



HOME

Giorgio Vasari's Fine Arts: Neoplatonic Visualization of Invention, Imitation and Beauty

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Fig. 1. Giorgio Vasari, Fine Arts, endpiece, *Vite*, 1550



Fig. 2. Giorgio Vasari, Fine Arts, frontispiece, *Vite*, 1568

During the sixteenth century, artists consulted emblematic and mythological manuals as a source for their visual conceits.^[1] With a moral overtone, these manuals contain verbal and visual representations of virtues, vices, passions and temperaments, revealing a Neoplatonic philosophy.^[2] This essay analyzes Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)'s assimilation of Neoplatonism in his artistic concepts of invention, imitation and beauty depicted as visual conceits in woodcuts of *The Fine Arts* in the *Vite* (1550 and 1568 editions, figs. 1 and 2) and in his paintings of Fame and the *Fine Arts* (1542 and 1560, figs. 3-6 and 7-11) in his homes at Arezzo and Florence. The conception for these visual designs reveal Neoplatonic influence based on Vasari's aesthetic and art theory.

Enkindled by this humanistic approach, Vasari summarizes his artistic intentions, aesthetic theory, and historical view of art in his writings and in his paintings. In *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori* (1550 and 1568 editions), he expounds his theoretical quest in some length in the prefaces, dedicatory letters and technical manual.^[3] In his artistic practice, he depicts images associated

with the Fine Arts in the frontispieces. Here, Vasari reveals his source of creativity, including conceits of invention, imitation and beauty, which in turn are inspired and derived from Marsilio Ficino's Neoplatonic philosophy.



Fig. 3. Giorgio Vasari, Painting, 1542, Casa Vasari, Arezzo



Fig. 4. Giorgio Vasari, Sculpture, 1542, Casa Vasari, Arezzo



Fig. 5. Giorgio Vasari, Architecture, 1542, Casa

Vasari's concept of creativity originates in God, whom he refers to as "Divine Architect of time and of nature" in the First Preface of the *Vite*. His view on God as the architect of the universe is based in the Bible of the Middle Ages and, in particular, in Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (I.17, 1. ro.3), where he says, "God, Who is the first principle of things, may be compared to things created as the architect is to things design (*ut artifex ad artificiata*)."^[4] In his *Self-Portrait* of 1565 at the Uffizi, Vasari depicts himself as an architect, standing in front a table where attributes of architecture and drawing instruments are visible. Not by whim, he points to an architectural drawing of his house at Arezzo.

Vasari's conception of creativity is further explained and elaborated on as historical construct composed of an organic scheme or historical progression. In the second preface, he defines history as "the true mirror of human life."^[5] This historical view is interpreted in the *Vite* in two distinct ways: in the trio of prefaces (*proemi*) and the biographies of artists (*Vite*). The prefaces present an almost cyclical view of history, determined by the laws of nature instead of by specific historical events, while the biographies (*vite*) explain the historical process in the evolution of each artist's accomplishments. Vasari visualizes the analogy of history with the mirror's



Fig. 6. Giorgio Vasari,
Poetry, 1542, Casa Vasari,
Arezzo



Fig. 7. Giorgio Vasari,
Painting, 1560s, Florentine
sala, Casa Vasari, Florence

reflection of human life in the *Endpiece* of 1550. In the imagery, the elliptical composition resembles the shape of a mirror or the shape of a cartouche with the *mascheroni* where female herms simulate the movement of the wheel of fortune. A well-known Medieval image is the *Wheel of Fortune* of 1372 in the pavement of the Duomo of Siena.^[6] Vasari's *Endpiece* may also allude to a type of honorific medal, similar to the Renaissance medal of Matteo de' Pasti's *Leon Battista Alberti* of 1446.

The structural aspects allude to the symbolic imagery depicted in the center of the composition – the Fine Arts (Sculpture, Architecture and Painting). Located at the bottom of the design, dormant and recumbent figures are awakened by Fame's sonorous trumpet and flaming torch. These figures represent the deceased artists who have excelled in their artistic careers by "mirroring nature" (imitating nature). The enlivened depiction of the personifications of the Fine Arts allude to one or more of their artistic accomplishments finally recognized by the efforts of Vasari. The motif of the Wheel of Fortune signifies the artistic efforts brought to light, even if time has passed, by the publication of the *Vite*.

