verreno con quest'ordine a seguitare tutte l'altre sei ...*



- <sup>143</sup> Antonio Montalvo: *Frey-Vasari*, vol. I, No. 332 (also No. 294, et passim); vol. II, pp. 247-52, 288 f., 878 (Ric. 300), 882 (Ric. 367), 886, et passim; vol. III, ad Indicem; *G. Gandi*, Il Palazzo Ramirez di Montalvo Matteucci di Bartolommeo Ammannati, Florence 1932 (biography); for six antiquities Montalvo left at the Florentine embassy in Rome for shipping to Florence, see ASF, Mediceo 3289, fol. 32or, 12 August 1570; cf. *C. Gaye*, Carteggio inedito d'artisti, vol. III, Florence 1840, p. 130.
- <sup>144</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 709; *Gandi* (see n. 143), p. 9: *Antonio Montalvo, Spagnolo, Coppiere di S. Eccellenza* (1558).
- <sup>145</sup> Palazzo Montalvo: *Vodoz* (see n. 8), pp. 79-95; *Thiem*, pp. 36-38, cat. 51; *Fossi* (see n. 8), pp. 87-92; also n. 143 above.
- <sup>146</sup> Vasari's letter to Montalvo, printed in *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 314-16 (and earlier editions), survives only in a copy (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, cod. 2354). *Frey* (in: *Frey-Vasari*) neither publishes or mentions the letter. *Vodoz* (see n. 8), p. 91, incorrectly doubts its value as a source. Without date, the letter carries the address, *da Roma*. Reference to the Duke, not Grand Duke, sets a *terminus ante* of 1569. *Kliemann* (see n. 94), p. 192, dates a matching invention in Borghini's papers to 1568/1569. Vasari writes that to the Duke *convenga riconoscere i servitori, come ha fatto nella persona vostra* (= Montalvo), *e condurgli al grado di signore*. In fact, *signore Antonio Montalvo* was created *signore della Sassetta* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 709) in 1563, and therefore a *terminus post* is 1563. The address, *da Roma*, speaks for 1568 ca., as *Vodoz* observes (p. 91).
- <sup>147</sup> The reading '*Felicità. Questa conviene a chi conversa e negozia con le corti*' (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 316) is due to a copyist's mistake. '*Facilità*' is intended; cf. *Kliemann* (see n. 94), p. 207, Anhang IV.
- <sup>148</sup> '*darà*', instead of '*dura*'; cf. Riccardiana cod. 2354.
- <sup>149</sup> *Vodoz* (see n. 8), p. 88 f.; *Kliemann* (see n. 94), p. 207, Anhang IV.
- <sup>150</sup> *Borghini* in: *Bottari-Ticozzi* (see n. 2), vol. I, p. 233.
- <sup>151</sup> Priority of Borghini: (1) Were, conversely, Borghini's memorandum a reduction of Vasari's letter, there would be no fundamental change in the organization and sequence of the elements. (2) In diagramming the personifications' positions Vasari has displaced several, introducing conflicts between his diagram and his letter, e.g., his scheme gives the progression, *Fortezza - Assiduità - Fama*, while his letter (and Borghini's memorandum) proposes, with greater logic, *Fortezza* (virtue) - *Fatica* (practice) - *Riposo* (reward).
- <sup>152</sup> Contrast the views of *J. Seznec*, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, New York 1953, pp. 284 f., 288-90, 298.
- <sup>153</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 314-16; *Kliemann* (see n. 94), p. 207, Anhang IV.
- <sup>154</sup> Montalvo impresa: *V. Borghini*, Carteggio artistico inedito, ed. *A. Lorenzoni*, vol. I, Florence 1912, p. 145 f.; *Frey-Vasari*, No. 538; *Bottari-Ticozzi* (see n. 2), vol. I, pp. 248-52; *Vodoz* (see n. 8), p. 90. Borghini's invention was based on an earlier invention of *Giovio* (see n. 138), p. 87 (ed. *M. L. Doglio*, Rome 1978, pp. 93-95; cf. also *C. Ripa*, *Iconologia*, ed. Padua 1613, pp. 70-71, 126, 281, 306-07).
- <sup>155</sup> *Imago Amoris*: See above n. 13; *B. Varchi*, *Della pittura d'amore ... dichiarazione sopra que' versi del Trionfo d'amore ...*, in: *Opere*, vol. II, Triest 1859, pp. 489-96; cf. *P. Bembo*, *Gli Asolani*, ed. Venice 1584, p. 41 f., for *il dipinto dell'Amore*.
- <sup>156</sup> See, e.g., *Petrarca*, *Canzoniere*, 30, 10; 30, 31; 131, 9; 66, 33.
- <sup>157</sup> *Accademia della Crusca*, *Concordanze del Canzoniere di Francesco Petrarca*, 2 vols., Florence 1971.
- <sup>158</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 316.
- <sup>159</sup> *Bartoli*, *Disc.*, No. 36 and 39, pp. 229, 289, 293, 294; *idem*, *Rag.*, pp. 41b, 50b-51a. See also *P. Rosello*, *Il ritratto del vero governo del prencipe dal esempio vivo del gran Cosimo de' Medici*, Venice 1552, p. 16 f.
- <sup>160</sup> '*Amor di virtù*': *Ripa* (see n. 110), p. 18; cf. *Alciati*, *Emblemata CX*; *G. Werner*, *Ripa's Iconologia. Quellen - Methode - Ziele*, Utrecht 1977, pp. 18, 42, and Pl. III. Vasari and Alciati: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 666.
- <sup>161</sup> *Diverse imprese ... tratte da gli Emblemi dell'Alciato*, Lyons 1551, p. 106; *Ripa* (see n. 110), p. 18.
- <sup>162</sup> *Bartoli*, *Rag.*, p. 25a.
- <sup>163</sup> '*Apetito di honore*': *Bartoli*, *Rag.*, pp. 49b-50a (cf. *Tervarent* (see n. 82), cols. 129, 232 f.: "*Laurier - vertu*"); *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 185 (also p. 183: *una Virtù coronato d'alloro con molti libri intorno*); *Bargellini*, fig. 216. All this confirms *Bartoli's* maxim that *virtù* is the *vera strada per camminare alla gloria*, which is the *vero, & principalissimo frutto, & premio della virtù* (*Disc.*, pp. 323, 327).
- <sup>164</sup> *Bartoli*, *Disc.*, No. 39.
- <sup>165</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 30.
- <sup>166</sup> *Bartoli*, *Rag.*, p. 50a; cf. n. 118 above.
- <sup>167</sup> *Bartoli*, *Disc.*, No. 34 and 39, pp. 329 ff., 293 f., 305; *idem*, *Rag.*, p. 10b.
- <sup>168</sup> *Bartoli*, *Disc.*, p. 324.
- <sup>169</sup> See *Tervarent* (see n. 82), col. 207.
- <sup>170</sup> See *Bartoli*, *Disc.*, No. 23, "*Che la celerità giova sempre ...*", p. 165 ff.: *celerità* is *quella presta & veloce esecuzione che si usa nel fare le cose con prudenza, poi che ce ne saremo maturamente, & con buon consiglio risoluti* ... *la celerità usata doppo una prudente deliberatione* ...
- <sup>171</sup> '*Trattatistica*': There exists no genuine overview of the very numerous Italian treatises on the courts and the courtier, and hence no substitute for reading the texts themselves, most of which are unstudied. Paradoxically, the best census of the treatises is contained in *Ruth Kelso's* *The Doctrine*



