

**‘The Outer Man Tends to be a Guide to the Inner’:
The Woodcut Portraits in Vasari’s Lives as Parallel Texts**

by
Sharon Gregory

Giorgio Vasari is perhaps best known as the author of the *Lives of the Artists*, a book of artists’ biographies first published in Florence in 1550. A second edition of the book, revised and expanded, appeared in 1568. In a passage in the second edition devoted to Flemish artists, Vasari commented on a letter he had received from a Flemish correspondent, Domenicus Lampsonius, who begged him to ‘add to [the *Lives*] three treatises on sculpture, painting and architecture, with drawings of figures, in order to explain and teach matters of the arts’.¹ Vasari made it clear that this had not been his intention; rather, he had wanted to produce a book about artists themselves, and their lives and works. For that reason he also provided the second edition of the *Lives* with portraits of the artists.

Vasari had supplied for both editions of the *Lives* designs for title pages and endpieces that were intended to elucidate the primary purpose of the book. In the title page for the first edition, published in 1550, the figures of Apollo and Eternity support a stage set with the curtain opening onto a view of Florence, the city Vasari believed had for centuries produced the most excellent artists. The endpiece is an allegory of Fame and the Arts. Fame, with a lighted torch and a trumpet, flies through the air above female personifications of the three arts of *disegno* (painting, sculpture, architecture). At their feet lie dead men. Title page and endpiece together enclose the text, like visual embodiments of Vasari’s Preface and

¹ Vasari-BB, VI, pp. 228-9. Vasari’s comment on Lampsonius’s letter (which has not survived) appears in a passage following the ‘Life of Giulio Clovio’.

My essay is based upon a chapter in my PhD dissertation, ‘Vasari, Prints and Printmaking’, London: Courtauld Institute of Art, 1999. My research was generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom. Papers on this subject were presented at the Universities Art Association of Canada Annual Conference in Montréal (1996), the Annual Conference of the Renaissance Society of America in Vancouver (1997), and at the Leonardo da Vinci Society Symposium in London (1999). I am grateful for advice offered by several people, including my PhD adviser Patricia Rubin; David McTavish; Martin Kemp; Charles Hope; and Rodney Palmer.

Conclusion. In both these passages, Vasari stated his intention to ‘protect artists from second death through the written word’ and to free them from ‘dust and oblivion’.² The 1568 edition of the *Lives* saw the introduction of a new title page and a new endpiece. The endpiece is an elaboration and clarification of the first version: now, as Fame blows her trumpet, she actually awakens the dead artists to judgement. A Latin inscription, provided by Vasari’s adviser Vincenzo Borghini, expresses the idea that as long as Vasari’s history lived it could never be said that the artists had truly died, nor that their works had remained buried.³

Other scholars have explored the meaning of the title pages and endpieces of both editions of the *Lives* as visual analogues to statements in the text - a means of announcing the import and purpose of the *Lives*.⁴ I believe that the artists’ portraits, which appeared for the first time in the 1568 edition, can, in a similar fashion, also be read as parallel texts.

In Renaissance Italy, the main purpose of collections of lives of illustrious men and women was, as it had been in antiquity, to provide models of moral behaviour to be imitated by the reader.⁵ The genre of exemplary biography, established by ancient writers such as Cicero, Plutarch and Suetonius, was re-established for the Renaissance by Petrarch, in his *De viris illustribus*. These examples and many written during the Quattrocento were available in manuscript and published form in Vasari’s time.⁶ Their subjects were typically persons of great stature: rulers and pontiffs, warriors, philosophers and saints. It has been amply

² J. Kliemann, ‘Su alcuni concetti umanistici del pensiero e del mondo figurative vasariani’, in *Giorgio Vasari: tra decorazione ambientale e storiografia artistica*, Florence 1985, pp. 73-82. Vasari-BB, I, pp. 9-10: ‘dalle...penne delli scrittori...per difenderli il più che io posso da questo seconda morte e mantenergli più lungamente che sia possibile nelle memorie de’ vivi’; VI, p. 411: ‘per...fare immortali questi artefici gloriosi, che io semplicemente ha tolti alla polvere et alla oblivione’.

³ ‘HAC SOSPITE NVNQVAM HOS PERIISSE VIROS, VICTOS AVT MORTE FATEBOR’. A document in Borghini’s hand explains the meaning of the inscription: see J. Kliemann in *Giorgio Vasari: principi, letterati e artisti nelle carte di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. C. Davis, M. Davis, L. Corti, J. Kliemann, exh. cat. Florence 1981 (hereafter Davis et al.), p. 239.

⁴ For the 1568 edition, see Kliemann in Davis et al. (1981), pp.238-42; and M. Warnke, ‘Die erste Seite aus den “Viten” Giorgio Vasaris: der politische Gehalt seiner Renaissancevorstellung’, *Kritische Berichte*, V,1977, p. 16.

⁵ E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, Chicago 1981, pp. 15-20, 393-404.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 393-99. For printed editions of numerous categories of biography, see P. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History*, New Haven and London 1995, pp. 161-62, notes 68-70.

demonstrated by scholars including Patricia Rubin and Paul Barolsky that Vasari's intention was to create a similar heroic biography for the visual artist; indeed, Vasari himself states in the *Lives* that the purpose of history is 'to teach men how to live and make them prudent'.⁷

One of Vasari's friends and advisers, the historian Paolo Giovio, had in the 1520s begun collecting portraits of illustrious historical figures. In the 1530s he began to build a villa at Como, intended in part as a home (the 'Museum') for his collection, which by the time of his death in 1552 numbered over four hundred portraits. The portraits were displayed with pieces of parchment below, on which eulogies were written.⁸ Giovio published two volumes of the eulogies, in 1547 and 1551, without illustrations, though he said that he would have liked to include them.⁹ It seems that Vasari, too, partly as a result of Giovio's influence, had intended to illustrate the first edition of the *Lives* with portraits of the artists, but was unable to do so, perhaps due to a combination of lack of time and financial constraints.¹⁰ In the 1568 edition he achieved this goal, and his book became part of the humanist tradition of illustrated biographies.¹¹

In the second edition of the *Lives*, there are 144 oval portraits, each at the beginning of the respective artist's biography. Each portrait is enclosed within an elaborate architectural frame. In addition there are eight empty frames, heading the biographies of Pietro Cavallini, Giovanni da Ponte, Barna of Siena, Duccio, Taddeo di Bartolo, Antonio da Correggio, Pietro

⁷ Rubin, pp. 155-61; P. Barolsky, *Michelangelo's Nose*, University Park 1990; Vasari-BB, III (Preface to the Second Part), p. 4: 'il che è proprio l'anima dell'istoria, e quello che invero insegna vivere e fa gli uomini prudenti...'

⁸ L. Klinger, 'The Portrait Collection of Paolo Giovio', PhD dissertation, Princeton 1991; a useful short history is P.L. de Vecchi, 'Il Museo Gioviano e le "Verae Imagines" degli uomini illustri', in *Omaggio a Tiziano: La cultura Milanese nell'età di Carlo V*, Milan 1977, pp. 87-96.

⁹ *Elogia veris clarorum virorum imaginibus apposite quae in Musaeo Ioviano Comi spectantur* (Venice 1547) and *Elogia virorum bellica virtute illustrium veris imaginibus supposita quae apud Musaeum spectantur* (Florence 1551). See also Davis et al., p. 239.

¹⁰ Evidence to this effect has been presented by: W. Prinz, 'La seconda edizione del Vasari e la comparsa di "vite" artistiche con ritratti', *Il Vasari*, XXI, 1963, pp. 5-7; and C. Davis in Davis et al. (1981), p. 214.