In the 1568 edition, the center image of the *Title Page* has a square rather than an oval shape. Virgilian inscriptions are inserted around the square, asserting and reinforcing the significance of the artists' immortality.^[7] The imagery of the 1568 edition is more complex than the imagery of the 1550 edition, for example, an energetic Fame vigorously blows her triple trumpet, and numerous images depicting deceased artists arise from the ground.^[8]



Fig. 8. Giorgio Vasari, Sculpture, 1560s, Florentine sala, Casa Vasari, Florence



Fig. 9. Giorgio Vasari, Architecture, 1560s, Florentine sala, Casa Vasari, Florence

Earlier, in his house at Arezzo, in the Chamber of Fame, Vasari continues with the Quattrocento and Cinquecento tradition of immortalizing artists and their art with paintings of the personifications of the Fine Arts. He provides a general characterization of this ceiling in his autobiography: “I painted (on the ceiling) . . . all the Arts connected with design or dependent on design.” In the middle Fame, seated on a terrestrial globe, blows one golden trumpet with one hand and discards another into a fire with the other hand, this latter trumpet symbolizes slander. Around her are all the Arts, with their attributes. [9] In his Florentine house, in the walls of the *sala*, Vasari repeats the same imagery of the Fine Arts, but without the personification of Fame in the ceiling.

The Fine Arts or the Arts appear on the ceiling of the Chamber of Fame as Painting, Sculpture, Architecture and Poetry. A personification of the Fine Arts is common in the humanistic art of the Italian Renaissance with examples including Pisani’s pulpits, the reliefs on Giotto’s Campanile, the reliefs on the Ducal Palace in Venice, the lost frescoes of the Eremitani in Padua, the Spanish Chapel in Florence, and later the figures in the Tempio Malatestiano, Pollaiuolo’s Papal Tomb, and Dosso’s *Sala del Tribunale* in Trento. [10]

In describing the function of the Fine Arts, Vasari stresses the element of *disegno* (drawing or design) as the underlying quality that unites them. In the second edition of the *Vite*, he continues with this idea, explaining what he means by *disegno* and why it rules creation in the Arts: “Seeing that Design, the parent of our three arts, Architecture, Sculpture and



Fig. 10. Giorgio Vasari, Poetry, 1560s, Florentine sala, Casa Vasari, Florence



Fig. 11. Giorgio Vasari, Music 1560s, Florentine sala, Casa Vasari, Florence

Painting, has its origin in the intellect and draws out from many single things a general judgment, it seems like a form or idea of all the objects in nature. Afterwards, when it is expressed by the hands and is called Design, we may conclude that Design is none other than a visible expression and declaration of our inner conception and of that which others have imagined and given form to in their ideas.”^[11]

Vasari goes on to observe that in the Arts “the chief use (of design) in Architecture is because its designs are composed only of lines, which so far as the architect is concerned are nothing else but the beginning and the end of his art. In Sculpture, drawing (design) is of service in the case of all the profiles, because in going round from view to view the sculptor employs design when he wishes to delineate the forms which please him best, or which he intends to bring out in every dimension. In Painting, the lines are of service in many ways, but especially in outlining every figure, because when they are well drawn, and made correct and in proportion, the shadows and lights that are then added give the strongest relief to the lines of the figure and the result is all excellence and perfection.”^[12] Vasari visualizes these conceits in the Aretine Chamber of Fame, in the Florentine *sala* as well as in the *Vite*’s frontispieces of 1550 and of 1568.

The addition of Poetry to the realm of the Arts is most revealing, since it alludes to the Renaissance Neoplatonic concept of *furor poeticus*, poetic inspiration. This concept derives from the writings of the Neoplatonic philosopher, Ficino, who explains in his Orphic writings that there

are four forms of inspiration or *divine frenzy*: divine, prophetic, amorous and poetic. For Ficino, Orpheus is an exceptional poet because he possesses these Platonic *furors*, and in particular, one of these *furors*, *furor poeticus* or the frenzy of the poet,^[13] an intellectual force, which is intuitive, creative and contemplative.^[14]

In Cinquecento art, the paradigm for the pictorial representation of Orpheus/Apollo and the muses is Raphael's *Parnassus and Poetry (Numine Afflatur)*, in the ceiling of the *Stanza della Segnatura*. Some years after Raphael's rendering, the conceits of *ut pictura poesis* and *furor poeticus* become so popular that even Andrea Alciato and Vincenzo Cartari have an emblematic entry for it in their books.^[15] The artistic conception of *ut pictura poesis* fascinates Vasari, evidence his portrayal of the personification Painting, Poetry and Music several times in his homes in Arezzo and Florence.^[16] At Arezzo, in the Chamber of Apollo, the Muses and Apollo are jointly portrayed, and in the Chamber of Fame, Poetry is depicted among the Fine Arts, while Painting is drawing a portrait of a poet, Dante. In the Florentine *sala*, Vasari portrays a fellowship between the Liberal Arts, restating the concepts of *furor poeticus* and *ut pictura poesis* by including Poetry and Music as part of the realm of the Fine Arts.