of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century, Urbana (Ill.) 1929, pp. 169-277, and in a sequel to this work, *Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, Urbana (Ill.) 1956, pp. 424-62 (supplementary bibliography).

Additional indications are contained in the following works, which are sometimes disappointing in terms of the number of texts they treat: *T. F. Crane*, *Italian Social Customs of the Late Sixteenth Century and their Influence on the Literature of Europe*, New Haven 1920, Chaps. 6-8; *F. R. Bryson*, *Point of Honor in 16th-century Italy*, New York 1935; *B. Croce*, *Libri sulle corti*, in: *Poeti e scrittori del pieno e tardo Rinascimento*, vol. II, Bari 1954, pp. 198-207; *A. Vallone*, *Cortesia e nobiltà nel Rinascimento*, Asti 1955; *P. V. Mengaldo*, *Appunti su Vincenzo Calmeta e la teoria cortigiana*, in: *Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, 1960, 3, pp. 446-69; *G. Toffanin*, *Il "Cortegiano" nella trattatistica del Rinascimento*, Naples 1961; *G. Mazzacurati*, *Misure del classicismo rinascimentale*, Naples 1967 (also in: *Modern Language Notes*, LXXXIII, 1968, pp. 16-60); *S. Battaglia*, *Mitografia del personaggio*, Milan 1968, pp. 92-96; *P. Grendler*, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, Madison (Wis.) 1969, passim; *W. Moretti*, *Cortesia e furore nel Rinascimento*, Bologna 1970; *A. Di Benedetto*, ed., *Prose di G. Della Casa e di altri trattatisti del comportamento*, Turin 1970; *M. Aurigemma*, *Lirica, poemi e trattati civili del Cinquecento*, Rome-Bari 1973, pp. 175-211; *G. Paparelli*, *Feritas, Humanitas, Divinitas*, Naples 1973; *A. Quondam*, *La parola nel labirinto: Società e scrittura del manierismo a Napoli*, Bari 1975, pp. 187-225; *G. Mazzacurati*, *Conflitti di culture nel Cinquecento*, Naples 1977, pp. 141-81; *M. Santoro*, *Fortuna, ragione e prudenza nella civiltà letteraria del Cinquecento*, Naples 1978, esp. pp. 545-82; *A. Quondam*, *Forme e istituzioni della produzione culturale (Le corti farnesiane di Parma e Piacenza, 1545-1622, II)*, Rome 1978.

Moreover, recent Renaissance historiography has taken relatively little interest in the courts as a social phenomenon; it is symptomatic that *F. Braudel's* *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II*, ed. London 1973, contains no entry for 'court', 'courtier', or 'Castiglione' in its highly detailed index. See usefully, *J. R. Hale*, *Renaissance Europe, 1480-1520*, London 1971, p. 84 ff., on court life; and *P. Burke*, *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420-1540*, London 1972, pp. 219-32, on the principal courts.

