

# Vasari, architecture, and the origins of historicizing art

ALINA PAYNE

"Historiography (that is 'history' and 'writing') bears within its own name the paradox—almost an oxymoron—of a relation established between two antinomic terms, between the real and discourse. Its task is one of connecting them and, at the point where this link cannot be imagined, of working as if the two were being joined."<sup>1</sup> For Michel de Certeau this submerged dialectic between the amorphous "stuff" of past life that we call history—the events of daily existence, whether momentous or banal—and the act of ordering it into a coherent narrative defines the very nature of history writing. In the visual arts it is Giorgio Vasari who first faced this tension, and his attempts at resolving it continue to affect the discipline of art history to this day<sup>2</sup> (fig. 1). However much scholars of Renaissance art may wish to resist him, he remains an indestructible palimpsest—we still rely on his information, we are still guided by his judgments, and we still tacitly perpetuate his prejudices. More important—and this applies to the field at large, not only to Renaissance scholarship—we also depend on his model of historical interpretation of the arts, on his choice of how to reconcile or appear to reconcile the domains of reality and writing.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the sources lying at the root of Vasari's original creation have come under frequent scrutiny. Quietly at work below the smooth surface of his synthesis, they are our sources twice removed, and as such indirectly continue to inform and shape our inquiries. Yet among the many influences upon his work that have been acknowledged, architectural literature has been almost entirely neglected. It is this issue that this essay will address.

---

A shorter version of this essay was presented at the College Art Association meeting, New York, February 2000. I am grateful to Alexander Nagel, Philip Sohm, and Marvin Trachtenberg, whose incisive comments and questions allowed me to sharpen my argument. I also wish to thank the Graham Foundation for generously supporting the research leading up to this article.

1 Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. xxvii.

2. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori* (Florence: Torrentino, 1550); and Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori* (Florence: Giunti, 1568).

3. On the fundamental way in which Vasari has affected modern art historiography, see particularly Hans Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1987) and Willibald Sauerländer, "From *stilus* to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion," *Art History* 6, (September 1983); 253–70.

## 1. Vasari's sources

The narrative format—the story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end—is perhaps the most enduring model Vasari has bequeathed us. His cyclical view of art—because this is how the line of the narrative unfolds—has been equally enduring and has fed a "stratigraphic" conception of history that still shapes the discipline. Based on an organic model—of birth, maturity, and decay—this narrative line of rise and fall means that the lows must be overcome for the next cycle to start again. And this overcoming necessarily entails a conception of neatly separated narrative units, or period styles. For Vasari, antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance existed in distinct compartments reminiscent of tectonic layers. Indeed, this geological metaphor—first suggested by Alois Riegl when he was struggling to bridge the "conceptual chasm" between late-antique and early Christian art—throws most vividly into relief the eventual weight and petrification of these units, as well as the consequent near-impossible task of loosening them up again.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, Vasari's historiographic model has been challenged over the years, yet it still retains its power. For example, although in his *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (1901) Riegl specifically attacked the catastrophic model that lies at the basis of the cyclical/overcoming theory of history, his own *Kunstwollen* has created even deeper cleavages between periods.<sup>5</sup> Not even rise and fall connect them anymore as they float independently on the sea of time. Microhistory and the history of the *longue durée*, that is the microscopic and telescopic views of history that have been proposed more recently, have not substantially impacted the history of art either. Stylistic periods stubbornly retain their autonomy, and

---

4. "Man denkt sich eine unüberbrückbare Kluft aufgerissen zwischen der spätromischen Kunst und der vorangegangenen klassischen Antike. Auf dem Wege natürlicher Entwicklung, meinte man, hätte aus der klassischen Kunst niemals eine spätromische werden können. . . man half sich mit der Anschauung einer gewaltsamen Unterbrechung der Entwicklung durch die Barbaren. Das Prinzip der Entwicklung war somit zwar gerettet, aber daneben auch das gewaltsame Eingreifen von Katastrophen zugelassen, wie weiland in der geologischen Schöpfungsgeschichte." Alois Riegl, *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (Darmstadt. Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 6–7.

5 Ibid., p. 7.



Figure 1. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de piu eccellenti architetti, pittori e scultori* (Florence 1550). Frontispiece.

movement from one to the other still makes for difficult transitions in a narrative made up of a series of ruptures.<sup>6</sup>

But if Vasari was the involuntary source for much of this historiography he was also more complex (and complicated) than is generally acknowledged. Coming

6. For a splendid synopsis of the aims of microhistory see Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," *Critical Inquiry* 20, 1 (Fall 1993):10–35. On the history of the *longue durée* and its *querelle* with the supporters of the *temps court*, see Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et science sociale. La longue durée" in F. Braudel, *Écrits sur l'histoire*, vol. 1 (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), pp. 41–83 [1st. publ. *Annales*, 1958] and more generally Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution. The Annales School 1929–1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). For a recent and incisive critique of art history and its tools, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps* (Paris: Minuit, 2000), pp. 9–55

as he did at a time when the *ars historica* was being redefined, his conception of periodization carries the traces of many competing and complementary models.<sup>7</sup> Thus he draws simultaneously on a providential view of history (the salvation of art, its fall and redemption),<sup>8</sup> on a cyclical one (of rise and fall, and recurrence of a Golden Age),<sup>9</sup> a linear ascending one (the progress of art from tentative beginnings to climactic hero-figures), an organic one (the analogy with the three ages of man from birth to death, followed by re-birth or *rinascità*),<sup>10</sup> a catastrophic one (ruptures caused by calamities), and so on.<sup>11</sup>

It would be unfair to say that Vasari was entirely unaware of the artifactual nature of his own creation. As he well knew, embarking on an unprecedented project necessarily meant that he had to cull and hybridize. Indeed, the peculiarity of historicizing art occurred to him—as it has to us.<sup>12</sup> This recognition is nowhere more

7. On the rise of history writing in the Renaissance, seminal remains Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). See also Donald R. Kelly, "The Theory of History," in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. C. B. Schmitt and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 746–762. On the "fissures" in Vasari's historiography, see the seminal article by Erwin Panofsky, "The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's *Libro*: A Study on the Gothic Style in the Judgement of the Italian Renaissance," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1955), pp. 169–225.

8. Already Schlosser noted the influence of Saint Augustine and the Christian tradition on Vasari's historical vision. See Julius von Schlosser, *La letteratura artistica* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1977), p. 315.

9. For Vasari's ancient sources on the concept of a Golden Age (such as Florus and Velleius Patroclus), see *ibid.*

10. "come i corpi umani, [le arti] hanno il nascere, il crescere, il invecchiare et il morire, potranno ora più facilmente conoscere il progresso della sua rinascita." Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de piu eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori* (see note 2), ed. I. Bellosi and A. Rossi (Turin: Einaudi, 1986; 1st. ed. Florence: Torrentino, 1550), p. 101; see also p. 208. The issue of a future replaying of the fall/rise scenario in Vasari's vision has been raised often. Certainly some tension is evident between Vasari's sense that contemporary art has reached an ideal plateau that stretches endlessly into the future and his fears for the future: "ella [arte] sia salita tanto alto, che più presto si abbia a temere del calare a basso, che sperare oggimai più augumento." *Ibid.*, p. 209.

11. The literature on the nature of Vasari's historical vision is vast. Seminal remains Schlosser, *La letteratura artistica* (see note 8), pp. 303–323. Most recent, the monograph by Patricia Rubin summarizes the preceding literature and makes new proposals. Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari, Art and History* (London: Yale University Press, 1995).

12. A most recent significant contribution on this issue of Vasari's historiography that also summarizes previous literature on the subject is Philip Sohm, "Ordering History with Style," in *Antiquity and Its Interpreters*, ed. A. Payne et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 40–54.

forcibly expressed than in Vasari's description of the dinner of 1546 in the Farnese palace that marked the putative genesis of the *Vite*.<sup>13</sup> At this gathering that included cardinal Alessandro Farnese and a sampling of his brilliant court of humanists—among them Molza, Paolo Giovio, Annibale Caro, Claudio Tolomei, Gandolfo and Romolo Amaseo—the project for the *Lives* was first conceived. When the cardinal invited Giovio to consider taking this project on, Vasari confronted the famous historian and claimed the *Lives* for himself. Despite a humility *de rigueur* in such instances, he could take this position in the certainty that he had privileged access to the art world. Following a trend in history writing that went back to antiquity (and was codified later by Gianbattista Adriani, Francesco Patrizi da Cherso, and Vincenzo Borghini), Vasari argued that like any other historian, the historian of art must be a spectator of events (or draw on those who have been) and the history of art a narrative of this spectatorship.<sup>14</sup> As Tolomei, Caro, and Molza concur, he is ideally placed: if he has not been an actual witness and spoken to each artist, he has at least spoken to someone who has or is part of a direct oral line of transmission.<sup>15</sup> For Vasari the body of history must still be warm.

Whatever else it may be, the Farnese vignette is certainly a statement of difference.<sup>16</sup> Yet identifying

13. The story of this event occurs in his autobiography and is included in the 1568 edition of the *Vite*. Vasari makes no mention of this moment of origin in the 1550 edition. Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, vol. 7 (Milan: Edizioni Il Club del Libro; 1st ed. Florence: Giunti, 1568), p. 236–237.

14. Zygmunt Wazbinski, "L'idée de l'histoire dans la première et la seconde édition des *Vies* de Vasari," in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista. Atti del convegno internazionale del IV centenario della morte* (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1976), pp. 1–25. On this principle in ancient history writing, see G. Nenci, *Il motivo dell'autopsia nella storiografia greca* (1953). Francesco Patrizi, *Della Historia dialoghi diece* (Venice, 1560); Giovanbattista Adriani, *Istoria dei suoi tempi* (Florence, 1583); Vincenzo Borghini, *Dell'origine di Firenze* (Florence, 1584–1585). The latter two texts were posthumously published.

15. At the conclusion of the *Vite* Vasari describes his method: "Pigliando nientedimeno i ricordi e gli scritti da persone degne di fede, e col parere e consiglio sempre degli artefici più antichi che hanno avuto notizia delle opere, e quasi le hanno vedute fare." Vasari *Vite* 1550, p. 916.