¹¹ See P.O. Rave, 'Paolo Giovio und die Bildnisvitenbücher des Humanismus', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, I, 1959, pp. 119-54.

Torrigiano and Marco Calavrese. Vasari explains in the Preface to the first part of the *Lives* that he was unable to find any surviving portraits of these artists.¹²

There are six variants of the frame, the blocks for which were used repeatedly with new portraits inserted into them. The frames contain allegorical figures and other attributes referring to the skills of the artists portrayed within them: some refer to painting, sculpture or architecture alone; some to a combination of two of these arts; some to all three arts of *disegno*.¹³ For example, the frame surrounding the self-portrait of Vasari, painter and architect, contains a female figure shown in the act of painting; below, *putti* hold devices of architecture. The frame around the portrait of the architect Cronaca, however, contains a reference to architecture alone, in the form of an allegorical figure on the pediment. The relationship between individual portrait and frame can sometimes be puzzling: for example, Lorenzo Ghiberti's portrait was printed within a frame signifying painting. Such anomalies were apparently the fault of the printer. In 1568, the same year that the second edition of the *Lives* was published, the Giunti press in Florence also issued a volume containing solely the portraits in their frames: the *Ritratti de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architetti* In this extremely rare book, many of the anomalies have been corrected, presumably by Vasari or Borghini: Ghiberti, for instance, is now ensconced in the frame appropriate to a sculptor.¹⁴

The woodcut portraits, their frames, and the title page and endpiece for the *Lives* were cut in Venice. Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of the woodcutter. Vasari refers in the *Lives* only to a 'maestro Cristofano'. A blank space was left after the name, indicating that

¹² Vasari-BB, II (Preface to Part One), p. 32: 'e se d'alcuno mancasse il ritratto, ciò non è per colpa mia, ma per non si essere in alcuno luogo trovato'. He reiterates this disclaimer in two of the *Lives* of these artists: *ibid* (Life of Pietro Cavallini), p. 189: 'Il ritratto suo non si è mai trovato per diligenza che fatta si sia: però non si mette'; *ibid*, IV (Life of Correggio), p. 54: 'Ho usato ogni diligenza d'avere il suo ritratto: e perché lui non lo fece e da altri non è stato mai ritratto, perché visse sempre positivamente, non l'ho potuto trovare'.

¹³ The portraits and their frames were first analysed by W. Prinz, *Vasaris Sammlung von Künstlerbildnissen*, Florence 1966. Additional clarification of the meaning of the frames was provided by Charles Davis in Davis et al., pp. 258-59.

¹⁴ The significance of the *Ritratti* ... was discovered by Charles Davis, as in note 13 above. Of the only two copies of the book known to me, one is in the Harvard Rare Book Library and the other at Villa I Tatti in Florence.

Vasari may have hoped to find out the surname and fill it in later. The surviving correspondence between Vasari and Cosimo Bartoli, who was in Venice and acted as go-between, is no more illuminating.¹⁵ H.W. Frey thought the artist in question might be Cristofano dell' Altissimo, a painter sent in 1552 by Duke Cosimo to copy some of the portraits of illustrious men in Paolo Giovio's Museum, but this is improbable, not least because Vasari was in charge of that project and so knew the artist's surname: indeed, elsewhere he refers to him by his full name.¹⁶ Gaetano Milanesi thought the block cutter might have been Cristoforo Coriolano (Christopher Lederer); the blank left by Vasari had been filled in with the name of Coriolano in the Bolognese reprinting of the *Lives* in 1647.¹⁷ Paul Kristeller suggested that the woodcutter could have been either Coriolano or Cristoforo Chrieger, also called Cristoforo della Guerra.¹⁸ Most recent scholars tend to ascribe them to Coriolano, though this attribution is by no means certain.

The fact that the blocks were cut in Venice suggests that no craftsman of comparable ability could be found in Florence. Vasari had faced a similar situation during the preparation of the 1550 edition, published by Torrentino in Florence. In January of that year, Pierfrancesco Giambullari, who was helping to see the book through publication in Vasari's absence, wrote to Vasari in Rome to ask his opinion of a print that had been made after Vasari's design by a German artist at Torrentino's press. If Vasari was not pleased with it, the

¹⁵ Vasari-BB, V (Life of Marcantonio), p. 25: 'Per ultimo basta vedere gl'intagli di questo nostro Libro dei ritratti de' pittori, scultori et architetti, disegnati da Giorgio Vasari e dai suoi creati, e stati intagliate da maestro Cristofano [...], che ha operato et opera di continuo in Vinezia infinite cose degne di memoria'. For letters from Cosimo Bartoli to Vasari, see K. Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, II, Munich 1930, p. 107 (19 August 1564); and pp. 347-48 (13 September 1567).

¹⁶ H.W. Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, III, Munich 1940, p. 52, note 3. Cristofano dell' Altissimo was sent to Como in 1552 and stayed until 1558. Vasari provided in the 1568 edition of the *Lives* a list of the portraits copied for Cosimo's collection. In his discussion of the members of the Accademia del Disegno, Vasari-BB, VI, p. 239, Vasari noted: 'È stato anco discepolo, prima del Puntormo e poi del Bronzino, Cristofano dell' Altissimo pittore, il quale ... fu mandato dal signor duca Cosimo a Como a ritrarre dal Museo di monsignor Giovio molti quadri di persone illustri...'

¹⁷ Vasari-Milanesi, V, p. 441, note 2.

¹⁸ U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler*, 37 vols. Leipzig 1907-50, VI, p. 533 (Chrieger) and VII, pp. 415-16 (Coriolano).

alternative was to send the design to Venice to be cut. In the event, the title page and endpiece were both cut in Venice, though we do not know by whom.¹⁹

One of the most perplexing aspects of the portraits in the second edition of the *Lives* is that in five instances, the portrait of one artist was copied and cut again on another block. In the case of the pairs comprised by the portraits of Luca della Robbia and Cecca, and of Giuliano Bugiardini and Spinello Aretino, the portraits face in the same direction, but in the other three pairs (Paolo Romano and Cosimo Rosselli, Girolamo da Carpi and Daniele da Volterra, and Girolamo da Treviso and Giovannantonio Sodoma) they are mirror images.²⁰ In the reversed pairs, the woodcutter presumably pasted the first version of the woodcut portrait onto the block and cut directly through it, resulting in the reverse image. In each of these five pairs, the second portrait is of a markedly inferior quality, appearing very schematic. The hair and beards in most of the woodcuts appear curly and springy, typical of Vasari's drawing style, while in the copy versions these features are arranged in ill-considered clumps. The ears, too, become distorted in the copies. It seems to me that these copies can hardly have been cut by the hand responsible for the remainder of the woodcuts. It is possible that the Florentine Giunti employed a woodcutter, considerably less skilful than Cristofano, and used him to provide the copies when some portraits were discovered, for whatever reason, to be missing. On the other hand, these spurious portraits also appear in the corrected volume of *Ritratti*, which may indicate that neither Vasari nor Borghini saw any need to correct them.

In the preface to the *Lives*, Vasari stated that the woodcut portraits he had gathered would be a better guide to artists' likenesses than could be provided by descriptions, and the scholarship surrounding them has focused on their accuracy as portraits.²¹ In 1966, Wolfram

¹⁹ For the letter from Giambullari of January 1550, see K. Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, I, Munich 1923, p. 247. Cosimo Bartoli wrote on 23 February 1550 to say that two woodcuts had arrived from Venice: *ibid*, p. 265.