In the Chamber of Fame, the concept of *furor poeticus* or poetic inspiration is manifested not only by the depiction of Poetry, but by the fact that all the Fine Arts are themselves seen to be in the process of creating an art form. And in his writings, Vasari relates the concept of

furor poeticus to the creation of visual art.

As Vasari states, “Many painters achieve in the first design (*disegno*) of their work, as though guided by a sort of inspirational fire (*furor poeticus*), something of the good and a certain measure of boldness; but afterwards, in finishing it, the boldness vanishes.”^[17] Vasari’s explanation of artistic creativity is based fundamentally on the Italian Renaissance tradition, which considers creativity to be a faculty present in all of human activity.^[18]

In his writings and visually, Vasari equates the *furor poeticus* with *furor artisticus* as he includes in the Aretine Chamber of Fame, Poetry among the Fine Arts. In the Florentine *sala*, he not only includes Personification of Poetry, but also adds the depiction of the Personification of Music in the realm of artistic inspiration. Years later, Vasari writes in *Ragionamenti*, “It is permissible for the brush to treat philosophical subjects as narrative, since poetry and painting, as sisters, use the same means.”^[19] Also years earlier, in his letter *De musica* to Canisianus, Ficino describes how singing and instrumental music start from the mind, the imagination and the heart of the player. Vasari captures in painting what Ficino is expressing in music.

The concept of *furor poeticus* and *ut pictura poesis* is restated in this *sala*, as the allegorical figure of Poetry is part of the realm of the Fine Arts, and the narrative stories illustrate the triumph of painting.^[20] The inclusion of the personification of Music to the Fine Arts adds a new dimension to Vasari’s interpretation of art. The Florentine *sala* portrays a fellowship between the Liberal Arts; their depictions suggest Vasari’s

awareness of the Cinquecento artist's need to cultivate the auditory and visual senses.[21]

These ideas about artistic creativity combine with the conception of poetic inspiration in relation to yet another central idea, *ut pictura poesis*: as is painting, so is poetry. Derived from Horace, the phrase is frequently employed by artists and theoreticians of the Cinquecento, including Leonardo, Dolce, Lomazzo, and Vasari himself. The idea of *ut pictura poesis* captures the complementary nature of poetry and painting, equating the inspiration of the poet with the imagination of the painter. Both are concerned with the imitation of nature, the painter through the use of visual elements line, color, tone, texture and shape the poet through words. Leonardo, commenting on the versatility of the painter, remarks about this parity: "And if a poet should say: 'I will invent a fiction with a great purpose,' the painter can do the same, as Apelles painted Calumny . . . If poetry deals with moral philosophy, painting deals with natural philosophy. Poetry describes the action of the mind, painting considers what the mind may effect by the motions. If poetry can terrify people by hideous fictions, painting can do as much by depicting the same things in action." [22] In his *Dialogue on Painting*, Dolce expressed similar sentiments, characterizing the poet as a *parlante dipintore*, a speaking painter; the painter as a *poeta mutolo*, a mute poet. [23] Years later, Vasari writes in *Ragionamenti*, "it is permissible for the brush to treat philosophical subjects as narrative, since poetry and painting, as sisters, use the same means" ("E lecito al pennello trattare le cose della filosofia

favoleggiando; atteso che la poesia e la pittura usano come sorelle i medesimi termini”).[24]

For Vasari, the notion of Fame or artistic recognition is associated with the artistic conception of *ut pictura poesis* as he visualizes it in the Aretine chamber and the Florentine *sala* by including Poetry in the realm of the Fine Arts. For example, in the Aretine chamber, Painting is depicting a portrait of a man holding a scroll – this man is the poet Dante – [25] whereas in the Florence *sala*, Vasari depicts Painting portraying an orator.