16. There is no agreement among scholars as to the veracity of this account. Views range from Frey who accepts it as historical fact, to Kallab who places the genesis of the *Vite* earlier, to Sohm who interprets it as a trope. See Karl Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1923), p. 212–213, Wolfgang Kallab, *Vasaristudien* (Vienna and Leipzig: Karl Graeser and B. G. Teubner, 1908), pp. 145–147, and Sohm, "Ordering History with Style" (see note 12), p. 41. Indeed, as is well documented, not all participants

wherein lies that difference and what constitute events in art—its own *res gestae*—is ultimately less easy. If in the history of nations events may seem self-evident—a war, an assassination, a succession dispute—and cause and effect may seem equally obvious, what is an event in art? What constitutes the *histoire événementielle* of art?<sup>17</sup> Vasari's answer is artistic innovation. As we know, the idea was not entirely new. But if his predecessors, Antonio Billi (1481–1530), the Anonimo Magliabecchiano (ca. 1537–1542), or (particularly, and even earlier) Lorenzo Ghiberti had already posited the notion of artistic progress, their chronicles did not turn it into a systematic governing principle.<sup>18</sup> For Vasari, however, innovation furnishes the essential plot for his narrative: he does not concern himself with *all* innovations, but only with those that are cumulative and are driven by a constant (and ultimately attainable) aesthetic ideal.<sup>19</sup> License within *regola*, judgment within *misura*, invention within *ordine*, *facilità* within *disegno*, and *grazia/leggiadria* within *maniera* are his coordinates. But what draws them together is one firmly set goal: the emulation of nature. "Vicino al vero," "non murassero ma nascessero," "la natura resta vinta" are statements Vasari sprinkles liberally throughout the *Lives* and especially in his three prefaces where he describes larger patterns and justifies his historiographic method.<sup>20</sup> The imitation of ancient art—the prototypical example of successfully emulated nature—remains a parallel target. Like nature, antiquity will also be overcome:

listed (e.g., Tolomei) by Vasari could have been present at this dinner in 1546. Nevertheless, even if not strictly accurate, Vasari may well have wished to convey the impact of a particular milieu and type of gathering that typically occurred in such princely palaces (and were at the origin of many academies).

17. On the *histoire événementielle* as typical of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historiography, see Krzysztof Pomian, *L'ordre du temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 7–36.

18. On Ghiberti and the chronicler tradition, see especially Schlosser's introduction to Lorenzo Ghiberti, *Lorenzo Ghiberti's Denkwürdigkeiten. I Commentarii*, ed. J. v. Schlosser (Berlin: Julius Bard, 1912), pp. 17–190. On the notion of progress in the arts before Vasari, see Ernst Gombrich, "The Renaissance Concept of Artistic Progress and Its Consequences," in *Norm and Form* (Chicago and London: Phaidon and University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 1–10. On Ghiberti's non-evolutionary historiography see James Ackerman, "On the Origins of Art History/Art Criticism," in J. Ackerman ed. *Origins, Imitation, Conventions* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2002).

19. See especially Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (see note 3), pp. 67–94. For a reading of Vasari's history as a process-based one, see idem, "Die Geschichte der Kunst als Prozess?," in *Theorie der Geschichte*, ed. K. G. Faber and C. Meier, vol. 2 (Munich: dtvää, 1978), pp. 98–126.

20. Vasari, *Vite* 1550 (see note 2), p. 539; p. 575, p. 542.

Michelangelo's performance is exalted as climactic precisely because he has "conquered those famous ancients" (*ha vinto quelli famosissimi antichi*).<sup>21</sup>

The artists' near-heroic struggle to attain equivalence with nature furnishes Vasari with the narrative thread he needs. Yet this narrative is no simple sequence of events, but unfolds within a structure resembling a set of Russian dolls. Within the larger tripartite frame that distinguishes the manner of the ancients from that of the barbaric Goths and the good modern manner, he also distinguishes separate identities for the Trecento, the Quattrocento, and the Cinquecento ("il moderno secolo", "secolo che noi viviamo");<sup>22</sup> finally, within each of these stylistic and temporal subcategories he places the individual *maniere* of the artists. What he is in effect doing is to seek the "ordine delle maniere," the smallest units of his overall structure.<sup>23</sup> As it turns out, this "order of styles" moves on a parallel course with the "ordine dei tempi." The result is a "qualità dei tempi"—style and history are inextricably connected.<sup>24</sup> It is in the apparent self-evidence of this parallelism that the power and true originality of Vasari's system lies.

Vasari clearly struggled with the degree of precision that his sequential system demanded. And he certainly sought to convey this struggle and the difference he perceived between a history of events and a history of art both in his preface for the second part of the *Vite* (1550) and in his 1568 autobiography.<sup>25</sup> Dealing as he was with a biographical structure rather than an *histoire événementielle*—a structure, therefore, that clearly buttressed the idea of individual personality and hence personal style—he was also its prisoner. Parallel descriptions were virtually impossible—individual lives

had to be placed in a sequence and the personal styles had to add up to a period style as well as run parallel to time. Yet, the lives varied in length; participation in the advancement of art was not always consistent throughout a life, nor did it occur at regular intervals. Some artists contributed early (e.g., Ghiberti), and then coasted or died young (e.g., Masaccio); others lived long and continuously challenged the practices of their contemporaries (Brunelleschi or Michelangelo). Submitting to the tyranny of the biography while retaining a sequential perspective of contributions was well nigh impossible and it therefore meant that Vasari had to make adjustments and fall back upon the "giudizio mio" as to which artists and which particular innovations were more momentous than others. Nevertheless, even if the order of the lives is not *strictly* chronological as to birth/death dates, it respects a chronological order of contributions and their effect upon the larger community of artists.<sup>26</sup>

The pattern of historical evaluation that Vasari established is so much a part of our second nature as historians of art that we have lost the ability to see just how artificial the connection between time and style is—or how original.<sup>27</sup> For example, charting phenomena of archaism or of stylistic persistence (without progress, as it were) that are unconnected with the race to conquer nature posited by Vasari and that existed alongside it, as parallel trends, are alternatives to his model that have been almost entirely neglected. Thus, the fact that Gothic buildings and artifacts were designed, built, or restored in Italy during the Renaissance (fig. 2) has remained a marginal issue for scholars, as has the revival of interest in Trecento art noticeable in this period.<sup>28</sup> Presented by Vasari as

21. *Ibid.*, p. 543.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 539.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 215. To be sure, the progress in individual styles that Vasari charts is not identical with progress in conquering nature but more, for it is also, and perhaps primarily, a progress in *disegno* and artifice, that is, in the individual's abstracting and synthesizing ability to translate what is seen (cf. *natura naturata*) into beautiful form (cf. *natura naturans*). Yet despite inevitable tensions and ellipses between the meta-narrative and its building blocks, charting styles on a progress-based template is Vasari's principal objective. On style and *disegno*, and bibliography related to the associated issues of imitation and artistic idea see Ackerman, "On the Origins of Art History/Art Criticism."

24. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

25. "non fu mia intenzione fare una nota delli artefici et uno inventario . . . che questo io lo arei potuto fare con una semplice tavola, senza interporre in parte alcuna il giudizio mio. [ . . . ] e mi sono ingegnato non solo di dire quell che hanno fatto, ma di scegliere ancora discorrendo il meglio da 'l buono, e l'ottimo da 'l migliore . . ." Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 207

26. For example, Vasari places Masaccio before Brunelleschi: the former is born much later (1401 versus 1377), yet he dies very young (ca. 1427); thus his contribution stops long before Brunelleschi's (who dies in 1446).

27. Recently Sohm and Belting have turned to this issue in particular. However, Sohm was less concerned with the connection between the two ordering systems (chronological order and order of style). Rather, he sees Vasari choosing between two types of historical order. Sohm (see note 12), p. 46. Likewise, Belting's focus is not on the connection between the two systems, but on the consequences of this blending. Belting, *The End of the History of Art?* (see note 3), pp. 84–94.

28. The history of Gothic within the Renaissance has been traditionally presented as aberrant—whether it manifested apparently pragmatic motivations to preserve existing buildings (in Italy) or *retardataire* and provincial ones in northern Europe. Rudolf Wittkower's *Gothic versus Classic* (1974) remains a seminal study on the survival of Gothic and the ongoing architecture projects in this

anomalous from the vantage point of his narrative, they became the *hapax legomenon* (that which is documentarily unique) and therefore unusable in serial history.<sup>29</sup> Almost invariably, scholars have attributed such trends to external, patron-induced pressures. Understood to reflect personal idiosyncrasies, political and religious reform conditions or acknowledge economic realities (e.g., the completion of existing Gothic buildings), they are not perceived to be internally driven, that is, responding to the larger aesthetic imperatives of the period. Panofsky's now famous 1930 article on Vasari's design of a medievalizing frame ("an Arnolfo frame") for a "Cimabue" drawing reinforced this blind spot. Interpreting Vasari's drawing as an effort to create a historically homogenous composite image he argued that it was not an aesthetic endorsement but a testimony to Vasari's concept of period style, a "disinterested" art-historical exercise.<sup>30</sup> Although

style in early modern Italy. For a more recent treatment of this topic, see Giorgio Simoncini, ed., *La tradizione medievale nell'architettura italiana dal XV al XVIII secolo* (Florence: Olschki, 1992). The archaizing tendencies in the work of Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo have been noted, not least of all by Vasari. But these have nevertheless been explicated as aberrant or psychologically driven instances, rather than part of another and more extensive narrative. Current scholarship in both fields is beginning to ask new questions. See for example Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–22 and, on Francesco Bocchi's antiquizing aesthetics, Erin Campbell, "The gendered *paragone* in late sixteenth-century art theory: Francesco Bocchi and Jacopo Pontormo," *Word and Image* 16 (2000), pp. 227–38. For a re-evaluation of Trecento architecture see Marvin Trachtenberg, *The Dominion of the Eye* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and A-M. Sankovitch's article in this issue. In particular Didi-Huberman has drawn attention to the recurrence/survival phenomena in art that challenges traditional evolution-based narratives and hints at psychological models that historical disciplines have rejected. Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps* (see note 6), pp. 45–55 The uncomfortable inclusion of much northern art into the Vasarian scenario (to the detriment of its objective evaluation) has been another consequence of this type of historiography (a trend reversed in the last twenty years as result of the work of Svetlana Alpers and others).