²⁰ Prinz (1966), p. 36, discovered four of these pairs; the Girolamo Treviso – Sodoma repetition was first noted in S. Gregory (1999), p. 101, note 109.

²¹ G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori nelle redazione del 1550 e 1568*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, 6 vols. Florence 1966-87. (hereafter Vasari-BB, II, p. 32: 'E nel descrivere le forme e le fattezze degl'artefici sarò breve, perché i ritratti loro, i quali sono da me stati messi insieme con non minor

Prinz identified most of Vasari's sources for the 144 portraits, calculating that ninety-five of them have some claim to be considered authentic likenesses.²² Charles Hope later argued that, even in most of the remaining cases, Vasari looked to sources that were at least contemporary with the individuals depicted, in which their portraits might reasonably have been expected to appear.²³ It should be noted, however, that the sources for some sixty-one of the portraits have not yet been identified.²⁴ In the cases where such identifications have been made, it seems that Vasari was not always scrupulously careful, as sometimes the portrait of the wrong artist was used as a likeness. For example, as Hope pointed out, the woodcut of Alfonso Lombardi resembles the self-portrait of Titian now in the Prado, though it is not an exact copy.²⁵ He suggested that Vasari in this instance simply gave his publisher the wrong drawing, and that the portrait at the head of Titian's Life is 'presumably someone else'. However, the woodcut of Titian (fig. 1) is also taken from a self-portrait, now in Berlin (fig. 2). Vasari's woodcut reproduces Titian's physiognomy closely (in reverse), although the resemblance is disguised by Vasari's changes to Titian's costume.

Given the elaborate allegorical meanings associated with title pages, endpieces, and even the frames for the portraits, it seems reasonable to suppose that the portraits might also have been intended by Vasari to fulfil a similar function - not merely to record likenesses. Of the eighty-three portraits for which the sources are known, some twenty-five (over a quarter)

spesa e fatica che diligenza, meglio dimostrerano quali essi artefici fussero quanto all'effigie che il raccontarlo non farebbe giamai'.

²² W. Prinz (1966), p. 40.

²³ C. Hope, 'Historical Portraits in the "Lives" and in the Frescoes of Giorgio Vasari', in *Giorgio Vasari: tra decorazione ambientale e storiografia artistica*, Florence 1985, pp. 321-38.

²⁴ By my count, the sources for 83 portraits can be identified. Many were discovered by Prinz; other sources have been suggested by L. Raghianti Collobi in 'Il "Libro de' Disegni" ed i ritratti per le "Vite" del Vasari', *Critica d'Arte*, XVIII, 1971, pp. 37-64. These scholars sometimes disagree; I discuss their observations in more detail in Gregory (1999), pp. 101-02, note 110. See also David Franklin, 'The Source for Vasari's Portrait of Morto da Feltre', *Print Quarterly*, XIV (1997), pp. 79-80. Franklin has additionally proposed a more likely source for Vasari's portrait of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, in 'Towards a new chronology for Ridolfo Ghirlandaio and Michele Tosini', *Burlington Magazine*, CLX (1998), p. 447. I have found the source for the portrait of Giovanni Antonio Sogliani precisely where Vasari said his self-portrait could be found: in Sogliani's *Adoration of the Magi*, painted for S. Domenico in Fiesole (Vasari's woodcut is based on the man with hands folded in prayer behind the young magus on the left). See the Life of Sogliani, Vasari-BB, IV, p. 440.

²⁵ Hope, p. 337.

have been altered in some way. Vasari seems, by means of these changes, to have invested some of these woodcuts with visual clues that were intended to convey meaning - meaning related to the content of the biographies.

It must be stressed that all the drawings for the portraits were made by Vasari or by his assistants under his supervision: he says so in the *Life of Marcantonio*, and the surviving evidence corroborates his statement.²⁶ The surviving sheets of preparatory drawings, at the Uffizi, contain heads of Lorenzo di Bicci and Orcagna (no. 638F); Andrea Tafi and Gaddo Gaddi (no. 642F recto); and Giottino (no. 642F verso).²⁷ These drawings served as models for those sent to Venice for use by the woodcutters. They are typical of Vasari's technique for chalk drawings, and the captions are also in Vasari's hand. As Licia Ragghianti Collobi noted, comparison of these drawings with the corresponding woodcuts clearly shows that the woodcutter was faithful to every detail in the drawings, down to the smallest buttons of the garments.²⁸ Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that the woodcuts accurately reflect Vasari's intentions for the portraits: neither the physiognomy of the individuals represented nor their attire was altered by the craftsman who cut the blocks.

Physiognomy and clothing were Vasari's two main devices for adding meaning to a portrait. Vasari's knowledge and use of physiognomy was not unusual. Several treatises on physiognomy appeared in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many based on ancient texts such as pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomica*. The first discussion of physiognomy in a work of art theory was a chapter in Pomponius Gauricus's *De sculptura*, published in Florence in 1504. For example, the association of leonine features with heroic portraits was apparently widespread. Peter Meller has argued that, among Quattrocento artists, Uccello, Donatello, Alberti and Verrocchio were influenced by the 'physiognomical doctrine'. Among Vasari's contemporaries, Baccio Bandinelli and Benvenuto Cellini were also certainly aware of

²⁶ Vasari-BB, V (*Life of Marcantonio Raimondi*), p. 25: the portraits were 'disegnati da Giorgio Vasari e dai suoi creati'.

²⁷ Reproduced in L. Ragghianti Collobi (1971), pls 37, 41, 45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

physiognomic theory, and Cellini made explicit use of leonine features in his bronze portrait bust of Duke Cosimo de' Medici (Florence, Bargello).²⁹

Clothing provided information about social status that would have been instantly comprehensible to contemporaries. Vasari's awareness of the importance of appropriate dress is revealed in the Life of Bastiano da Sangallo, where he criticizes the artist Jacone's brutish behaviour and clothing in contrast to Vasari's own cultivated manners and velvet apparel, concluding that 'the outer man tends to be a guide to the inner, and to reveal what our minds are'.³⁰ Vasari sometimes used clothing in the portraits to provide information about the artist portrayed, signalling themes that would be confirmed in the text of his biography. Not all of the changes he made to his sources can be described as meaningful in this way; some were surely simple attempts to avoid the ridiculous effect of bizarre costumes. For example, in the source for the woodcut of Jacopo Palma il Vecchio, Palma's *Adoration of the Magi* (Milan, Brera), the man from whom Vasari drew the portrait wears an exotic tall, furry hat, while Vasari's version of the headgear is a simple unadorned cap.³¹ But other instances reveal much more interesting transformations that cannot be so easily explained. Vasari altered details of the clothing in at least sixteen other portraits, and it is very likely that similar changes were made in additional cases where the original source is no longer known. I will discuss only a few of these instances here.³²

A straightforward example is the identification of an artist with the religious order to which he belonged by means of showing him in clerical costume. Thus, Lorenzo Monaco, Fra

²⁹ P. Meller, 'Physiognomical Theory in Renaissance Heroic Portraits', in *Studies in Western Art*, vol. II: *The Renaissance and Mannerism*, Princeton 1963, pp. 53-69; A. Chastel, *The Myth of the Renaissance 1420-1520*, Geneva 1969, 'Physiognomy and Portraiture', pp. 145-6.

³⁰ Vasari-BB, V, p. 404: 'il di fuori suole essere indizio di quello di dentro e dimostrare quali sieno gl'animi nostri'.