Furthermore, Vasari’s conception of artistic creativity is related to this theory of painting. He considers that there are two alternatives in a painter’s development or achievement of artistic creativity: imitation (*imitazione*) and invention (*invenzione*). [26] Imitation is the copying of art as a method of learning, whereas invention is independent of imitation and constitutes the means for conceiving artistic ideas. Imitation serves to guide and teach the artist in composing and creating perfection. For Vasari, imitation draws upon three different sources: the first two are copying visual forms from nature or copying from a model (*copia dal vero*), and the third is selecting images from one’s work (*imitare se stessi*).[27] He emphasizes that copying from nature is important for the artists so that they may learn to create forms that are alive.[28] It also helps artists learn how to draw in such a way that eventually they are capable of drawing anything from memory without the need of a model. In the Aretine chamber and Florentine *sala*, the Fine Arts appear to be creating from memory, as no model is visible.[29]

Vasari adds another intellectual faculty to imitation, the notion of *giudizio* (judgment). This is necessary when copying or selecting from nature, from one's work and from other masters in order to improve the artistic design. In doing so, artists' conceits are an improvement on nature, and artists may claim that they surpassed nature. Thus, for Vasari, artists must study not only nature, but also antiquity and other masters, so that they may learn how others acquire the experience of imitating nature.

The third aspect of imitation, where the artist copies or quotes from his own work, reveals as well the manner in which the Arts surpass nature. Vasari finds examples of this achievement in the works of Titian, Michelangelo and Raphael.^[30] In the Chamber of Fame, Vasari quotes from his own work of the Fine Arts in the Florentine *sala* in the depiction of the Fine Arts and in the frontispieces. In addition, the oval shape of the *ovati*, with the portraits of the artists, derives from the same shape of the *ovati* in the woodcuts with portraits of the artists from the second edition of the *Vite*. A unique study for the frontispiece in the collection of Anthony Blunt reveals Vasari's quest for *disegno* as well as his desire to integrate the Fine Arts with the relevant creative and artistic skill of the artists: in Vasari's case, for example, adding the personification of painting and architecture to the cartouche of his vita. In addition, in his collection of artists' drawings for his book on *Libro de' Disegni*, Vasari once again designs a cartouche with the artist's attributes, surrounding the imagery with actual drawings of the artist.

Around the Chamber ceiling and

Florentine *sala*, each image of the Fine Arts is creating a work of art through a fusion of imitation and invention. Here, the viewer finds Vasari's pictorial commentary on the methods and classification of the Fine Arts, which he later elucidates in words in the prefaces of the *Vite*. Thus, Vasari visualizes his aesthetic theory of art.

Vasari's aesthetics (the word aesthetic derives from the Greek *aesthesis*—sensation) are concerned with the nature of the beautiful as it exists in art and nature as well as with the physicality and spirituality of beauty.^[31] For Vasari, apprehension of a visual form in nature must arouse a sensation of beauty. The notion of beauty exists at two levels: physical and spiritual. The physicality of beauty is perceived in the painted image and Vasari's spirituality of beauty is reflected in the evocation of the visual experience. His philosophy of art depends upon the philosophical and poetical tradition of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento – in short, the Italian Renaissance restatement of Neoplatonism. In accordance with the Neoplatonic theory of beauty, Vasari understands beauty to be a divine creation, writing "He [God] fashioned the first forms of painting and sculpture in the sublime grace of created things."^[32] Consequently, he refers to beauty as symmetry and proportion of form and associates the beautiful with Plotinus's concept of radiance or splendor, an element that results from the quality of unity inherent in the object.

Correspondingly, Vasari absorbs from Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium" about Love*, the ancient

Greek philosopher's definition of beauty "as the splendor of *divine goodness* present everywhere, personal beauty expresses an interior moral goodness," as well as Ficino's explanation of beauty as "a process of ascent from sensual cognition of earthly beauty to the apprehension of the immortal ideal of beauty itself."^[33] By appropriating from Ficino the interconnection between love and beauty, Vasari also embraces Ficino's notion of the essence of beauty that consists in proportion. This is the ancient doctrine of the symmetric and pleasant relationship of individual parts. According to Vasari, the origin of beauty derives from order and proportion (*la bellezza nasce da ordine e proporzione*), and he relates the concept of beauty with goodness (*bellezza e bontà*).^[34] Vasari is obviously following Ficino. In the *Symposium*, Ficino discusses how many things are required to create a beautiful body, such as arrangement (means the distance between parts), proportion (means quantity), and aspect (means shape and color). He further analyzes how the proportioning of the parts have their natural position: "That the ears be in their place, and the eyes and nose, etc., and that the eyes be at equal distances near the nose...proportion of the parts... preserve the proper portion of the whole body."^[35]