29 For examples of anomaly, see Vasari's treatment of the oeuvre of Bernardo Rossellino and Antonio Rizzo. Rossellino who had modelled Pope Pius's Pienza cathedral on a German Gothic hall church and who completed the Misericordia in Vasari's own Arezzo in a Gothicizing manner, is ignored for not being sufficiently "*eccelente*"; and Antonio Rizzo's (whom he calls Riccio) architectural work as proto of the Doge's palace from 1483, is also left out presumably due to its Gothicizing manner. Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, pp. 413 and 364. On this phenomenon in history writing more generally, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 96–125.

30. Panofsky concluded: "Vasari's frame marks the beginning of a strictly art-historical approach which . . . is focused on the visual remains and proceeds to borrow Kant's phrase, in a 'disinterested'



Figure 2 Doge's Palace, Venice. Photo: Alina Payne.

developed for a particular case-study, Panofsky's powerful argument became a general reference point in scholarship on the reception of the Gothic in the Renaissance and set its parameters; it also ensured that Vasari's model of ascending artistic innovation—so well suited to modernist sensibilities—remained virtually unquestioned into our own day. Indeed, as Didi-Huberman has recently shown, not even the Waburgian model based on charting anachronisms, psychological phenomena and survival of forms has left real traces within the discipline.<sup>31</sup>

manner." Panofsky, "The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's *Libro*" (see note 7), pp. 169–225

31. Vattimo has argued that rather than understanding the modern model of progress associated with the arts to be derived from a scientific one (science progressing by discovery and revolution, and *mutatis mutandis* the arts as well)—a model frequently proposed in art historical studies of the 1950s and later—the phenomenon is in fact the opposite: in modernism it is science that has been aestheticized and the model of progress has been imported from the arts. Gianni

Yet it seems well worth asking how Vasari came to conceive of styles (individual and period) as ordered *and* of this order as a temporal one. The examples on which he could draw were not all helpful. True enough, Cicero's *Brutus*—a text traditionally seen as a key source for him—charts a history of rhetoric in which style may be expected to hold a central place.<sup>32</sup> But this history is more concerned with recording the names and lives of Roman orators so as to demonstrate the greatness that this art achieved in Rome, than with their stylistic peculiarities, which Cicero discusses summarily in most cases. As for the “qualità de' tempi,” that is, the stylistic unity of whole periods, it is implicit at best.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Cicero's is a melancholy stance: the present is an unworthy progeny of a distinguished past, and, besides deploring this state of affairs while admonishing Brutus, he offers no larger schema that locates the ebb and flow of style in a historical determinist arc.<sup>34</sup> Nor is Cicero's “later” necessarily “better” on an ascending scale. It is true that he posits development as a fundamental principle and introduces an analogy between painting and the art of rhetoric (as he does in his other writings) to buttress his argument,<sup>35</sup> yet for him the followers of Cato do not exceed him in oratorical accomplishments and while a “more brilliant habit of speaking” does arise, it is not better than what preceded it, but simply different.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Cato's style (unlike Giotto's in

Vattimo, *The End of Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, pp. 45–55.

32. Indeed, Cicero suggests that this is his principal objective: “. . . studio illustrium aetates et tempora persequendi. . . delector ista quasi notatione temporum et ad id quod instituisti, oratorum genera distinguere aetatibus . . .” Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Brutus*, Loeb Classical Library, trans. G. L. Hendrickson (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and Wm. Heinemann, 1951), 74–77, p. 70. Ernst Gombrich was the first to posit the connection between the *Vite* and *Brutus*. Ernst Gombrich, “Vasari's *Lives* and Cicero's *Brutus*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XXIII (1960):309–311

33. Although Cicero speaks of “Cato's lifetime” and thus suggests a stylistic continuity in this time span, such a characterization of a whole period is infrequent in his text. Moreover, even this is very narrowly conceived around the life of a single orator, rather than several generations, as will be the case for Vasari. *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 79–82.

34. Though in some cases the style becomes increasingly more polished, a rise in quality is not necessarily a given in Cicero's schema of individual aetates. Servius Galba, a younger successor of Cato's who flourished in his lifetime, is a case in point. “[H]is [Servius Galba] orations are more meagre and savour more of antiquity than those of Laelius and Scipio, or even Cato himself. Their colours have become so much faded that they are scarcely still visible.” *Ibid.*, 82–83, p. 77. On Cicero's attitude to living orators, *ibid.*, 251–253, p. 217.

35. “The same thing I take it is true of the other arts; nothing is brought to perfection on its first invention,” Cicero, *Brutus*, 69–71.

36. “Now by this time a richer and more brilliant habit of speaking had arisen” (after Cato). *Ibid.*, 77–79.

Vasari's terms) remains a worthy model for succeeding generations (while Giotto's does not).

Pliny's *Historia naturalis* was also unhelpful on this issue, although in other respects, like the *Brutus*, it was undoubtedly one of the principal models for Vasari.<sup>37</sup> Though Pliny sketches a history of the arts—and this is the correct description of what he does and what Vasari alludes to when he describes it as a *trattatello*—his interest is focused on materials (as a manifestation of the natural world he examines), not on the styles or manners of the individual artists, and he is even less interested in characterizing larger periods.<sup>38</sup> His attention is certainly focused on innovation and its serial nature—and this set an example for Vasari, as for Ghiberti—but his real concern is with improvements in technique, with the physical handling of materials (whether coloured sands, marble, or bronze), not with aesthetics. Vignettes such as those describing Zeuxis' or Parrhasius' ability to “fool” nature itself are statements of these artists' miraculous skill that allows them to transcend the limitations of their materials (paint on wall), not an attempt to establish a comprehensive model for the development of the arts.<sup>39</sup> Pliny's approach is, if anything, chronographic in that he neither thematizes the future nor traces a trajectory connecting it to the past.<sup>40</sup>

The ancient and Renaissance historians that may have guided Vasari's understanding of periodization had likewise relatively little to offer on the relationship between time and style. Writing on history rather than art history, these authors—ranging from Diogenes Laertius (*Lives of the Philosophers*) and Annaeus Florus (*Epitome rerum romanorum*, published in 1546), through the late medieval chroniclers such as Filippo Villani (*Le vite ca. 1381*) to Paolo Giovio (*De viris illustribus*, 1527, and *Elogia veris clarorum virorum*,

37 The amount of literature on Pliny's influence on Vasari is so vast that it prohibits reference. A useful summary is offered most recently by Sohm (see note 12), p. 42.

38. At the beginning of Book XXXV Pliny himself acknowledges the limits of his inquiry into the arts. “I will now run through as briefly as possible the artists eminent in painting; and it is not consistent with the plan of this work to go into such detail.” Pliny, *Historia Naturalis XXXIII–XXXV*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass: Heinemann and Harvard University Press), 53, p. 301. Indeed, of the thirty-seven books of his treatise, the arts only make very sporadic appearances in the last four.

39. *Ibid.*, 65–66, p. 309.

40. For this distinction between historiographic styles, see Pomian, *L'ordre du temps* (see note 17), p. iv–v. For a reevaluation of Pliny's “art history” that convincingly places it in an ethical and judiciary Roman context and distinguishes it sharply from Vasari's, see Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps* (see note 6), pp. 59–83

Venice, 1546)—connected events with people, history, and biography (all useful grist to Vasari’s mill), but were not concerned with blending the “ordine dei tempi” with an “ordine delle maniere.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Vasari was keenly aware that the visual arts have peculiarities of their own that could not be well served by borrowing from any one discipline. Principal among them—and he notes this very prominently in his statement on historical method contained in the preface to Part 2—is their simultaneous linear and cyclical development: from primitive beginnings or infancy to excellence or maturity and finally, decay; then the process starts again. Indeed, he argues, something so similar to the present development in the arts had occurred in antiquity that if one were to exchange the names of the modern artists with those of ancient times one would be looking at virtually the same situations (*casi*).<sup>42</sup>

This blend of a cyclical with a linear pattern may not have been as peculiar to the (liberal) arts as Vasari claimed—at least in the view of contemporary historians. Following in the path of Polybius, Macchiavelli, and Guicciardini, later sixteenth-century Italian and French historians also sought larger patterns in the national past and evolved cyclical theories.<sup>43</sup> But Vasari had nevertheless intuited a difference even if he was not able to articulate its nature with enough clarity. What he had sensed was not only that the “temps des arts,” as Krzysztof Pomian has termed it, followed a different pattern from the “temps du savoir,” or that of politics, religion, or language,<sup>44</sup> but also that not all aspects of artistic culture could be plotted on the same curve.<sup>45</sup>

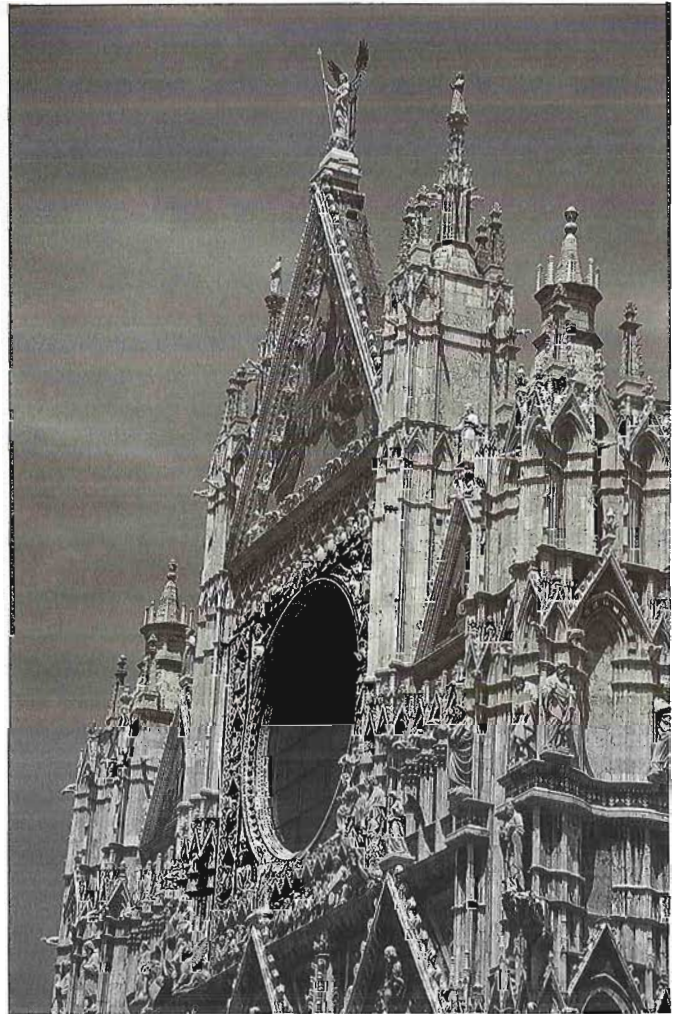


Figure 3 View of Cathedral, Siena. Photo: Alina Payne.