³¹ For reproductions of these images, see Prinz (1966), p. 130.

³² Other examples are discussed in greater detail in Gregory (1999), pp. 104-15. To summarize changes made to the known portrait sources: two instances involve the removal or addition of clerical attire; in three cases, Vasari added hats; in four cases he added a shirt collar resembling a ruffle of lace or linen; in another four cases he added fur collars. To one portrait he added a garment resembling a toga; to another a chain with a cross pendant around the neck. In another case he removed chains from around the neck and also removed a fur collar.

Angelico, Fra Bartolommeo and Fra Giovanni Montorsoli all appear in their monastic habits. Significantly, Fra Filippo Lippi does not (fig. 3). Vasari cited a self-portrait of Fra Filippo in the frescoes in Prato cathedral, in which he noted that the painter wore a friar's habit.³³ Another self-portrait of Filippo clothed in his monastic habit can be seen in the *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Uffizi. Vasari used this painting as his source for the friar's portrait, but instead of the actual self-portrait by Fra Filippo, he used the portrait of the kneeling donor, Francesco Maringhi (fig. 4). Vasari was probably misled by the inscription beside Maringhi ('is perfectit opus') thinking that it referred to the painter as opposed to the patron. Maringhi was a canon of San Lorenzo and chaplain of the convent at Sant' Ambrogio, and in the *Coronation* he also wears clerical robes. In his Life of Fra Filippo, Vasari recorded the friar's sexual exploits, claiming that 'he was a slave to his amorous appetite'.³⁴ Vasari's stories may in the main have been true. It seems that Fra Filippo, appointed to the chaplaincy of a convent in Prato, improperly shared his house with seven nuns from 1456-1458. One of the nuns, Lucrezia, bore him a daughter and a son (the painter Filippino Lippi). Later he and Lucrezia left their religious communities, but Filippo continued to wear his habit and signed his paintings as Frater Philippus. Vasari, on the other hand, seems to have believed that the friar had at the age of seventeen 'boldly thrown off his monastic habit'.³⁵ Therefore when he came to design the woodcut portrait of Fra Filippo, he removed the clerical clothing and substituted secular attire, though the friar still displays the tonsure.

Two other figures also wear clerical garments: Sebastiano del Piombo and Donato Bramante. Wolfram Prinz was disturbed by Sebastiano's clerical cloak and cap and thought that Vasari had inappropriately used the portrait of a bishop or a cardinal for his woodcut.³⁶

³³ Vasari-BB, III (Life of Fra Filippo Lippi), p. 337. Vasari mistakenly cited the *Feast of Herod* as the scene in which he appears 'in a prelate's black habit'; the self-portrait is actually in the *Mourning over the Body of St. Stephen*.

³⁴ Vasari-BB, III, p. 331: 'et era tanto perduto dietro a questo appetito [venereo]'.
³⁵ Ibid., p. 329: 'Per il che senetentosi lodar tanto per il grido d'ognuno, animosamente si cavò l'abito d'età di anni XVII'.

³⁶ Prinz (1966), p. 135.

But Vasari expressly tells us that when Sebastiano was appointed to the office of the Piombo, he took up the friar's habit.³⁷ The office of the Piombo, a papal appointment given to a celibate man, entitled its bearer to wear the bishop's *mozzetta*.³⁸ This must also be the reason for the habit worn by Bramante (who, as Vasari noted, was appointed to the same office) in his woodcut portrait, probably based on the supposed portrait of Bramante as Euclid in Raphael's *School of Athens*.³⁹ One of Vasari's primary themes in the *Lives* is the high social status that artists were able to attain. In these two examples he alludes in the woodcut portraits to an artist's having received an important papal appointment; and in both instances the fact was also noted in the artist's biography.

Clothing could also reveal Vasari's view of an artist's character. Vasari's Life of Piero di Cosimo describes the painter as a talented observer of the natural world but also as a solitary, abstracted, misanthropic man who lived a life 'more beastly than human'.⁴⁰ Piero ate only when he was hungry, instead of at the proper hour; he allowed his garden to grow without pruning; and he 'liked to see everything wild like his own nature'.⁴¹ The source for Vasari's portrait woodcut is not known, but it is surely significant that the woodcut itself shows Piero dressed in very rustic clothing - a simple smock and an outdoor labourer's or gardener's hat (fig. 5). Similar floppy felt hats can be seen in Andrea del Sarto's *Parable of the Vineyard*, in SS. Annunziata in Florence (now destroyed; an anonymous drawing reproduces the design), and in a drawing by Girolamo Muziano of the *Noli me tangere*, with Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen in the guise of a gardener. This drawing was in Vasari's *Libro de' Disegni*.⁴² Vasari

³⁷ Vasari-BB, V (Life of Sebastiano), pp. 95-96.

³⁸ L. Raghianti Collobi (1971), p. 50.

³⁹ Vasari-BB, IV (Life of Bramante), p. 80. It is not certain that Raphael's fresco was Vasari's source; however, the woodcut resembles the figure of Euclid far more than it does any other known portrait. If this was his source, then Vasari also raised the head slightly to provide a viewpoint somewhat less foreshortened than the head of Euclid in the fresco.

⁴⁰ Vasari's Life of Piero, Vasari-BB, IV, pp. 59-71, refers constantly to the painter's solitariness and abstraction; for his bestial life, see p. 61: 'teneva una vita più tosto bestiale che umano'.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 61-2: 'si contentava veder salvatico ogni cosa come la sua natura'.

⁴² The anonymous drawing after Andrea's fresco is reproduced in J. Shearman, *Andrea del Sarto*, Oxford 1965, pl. 37. For Girolamo Muziano's drawing, see L. Raghianti Collobi, *Il 'Libro de' disegni' del Vasari*, II, Florence 1974, pl. 431.

frequently expressed reservations about artists who withdrew from society and who lived in a manner more plebeian than refined. This is alluded to in the woodcut but made explicit in Piero's biography, where Vasari complained that Piero 'should have made known his great talent in such a way that he would have been adored; whereas instead, on account of his bestial life, he was thought to be mad'.⁴³ Further, according to Vasari, Piero was inclined to become abstracted and to daydream, to the extent that when a subject was being discussed, it was often necessary to recount the argument for him, as his mind had in the meantime wandered. Vasari says that he was 'always building castles in the air'.⁴⁴ Thus Vasari's portrait shows Piero with his eyes half closed, as though lost in dreamy and unproductive thought.

An interesting comparison can be made between Piero's biography and portrait and those of Leonardo da Vinci. In their Lives, Vasari draws pointed parallels between the two artists: both are said to have been obsessed with the natural world, to have painted fantastic monsters, and to have failed to discipline their talent. Vasari claims that Piero used to look at the stains on walls and find there battle scenes and landscapes - something that Leonardo in his notebooks actually recommends.⁴⁵ However, while Piero, in Vasari's opinion, led his life in an uncivilized manner, Leonardo was the very model of the courtly artist, urbane and sociable. Whereas Piero died alone, his body being found later at the foot of the stairs, Leonardo died, according to Vasari, in the arms of the King of France.

Vasari's Life of Leonardo concentrates on his intellectual pursuits and scientific study of nature: even in his youth, he would confound his mathematics teacher with difficult questions; at a more mature age, he turned his attentions to the properties of herbs, the motions of the heavens, and to the anatomies of the horse and man.⁴⁶ Vasari wrote that 'there was

⁴³ Vasari-BB, IV, p. 62: 'E se Piero non fusse stato tanto astratto e avesse tenuto più conto di sé nella vita che egli non fece, arebbe fatto conoscere il grande ingegno che egli aveva, di maniere che sarebbe stato adorato, dove egli per la bestialità sua fu più tosto tenuto pazzo.'