Thus, Vasari's aesthetics derives jointly from the classical conception of physical beauty and from the Neoplatonic notion of spiritual beauty. That is to say, for Vasari the classical concept of beauty means a creation of a beautiful image from the combination of parts of the body commensurately and proportionately arranged as a whole, as represented in

his paintings of *The Studio of Zeuxis* (1548) in his house at Arezzo, and *The Studio of Apelles* (1560) in his house in Florence.^[36] In contrast, for Vasari the Neoplatonic spiritual beauty meant the manifestation of vivacity, radiance, and grace in the image perceived through reason and sight in order to move the human soul and delight the spirit, as illustrated in the frontispieces of the *Fine Arts*, the *Toilette of Venus* of 1555, and *St. Luke Painting the Virgin* of 1562.^[37]

Vasari describes his depiction of Fame as having “the trumpet in the mouth, the one of fire in hand, and the world below” (“la tromba in bocca, quella di fuoco in mano, il mondo sotto”),^[38] and as “a female figure holding two trumpets, one of gold, and the other of fire, and seated about the world” (“una femmina con due trombe in mano una d’oro, l’altra di fuoco, e che segga sul mondo”).^[39] Vasari further explains that the personification of Fame “sings and praises the deeds of the virtuous.”^[40] In part, his conceit for the allegory draws upon the traditional Cinquecento depiction, which represents Fame as winged, bare-breasted, seated or standing on a globe and, most importantly, holding up two trumpets (Polidoro da Caravaggio and Domenico del Barbieri), or blowing a trumpet (Francesco Salviati).^[41] These elements combine in Vasari’s painting to provide Fame’s affirmation of success. Fame’s act of blowing is reminiscent of Alciato’s Emblem 119, *Ex literarum studiis immortalitatem acquiri*, in which Neptune or Triton blows a conch. Alciato’s composition is encircled by a snake (*oroburos*).^[42] However, Vasari’s deviation from this traditional depiction is as marked as his adherence to it. In

addition to holding the trumpet, which affirms achievement, Vasari's Fame also casts away a flaming trumpet, a sign of the rejection of slander. The latter appears to be solely a Vasarian invention, as he explains in his autobiography: "Fama suona una tromba d'oro, gettando via una di fuoco, finta per la maldicenza" ("Fame blows a golden triumphet and discards one with fire, symbol of slander"). According to Ripa, the figure of Slander (*Maledicenza*) is portrayed as holding a flaming torch in each hand, symbolizing the fomentation of slander by hate.^[43] Vasari's Fame thus takes on a dual role of the affirmation of Fame and Glory on the one hand and the rejection of Slander on the other hand. His concern with slander surely derives from the sort of reflections proffered by Virgil, with whom he was familiar. Virgil discusses the fickleness of fame and the difficulty of overcoming it: "Fame can as quickly depart or detract from one's life as it can enter and benefit it in the first place. One danger is the propensity of others to slander those who achieve fame. If fame is to be sustained, then the threat of slander must be nullified."^[44] It is interesting to note here that the artists portrayed beneath the depiction of Fame each manages to sustain the fame they achieve in their respective lives. In her affirmative role, the allegorical figure of Fame is blowing the golden trumpet in the direction of the allegorical figure of Painting. Assuming this not accidental, Vasari refers to his early success as a painter as being due to his training with Michelangelo and Andrea del Sarto, whose portraits are seen in the *ovati* located below Fame and adjacent to Painting. In the frontispieces, Vasari continues with the elaboration of Fame honoring the artists who embrace the Fine

Arts.

The composition of the frontispieces is composed of three parts: at top is the depiction of Fame blowing two or three horns, recalling images of Fame blowing trumpets from the Aretine chamber, Francesco Salviati's drawing of *Fame* of 1547, and Michelangelo's trumpeters in the *Last Judgment* of 1541 in the Sistine Chapel. In the middle of the composition, second part, are seated the Fine Arts on a mountaintop. This top symbolizes Mount Parnassus or the Mount of Muses where the Fine Art residing as in Raphael's *Parnassus* of 1510, in the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican. The last part is below the Fine Arts, where Vasari depicts an abyss filled with nude human bodies, being awakened by the loud sound of the trumpets, an allusion to a call for recognition of their artistic achievements. This section visually recalls the calling on a Judgment Day, as depicted in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* of 1541-43, in the Sistine Chapel, and Giulio Clovio's *Last Judgment* of 1545, from the Farnese Book of Hours. Although the last judgment association appears to be negative, Vasari's depiction is benevolent and alludes to the eternal recognition of artists' achievements. Displaying the new conception of art and the new role of artists, Vasari honors the virtue of Fame among the Fine Arts and recognized artists. At the center of the frontispieces, Fame blows her golden trumpet toward the Fine Arts, to acknowledge their creative significance as well as those artists who successfully pursue them.