41. The reference to Annaeus Florus alongside Lactantius and Sallustius was first made by Panofsky. See Panofsky, “The First Page of Giorgio Vasari’s *Libro*” (see note 7), pp. 216–217. The many ancient and contemporary sources for Vasari—and the list includes Plutarch, Macchiavelli, Gianbattista Adriani, and many others—have been discussed since at great length in the literature. For an exhaustive summary of the discussion and reassessment, see Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (see note 11), pp. 148–186.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 209. Vasari identifies the pattern of organic growth and decay to be peculiar to the liberal arts.

43. Kelly, “The Theory of History” (see note 7), pp. 753 and 759.

44. Pomian, *L’ordre du temps* (see note 17), pp. 51–53.

45. On the persistence of the notion of homogenous culture in history writing and its recent rejection, see Ginzburg (see note 6), p. 21. As a result, the leading issues became 1) the relationship between structures (e.g., arts, letters, economy) synchronically and 2) the relationship between the moments of revolution (or paradigm shift) of the various structures diachronically. For an account of the impact of the social sciences on history writing (particularly anthropology) and the seminal importance of Claude Lèvi-Strauss’s *Race et histoire* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), see Pomian (see note 17), pp. 147–151 and *idem*, “L’histoire des structures,” in J. Le Goff et al., eds., *La nouvelle histoire* (Paris: Retz-CEPL, 1978), pp. 528–553, for a contemporary testimony

Already the discrepancy (which he never acknowledges but which he surely noticed) between the course of the figural arts and architecture must have alerted him to this phenomenon. Indeed, his difficulties in dealing with the architects of Arnolfo di Cambio’s generation are evident. In the 1550 *Vite* Vasari lists no architect in the *prima età* (the Trecento) and, although he praises the Duomo of Florence for its plan and magnificence, he lists it among such temples “alla tedesca” as the Cathedrals of Siena, Venice, and Milan<sup>46</sup> (fig. 3). Arnolfo di Cambio himself does not get a separate “life”—only a fleeting mention in Cimabue’s—and he is consistently

of Levy-Strauss’s importance in the 1950s, see Braudel, “Histoire et sciences sociales.”

46. Vasari, *Le vite* 1550, pp. 98–99.

referred to as “Todesco”<sup>47</sup> Brunelleschi is the first architect Vasari introduces. Yet he was active one hundred years after Cimabue and Giotto, and appears in the *seconda età*, despite the fact that Vasari anoints him as the rescuer from the barbarous “modern” manner on par with them.<sup>48</sup>

The history of language likewise offered Vasari mixed messages on the correspondence between stylistic change and time. While the history of *Latinità* as recounted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus and others certainly reinforced the notion of an evolutionary model for Vasari, the history of the *volgare* must have provided him with another clue that not all aspects of culture moved at the same pace or on the same coordinates. If in the Quattrocento the recovery and purification project under way in the arts and letters could be seen to move along parallel lines—and both Filarete and, later, Pietro Bembo made this argument—their respective qualitative peaks did not coincide.<sup>49</sup> For all those involved in the prominent debate on language—and this was the *querelle* of the century that came to a head in the very same years when Vasari was writing the *Vite*—the Trecento marks the stylistic climax of linguistic and stylistic excellence. Though Vasari and his friends from the Accademia Fiorentina—Carlo Lenzone, Cosimo Bartoli, Pierfrancesco Giambullari, Benedetto Varchi—

47. *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

48. “si puo dire che e’ ci [Brunelleschi] fu donato dal cielo per dar nuova forma alla architettura, gia per centinaia d’anni smarrita, nella quale gl’uomini di quell tempo in mala parte molti tesori avevano spesi, facendo fabbriche senza ordine, con mal modo, con tristo disegno, con stranissime invenzioni, con disgraziatissima grazia e con peggior ornamento.” Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 276. For the comparison Brunelleschi/Cimabue/Giotto, see *ibid.*, p. 283. Giotto’s *campanile* though mentioned is described as built “in quella maniera todesca che in quell tempo si usava” and he gets no accolades for operating a paradigm shift in architecture. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

49. “There is the same comparison between ancient and modern architecture as there is in literature. That is [there is] the same difference between the speech of Cicero and Virgil and that used thirty or forty years ago. Today it has been brought back to better usage than had prevailed in past times—during at least several hundred years—for today one speaks in prose with ornate language. This happened solely because they followed the antique manner of Virgil and other worthy men. I give you architecture in the same comparison, for whoever follows antique practice participates precisely in the above comparison, that is, the one on Ciceronian and Virgilian letters.” Antonio Averlino, *Filarete’s Treatise on Architecture*, trans. and intro. by John Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 102; “Architecture declined as letters declined in Italy; that is, spoken and [written] Latin became more gross until fifty or sixty years ago, when minds became more subtle and were reawakened [to the past] . . . The same happened to this art.” *Ibid.*, p. 176; Pietro Bembo, “Le Prose della volgar lingua” III, 1, in *Opere*, ed. C. Dionisotti, 2nd. ed., pp. 183–185.

often compared Dante with Giotto, they also compared Michelangelo with Dante.<sup>50</sup> To be sure, in the first instance the comparison was made on stylistic grounds, and the *terribilità* of one could be used to justify the stylistic liberties (*mescolanze*) most famously imputed to the other by such authorities as Pietro Bembo. Their difficult style was also frequently contrasted to Petrarch’s and Raphael’s who were adduced as parallel analogues on the basis of a superficially appealing lyricism and *grazia* that they were said to share. The comparison was also absorbed in the artistic literature; if Gelli Giambullari and Lenzone used Michelangelo’s acknowledged challenge to the ancients to defend Dante, Varchi and Dolce used Dante to defend (or respectively criticize) Michelangelo.<sup>51</sup> But the terms for this comparison were not chosen on the basis of stylistic kinship alone. The real strength of the analogy lay in the fact that the artists were acknowledged to stand at the pinnacle of their respective arts. Like Apelles and Homer, who were also invoked in such analogies, peaks were seen to meet peaks and were naturally paired off with each other. Thus the comparison Michelangelo/Dante also acknowledged a failure: the failure to find a contemporary poet of the same exalted stature as Michelangelo. To be sure, the *tre corone di Firenze*, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, took on the role of surrogate antiquity for the authors writing in the *volgare*. Yet the analogy could only be taken so far. They did not hail from the other side of a gap as did their Roman counterparts; no calamities had interrupted the development of culture from the Trecento to the Cinquecento; there was no estrangement between the present and a dimly perceived past, no loss and no thousand years of darkness. Indeed, Giambullari argued that Dante had overtaken the ancients, and in this

50. On this topos in Florentine academic writing, see Alina Payne, “Architects and Academies: Architectural Theories of *Imitatio* and the Literary Debates on Language and Style,” in *Architecture and Language*, ed. P. Crossley and G. Clarke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 118–133 and 195–202.

51. Benedetto Varchi draws on this comparison in *Due lezioni and Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto*. See Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d’arte del cinquecento* (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), vol. II, p. 267, and Benedetto Varchi, *Opere*, vol. II, p. 616. Lodovico Dolce, “Dialogo della pittura, intitolato l’Aretino,” in Barocchi, ed., *Scritti*, vol. IV, p. 826. Giambattista Gelli, “Decima lezione tenuta all’Accademia Fiorentina,” in Barocchi ed., *Scritti*, vol. II, pp. 286–89. Carlo Lenzone, *In difesa de la lingua fiorentina e di Dante* (Florence: Torrentino, 1556), p. 10. The book was written before Lenzone’s death (1550) and published posthumously by Cosimo Bartoli and Pierfrancesco Giambullari.



achievement only Michelangelo could equal him.<sup>52</sup> Whatever their stylistic peculiarities, the three great Florentine poets had not yet been equalled let alone overcome in the present, and they continued to represent the high water mark for the *volgare* in a way that their contemporary Giotto did not for painting. The problem was certainly noticed by the *letterati*, if uncomfortably brushed aside. Carlo Lenzone, for example, records this deviant line of reasoning in his *In difesa de la lingua fiorentina e di Dante* (and even refers to Vasari's *Vite*), but he attributes it to his opponent in the dialogue, the foreigner Licenziado, whom he instructs. When Licenziado asks why the poets should imitate Dante, as this would be tantamount to suggesting that painters imitate Giotto, Lenzone ridicules him and effectively ignores the question.<sup>53</sup> What we have here is one of the earliest acknowledgments of a cultural *décalage*: the climax of the language arts is to be found in the Trecento, that of the visual arts in the Cinquecento.

## 2. Progress, *ordine* and *maniere*

If other disciplines provided Vasari with partial and/or contradictory models, architecture could fill in some gaps. In the architectural literature of the period both the issue of *maniere* and their historical ordering—indeed a direct connection between them—was so prominent as to be unmistakable. The origin of the connection was, of course, Vitruvius' *De architectura*. In his account of the invention of the columnar orders from Book IV Vitruvius identified three *genera*: the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian, invented respectively by the Dorians, the Ionians, and the Corinthians. He does not use the term *ordine*, much less "style," in this context but the inventions of the *genera* do succeed each other in time. Moreover, a notion of progress is also implied: the sequence of their invention testifies not only to a shift in taste but also to a refinement (IV,1,7).<sup>54</sup> This is reinforced

by Vitruvius' definition of *decor* (one of his six aesthetic fundamentals of architecture). Since according to this category each group of deities requires a particular *genus* of columns in order to be appropriately displayed (Doric for Zeus and Hercules, Ionic for Apollo, and so on), by the time the Corinthian was invented, this ability to calibrate the *genus* of a temple to its dedicatee is also complete and a manner of fulfillment has been reached (I,2,5).<sup>55</sup> The passage was an important one. Not only did it describe origins—always an attractive topic for Renaissance readers—but it also worked with and validated the schema of cumulative invention in the arts. Even more so than Pliny, Vitruvius was a congenial model for Vasari. He seemed to associate invention (that followed upon much experimentation and adjustment) with an upward moving scale and with taste, and embedded this connection in a theoretical discussion rather than in one concerned with technical virtuosity.