- <sup>172</sup> *Castiglione's* "Cortegiano" has engendered a very large literature, most of which is cited in the various editions, and much of which I have examined. The following account, however, is based primarily on a reading of *Castiglione's* text itself. Also helpful were: *A. Bonadeo*, *The Function and Purpose of the Courtier*, in: *Philological Quarterly*, L, 1971, pp. 36-46, and *L. Martines*, *The Gentleman in Renaissance Italy*, in: *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, ed. R. S. Kinsman, Berkeley 1974, pp. 77-93; *E. Loos*, *B. Castigliones Libro del Cortegiano. Studien zur Tugendauffassung des Cinquecento*, Frankfurt am Main 1955; *P. Floriani*, *Idealismo politico del "Cortegiano"*, Florence 1972; and see below n. 182. During the *Castiglione Year, 1978*, congresses were held at New York, Mantua, and Casatico (Mantua), from which publications are expected.

- <sup>173</sup> See below n. 187.

- <sup>174</sup> *Castiglione*, II, 18.

- <sup>175</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 5 ff.; see also *Loos* (see n. 172), p. 206, et passim.

- <sup>176</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 49 ff.

- <sup>177</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 64-70.

- <sup>178</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 70 f.

- <sup>179</sup> Platonic love: *Castiglione*, IV, 49 f. This doctrine is the source of *Alciati's* *Amor di virtù* (see n. 160). *Bartoli* first published the hitherto unpublished Italian commentary of *Marsilio Ficino*, *Sopra lo amore o ver' Convito di Platone*, Florence 1544. See *Vasari's* *divino amore* who looks upward to a celestial splendor, and *il guardare alto è il contemplare le virtù* (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 60).

- <sup>180</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 51-52.

- <sup>181</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 69.

- <sup>182</sup> *Castiglione*, IV, 52, 57, 58, 67, 68; cf. *P. Floriani*, *Bembo e Castiglione*, Rome 1976, pp. 169 ff., 184 f. *Nicolò Franco* in his "Li Due Petrarchisti", Venice 1623, pp. 17-18, writes of the fittingness of love to the courtier's role: *E mentre quasi non puote essere senza amore il vivere gentile, e bello, qual si conviene a gli animi cortesi, et humani, et spetialmente ai cortigiani, della sorte, che il Castiglione n'insegna. non è Filosofo, ne Poeta, da cui meglio apparar si possa la via d'honestamente amare, e d'amando sfogare.*

- <sup>183</sup> Between its appearance, in 1528, and the year *Sforza Almeni* died, in 1566, the "Cortegiano" averaged more than one new printing every year (see the *Le Monnier* ed., Florence 1854, ed. *C. Baudi di Vesme*, with catalogue of editions, pp. 349-60).

- <sup>184</sup> *Castiglione*, II, 17-22, 30; III, 5-6; cf. IV, 18, 40.

- <sup>185</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 316.

- <sup>186</sup> *Castiglione*, II, 17, 18.

- <sup>187</sup> *Malpiglio*: All references are to the standard edition of *Tasso's* "Il Malpiglio overo de la corte", in: *T. Tasso*, *Dialoghi*, ed. crit. *E. Raimondi*, vol. II, Florence 1958, pp. 547-65. The dialogue has been scarcely studied, except for an interesting introduction to a recent English translation (*Tasso's* *Il Malpiglio: A Dialogue on the Court*, ed. *D. A. Trafton*, Amherst, Mass. 1973, pp. 1-13).

- <sup>188</sup> *Malpiglio*, 47-50; for the new trend, see also *B. Pino*, *Del Galant'huomo overo dell'huomo prudente, et discreto*, Venice 1604.

- <sup>189</sup> 'prudenza cortigiana': *Malpiglio*, 34, 35; 'oculare', *ibid*, 41, 47; 'celare', *ibid*, 41; 'infiggere', *ibid*, 53.