Vasari's depiction of the Fine Arts in the paintings and in the frontispieces

expresses the Cinquecento artist's sentiments regarding the aim, value, and status of both the artist and the arts. Art is no longer considered a craft based on imitation and technique, but rather a noble humanistic endeavor requiring, as with poetry, invention. Likewise, the artist is to be regarded not as artisan, but as a creative, educated being and a member of a humanist society. The artist who would fully pursue this enhanced status must endeavor to demonstrate the qualities and capacities presented by Baldassare Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* (1517). Castiglione notes that it is the touch of fame and glory upon one's life that establishes a reputation and immortality.^[45] Among the requirements securing and enhancing one's status as a gentleman are knowledge of the liberal arts, especially painting, the construction of a memorial—preferably in painting—to one's achievements,^[46] and the possession of personal nobility achieved through one's ancestry, deeds and personal attributes.^[47] In many respects, the paintings and frontispieces are a testimony to this social and cultural upgrading of art and the artist. It demonstrates that Vasari heeds the counsel of Castiglione, Vasari providing evidence of his own nobility, as manifested by the fruits of his talent, in representing himself surrounded by the Fine Arts in his houses and less evident in the frontispieces and endpieces of the *Vite*.

Figura - Studi sull'Immagine nella Tradizione Classica, n° 1, 2013.

[1] The most important of these are Francesco Colonna's *Hypnertomachia Poliphili* (Venice 1499), Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica* (Venice 1505), Andraea Alciato's *Emblemata* (Basel 1529; Lyon 1531, 1546, 1546; and Venice 1551), Lelio Gregorio Giraldi's *De Deis Gentium* (Paris 1548), Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* (Paris 1551/1558), Pierio Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (Venice 1556), Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo dell'Imprese Militari et Amoroze* (Venice 1556), and Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini delli Dei degl'Antichi* (Venice 1556-57). See also Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery* (London/Rome: Phaidon, 1941, 1947 and 1964), Introduction, and Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), pp. 279–327.

[2] Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery*, II, pp. 5, 36 and 139; George Boas' translation of *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* (New York: Bolligen Series, XXIII, 1950, based on the 1505 version published by Aldus Manutius in Venice); and Daniel Russell, "Alciati's Emblems in Renaissance France," *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXXIV (1981), p. 549. Russell defines the importance of Alciato's book in Cinquecento art and literature: "[It] served as a manual to train readers in a particular approach to artistic artifacts. It taught them to participate actively in the moralizing of visual art, and it showed them how to fragment texts—mainly poetic or dramatic texts; it would appear—into short passages that they could summarize into titular paroemia."

[3] The title of the 1550 edition is *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et*

scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri nell'edizione per I tipi di Lorenzo Torrentino Firenze, 1550. This earlier title is changed in the edition of 1568 to *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*. See the invaluable comparative study of Rossana Bettarini and Paola Barocchi on the 1550 and 1568 editions of Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori* (Florence: Sansoni, 1971-1986). Hereafter referred as Bettarini-Barocchi. For this note, see Bettarini-Barocchi I, p. xvii.

[4] *Bible moralisé*, Paris, c. 1220-1230, folio 1 verso, in BL Harley MS 1527, f.27.

[5] See Bettarini-Barocchi, III, pp. 3-20.

[6] The imagery depicts the King enthroned at its summit, and three other figures clasping it at opposing points. Four philosophers of antiquity are portrayed in hexagons placed at the four corners of the panel: Epictetus, Aristotle, Euripides, and Seneca, each with an unwound scroll inscribed with sayings about fortune.. See Bruno Santi, *The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena* (Florence: Scala, 1982), Introduction.

[7] “Hac sospite nunquam hos periisee viros, vitos avt morte fatebor” (“While history lives, it would never be said that artists’ work has perished”). See Liana De Girolami Cheney, “Giorgio Vasari’s Studio, Diligenza ed Amorevole Fatica,” in *Reading Vasari*, Anne B. Barriault, ed. (London: Wilson Publishers, 2005), pp. 259-75.

[8] With the imagery of resurrected bodies, no doubt, Vasari is visually referring to his highly praised Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment* of 1541-43,

in the Sistine Chapel.