Of course Vasari read a Vitruvius already laden with layers of interpretations accumulated at the hands of his many commentators. And this reception had imperceptibly modified the incipient evolutionary model embedded in *De architectura*. Leon Battista Alberti offered one of the first and most interesting readings. In *De re aedificatoria* (ms ca. 1452, publ. 1486) he explicitly posited the idea of artistic progress, rewrote the history of the architectural orders, and compared the process with that of the sciences. "The arts—he contends—were born of Chance and Observation, fostered by Use and Experiment, and matured by Knowledge and Reason [*ratiocinatio*]. Thus medicine, they say, was developed by a million people over a thousand years; sailing too, as almost every other art, advanced by minute steps (VI,1)."<sup>56</sup> His account of architecture is accordingly plotted on an ascending line: "Building . . . enjoyed her first gush of youth, as it were, in Asia, flowered in Greece, and later reached her glorious maturity in Italy (VI,3)."<sup>57</sup> Scale, proportioned beauty, and splendour coupled with utility were their respective and cumulative contributions. Likewise,

52 Lenzone, *In difesa* (see note 51), p. 6.

53 "L.: Or non mi terrestre voi per huomo di poco giudizio, se volendo esser dipintore, imitassi piu tosto Giotto, che Rafael da Urbino? Tutto che Giotto sia così stranamente lodato dal vostro Giorgio Vasari. Gello: Miglior comparazione certamente havreste voi fatta se haveste detto Michelangelo che Rafaello: et io vi haverer risposto, che & l'uno, & l'altro è maestro perfetto; Et sono di così diversa maniera, come il Petrarca & Dante." Lenzone, *In difesa*, p. 10.

54. On the invention of the Ionic order after the Doric proportions of 1.6 have been established, Vitruvius says: "Advancing in the subtlety of their judgements and preferring slighter modules, they fixed seven measures for the diameter of the height of the Doric column, nine for

the Ionic." Vitruvius Pollio, *De architectura*, trans. F. Granger, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann and Harvard University Press, 1931). The shifts in the proportions of the orders themselves—towards increased slenderness—is also attributed to an increase in refinement. "Subtilitateque iudiciorum progressi et gracilioribus modulis delectati . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 206.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

56. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. J. Rykwert, N. Leach, and R. Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), p. 57.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

architectural ornament had known an evolution—and for Alberti the principal ornaments of a building are the columnar orders—and it was charted on an ascending scale.<sup>58</sup> The Dorians set the string in motion; the Ionians improved upon their inventions; so did the Corinthians; finally, the Romans brought them to the highest level of accomplishment (VI,3).<sup>59</sup>

The historical thrust of the Vitruvian invention stories is perceptibly enhanced by two significant additions Alberti makes. Not only did the Romans take the art of building one step further by blending beauty with functional appropriateness, but they also invented the Italic (Composite) order (VII,6).<sup>60</sup> Further developments are not excluded as Alberti foresees the possibility of other capitals and ornaments being invented sometime in the future (I,9).<sup>61</sup> His second move is to reinforce the temporal implications of stylistic change. If he places the Romans at one end of his timeline, he places the Etruscans at the other: their highly sophisticated architecture is presented as a competing and perhaps an even older one than that of the Greeks (I,9 and VI,3). Indeed, Alberti argues, the Doric order was already in use in Tuscany before it was in Greece (VII,6).<sup>62</sup> Thus, the notion of an evolution that was implicit or at best suggested in *De architectura*, becomes a governing principle: what had the qualities of an origin myth has turned into a history of architecture.

Alberti's was certainly not the first historical evaluation of an art written in modern times. Its novelty, however, lay in the fact that unlike Ghiberti's (or Pliny's in antiquity) it embedded a historical account within a theoretical work. In his narrative, a logical thread—the whys and wherefores of artistic production, the causes and effects that Vasari was insisting upon identifying nearly a century later—connected past, present, and future.<sup>63</sup> Vitruvius had offered a starting point, to be sure, but it was Alberti who turned it into a consistent

principle. Among the three inaugural treatises Alberti wrote on the visual arts, *De re aedificatoria* was certainly the only one that offered the seeds for the history of (an) art.

The implications of Alberti's position reverberated in the architectural literature of the next decades. For example, Francesco di Giorgio Martini picked up Vitruvius' and Alberti's story of the sequence of the orders and reinforced a tradition of reading: the Doric is the most *antiqua opera* and it is followed in succession by the Ionic, Corinthian, and so on, plotted on a temporal and rising scale of refinement.<sup>64</sup> Like Alberti, he also applied this principle to a definition of architecture: "like all the other sciences" he argued, architecture was invented *successivamente*. Although never published, the numerous manuscript versions of his treatise that saw many forms from the 1460s through to the 1500s were known and circulated in architectural and antiquarian circles. As a result, Francesco's views inflected the development of architectural thinking at many levels whether directly or indirectly, through those who had access to his writings (Raphael, Peruzzi, Sebastiano Serlio, Scamozzi, and so on).<sup>65</sup>

The same is true of Raphael's views on architecture. Though unpublished, they affected the field through the agency of his numerous assistants and humanist friends.<sup>66</sup> Thus, Raphael's now famous letter to Pope Leo X (ca. 1519), where he set out his ambitious plan for an archaeological reconstruction of Rome, may be seen as the next significant moment in the history of a connection between the "ordine delle maniere" and "ordine dei tempi."<sup>67</sup> For our purposes the importance

58. "In tota re aedificatoria primum certe ornamentum in columnis est." Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria. Facsimile und Index verborum*, ed. H.-K. Lücke (Munich: Prestel, 1975), 108.29. For a discussion of the broader meaning of Alberti's term "ornamentum," see Anne-Marie Sankovitch, "Structure/Ornament and the Modern Figuration of Architecture," *Art Bulletin* LXXX 4 (December 1998): 711, and Veronica Biermann, *Ornamentum. Studien zum Traktat 'De re aedificatoria' des Leone Battista Alberti* (Hildesheim: Wernersche Buchgesellschaft, 1997).

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 157–158.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 200–201

61. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

63. For Vasari's didactic conception of history (of art), see Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 207.

64. Francesco di Giorgio Martini, *Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare*, ed. C. Maltese and L. Degrassi Maltese (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1967), vol. 2, p. 373.

65. On the presence of Francesco di Giorgio's treatise (Zichy codex) in Venice, see Massimo Mussini, "La trattatistica di Francesco di Giorgio: un problema critico aperto," in *Francesco di Giorgio architetto*, vol. II, ed. F. P. Fiore and M. Tafuri (Milan: Electa, 1993), pp. 359–379. On Raphael's knowledge of Francesco's work, see Manfredo Tafuri, *Ricerca del rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 284–285.

66. On the complex ties connecting architects and humanists, see Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Ingrid Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

67. For a recent transcription and translation of Raphael's letter, see Ingrid Rowland, "Raphael, Colocci and the Orders," *Art Bulletin*, LXXVI, 1 (March 1994):81–104; regarding debates on the letter's author (particularly on the degree of Raphael's involvement), see Francesco Di Teodoro, *Raffaello, Baldassar Castiglione e la Lettera a Leone X* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1994), especially pp. 9–10.

of this letter lies not only in that he shows the orders to succeed each other in time, but in the fact that here the terms *ordine* (for the columnar orders) and *maniere* are used interchangeably for the first time. The “cinque ordini” listed in one paragraph become “maniere, come da ionica et corintha . . .” in the next.<sup>68</sup> Earlier in the text the term *maniera* had been also used to designate three distinct periods or meta-styles—the ancient, the Gothic, and the modern—as part of a discussion, yet again, concerned with architecture. The association of art (architecture), sequentially invented orders, and style, that is, of *ordine*, *maniere*, and history, was hard to miss.

As Rubin, Shearman, and others have shown, and as Vasari himself seems to confirm, he had seen Raphael’s papers—among them the 1519 letter—when he visited Giulio Romano in 1541, and traces of this acquaintance can be found at various places in the *Lives*.<sup>69</sup> Most attention has been paid to Vasari’s use of Raphael’s views on the three *maniere*, on the barbarous Gothic, and the ruins of Rome. But there are other, more subtle borrowings like the idea that the ancients could be emulated and surpassed, that architecture was the last of the arts to be destroyed and longest to survive, and that not all arts move at the same pace. Perhaps most important were borrowings of vocabulary. In Raphael’s words (or Castiglione’s) bad style is “senza arte, o misura, o gratia alcuna” and “senza maniera alcuna”, Vasari uses the selfsame constructions (“non edificavano cosa che per ordine o per misura avesse grazia, né disegno, né ragion alcuna”);<sup>70</sup> the images used in the *Lettera* to describe Gothic architecture (“un figurino ranichiato e mal fatto et peggio inteso per mensola a sostenere un travo et altri strani animali e figure et fogliami fuor d’ogni ragione”) Vasari almost quotes (“facevano una maledizione di tabernacolini l’un sopra l’altro, con tante piramidi e punte e foglie . . . pare impossibile ch’elle si possino reggere”);<sup>71</sup> and so on (fig. 4). Likewise, the subtle association of *maniera* and *ordine*, indeed, their virtual merging in Raphael’s language, would have passed into Vasari’s vocabulary.