- <sup>190</sup> Malpiglio, 34. Note the Duke's often repeated initial reservation when Vasari wanted to enter his service, *E' non ha fermezza* (Frey-Vasari, No. 195; cf. No. 191, 198).
- <sup>191</sup> Malpiglio, 40.
- <sup>192</sup> Malpiglio, 38. And, *per l'accortezza del cortigiano*, the severe *commissioni* of the prince *sogliono parer men dure e spiacevoli* (39).
- <sup>193</sup> Malpiglio, 51.
- <sup>194</sup> Malpiglio, 52-53.
- <sup>195</sup> On *il Lume della Virtù*, see G. Muzio, *Il gentiluomo*, ed. Venice 1575, p. 25. Among the Almeni sotto virtues, the heads of *Firmezza*, *Facilità*, *Bontà*, *Pretezza*, *Perseveranza*, *Vigilanza*, *Accuratezza*, and *Fede* are all surrounded by a large golden splendor, not discernible in black and white photographs. See above n. 85.
- <sup>196</sup> 'Dio Terreno': Bartoli in Alberti (see n. 51), dedication; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 85 f.: *le storie dipinti delli Dei terrestri della illustrissima casa de' Medici*; also pp. 16, 22, 38 f, 46 f., et passim.
- <sup>197</sup> L. Domenichi, "Della corte", in: Dialoghi, Venice 1562, pp. 276, 310; the large literature against the courts is also little studied, cf. Croce (see n. 171), p. 198 ff.
- <sup>198</sup> Enea Silvio Piccolomini's "De curialium miseriis", composed in 1444; see *Le miserie della vita di corte*, translated by G. Paparelli, Lanciano 1943; and Paparelli, *Il "De curialium miseriis"*, in: Enea Silvio Piccolomini Papa Pio II, Atti del Convegno per il quinto centenario della morte, ed. De Maffei, Siena 1968, pp. 213-18.
- <sup>199</sup> P. Aretino, *Ragionamento delle corti*, ed. G. Battelli, Lanciano 1923 (ed. pr. 1538). See A. Quondam, *La scena della menzogna*, in: Psicon, 8-9, III, 1976, pp. 4-23.
- <sup>200</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, pp. 314-16; Tasso, Malpiglio (see n. 187), 25-29. Vasari and Bartoli were well aware of the counter-current against the courts. Bartoli (Disc., p. 289) recommends to who wants to know of princes to read what *nel suo Momo molto piacevolmente ne scrisse Leonbattista Alberti*. And, in his translation of the Momus (see n. 51), p. 69, under the heading, *cortigiani per lo più come fatti*, courtiers are denounced as *rozzi*, *ignoranti*, vain flatterers, and all the rest. There is, moreover, a strain of 'anti-cortigianeria' in Vasari's letters of the 1550's (Frey-Vasari, No. 135, 139, 183, 196, 205). Note *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. V, p. 87: *Alfonso Lombardo ... più tosto uomo di corte, lascivo e vano, che artefice desideroso di gloria*.
- <sup>201</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 315; Tasso, Malpiglio, 11, 17.
- <sup>202</sup> Zibaldone, pp. 11-15: *Et perchè il Duca è giustissimo farei ...*, etc.; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 83: *... tutte le virtù si truovono nel duca Cosimo ... le quali sono sempre state nella casa de' Medici, ed oggi sono tutte nell'eccellentissimo signor duca ...*
- <sup>203</sup> Aretino (see n. 199), p. 11; Tasso, Malpiglio, 3-6.
- <sup>204</sup> Domenichi (see n. 197), index and p. 301 f.
- <sup>205</sup> Saltini (see n. 2), pp. 199-202.
- <sup>206</sup> Baldini (see n. 2), p. 71.
- <sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71; cf. Vasari's mysterious letter of 30.IV.1566.
- <sup>208</sup> Saltini (see n. 2), p. 204.
- <sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.
- <sup>210</sup> First published in the catalogue, *Handzeichnungen des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts ... aus den Slgn. des Wallraf-Richartz-Museums*, Cologne 1965, No. 64, illus. p. 58, attributed to the circle of Pietro Candido. First associated with the Almeni Bontà 30 May 1978 (see n. 9) and illustrated by A. Cecchi, *Nuove acquisizioni per un catalogo dei disegni di Giorgio Vasari*, in: *Antichità Viva*, XVII, No. 1, 1978, Jan.-Feb. (published Sept.), p. 57 f., and associated with the Cortona sacrifices of Gherardi. The reading, *Bontà*, may be verified by comparison with the first word of the ninth line ("Bontà") of an autograph letter of Vasari, dated 1 January 1570, formerly in the Archivio di Stato, Florence, whence it was removed and sold to J. Pierpont Morgan. This letter, already published by Gaye, is reproduced photographically in an exhibition catalogue, *The Age of Vasari, Notre Dame-Binghamton*, 1970, p. 164. Other relevant specimens of Vasari's script are found in the large collection of his letters in the ASF, *Carteggio di artisti*, vol. II.
- <sup>211</sup> Illustrated is a copy which shows the design clearly, present location unknown (*Finarte*, Asta di disegni dal XVI al XIX secolo, Milan 21-22 April 1975, Cat. 204, No. 44 (illus.), attributed to T. Zuccari). Other drawings for the *Terza Ora* discussed in Cecchi (see n. 210), pp. 52, 54, and nn. 6-10. For the *Apparato dei Sempiterni*, see further the study of D. McTavish, *Speculations on Two Drawings* Attributed to Giorgio Vasari, in: *The National Gallery of Canada, Bulletin*, No. 28, 1976, pp. 16-19, with many observations on the problems Vasari's drawings raise. A drawing *McTavish* (n. 33) mentions for the 19th Hour (illus. in *Burl. Mag.*, CXVII, 1975, p. 321) is certainly of Vasari's design and some of its features indicate it may be by the hand of Gherardi.
- <sup>212</sup> See nn. 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 62 f., 163, et passim, above. Bartoli's departure for Venice: June 1562.
- <sup>213</sup> Two unknowns in Vasari's workshop need to be clarified: Stefano Veltroni and Battista Cungi.
- <sup>214</sup> Studies of Vasari as a painter and draftsman have been active since P. Barocchi's 1964 monograph. A. Cecchi (see n. 210), p. 59, gives an ample citation of recent literature on the drawings. Note especially, *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, Atti del Congresso Internazionale nel IV centenario della morte, Florence 1976.
- <sup>215</sup> Cf., e.g., Oberhuber-Walker (see n. 37), Cat. 28. Furthermore, a characteristic detail of these drawings,