[9] Gaetano Milanesi, ed., *Le vite de' più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, et Architettori* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1970–1974), VII, p. 671. Herewith cited as Vasari-Milanesi.

[10] J. von Schlosser, “Giustos Fresken in Padua und die Vorläufer der Stanza della Segnatura,” *Jahrbuch der Kunst, Sammlungen des Allerhochsten Kaiserhauses* (Vienna 1896), pp. 13–100; P. D’Ancona, “Le rappresentazioni allegoriche delle arti liberali,” *L’Arte* (1902), pp. 13, 221–27, 269–89 and 370–85, pp. 137, 211, 269 and 370); Raymond van Marle, *Iconografie de l’art profane au moyen-âge et à la Renaissance*, Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1932), II, p. 203-6); L. Réau, *Iconographie de l’Art Chrétien*, Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1955–1959), I, pp. 154–162; and F. Gibbons, *Dosso and Battista Dossi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 52–53, for an interesting discussion on the Liberal Arts.

[11] Vasari-Milanesi, II, 93–107; L. Macle hose and G. B. Brown, *Vasari on Technique*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), pp. 205–207); M. Winner, “Poussin Selbstbildnis im Louvre als kunsttheoretische Allegorie,” *Römanisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* (1983), pp. 417–48.

[12] Vasari-Milanesi, II, pp. 93–107.

[13] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology: Concerning the Immortality of the Soul* (1474, VIII, p. 16) quoted by Panofsky in Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), p. 137, n. 22. See Marsilio Ficino,

Commentary on Plato's Symposium, trans. S. R. Jayne (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1944); and Clement Salaman, ed. *Meditations on the Soul: Selected Letters of Marsilio Ficino* (Rochester, VT: Inner Tradition International, 1996), pp. 64-75. Another probable source is Leon Battista Alberti's treatise *On Painting* where he describes painting as highest among the Arts because "it contains a divine force." See *L. B. Alberti, On Painting*, ed. and trans., R. Spencer, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 90–91; Rudolph and Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 15; and R. Klein, *La forme et l'intelligible* (Paris: Gallimard Editions, 1970), Introduction.

[14] Ficino, *Platonic Theology* (1474, VII, pp. 14–15) quoted by Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology*, p. 140, n. 36.

[15] Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Lyon 1546), p. 61. See also, Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Basel 1529), Italian ed. and trans. by Guilliame Roville as *Diverse impresse accomodate a diverse moralita con versi che i loro significati dichiarono tratte da gli Emblemata dell' Alciato* (Lyon, 1549); Peter M. Daly, ed. *Andreas Alciatus' Index Emblematicum* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 2 vols.; and Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagine delli Dei de gl'Antichi* (Venice 1556-1557).

[16] Liana De Girolami Cheney, *The Homes of Giorgio Vasari* (London/New York: Peter Lang 2006), pp. 91-106 and 158-62.

[17] Vasari-Milanesi, V, p. 260.

[18] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology: Concerning the Immortality of the Soul*

(1474, VII, pp. 14–15), quoted by Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology*, p. 140, n. 36.

[19] Vasari-Milanesi, VIII, p. 18: “E lecito al pennello trattare le cose della filosofia favoleggiando; atteso che la poesia e la pittura usano come sorelle i medesimi termini.”

[20] Wolfram Prinz, “Vasari’s Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* (1966), p. 22). It has been argued whether the Louvre drawing of Poetry was actually designed for Poetry in the Florence *sala*. See C. Monbeig-Goguel, *Vasari et son temps: Inventaire General des dessins Italiens du Musée du Louvre* (Paris: Editions des Musée Nationaux, 1972). The stylistic similarities between the drawing and the painting suggest their relationship. The Uffizi drawing of hands could also be a study for Poetry.

[21] Ficino’s *Platonic Theology: Concerning the Immortality of the Soul* (1474, VIII, p. 16), quoted by Panofsky in *Studies in Iconology*, p. 137, n. 22, and André Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et L’Art* (Geneva: Droz, 1996), pp. 81-89.

[22] Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 52.