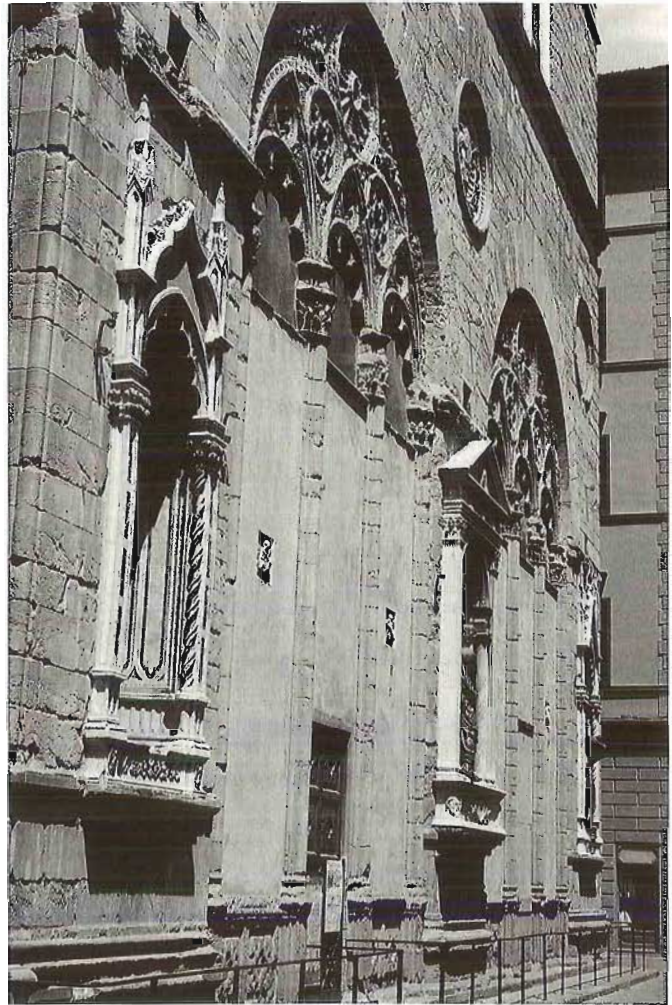


Figure 4 Orsanmichele, Florence. Photo: Alina Payne

In the dizzying succession of architectural treatises that followed in the sixteenth century this connection remained both valid and fundamental. It was Sebastiano Serlio who popularized the ideas, forms, and vocabulary developed in the circle of Raphael in his series of treatises that began to be published in 1537.<sup>72</sup> And as is abundantly clear from his introduction to architecture, Vasari read Serlio’s *Quarto Libro* (1537) and *Terzo Libro*

68. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

69. “In oltre mi sono aiutato ancora e non poco de gli scritti di Lorenzo Ghiberti, di Domenico del Ghirlandaio, e di Raffaello da Urbino . . .” Vasari, *Le vite* 1550, p. 916. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (see note 11), pp. 130 and 264, n. 44. Rubin argues that Vasari made little use of this letter in Raphael’s life. John Shearman notes the connection to Vasari’s prefaces with respect to the antiquities of Rome. “Raphael, Rome and the Codex Escorialensis,” in *Master Drawings* XV (1977):107–146.

70. Vasari, *Le vite* 1550, p. 98.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

72. On Serlio’s relationship to Roman circles and Raphael’s milieu in particular, see Christoph Frommel, “Serlio e la scuola Romana,” in *Sebastiano Serlio*, ed. C. Thoenes (Vicenza and Milan: Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio and Electa, 1989), pp. 39–49.

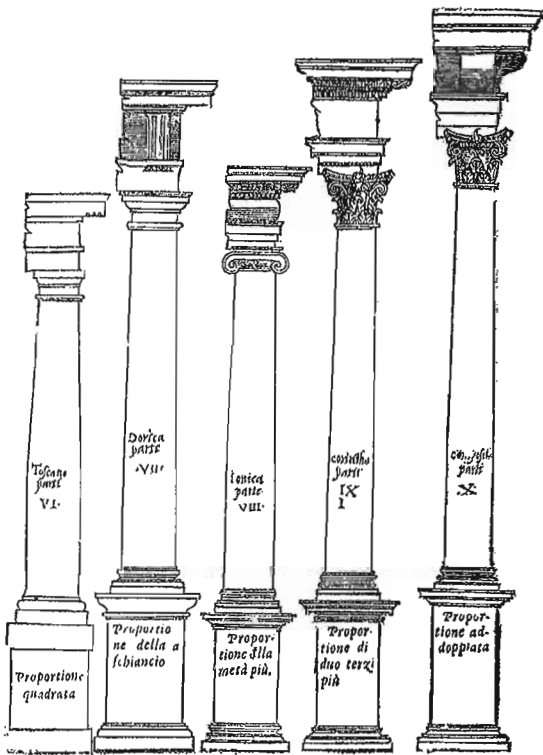


Figure 5 Sebastiano Serlio, Composite image of the orders, *Quarto Libro* (Venice, 1537).

(1540) very carefully indeed.<sup>73</sup> Like Raphael, Serlio used the terms *ordine* and *maniere* interchangeably.<sup>74</sup> It was also Serlio who consecrated the Tuscan as first order. Alberti had only suggested that the Doric “was already in use in ancient Etruria”<sup>75</sup> and offered an image for the historical succession of architectural styles: this is the Colosseum where the superimposed orders illustrate at one and the same time their temporal sequence *and* immortalize the triumph of the Romans who invented the Composite<sup>76</sup> (fig 5).

73. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, pp. 254–255, Payne, “Architects and Academies,” p. 125.

74. Serlio uses the term *maniera* for columnar orders in the very title of his first book: *Regole generale d’architettura sopra le cinque maniere degli eidfici, cio e thoscano, dorico, ionico, corinthio et composito* (Venice, 1537). For uses of the two terms in the text, see for example “nondimeno io ho voluto accompagnare alle predette una quasi quinta *maniera* delle dette semplice mescolata,” Serlio, *Tutte l’opere* (see note 72), IV, f 183; and the very title of the chapter on the Doric, “Dell’ordine dorico,” *ibid.*, f.139.

75. Alberti, *On the Art of Architecture*, VII, 6, p. 201

76. Sebastiano Serlio, *Tutte l’opere*, Book III, f 81 On Serlio and the Composite order, see Payne, *Architectural Treatises*, pp. 131–133

Vasari absorbed and perpetuated Serlio’s vocabulary. In his introduction to architecture, the chapter on the orders brings *maniera* and *ordine* together with the self-evidence of a well-known fact: “Ma perché molti non sanno conoscere le differenze che sono da *ordine* a ordine, ragioneremo distintamente nel capitolo che segue di ciascuna *maniera* o modo”<sup>77</sup> [my emphasis] (But as many do not recognize the differences between order and order, we will discuss individually each style or manner in the following section.) And his praise of the Roman inventions follows Serlio’s almost to the letter, but with a Tuscan overtone: the Composite order invented by the Romans, he attributes even more specifically to the Tuscans. An adornment for the crown of the Colosseum for being “superiore di forza e bellezza” this order represents the triumph of his people over the Greeks and the entire world<sup>78</sup> (fig 6).

Architectural critics had noticed the multivalent meanings of the term *ordine* and the lexical slippage it led to. Indeed, by 1556, in his commentary on Vitruvius, Daniele Barbaro was moved to clarify the issue and to remind his readers of the sequential implications in the term *ordine* that to him designates “il prima e il poi” (the before and after) rather than style.<sup>79</sup> It may well be that Barbaro’s attention was drawn to this problem by the preeminence *maniera* had acquired as a category of art criticism in the wake of Vasari’s own work. In any event, he wished to stress the proper usage of the term *ordine* since it was the *volgare* equivalent of Vitruvius’s category *ordinatio* (ordering) and as such had a very specific meaning in architecture. Any confusion with *style/maniera* and its implications of personal latitude would have compromised this crucial and immutable category that was closely associated with proportion (as its instrument).<sup>80</sup> As result he resolutely avoided the term *ordine* to designate the columnar orders and used a wide range of others, among which were *maniera*, *modo*, *compartimento*, *ragion*, and *opera*, he even used

and Yves Pauwels, “Les origines de l’ordre composite,” *Annali di architettura* 1 (1989); 29–46.

77. Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 31.

78. Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 32.

79. Vitruvius, Marcus Pollio, *I dieci libri dell’ architettura tradotti e commentati da Daniele Barbaro* (Milan: I1 Polifilo, 1987; facs. ed., Venice: Francesco de’ Franceschi, 1567; 1st ed. 1556), p. 28.

80. “Io dico che l’ordine e tra quelle cose, che si riferiscono ad altre, & che poste sono in comparatione, & rispetto. Dico di più che la comparatione è di quelle, che sono nella disuguaglianza. Chiaro è che nell’ordine sia rispetto, perche l’ordine s’intende, che alcuna cosa preceda, & altra succeda” His definition of proportion is “comparatione di cose tra se, che sono di una stessa natura.” *Ibid.*

the expression “alla Dorica.”<sup>81</sup> Still, the association *ordine*—now clearly spelled out as meaning sequence—and *maniera* evident in contemporary texts remained implicit in his text also, despite the warning; if anything, by highlighting it he had drawn attention to their habitual overlap. The fact that Barbaro had hit a nerve was confirmed by the reception of his text. In the 1560s when he was writing his treatise on architectural ornament, the Florentine *letterato* Gherardo Spini was even more outspoken on the convergence between the terms *ordine* and *maniera* in architecture: “Modern artists have taken the habit of calling these manners or styles [*maniere*] of ornaments orders [*ordine*], which seems inconvenient since order means a relationship of before and after [*al prima e al poi*]”<sup>82</sup> Much later, in his own 1615 treatise, Vincenzo Scamozzi still felt that a clarification and definition of terms was necessary.<sup>83</sup> Yet, despite such warnings, and indeed, as the need for them documents, the meaning of *ordine* had long since penetrated *maniera*.

### 3. Stationary time and ethnic style

But plotting the *ordine delle maniere* was not the only original aspect of Vasari’s historiography. Alongside this ascending line one can also detect an ethnic narrative at work. However sharply rising the vector of progress may be, it always plots a Tuscan achievement: the implication is that there exists a Tuscan style and that its supremacy remains a constant. Regional style and period style intersect like the abscissa of a Cartesian system. Although such ethnic classifications of styles were common in the ancient corpus known to Vasari—one need only think of the Attic, Asiatic, and other rhetorical styles famously described by Cicero and others—the integration of the two models (temporal/determinist and ethnic) into one coherent narrative is

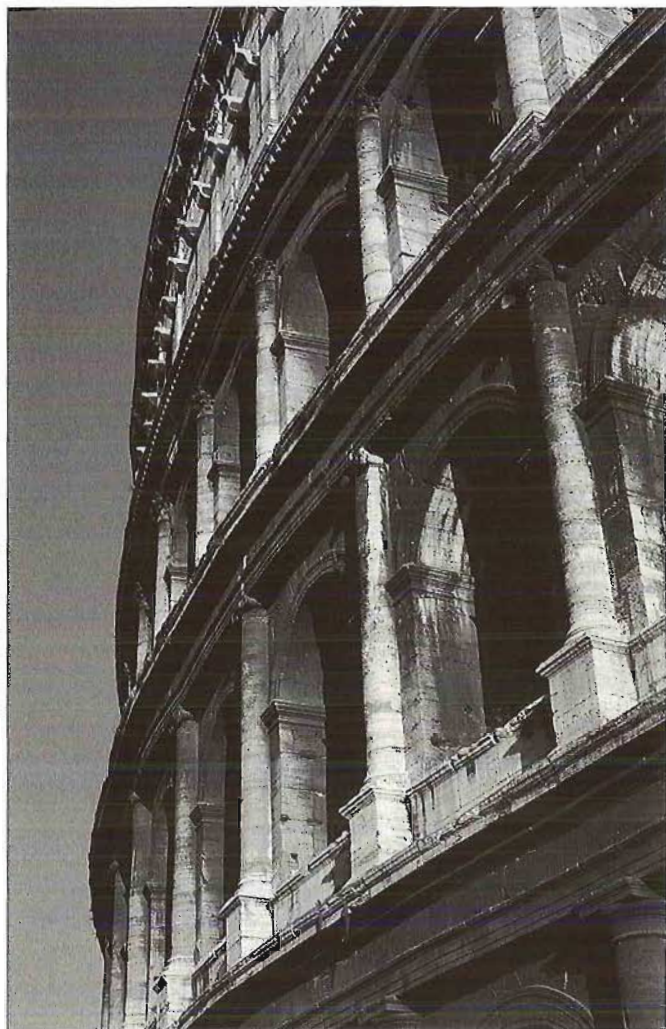


Figure 6. View of Colosseum, Rome. Photo: Alina Payne.

nevertheless Vasari’s own. Here too architecture offered something of a precedent.