- the frames of Mercury and Saturn, corresponds exactly to the chiaroscuro vignettes beneath Amor and Diligenza (Figs. 5 and 8). The basic design problem Vasari faced in the Almeni salotto was to give a regular, "right angle" impression to the existing room, to bring what was *fuora di squadra* into line. To this end he introduces countless small displacements in the symmetries of the ceiling framework, thereby achieving an impression of regularity. He faced this fundamental problem of remodelling often and wrote about it: *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, p. 674 (*per levar via, con ricchi partimenti di maniera moderna, tutta quella vecchiaia e goffezza di sesti*), vol. VIII, pp. 13-18, 205 f.
- <sup>216</sup> Tesoretto: G. L. Maffei, Gli interventi vasariani in Palazzo Vecchio, in: *Studi e documenti di architettura*, No. 6, Dec. 1976, pp. 51-66.
- <sup>217</sup> Illus. in *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, at p. 554.
- <sup>218</sup> See Davis, 1979 (see n. 37); L. Raghianti Collobi, Il Libro de' disegni del Vasari, Florence 1974, Fig. 431.
- <sup>219</sup> Bontà: See also Palazzo Altoviti Febbraio (above n. 133).
- <sup>220</sup> See A. M. Maetzke, Restauri nella Casa del Vasari, Arezzo 1977, fig. 27; *Vasari-Ricci*, vol. IV, end page.
- <sup>221</sup> Bargellini, fig. 242; Davis, 1979 (see n. 37), fig. 3; cf. Maetzke (see n. 220), Tav. 1-5.
- <sup>222</sup> Isaac, Jacob, Samuel: Gab. Fotografico, Sopr. Gall. Firenze, Foto N. 31 668, 31 662, 31 655.
- <sup>223</sup> Davis, 1979 (see n. 37), figs. 1, 7, 10.
- <sup>224</sup> Bargellini, fig. 432.
- <sup>225</sup> Barocchi, Pittore, pl. 97.
- <sup>226</sup> Davis, 1980 (see n. 9).
- <sup>227</sup> Raghianti Collobi (see n. 218), figs. 201, 203; cf. Maetzke (see n. 220), color illus. at p. (14); Bargellini, fig. 401; C. Monbeig-Goguel, Giorgio Vasari et son temps, Paris 1972, No. 216.
- <sup>228</sup> See Monbeig-Goguel (see n. 227), p. 177 ff., No. 239, 266, 273, 283.
- <sup>229</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 232.
- <sup>230</sup> Cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. I, p. 181 f.
- <sup>231</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. I, p. 174.
- <sup>232</sup> Cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. I, pp. 175-77, 181 f.
- <sup>233</sup> See esp. Gab. Fotografico, Sopr. Gall. Firenze, Foto N. 31 655, 31 659, 31 660, 31 662, 31 663, 31 666, 31 670. In contrast, cartoons were used for the ceiling frescos, where the *incisioni* are visible, following the method used in the Sala degli Elementi (cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. I, p. 176 f.).
- <sup>234</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 232.
- <sup>235</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 238; cf. vol. VII, p. 697; *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 872, Ric. 224. The Cortona frescos are difficult to see in situ and, although well photographed, are inadequately published Sopr. Foto N. 31 649-31 673). In my view the most recent discussion, Cecchi (see n. 210), pp. 56-58, 61, nn. 38-44 (with literature), still somewhat over-estimates Gherardi's role.
- <sup>236</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 221.
- <sup>237</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, pp. 221, 232.
- <sup>238</sup> Uffizi 7083 F-7094 F (Foto Sopr. 122 766, 122 767, 122 771, 122 792-122 799, 122 802). Completely illus. in: Arte in Valdichiana, Cortona 1970, ed. L. Bellosi, G. Cantelli, and M. Lenzi Moriondo, No. 59-70; also Barocchi, Pittore, pls. 49a-50b, and *idem*, Complementi, figs. 63, 65-68. Literature and discussion: Cecchi (see n. 210), pp. 57, 61.
- <sup>239</sup> Barocchi, Pittore, p. 37 f.
- <sup>240</sup> The figure of Melchisedec represents a stock figure in Vasari's art. Already present in the Abraham for S. Michele in Bosco, Bologna, where it is recorded in two drawings, Lille No. 547 and Uffizi 1192 E (illus. in Barocchi, Complementi, fig. 1, literature p. 289), it recurs, e.g., the 1545/46 former Chrysler "Agony in the Garden", now Newhouse Galleries, New York (illus. in Art Journal, XXXVII/4, 1978, advertisement). For the *Neemie*, see Barocchi, Pittore, Tav. XV., Rimini "Adoration".
- <sup>241</sup> Literature in Cecchi (see n. 210), pp. 59-61.
- <sup>242</sup> C. Monbeig-Goguel, Gherardi senza Vasari, in: Arte illustrata, V, No. 48, 1972, pp. 130-40; *idem*, Cristofano Gherardi à Recanati, in: Paragone, XXVIII, No. 327, 1977, pp. 108-16. These articles provide a conservative, but just view of Gherardi's merits. His true artistic physiognomy seems closer to the image Vasari gives of him than recent criticism has by and large allowed. See the useful assessment of G. Previtali, in: *Vasari-CdL*, vol. VI, p. 103 f. Much of what has been said concerning Gherardi awaits demonstration; cf. W. Vitzthum, Vasari, in: Master Drawings, III, 1965, p. 54 ff., and G. Thiem, in: Atti (see n. 214), p. 267 ff.
- <sup>243</sup> See also Villa Altoviti stucco frames (Davis, 1979, see n. 37), and the title page portrait of Alberti in Bartoli's 1550 Architettura (illus. in W. Prinz, Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen, Florence 1966, p. 24), the design of which may now almost certainly be ascribed to Vasari. These filiations also add weight to an early date for the Almeni frescos.
- <sup>244</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 237 f.; *Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 872, Ric. 223; cf. p. 862, Ric. 146: *cinque garzoni spesati*, Ric. 148: *stanze, letti e provisione per il vitto dacordo*; p. 870, Ric. 202: *spesato da lui in casa sua*.
- <sup>245</sup> Illus. in Barocchi, Pittore, Tav. E (Gherardi's hand appears to be present also in the lower part of this immense painting).
- <sup>246</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. I, p. 192 f.; cf. Thiem, pp. 98-100.
- <sup>247</sup> *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 243.