[23] *Dolce’s Dialogo della Pittura*, trans., M. Roskill (New York: New York University Press, 1968), pp. 97 and 239, and Gian Paolo Lomazzo’s *Trattato dell’ arte della pittura, scultura et architettura* (1584), summarizes Leonardo’s and Dolce’s conceptions of the relationships between poetry and painting. See R. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: Humanist Theory of*

Painting (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 1, n. 2; G. B. Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura* (1587), p. 23, comments on this fashion: "Per cio si chiama la pittura, Poetica che tace, et la Poetica, Pittura che parla, et questa l'anima dover esser, et quella il corpo, dissimile pero quin questo si tengono, perche, l'una imita con i colori, l'altra con le parole. Ma certamente che qui quanto all' inventione predetta et quin quanto alla Verita sono d'una stessa propriet  et d'uno effetto medesimo." Torquato Tasso refers as well to the poet as a *pittore parlante* (speaking painter) in *Del Poema Eroico* (1587). And in a letter to Vasari, Annibale Caro refers to the artist as a poet and painter: "L'inventione mi rimetto a voi, ricordandomi d'un altra somiglianza, che la poesia ha con la pittura, et di pi , che voi siete cosi poeta come pittore, et che ne l'una et ne l'altra con pi  affettione et con pi  studio s'esprimono i concetti et le idee sue proprie che d'altrui." See Karl Frey ed., *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris* (Munich: George M ller, 1923), I, p. 220. Letter 112 dated May 10, 1548. See also K. Borinski, *Die Antike in Poetik und Kunsttheorie von Ausgang des klassischen Altertums bis auf Goethe und Wilhelm von Humboldt* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1914–1924), I, pp. 30, 97, 175, 183, 238; II, pp. 106, 125–127, on the history of the dispute about *ut pictura poesis* and L. Mendelsohn, *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi Due Lezioni and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), pp. 109–142.

[24] Vasari-Milanesi, VIII, p. 18.

[25] Compare Vasari's portrait of Dante with Raphael's in the *Parnassus* of 1512-

14, Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican.

[26] Vasari-Milanesi, II, pp. 95–96. See Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 60–63, and *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans., K. Jex-Blake and E. Sellers, New York: Macmillan, 1968), Pliny 35:84).

[27] Wolfram Prinz, “I ragionamenti del Vasari sullo sviluppo e declino delle arti,” in *Il Vasari: Storiografo e Artista* (Florence: Istituto di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1976), pp. 857–67.

[28] Vasari-Milanesi, I, p. 99, and Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy*, pp. 88–90.

[29] Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy*, p. 90.

[30] Vasari-Milanesi, IX, I, p. 18; IV, 84; and IV, p. 83.

[31] Philip P. Wiener, ed. *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1974), Vol. III, pp. 510-12; Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 89-91; and, Laura Vestra, “Love and Beauty in Ficino and Plotinus,” in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*, ed., Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Toronto: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986), pp. 179-80.

[32] Vasari-Milanesi, Preface I, p. 93.

[33] Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino*, p. 90. Ficino explains how Beauty is the splendor of the divine countenance, pp. 89-91; Vestra, “Love and Beauty in Ficino and Plotinus,” p. 185, and Liana De Girolami Cheney, *Botticelli's Neoplatonic Images* (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1993), pp. 32-34.

[34] Vasari-Milanesi, VII, p. 710 and V, p. 386.

[35] Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 93-95.

[36] Liana De Girolami Cheney, "Vasari's Depiction of Pliny's Histories," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, Vol. XV, 1989, pp. 97-120, and, Fredrika Jacobs, "Vasari's Vision of the History of Painting: Frescoes in the Casa Vasari, Florence," *Art Bulletin*, 66, 1984, pp. 399-416.

[37] Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, pp. 129-41.

[38] Alessandro del Vita, *Lo Zibaldone di Giorgio Vasari* (Rome: R. Istituto Archeologico e Storia dell'Arte, 1938), pp. 22-24.

[39] *Del Vita, Lo Zibaldone*, p. 108.

[40] Vasari-Milanesi, VII, pp. 60, 350.

[41] Polidoro da Caravaggio's *Fame* from the *Salone* of the Villa Lante (now in the Bibliotheca Hertziana); Domenico del Barbieri's *Gloria* (engraving); and Francesco Salviati's *Fame* from the fresco cycle of the *Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani* in the Palazzo.

[42] Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1549), Emblem 109.

[43] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Erna Mandowsky (New York: George Olms Verlag, 1970), p. 302.

[44] Ripa, *Iconologia*, p. 142, quoting Virgil. "La fama e un mal, di cui non pui veloce e nessun altro, e di volubilezza sol vive, & caminando acquista forze, piccola al timor primo, e poi s'inalza fino alle stelle."

[45] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 92.

[46] Castiglione, pp. 96–97.

[47] Castiglione, p. 56.