If the architects could supply a starting point for a historical charting of the “*ordine delle maniere*,” their definition of *maniere* was nevertheless rather different from Vasari’s. Once invented, the architectural *maniere* became ever valid, none superseding the other or causing each other to become obsolete even if at their origin they testified to their inventors’ different levels of refinement. Their invention occurred over time and was plotted on a rising scale, but the historical process eventually stopped: any style (Doric, Ionic, and so on) could be used at any time provided that it suited its object. In this respect the similarity with rhetoric’s

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 188, 186, and 172.

82. “Queste *maniere* e specie di ornamenti hanno gli” Artefici moderni messi in uso di chiamare *ordini*, il che pare inconveniente significand’ ordine un rispetto et relazione *al prima e al poi* . . . Gherardo Spini, “I tre primi libri sopra l’istituzioni intorno agl’ornamenti,” ed. C. Acidini, in *Il disegno interrotto*, ed. F. Borsi et al. (Florence: Gonnelli, 1980), p. 63

83. “Questa voce *ordine* presa in generale significa molte cose; mà nell’ Architettura specialmente dinota un concerto, o componimento di varie cose proportionate: e corrispondenti, & annesse insieme: come sono i Piedistilli, le Colonne, e gli ornamenti sopra: perche tutte poste insieme fanno ordine intiero, e còrpo, con le sue parti, e membra.” Vincenzo Scamozzi, *L’idea dell’architettura universale* (Venice: by the author, 1615), vol. II, p. 2

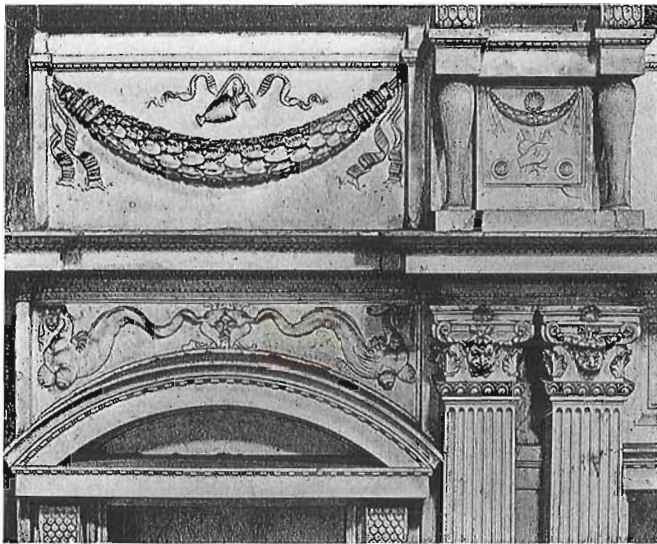


Figure 7 Michaelangelo Buonarroti, Detail, Medici Chapel. San Lorenzo, Florence. Photo: From Heinrich von Geymüller's *Michelangelo Buonarroti als Architekt*, 1904

*genera dicendi* has often been noted.<sup>84</sup> Yet although individual orators did develop their own styles, such did not seem to be the accepted understanding of an architect's relationship to the orders/*maniere*. True enough, individual architects could and did develop their own versions of these canonical forms (and wrote treatises about them), but such procedures often led to heated debates rather than to the acknowledgment of a personal style.<sup>85</sup> Personal style—the cornerstone of Vasari's system—never came up in architectural discussions. Indeed, the pattern was so established that not even Vasari, who was more than usually attentive to this issue, used personal style as a category to describe the oeuvre of architects. In his view, when Michelangelo presented his generation with the astounding innovations in the Medici chapel, this was ultimately not his own style but more: he was the inventor of the modern Composite, on par with Callimachus, the mythical begetter of the Corinthian<sup>86</sup> (fig. 7). Perhaps Vasari's description of Michelangelo's achievement as breaking "the bonds and chains that previously confined [the artists] to the creation of traditional forms" and his

approach as departing "in so many details and so widely from normal practice [*communa usanza*]" hints at a conception of personal architectural style at the same time as it helps him illustrate all the typical features of a period style (the *terza età*).<sup>87</sup> And, by the same token, when he mentions in the Introduction that the architect's hand ideally should have "*giudiccio con bella maniera*" (with reference to the design of the orders) he may be thinking again of a form of personal style. Yet Vasari never developed this thought any further, nor did the architectural theorists and critics writing after him.<sup>88</sup> Apparently the connection *maniera/ordine* was so powerful in architecture that another, parallel meaning for the term style could not be conceived.

It would seem that by Vasari's time two interlocking and simultaneous historical models had been developed in architectural discourse: a linear/cumulative one, that charted the movement from invention to invention, and style to style, on an upward path similar to that used to plot the trajectory of modern science from the late sixteenth century onwards; and a stationary one similar to that identified by Pomian as traditionally assigned to the *savoir* (the ancient canon in all disciplines from philosophy to natural history transmitted through texts and regarded as unimpeachable).<sup>89</sup> Like the ancient texts that participated in this *savoir* and could not be challenged, the architectural *maniere* were also always valid: indestructible, they maintained their value as models or norms forever. That these two historical timelines operated in architecture is confirmed by the fact that in this period its discourse displays the same pattern of *querelles* as the *savoir*. Like the discrepancy between the stationary time of *savoir* (endorsed by the "Ancients"), and the linear/cumulative time of science and innovation (endorsed by the "Moderns") that caused the famous *querelles* between them (among which was the famous *questione della lingua*), the two colliding

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42. On the absence of a concept of personal style in architectural theory and criticism of the Renaissance arising from a particular view of architectural creativity, see Alina A. Payne, "Creativity and *bricolage* in Architectural Literature of the Renaissance." *Res: Journal of Aesthetics and Anthropology* 34 (autumn 1998):20–38, esp. pp. 27–28.

89. Pomian, *L'ordre du temps* (see note 17), pp. 46–51. The challenge to the canonical corpus of the *savoir* was essentially a phenomenon of the later sixteenth century and coincided with the expansion of horizons caused by new travel routes and consequent discoveries. On this issue, see Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1992).

84. See especially John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

85. On these debates and their framing as debates on license, see Payne, *Architectural Treatise* (see note 66), chap. 1.

86. Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 901.

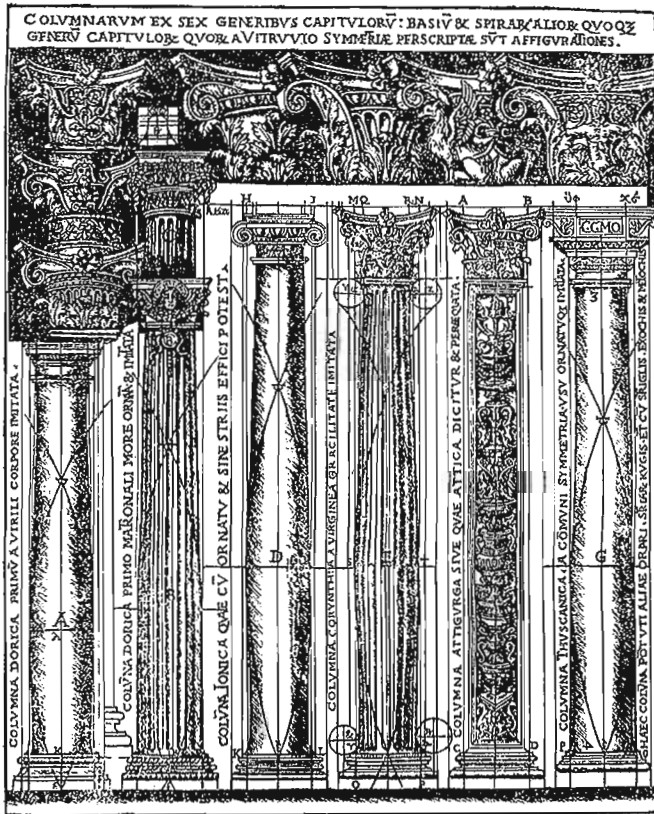


Figure 8. Cesare Cesariano, Composite image of the orders, Vitruvius. *De architectura* (Milan, 1521).

time scales had the same effect in architecture.<sup>90</sup> They ignited debates and confrontations between those championing progress and those calling for a respect of norms.<sup>91</sup>

But architecture brought in a third and crucial element in the *maniere*/history connection: it also suggested an ethnic thread that likewise existed outside time. If in Vitruvius the role of the *maniere* in the definition of a national identity is hardly noticeable, for his Renaissance readers the implication seemed self-evident (fig. 8). Pliny, who modified Vitruvius by identifying a specifically Tuscan column (rather than temple form *De arch.* IV,7), certainly helped in this transition. But his mention was a fleeting one (*Nat. Hist.*

XXXVI.v.177-lvi.179) and it was not until Alberti that national identity and columnar orders surfaced as a bona fide issue. As we have seen, Alberti attributed the Dorians' Doric also to the Tuscans—he argued that they had invented it first or at least at the same time—and named the Composite order (not mentioned by Vitruvius) *Italic*. In his view it was not only the most recent but also the most accomplished in the sequence of orders initiated by the Greeks. In so doing he strengthened the temporal implication associated with their invention and claimed both a foundational and climactic role for his people.<sup>92</sup> What is critical here is that Alberti presented architectural styles as the expression and image of particular civilizations (from Etruscans to Romans). Although he mentioned the orders as *opera dorica*, *ionica*, and so on, he described them far more frequently as the work of the Dorians, Ionians, and so on, that is, as the consequence and representation of the preferences and views of a particular ethnic group.<sup>93</sup>

The connection between ethnicity and the orders was retained and passed along by Francesco di Giorgio Martini. Straining Vitruvius's text somewhat, he argued that the Ionic was invented in Ionia and conceived "sicondo la invenzione dell'architetto in Ionia operante" (according to the invention of the Ionian architect) as was the Corinthian invented by the "populi corinzi."<sup>94</sup> But it is Alberti's outspoken and patriotic support of his people that had the longest half-life. The model was so powerful that in the mid sixteenth century Philibert de L'Orme invented a "colonne françoise" as a sign of French national architectural identity.<sup>95</sup> Likewise, given his own inquiry, Vasari could not miss the association of

92 In the preface to the second part, Vasari is particularly eloquent when he describes his desire to understand the causes of things: "e mi sono ingegnato non solo di dire quell che hanno fatto, ma di scegliere ancora discorrendo il meglio da'l buono, e l'ottimo da'l migliore, e notare un poco diligentemente I modi, le arie, le maniere, I tratti e le fantasie de' pittori e degli scultori; investigando, quanto più diligentemente ho saputo, di far conoscere a quegli che questo per se stessi non sanno fare, le cause e le radici delle maniere e del miglioramento e peggioramento delle arti . . ." Vasari, *Le Vite*, pp. 207–208.