- <sup>248</sup> Note Vasari's resolve *a non far più opere che non fussero da me stesso del tutto finite sopra la bozza di mano degli aiuti, fatta con i disegni di mia mano* (VII, p. 680 f.); or: *abbozzando le tavole con i colori* (VI, p. 220, cf. p. 225); or: *ho avuto talora ... a rifare ogni cosa di mia mano, e tutta ricoprire la tavola, perchè sia d'una medesima maniera* (VII, p. 702).
- <sup>249</sup> A. Cecchi, Marco da Faenza in Palazzo Vecchio, in: *Paragone*, XXVIII, No. 327, pp. 24-54; No. 329, pp. 6-26.
- <sup>250</sup> The distinctive motif beneath the *ovati* — a grey square in a red octagon on a white circle — appears in the hemicycle of the Villa Giulia in Rome. Among the painters who worked there were Stefano Veltroni and Pietro Venale (*T. Falk*, Studien zur Topographie und Geschichte der Villa Giulia, in: *Röm. Jb.*, XIII, 1971, pp. 135-70, Regesten).
- <sup>251</sup> Note Vasari's three often overlooked sonnets on the death of Gherardi, in: *Scoti-Bertinelli* (see n. 14), pp. 268-69, 271; cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VIII, p. 321 f. and vol. VI, p. 214.
- <sup>252</sup> *Cecchi* (see n. 249), No. 327, p. 34; *idem*, No. 329, p. 18: again in Florence, 1560, 1563-65.
- <sup>253</sup> Circumstances: *Cecchi* (see n. 249), No. 327, p. 34. It is not likely that the Almeni *salotto* was a paid commission in a conventional sense (see n. 244). Therefore it did not enter Vasari's '*ricordi*', which contain gaps, but which were also the basis for Vasari's autobiography, which, in turn, concentrates on public works and is not exhaustive by its own account (*Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VII, pp. 700, 711 f.). It is curious that Vasari says, apropos the chiaroscuro Almeni façade, that Gherardi *come si vede, valeva tanto nel maneggiar i colori in fresco ...* (vol. VI, p. 232). *Ricordo 222* (*Frey-Vasari*, vol. II, p. 872) contains an unexplained 'gift' of Sforza: *Ebbe ser Pietro mio fratello robbe per fornire la casa, che valeva scudi 50*; cf. n. 28 above. *Frey-Vasari*, No. 214 (1554 July 4) contains a reference to the Almeni façade and to Sforza's brother, *Evangelista Almeni*, that *Frey* does not recognize. Letters are few for this period. In early 1559 there are mentions of small cash sums in connection with Sforza (*Frey-Vasari*, vol. I, p. 511).
- <sup>254</sup> W. Prinz, La seconda edizione del Vasari e la comparsa di "vite" artistiche con ritratti, in: *Il Vasari*, XXI, No. 1, 1963, p. 1.
- <sup>255</sup> See above notes 49, 64, 116.
- <sup>256</sup> *Vasari-Ricci*, vol. II, p. 89. In fact, in his dedication (p. 4), *Bartoli* plays Vitruvius to Cosimo's Augustus.
- <sup>257</sup> A preparatory drawing, found in the Berlin Kupferstichkabinett (K.d.Z. 22 135), was brought to my attention by *Julian Kliemann*.
- <sup>258</sup> G. Mancini, Cosimo Bartoli, in: *Archivio Storico Italiano*, LXXXVI, No. 2, 1918, p. 128.
- <sup>259</sup> The printed Alberti frontispiece illus. in *Prinz* (see n. 254), p. 5. Cf. *Vasari-Milanesi*, vol. VI, p. 87: *l'Eternità, con una palla nelle braccia, e sotto ai piedi un vecchio canuto, figurato per lo Tempo* (Tribolo). Note further: *Virtù una femmina che rimiri il cielo con la bocca aperta che il cielo gli empia di gratia il petto ...* (*Bartoli* in *Zibaldone*, pp. 312, 108).
- <sup>260</sup> The last revision of the notes to this article was made in December 1979. In the meantime there have appeared, in conjunction with the 1980 Medici exhibitions in Florence and Tuscany, several publications that touch upon aspects of Vasari's activity treated here. In addition to the Council of Europe Exhibition catalogues, note especially the following contributions made at the International Congress, "Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento", Florence, 9-14 June 1980: A. M. Testaverde, La biblioteca erudita di Don Vincenzo Borghini; C. Vasoli, Osservazioni sui "Discorsi storici universali" di Cosimo Bartoli; and H. Burns, Le finestre inginocchiate: fonti, forme e funzioni nel '500 fiorentino (for Alessi and the palace and villa of Almeni). In addition, note the Convegno-Seminario, "Il potere e lo spazio", Florence, 16-17 June 1980, with "pre-Atti" published simultaneously (Interventi presentati al Convegno-Seminario, Istituto di storia dell'architettura e di restauro dell'Università di Firenze, Florence 1980). Numerous further contributions to the study of Medicean iconography are contained in: *La città effimera e l'universo artificiale del giardino, La Firenze dei Medici e l'Italia del '500*, ed. M. Fagiolo, Rome 1980. For the decoration of Palazzo Vecchio, see now E. Allegri and A. Cecchi, Palazzo Vecchio e i Medici, Guida storica, Florence 1980. The Biblioteca di Disegni, vol. XXII, Maestri Toscani del Cinquecento, ed. C. Monbeig-Goguel, Florence 1979, contains, in addition to many important new contributions to Vasari studies, an entry for Uffizi 394 Orn. (cat. 32 a), which affirms a connection between Vasari's drawing and the content of Aliberti's Architettura.