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 60.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 62. For Leonardo's notation, see M. Kemp and M. Walker, eds, *Leonardo on Painting*, London 1989, p. 222. S. Fermor, in *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction, invention, and fantasia*, London 1993, pp. 26-8 and 35-6, shows how Vasari's Life of Leonardo provides a counterpoint to that of Piero.

⁴⁶ Vasari-BB, IV (Life of Leonardo), pp. 16, 19, 27.

infused in that brain such grace from God, and a power of expression in such sublime accord with the intellect and memory that served it ...that he vanquished with his discourse and confuted with his reasoning every valiant wit'.⁴⁷

Vasari's woodcut portrait of Leonardo (fig. 6) was probably based upon a likeness of the artist that had been reproduced by Cristofano dell'Altissimo from a painting in Paolo Giovio's collection (fig. 7). The painted likeness had its original source in a red chalk drawing of Leonardo that was then in the collection of Francesco Melzi. It shows Leonardo in profile, with a long white beard. Unlike its source, however, Vasari's woodcut provides Leonardo with a cap and also with a decidedly piercing gaze, in contrast to Piero's dreamy expression: both serve to underline Leonardo's resemblance to depictions of Aristotle and other ancient philosophers.⁴⁸ For example, the pen and ink drawing of a philosopher by the young Michelangelo, now in the British Museum, is very similar. The cap and long beard are also features of the portrait of Bastiano da Sangallo, of whom Vasari wrote

he would speak with great gravity, slowly and sententiously, so that a company of craftsmen gave him the name of Aristotle, which, moreover, sat upon him all the better because it appeared that according to an ancient portrait of that very great philosopher and confidant of nature, Bastiano closely resembled him.⁴⁹

Social status and laudable attributes of character are also alluded to in the portrait of Michelangelo, shown wearing an elaborate and expensive costume of fur and brocade. Michelangelo is presented as a gentleman artist, capable of being on good terms with popes

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 17: 'era in quello ingegno infuso tanta grazia da Dio et una dimostrazione sì terribile, accordata con l'intelletto e memoria che lo serviva...che con i ragionamenti vinceva e con le ragioni confondeva ogni gagliardo ingegno'.

⁴⁸ The resemblance of the Melzi drawing of Leonardo (Windsor 12726) to portraits of Aristotle was pointed out by J. Roberts in the exhibition catalogue *Leonardo da Vinci*, London: Hayward Gallery 1989, p. 46. Patricia Rubin pointed out that Vasari's Life of Leonardo was the life of a philosopher in 'What Men Saw: Vasari's Life of Leonardo da Vinci and the Image of the Renaissance Artist,' *Art History* XIII, 1990, pp. 35-46. She drew attention to the similarity between the Leonardo portrait and images of sages in fifteenth-century world chronicles.

⁴⁹ Vasari-BB, V (Life of Bastiano da Sangallo), p. 393: 'Nel che fare parlando egli con gravità, adagio e sentenziosamente, gli fu da una schiera di virtuosi artefici posto il soprannome di Aristotile: il quale gli stette anco meglio, quanto pareva che, secondo un antico ritratto di quel grandissimo filosofo e segretario della natura, egli molto il somigliasse'.

and princes. His attire is notable because of its extreme improbability: surely this cannot be the dress adopted by an artist who was notoriously parsimonious, and who cared so little about clothing or personal comfort that he was described by both Vasari and Condivi as wearing dogskin buskins on his legs for months at a time, so that when he finally took them off, his own skin came off with them.⁵⁰

Brocade in particular seems to have been associated with courts and the nobility. In their portraits, the courtly rulers of northern Italian cities are frequently seen in brocaded garments. For example, the members of the inner court of the Gonzaga family wear brocade in Mantegna's frescoes in the Camera Picta (Mantua, Palazzo Ducale); so do Galeazzo Maria Sforza in the portrait by Piero del Pollaiuolo (Florence, Uffizi), Ludovico Maria Sforza in the painting attributed to Boltraffio (Milan, private collection), and Lionello d'Este in the Pisanello portrait in Bergamo (Galleria dell'Accademia, Carrara). Closer to home for Vasari was Bronzino's famous portrait of Eleanora da Toledo with her son Giovanni (Florence, Uffizi). When in 1549 Duke Cosimo I and Eleanora commissioned Bronzino to paint their portraits to be sent to Cardinal Granvelle, they allowed that, for the sake of convenience and speed, Eleanora should *not* be shown wearing a rich brocade, but that her dress should be of 'some other patterned cloth which will make a fine show'.⁵¹

In letters of the 1520s and 30s, the poet Pietro Aretino revealed his passion for rich brocade fabrics and the associations of high rank that they held for him. In one instance he thanked Federigo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua for his gift of sumptuous cloth, pleased that a nobleman should judge him 'worthy to wear the clothing of princes'.⁵² The wearing of

⁵⁰ Vasari-BB, VI (Life of Michelangelo), p. 122: 'Alle gambe portò invec[c]hiando di continue di pelle di cane sopra lo ignudo i mesi interi, che, quando gli voleva cavare, poi nel tirargli ne veniva spesso le pelle'; A. Condivi, *Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti*, ed. G. Nencioni, Florence 1998, p. 63: 'più volte ha dormito vestito e con li stavaletti in gamba, quali ha sempre usati sì per cagion del granchio, sì per altri rispetti, e è stato qualche volto tanto a cavarsegli, che poi insieme con li stivaletti n'è venuta la pelle, come quella della biscia'.

⁵¹ Letter from Pagni to Riccio, 21 October 1549, from G. Pieraccini, *La stripe de' Medici di Caffaggiolo*, Florence 1924-25, II, p. 56.

⁵² Letter of 11 May 1529, P. Aretino, *Il Primo Libro delle Lettere*, ed. F. Nicolini, Bari 1913, p. 19: 'Né mi son tanto rallegrato del dono per la ricchezza sua, quanto de l'aver voi, che principe sète, giudicatomi degno

brocade by persons of lesser status could be a matter for derision. In his *Life of the Florentine sculptor and painter Dello di Niccolò Delli*, Vasari described the artist going to work in Spain, where he became honoured and wealthy. When he returned to Florence and rode through the goldsmiths' quarter wearing brocade, he was mocked by his childhood friends for his pretensions.⁵³

Another letter by Aretino sheds light on the symbolic value of brocade as an indicator of nobility of character. Writing to thank another patron for his gift of rich clothing, he stated that it 'comprised a gift more fitting to your greatness than to my lowliness, which nevertheless does not blush to be seen wearing such garments, thanks to the *virtù* which elevates it ...'.⁵⁴ In other words, though brocade could not normally be worn by people of the lower classes, genius and virtue could elevate one's station and permit this form of dress.

Michelangelo's nobility of character was stressed repeatedly in Vasari's life of the artist. Not only was Michelangelo born to an ancient family, but he was also 'an exemplar sent by God to the men of our arts, that they might learn from his life the nature of noble character'.⁵⁵ Vasari noted that despite Michelangelo's frugality, he was not avaricious and generously gave away many works of art. He helped the poor, secretly provided dowries, and enriched his servants, on one occasion giving his servant Urbino two thousand crowns all at once, 'an act such as is generally left to great emperors and pontiffs'.⁵⁶ He counted among his friends many great persons, a number of whom were listed by Vasari.

di portare gli abiti dei principi'. Aretino describes the clothes, which included a black velvet robe with a lining of cloth-of-gold, and a brocade jerkin.