## RIASSUNTO

Questo studio presenta un ciclo di affreschi inediti dipinti da Giorgio Vasari e da pittori della sua bottega. Tali affreschi, appartenenti ad una decorazione di soffitto, sono stati identificati nel 1977 e presentati da chi scrive nel corso di una conferenza tenuta nel maggio del 1978 al Kunsthistorisches Institut di Firenze. Il soffitto si trova a Firenze in Via de' Servi 12, in un palazzo già di proprietà del coppiere e primo cameriere di Cosimo I de' Medici, Sforza Almeni. In primo luogo vengono esaminati gli aspetti storici e tematici degli affreschi, e queste indagini intendono portare un contributo alla soluzione dei numerosi problemi stilistici e cronologici presentati dall'opera.

I dati storici più importanti sono tre. Nel 1546 il Duca dona a Sforza Almeni il palazzo di Via de' Servi; nel 1554, Vasari e Cristofano Gherardi dipingono in chiaroscuro sulla facciata del palazzo una complessa decorazione allegorica e, nel 1566, Almeni viene ucciso dal duca per motivi rimasti tuttora oscuri.

Sul soffitto di Palazzo Almeni sono dipinte dodici figure allegoriche, e la maggior parte non è facile da identificare. Risulta però che il nome di ciascuna figura corrisponde ad una parola di un'iscrizione poetica posta sul cornicione della stanza.

Nove di queste allegorie sono descritte in una serie di brevi "Invenzioni per figure allegoriche" contenute in un quaderno di appunti di Vasari, il suo "Zibaldone". Le figure rappresentano la Fede, la Vigilanza, la Perseveranza, l'Accuratezza, la Bontà, la Diligenza, la Prestezza, la Facilità. (L'identità delle altre tre figure — Amor, Flora, ed Arno — risulta evidente.) Quest'elenco d'invenzioni allegoriche è tratto dal testo, più esteso, del primitivo programma iconologico per il soffitto di Palazzo Almeni. Abbiamo in questo modo una documentazione *prima facie* del legame di Vasari con il progetto.

Oltre che nella veste di cortigiano, Almeni si distingue come collezionista e mecenate — amico e protettore di artisti ed accademici di corte. Fra gli artisti più vicini ad Almeni si annoverano Vincenzo Danti, Giorgio Vasari e Cristofano Gherardi. Gli ultimi due realizzano l'opera più ambiziosa intrapresa per conto di Almeni: la decorazione della facciata del suo palazzo di Via de' Servi. Il dipinto, sparito da quasi due secoli, può essere ricostruito attraverso alcune testimonianze letterarie, che consentono anche di attribuire a Cosimo Bartoli, amico di Vasari, la formulazione definitiva del complesso programma iconologico, elaborato per la facciata nell'anno 1554. Inoltre un esame dell'intera serie di "Invenzioni per figure allegoriche" (comprendente le nove invenzioni per il soffitto di Palazzo Almeni) consente di attribuire con sicurezza a Bartoli tutte le invenzioni allegoriche non riguardanti Palazzo Almeni. Di conseguenza risulta altamente probabile una sua paternità anche per il programma iconologico del salotto in Palazzo Almeni. Il fatto che l'impostazione del programma sia di Bartoli viene confermato dalla coincidenza tra numerosi elementi caratterizzanti gli affreschi di Palazzo Almeni ed invenzioni iconologiche di Bartoli contenute nei suoi scritti, o tradotte in pittura da Vasari. Il confronto tra le personificazioni del soffitto di Palazzo Almeni, le pitture di Vasari ed i testi di Bartoli ci permette inoltre una lettura più attendibile dei loro simbolismi.

Nel trascrivere sullo "Zibaldone" brevi 'ricette' pittoriche per personificazioni di virtù tratte dal testo oggi disperso del programma iconologico di Palazzo Almeni, Vasari riporta una frase non immediatamente utile alla delineazione di tali figure, svelando casualmente il contesto preciso a cui tutte le virtù del soffitto si riferiscono. La Facilità si piega "alle voglie dei padroni", e quindi, alla luce della professione di Sforza Almeni, le virtù vengono inquadrare nel mondo cortigiano.