⁵³ Vasari-BB, III, p. 40.

⁵⁴ Letter of 21 January 1530, to Count Massimiano Stampa, Nicolini (1913), pp. 23-4: '... dono conveniente a la grandezza vostra più che a la bassezza mia, la quale non si vergogna a esser vista ornate di robbe tali per amor di la virtù che l'alza ...'.

⁵⁵ Vasari-BB, VI (*Life of Michelangelo*), pp. 4-5, for Michelangelo's noble birth; and p. 122: 'Certamente fu al mondo la sua venuta...uno esempio mandato da Dio agli uomini dell'arte nostra, perché s'imparrassi da lui nella vita sua i costumi, e nelle opere come avevano a essere i veri et ottimi artefici'.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-15: 'donò [to Urbino] scudi dumila in una volta, cosa che è solita da farsi per i Cesari e Pontefici grandi'.

The only other artist to be dressed in brocade is Vasari's friend Michele da Sanmichele, who is, significantly, also described as being of noble character if not of noble birth. He was 'honourable in his every action', and 'more courteous than any man has ever been, to such an extent that he no sooner heard the needs and desires of his friends than he sought to gratify them...nor did any person ever do him a service that was not repaid many times over'.⁵⁷ Vasari provided a personal anecdote: he once gave Michele a drawing, and later Michele sent to Vasari's mother 'a quantity of *robe* [a word that can mean 'goods' or actual 'clothing'] beautiful and honourable enough to be the gifts of a very rich nobleman'.⁵⁸ Vasari then listed a number of noblemen and princes who were Michele's friends; the only artist to be included among these prestigious persons was Michelangelo himself. Thus, brocade in Vasari's woodcut portraits seems intended to indicate both the very high social standing of an artist, as borne out by his personal associates, and also the artist's profound nobility of character.⁵⁹

Clothing could even be a clue to the stylistic nature and content of an artist's work. Andrea Mantegna, for example, strove to emulate antique statuary, to the extent that, as Vasari has his teacher Squarcione say, his figures looked 'like marble statues'.⁶⁰ The source Vasari cited for his woodcut was a portrait on Mantegna's grave in Sant'Andrea in Mantua.⁶¹ While the bronze relief on the grave portrays Mantegna with a completely bare chest, Vasari provided him with draperies: in his woodcut portrait, Mantegna wears a toga (figs. 8, 9).

⁵⁷ Vasari-BB, V (Life of Michele da Sanmichele), p. 374: 'Fu Michele di costumattissima vita et in tutte le sue cose molto onorevole'; p. 375: 'Fu dunque Michele cortese sopra quanti uomini furono mai, con ciò fusse che, non si tosto sapeva il bisogno e desiderio degl'amici, che cercava di compiacergli, se avesse dovuto spendere la vita; né mai alcuni gli fece servizio che non ne fusse in molto doppii ristorato'.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 'trovò il San Michele aver molto innanzi mandato a sua madre...una soma di robe così belle et onorate, come se fusse stato un ricchissimo signore'.

⁵⁹ That Vasari's use of brocade was not meant only to refer to personal wealth is evident from its absence in the portraits of other wealthy artists – notably, for example, Raphael and Titian.

⁶⁰ Vasari-BB, III (Life of Mantegna), p. 549: 'non avevano quelle pitture somiglianza di vivi ma di statue antichi di marmo'.

⁶¹ Vasari visited Mantua in 1542, and may have seen Mantegna's grave at that time. However, he mentioned the bronze portrait only in 1568; see Vasari-BB, III, p. 555.

Mantegna's antiquarian interests are clearly evident from his paintings, and it seems that they led Vasari to consider it appropriate to associate him with this ancient Roman garment.

In seven of the woodcut portraits, the artists wear fur collars. In three of these cases (the portraits of Cronaca, Simone Mosca and Michelangelo), Vasari's precise source is no longer known. In the other four cases, the fur collar was added by Vasari.⁶² All are artists for whom Vasari seems to have had exceptional esteem, a category which, of course, also includes Michelangelo. Among them is the French stained-glass painter Guillaume de Marcillat, Vasari's first teacher in the visual arts. Lorenzo Ghiberti and Masaccio are the sculptor and painter who helped to initiate Vasari's second age of art; and Polidoro da Caravaggio was an esteemed pupil of Raphael. A study of the biographies of the seven fur-clad artists reveals that they had much in common. All are described by Vasari as being absolute masters of their primary field of activity. All had studied and learned from works of art that they had seen in Rome, and all except Marcillat had, according to Vasari, actually contributed in important ways to the rediscovery and revival of antiquity.⁶³ Vasari's esteem for these artists and his assessment of their contributions to the history of art through their studies in Rome can fruitfully be contrasted with his opinion of the only artist from whom he deliberately removed a fur collar: Titian. In the self-portrait in Berlin, Titian wears a mantle with a fur collar and chains bearing the insignia of the knighthood granted to him by Charles V. Neither is present in Vasari's woodcut (figs. 1, 2). In his biography of Titian, and elsewhere, Vasari states that Titian, as excellent as he was, would have been a much greater artist had he spent more time in Rome studying the work of great ancient and modern masters.⁶⁴

⁶² The sources are cited by Prinz (1966), pp. 72-75, 114-15, 125-26. I disagree with Prinz concerning Ghiberti's portrait, as I will explain later.

⁶³ Vasari-BB, III (Life of Ghiberti), pp. 75-6, 88; *ibid.*, (Life of Masaccio), pp. 124, 128; *ibid.*, IV (Life of Guillaume de Marcillat), pp. 221, 223; *ibid.*, (Life of Cronaca), pp. 234, 236; *ibid.*, (Life of Polidoro da Caravaggio and Maturino), pp. 456-60; *ibid.*, V (Life of Simone Mosca), pp. 337-38.

⁶⁴ Life of Titian, Vasari-BB, VI, p. 157: 'se Tiziano in quel tempo fusse stato a Roma et avesse veduto le cose di Michelagnolo, quelle di Raffaello e le statue antiche, et avesse studiato il disegno, arebbe fatto cose stupendissime...'

In most instances where Vasari's source for a portrait is known, he made no major changes to it. As his adjustments to clothing were usually significant, it seems reasonable to assume that where changes occur in other aspects of the portraits - the position of the subject's head, or his physiognomy - then some intimation about the subject may likewise have been intended by Vasari.

In a few of the portraits, the heads are seen in profile, whereas Vasari's sources were either sculptural (thus presenting a variety of possible views) or two-dimensional images showing the face in three-quarter view. For example, Vasari's source for the portrait of Lorenzo Ghiberti was almost certainly the bronze self-portrait head on the Gates of Paradise. Wolfram Prinz postulated a lost painting of Ghiberti as Vasari's source.⁶⁵ However, Vasari's woodcut shares so many characteristics with the bronze bust that such a hypothesis is unnecessary: both have the firmly-set mouth and small chin, the bald crown surrounded by a fringe of hair, and the sharply arched eyebrows that cause pronounced creases in the flesh of the forehead. In order to have actually seen the bronze head in profile, as the woodcut presents it, Vasari would have had to adopt an unusual viewing point, standing pressed against the wall of the Florentine Baptistery. A profile portrait, in the context of the printed book of the Cinquecento, was almost certain to bring to mind the numerous representations of antique portrait medals that illustrated volumes by scholars like Andrea Fulvio and Enea Vico.⁶⁶ Vasari shared with many of his contemporaries an interest in antique medals and artists who revived their manufacture; he also singled out Vico's books for praise.⁶⁷ Vasari praised Ghiberti for having been the first sculptor to look closely at antique works of art and, by

⁶⁵ Prinz (1966), pp. 72-3.

⁶⁶ Vico published several books of engravings of ancient medals, beginning with *Imagini con tutti i riversi trovati et le vite de gli imperatori* (Parma 1548), including addresses to the reader by Antonio Zantani. Andrea Fulvio's *Illustrium imagines* (Rome 1517), purports to contain reproductions of ancient coins, though many are the author's inventions.

⁶⁷ For Vasari's interest in medals, see for example the Life of Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello, Vasari-BB, III, p. 368; Life of Francesco Francia, *ibid.*, p. 582; and Life of Valerio Vicentino...and Other Engravers of Cameos and Gems, *ibid.*, IV, pp. 619-30. He cites Vico's books in the Life of Marcantonio Raimondi, *ibid.*, V, p. 11.

imitating them, to aid in the revival of the good aspects of ancient sculpture.⁶⁸ His representation of Samson on the Gates of Paradise was, according to Vasari, as good as anything made in the time of the ancients; indeed, the doors as a whole were ‘the most beautiful work in the world, whether ancient or modern’.⁶⁹ And, probably not coincidentally, Vasari also mentioned that Ghiberti had made portrait medals of his friends, in emulation of ancient examples.⁷⁰

A similar change in viewpoint arises in the case of Baldassare Peruzzi, whose self-portrait drawing, Vasari’s probable source, shows a three-quarter view rather than the profile of Vasari’s woodcut. Vasari comments on Peruzzi’s antiquarian interests, noting that he had studied antique remains in Rome and had even begun a book on Roman antiquities with a commentary on Vitruvius, a copy of whose writings Peruzzi had illustrated with small drawings in the margins.⁷¹

Luca della Robbia is also shown in profile. Vasari’s source for Luca’s portrait may have been, as Wolfram Prinz thought, a similar sculptural work, but it is more likely that it was the drawing in Vasari’s *Libro*, identified by him as a self-portrait made by Luca while looking in a mirror.⁷² Licia Ragghianti Collobi has suggested that this self-portrait can be identified as the metalpoint drawing at Chatsworth (no. 704), now attributed to Lorenzo di Credi, of a man in three-quarter view; the resemblance, encompassing the style of headdress, the arched eyebrow, the hooked nose, and the jowls, is close.⁷³ In any case, the drawing that Vasari owned cannot have shown a profile view; if it was his source for the woodcut, the

⁶⁸ Vasari-BB, III (Life of Ghiberti), p. 88: ‘fu il primo che cominciasse a imitare le cose degli antichi Romani, delle quali fu molto studioso, come esser dee chiunque desidera di bene operare’.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 94: ‘e tutte bellissime: come uno Sansone ignudo che...mostra quella perfezione che maggior può mostrare cosa fatta nel tempo degli antichi’; p. 100: ‘si può dire che questa opera abbia la sua perfezione in tutte le cose, e che ella sia la più bella opera del mondo e che si sia vista mai fra gli antichi e’ moderni’.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 77: ‘Diletossi anco di contraffare i conii delle medaglie antiche, e di naturale nel suo tempo ritrasse molti suo amici’.

⁷¹ Vasari-BB, IV (Life of Peruzzi), p. 324. For his self-portrait drawing, see L. Ragghianti Collobi (1974), pl. 350.

⁷² Vasari-BB, III (Life of Luca della Robbia), p. 173.

⁷³ Ragghianti Collobi (1971), fig. 15, pp. 40 and 60, note 3.

profile aspect was his own contribution. Whereas Vasari made claims about reviving and equalling antiquity on behalf of Ghiberti and Peruzzi, he made no such claim for Luca della Robbia. On the other hand, Luca was the inventor of a new technique of terracotta glazing, and created a method of working in sculpture that was, as Vasari commented, completely unknown to the ancient world. ‘By inventing this art’, wrote Vasari, ‘he gained immortal glory and everlasting fame’.⁷⁴ His invention may also have gained him a medallic portrait in the *Lives*.

Circumstantial evidence that innovation beyond ancient achievement was a criterion sufficing for a profile portrait is provided by Vasari’s comments about Antonello da Messina, also shown in profile in the woodcuts. Vasari, unfortunately, failed to cite a source for his portrait, so that we have nothing to compare it to and cannot be certain that the profile aspect is Vasari’s intervention. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Antonello was credited by Vasari with the introduction of oil painting to Italy. He was

greatly honoured in his obsequies by the craftsmen [in Venice], by reason of the gift bestowed by him on art in the form of the new manner of colouring...There is no writer to be found who attributes this manner of colouring to the ancients, and if it could be known for certain that it did not exist among them, this age would surpass all the excellence of the ancients by virtue of this perfection.⁷⁵

Thus, profile views in the woodcut portraits, where not taken from sources rendering the subject in profile, may be pointers to the artists’ abilities either to revive antiquity or to surpass it through technical skill and innovation.

In other portraits, the alteration of the source may be subtle but decisive in terms of the viewer’s response to the subject. The woodcut portrait of Francesco Salviati was derived from his self-portrait in the fresco of the *Triumph of Furius Camillus* in the Sala dell’Udienza of

⁷⁴ Vasari-BB, III, p. 173: ‘per che, risolutosi di tornare a godersi nella patria ricchezze che si aveva con fatica, e sudore guadagnate, et anco lasciare in quella qualche memoria...poiché l’aver trovato Luca queste nuove sculture – le quali non ebbero, che si sappia, gl’antichi Romani’.

⁷⁵ Vasari-BB, III (Life of Antonello), pp. 308-9: ‘Fu dagl’artefici nell’essequie molto onorato per il dono fatto all’arte della nuova maniera di colorire...La qual cosa tanto più debbe essere in pregio, quanto manco si trova scrittore alcuno che questa maniera di colorire assegni agl’antichi. E se si potesse sapere che ella non fusse stata veramente appresso di loro, avanzarebbe pure questo secolo l’eccellenze dell’antico in questo perfezzione’.

Florence's Palazzo Vecchio (figs. 10,11). Salviati represented himself looking back over his shoulder to meet the viewer's gaze. Vasari altered the portrait so that in his woodcut Salviati is seen from the front; the angle of his head is also changed so that instead of looking downward at the viewer in a bold and confident way, he now looks upward. The result of this angle of view, in combination with the placement of his pupils in the very corners of his eyes, is that Salviati seems to look out at the viewer furtively, as if he is at the same time attempting hurriedly to turn away. Salviati is given a swarthy complexion by means of dark shadowing on his face but also through the startling brightness of the whites of his eyes, a characteristic that can fruitfully be compared with the protagonist of Dürer's engraving, *Melencolia* (which Vasari knew).⁷⁶ In fact, Vasari's portrait of Salviati seems to aim to emphasize the melancholic and solitary aspects of his friend's character, to which he made several allusions in his biography. Vasari said that Salviati's inability to get along with officials in the court of Duke Cosimo was largely due to the fact that 'Francesco was by nature melancholy'. He was equally unable to succeed at the French court because he was 'melancholy, abstinent, sickly and morose'. In sum, 'Francesco was affectionate by nature, but suspicious, credulous, acute, subtle and penetrative ...in the end his strange nature, so irresolute, suspicious and solitary, did harm to no one but himself'. Vasari altered Salviati's portrait in such a manner as to closely reflect these very character traits.