Le opinioni espresse da Bartoli nei suoi libri concordano con la concezione del servizio cortigiano illustrata nei dipinti sul soffitto di Palazzo Almeni. Altre concezioni in accordo



con questa visione ideale del servizio a corte e della sua remunerazione possono essere rintracciate negli scritti e nella pittura di Vasari. Tre programmi analoghi, tutti ben documentati, vengono esaminati. Innanzitutto sono messe a fuoco le numerose componenti specificamente cortigiane, di solito trascurate, della decorazione della facciata di Palazzo Almeni: i riferimenti a Sforza Almeni e al suo servizio, inoltre quelli a Cosimo de' Medici e al suo regno. Temi ricorrenti sono il panegirico mediceo, in particolare la "felicità" astrologicamente preordinata di Cosimo, il servizio fedele di Sforza e la sua ricompensa. Idee analoghe sono presenti nella decorazione della facciata del palazzo di un altro cortigiano di Cosimo, Antonio Montalvo. Il programma iconologico elabora esplicitamente il concetto di "ben servire" e in questo "specchio d'una servitù non vile e bassa, ma onoratissima" ricorrono molte delle virtù dipinte sul soffitto di Sforza Almeni: Liberalità, Fama, Facilità, Vigilanza, Fedeltà, Amore, Perseveranza. Un altro programma cortigiano dedicato al tema della servitù fedele e della sua ricompensa sta alla base di un'impresa col motto *Hoc FIDUNT DUCE* fatta per Montalvo da Vasari e Vincenzo Borghini.

Alla luce di questi tre programmi iconologici si possono ricostituire gli elementi connettivi dell'analogo programma per il salotto di Almeni. Mettendo in opera le invenzioni create da Borghini per Montalvo, Vasari ne accentua le implicazioni etico-sociali, e nello stesso tempo sottolinea il ruolo svolto dall'amore nel servizio cortigiano, facendone la forza animatrice. Tale concezione trova un significativo riscontro nell'importanza data all'immagine di Amore sul soffitto di Palazzo Almeni. In questo caso la figura di Amore acquista anche il significato di "Amor di Virtù", per la presenza della corona di lauro — in base ad un simbolismo proposto da Andrea Alciati, "amicissimo" di Vasari.

Il sostrato di tali idee sulla "vita di corte" si trova nell'amplessima discussione cinquecentesca sulle corti e sulla figura del cortigiano. Di conseguenza la decorazione del soffitto di Palazzo Almeni viene riletta, avendo come riferimento due dei più importanti e tipici trattati sulle corti, il "Cortegiano" di Castiglione e il più tardo e più realistico "Mapiglio" di Torquato Tasso. Il rilievo dato all'amore e la presenza dell'allegoria della Facilità-Affabilità rispecchiano valori chiavi del "Cortegiano". La parte importante assegnata alla prudenza nelle virtù cortigiane ci indica la strada che porta alla nuova visione delle corti espressa nel dialogo di Tasso. L'iconologia esplicitamente documentata dell'allegoria del "ben servire" contiene già elementi di un'apologia in risposta alle dure critiche contemporanee alla "vita di corte". Alla fine la stessa morte di Sforza Almeni assume le proporzioni irreali di un paradosso cortigiano che nega tutti i valori affermati dal soffitto dipinto del suo palazzo.

L'esame del programma iconologico del salotto di Palazzo Almeni scopre l'intima relazione del progetto con la collaborazione artistica di Vasari e Bartoli. Alla luce di questa collaborazione occorre prendere in esame, per quanto riguarda la paternità e l'esecuzione dell'opera, soltanto Vasari e la cerchia di artisti operanti nella sua orbita. Un disegno autografo di Vasari per il tondo della Bontà si trova a Colonia. Il disegno, già quadrettato per essere tradotto in affresco, indica che Vasari con i suoi disegni sta dietro le quinte. Analoghi progetti vasariani per soffitti, generalmente non realizzati, consentono di attribuire a Vasari la struttura ornamentale del soffitto. Inoltre i singoli affreschi seguono le sue concezioni figurative, ben note attraverso altre opere. Tuttavia nell'esecuzione del soffitto sono palesemente presenti più artisti, e quindi mani qualitativamente diverse. Vasari stesso risulta interamente responsabile per due affreschi, quelli dell'Accuratezza e della Fede, e la sua mano si avverte in una qualche misura nella figura della Diligenza. Esaminando attentamente le divergenze fra il disegno preparatorio di Colonia per la Bontà e l'affresco di Palazzo Almeni, si ravvisa la mano di Cristofano Gherardi nell'affresco, come anche in quelli di Amor, Diligenza, Vigilanza, Prestezza e Perseveranza. L'affresco della Facilità



segue strettamente un modello di Vasari, noto attraverso vari disegni, ma nondimeno dimostra caratteri individuali ben marcati, che sembrano quelli propri a Marco da Faenza.

Il progetto per Palazzo Almeni si colloca negli anni 1554-1560, che sono quelli della collaborazione più attiva di Vasari con Bartoli. Per di più, data la partecipazione di Gherardi, rientrato in Toscana dopo quasi vent'anni di esilio soltanto nel 1554 e morto nel 1556, appare certa la realizzazione della maggior parte della decorazione in un arco di tempo molto limitato, negli anni 1554-1556.

In appendice sono stampati brani scelti di un testo finora non ricollegato al disegno di Vasari (Uffizi 394 Orn.) eseguito appositamente per il frontespizio allegorico della traduzione italiana di Cosimo Bartoli del "De re aedificatoria" di Alberti (1550). La descrizione molto estesa di un "gran quadro" nei "Ragionamenti accademici" di Bartoli svela quasi tutti i particolari oscuri del frontespizio, offrendo una nuova documentazione di un collegamento fra un'immagine figurativa e un testo scritto rilevante anche per lo studio disciplinare dell'iconologia.

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*Drawing by Harmen Thies, Florence: Fig. 2.*

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