Vasari's woodcut portrait of Jacopo Pontormo almost certainly derives from one of the depictions of the master by his pupil Bronzino (figs. 12, 13). Bronzino depicted Pontormo next to Christ's shoulder in the *Christ in Limbo* of 1552 (Florence, Santa Croce), and again several years later in the fresco of the *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* (Florence, San Lorenzo). The fresco, of 1567-69, was painted too late to have served as the source for Vasari's woodcut. An additional portrait, now lost but cited by Vasari, was added by Bronzino to Pontormo's

⁷⁶ Vasari describes the print in his discussion of Dürer's prints in the Life of Marcantonio Raimondi: Vasari-BB, V, p. 6. The idiosyncratic spelling of 'Melencolia' is Dürer's, as it appears on the engraving.

frescoes in the choir of San Lorenzo, left unfinished at Pontormo's death in 1557.⁷⁷ This was presumably Vasari's actual source. Since the portrait in Bronzino's later fresco of the *Martyrdom* resembles that in *Christ in Limbo* in all respects except that Pontormo's beard has turned white, it seems safe to assume that the portrait in the choir was similar to both. Wolfram Prinz, who otherwise refrained from making statements about the emotional content of Vasari's portrait woodcuts, noted that in this woodcut Vasari has given us an excellent image of the aged, angst-ridden Pontormo.⁷⁸ The emphasis is all Vasari's, since in Bronzino's paintings Pontormo is shown with a mild expression, devoid of the anxious lines in the forehead and the staring eyes with which Vasari depicted him. In his biography of Pontormo, Vasari described the old artist as 'solitary and eccentric'; he went up to his bedroom by means of a stepladder that he could pull up after him so that he could not be followed.⁷⁹ Pontormo was, like Piero di Cosimo, 'solitary beyond all belief', and so afraid of death that he would not hear it mentioned.⁸⁰ The baleful expression in Vasari's portrait woodcut is a clear guide to his view of Pontormo's personality: toward the end of his life, Pontormo descended into an anxious and misanthropic way of life.

Physiognomy is also relevant to understanding the portrait of Rosso Fiorentino (fig. 14). Prinz was unable to identify Vasari's source for this portrait, but during a conference at the Warburg Institute in 1995, Jeroen Stumpel convincingly suggested that it may have been a drawing by Andrea del Sarto, later used for one of the apostles in his fresco of the *Last Supper* (fig. 15).⁸¹ Like the woodcut, the drawing shows a man in profile, with short, slightly wavy

⁷⁷ Vasari-BB, VI (Of the Academicians), p. 236.

⁷⁸ Prinz (1966), p. 139: 'Vasari gibt mit dem Vitenbild ein vorzügliches Bildnis den alten, angstvollen, und totesfürtigen Pontormo'.

⁷⁹ Vasari-BB, V, p.328: 'ha più tosto cera di casamento da uomo fantastico e soletario che di ben considerate abitura: con ciò sia che alla stanza dove stava a dormire e talvolte a lavorare si saliva per una scala di legno, la quale, entrato che egli era, tirava su con una carrucola, a ciò niuno potesse salire da lui senza sua voglia o saputa'.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 333-34: 'quasi sempre stette da sé solo...fu tanto pauroso della morte, che non voleva, non che altro, udirne ragionare...fu ogni credenza solitario'.

⁸¹ 'The Accidental Portrait: Drawings after the model in the studios of Andrea del Sarto and Pontormo', paper presented at a conference on 'The Image of the Individual c.1400-1500', Warburg Institute, London, 10 March 1995.

hair and a beard. The resemblance is most striking in the furrowed forehead that creates a small lump at the eyebrow, the shape of the eye itself, and the pronounced cheekbone. Stumpel was unable to explain the alteration of features like Rosso's nose (which is made larger and more blunt) and his beard (which is made longer), except to speculate that this was the fault of the woodcutter. But, as we have noted, the woodcutters seem to have followed Vasari's designs with unfailing accuracy. If this drawing was Vasari's source, as I believe it to have been, then I suspect that the changes instead constitute a deliberate reference to Rosso's leonine, choleric temperament. In Renaissance physiognomic theory, a strained prominent brow; a blunt, fleshy, obtuse nose; and pronounced cheekbones with swelling facial muscles (all present in Vasari's woodcut) were considered to be signs of a leonine character: a great soul given to great deeds and to magnanimity, but also prone to fits of rage.⁸²

We learn from Vasari's biography that Rosso was 'endowed with a most beautiful presence... he was always, however poor in circumstances, rich in spirit and grandeur'.⁸³ King Francis I enjoyed the company of Rosso, who was 'imposing in person, with red hair in accordance with his name, and serious, considerate, and very judicious...in his every action'.⁸⁴ Rosso lived there 'like a nobleman, with a good number of servants and horses, giving banquets and showing all manner of extraordinary courtesies to all his acquaintances and friends'.⁸⁵

But, in Vasari's account of his life, Rosso was prone to bouts of anger. He had left Italy after causing a row during mass, when a priest struck one of his assistants. And, rich as he was in France, he was robbed and rashly accused an innocent friend of the crime, having him arrested and tortured. When the accused issued a writ of libel against Rosso, he

⁸² See P. Meller, 'Physiognomical Theory in Renaissance Heroic Portraits', in *The Renaissance and Mannerism: Studies in Western Art*, Princeton 1963, II, ed. I.E. Rubin, pp. 53-69.

⁸³ Vasari-BB, IV (Life of Rosso), pp. 473-74: 'Rosso era...dotato di bellissima presenza...e sempre, per povero ch'egli fosse, fu ricco d'animo e di grandezza'.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 486: 'Rosso...era grande di persona, di pelo rosso conforme al nome, et in tutte le sue azzione grave, considerato, e di molto giudizio'.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 487: 'il Rosso con buon numero di servidori e di cavalli viveva da signore e faceva banchetti e cortesie straordinarie a tutti i conoscenti e amici...'

‘perceived that he had not only accused his friend falsely, but had also stained his own honour...he therefore resolved to kill himself by his own hand rather than be punished by others’.⁸⁶ Rosso’s appearance in Vasari’s woodcut reflects his character - imposing, gracious, but rash and impetuous - both the positive and the negative attributes of the leonine man.

As we have seen, in the woodcut illustrations Vasari was concerned to provide visual analogues to the text. This has been shown both with respect to the title pages and endpieces of both editions of the *Lives*, and now also with respect to the woodblock portraits included for the first time in the edition of 1568. Thus, the woodcuts can by no means be seen as merely decorative additions to the book; they were for Vasari a vital part of the fabric of the entire work, and an essential component of his project for promotion of the visual arts and their practitioners. They reinforce the message of the biographies, presenting artists as moral and social exemplars.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 490: ‘paredogli non solo avere falsamente vituperato l’amico, ma ancora mac[c]hiato il proprio onore, et il disdirsi o tener altri vituperosi modi lo dichiarava similmente uomo disleale e cattivo. Per che deliberato d’uccidersi da se stesso più tosto che esser castigato da altri, prese questo partito...’.

As the first Italian art historian, Vasari initiated the genre of an encyclopedia of artistic biographies that continues today. Vasari's work was first published in 1550 by Lorenzo Torrentino in Florence,^[5] and dedicated to Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. It included a valuable treatise on the technical methods employed in the arts. It was partly rewritten and enlarged in 1568 and provided with woodcut portraits of artists (some conjectural). The work has a consistent and notorious favour of Florentines and tends to attribute to them all the new developments in Renaissance