93. "The Ionians found the thickness of the Doric to their liking [probare], but doubled the number of scotias " (VII, 7) p. 203; "The Corinthians found both the Ionic and the Doric base to their liking [probare] . . ." (VII, 7), p. 204.

94. Francesco di Giorgio Martini, *Trattati di architettura ingegneria e arte militare*, ed. C. Maltese and S. D. Maltese (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1967), vol. 2, p. 376.

95. Philibert de L'Orme, *Premier tome de l'architecture* (Paris: Federic Morel, 1567), p. 218 v and chap. xiv.

90. Pomian has argued that Giambattista Vico makes a last and futile attempt to reconcile the cyclical and cumulative time of the various disciplines by proposing a spiral model. Pomian (see note 17), p. 54.

91. See Payne, "Architects and Academies" (see note 50).

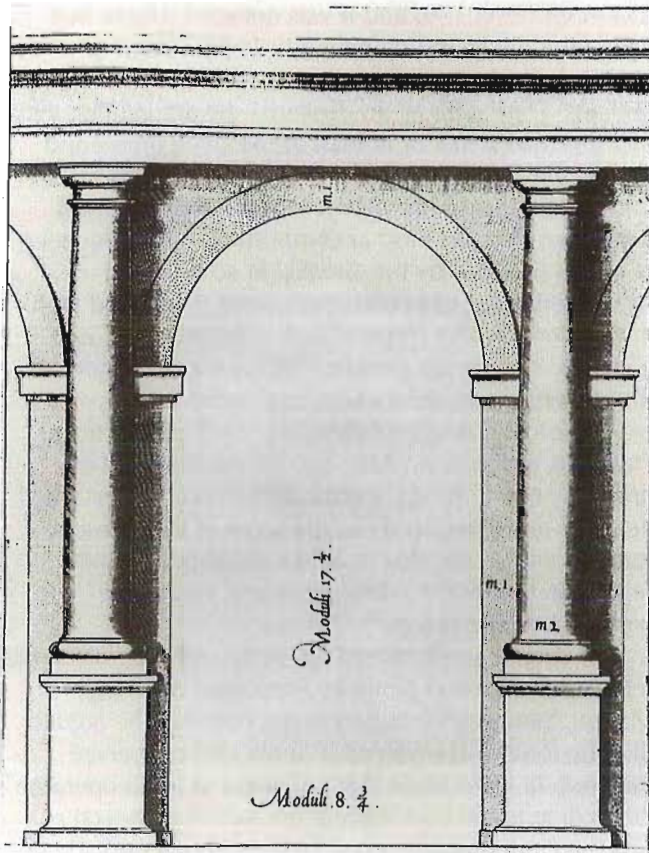


Figure 9 Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Tuscan order, *Regola delli cinque ordini* (Rome, 1562).

style, history, and ethnicity embedded in these architectural texts. Moreover, this association would have been much reinforced by the fact that in the recent past one other, alien *maniera*, had been added to the canon and attributed to the Goths and Barbarians. Again, the ethnic thread was unmistakable. If Raphael most famously vituperated against the “*maniera dell’architettura Tedescha*,” the connection had already been made in 1460 by Filarete, even if he otherwise did not follow Alberti’s suit to associate the orders with Greek tribes or, later, with the Romans.<sup>96</sup> Vasari noted

96. For Raphael’s comment, see Rowland (see note 66), p. 101. Filarete argues: “I beg everyone to abandon modern usage [Trecento architecture]. . . Cursed be he who discovered it! I think that only barbaric people could have brought it into Italy.” Antonio di Piero Averlino, *Filarete’s Treatise on Architecture*, trans. J. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 2 vols., p. 102. Alberti makes no mention of a Gothic manner, nor does he criticize the modern manner (except implicitly by recommending the ancient as a model).

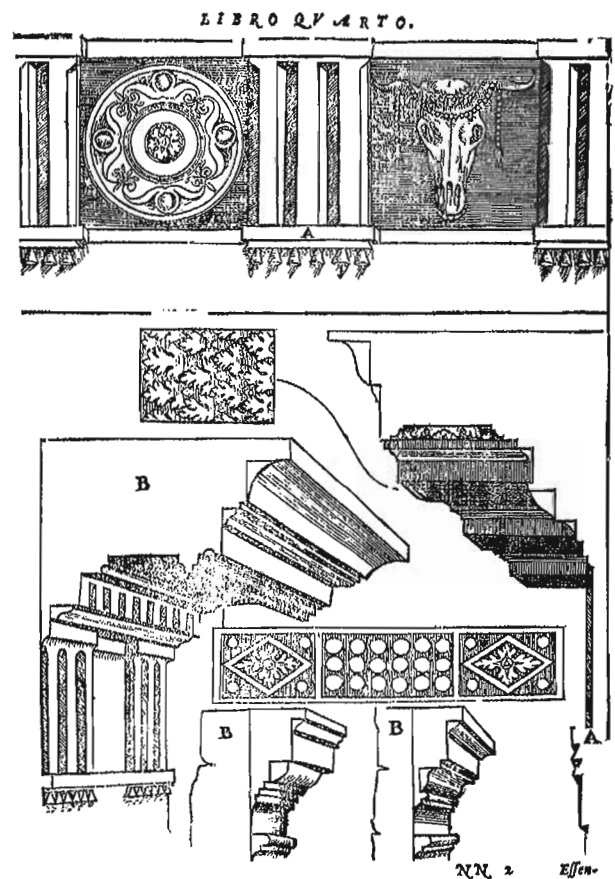


Figure 10. Sebastiano Serlio, Details of the Doric order, *Quarto Libro* (Venice, 1537).

the connection and poured upon the *maniera tedescha* that had been “*trovata da I Goti*” a scorn no doubt exacerbated by recent hardships experienced at the hands of invading northern (French) armies.<sup>97</sup> Vitruvius’s mythic invention stories of the orders had been transformed by his Renaissance readers into a genuine history of nations that connected Etruscans to Romans and modern Tuscans across the barbarian Goths.

That Vasari was aware of this ethnic narrative in architecture is confirmed by his description of the orders, which is modelled on both Serlio and Alberti. Although his reference to the Tuscan is not as forceful as Vignola’s (who avoids Serlio’s rustic reference and consecrates a Tuscan order on par with the others in his 1562 *Regola delli cinque ordini*) (fig. 9) and although he prefers the term *composto* for the Italic order, he does

97. Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 35.



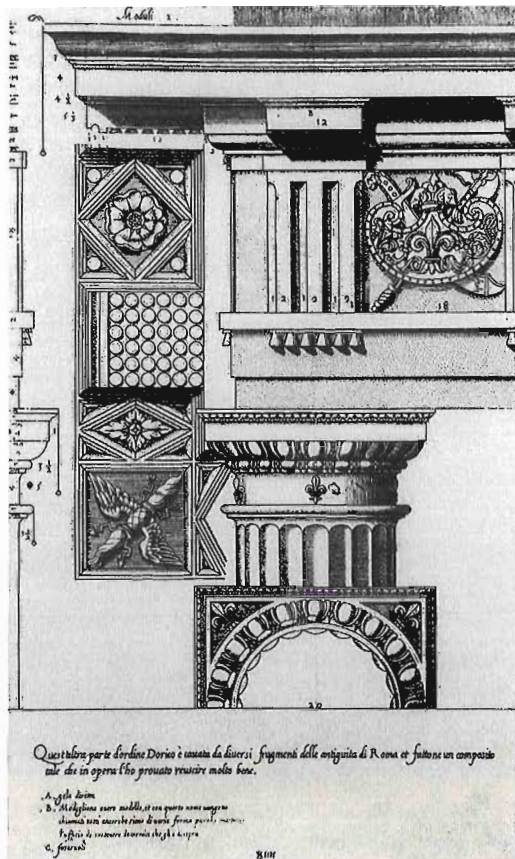


Figure 11. Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Doric order, *Regola delli cinque ordini* (Rome, 1562).

follow Alberti's lead in attributing it to the Romans.<sup>98</sup> But if Vasari's text did not attend to the vexed question of the Tuscan/Greek Doric, his built work did. In his project for the Uffizi (begun in the later 1550s) the distinction between the two orders remained moot.<sup>99</sup> As Vasari tells the story in his autobiography (1568 *Vite*), at the Uffizi he had used the Doric at the Duke's command.<sup>100</sup> Yet his Doric could easily be anybody else's Tuscan. In their treatises both Serlio (1537)

98. L'ordine composto, se ben Vitruvio non ne ha fatto menzione, non facendo egli conto d'altro che dell'opera dorica, ionica, corinthia e Toscana . . ." Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 34. On Vasari's subtle attribution of the Composite to the Tuscans following the lead of Luca Pacioli and Cosimo Bartoli and relevant bibliography, see Claudia Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (Milan: Electa, 1993), p. 41 and p. 84 n. 18.

99. On the dating of Vasari's work and Medici patronage, see Conforti, *Vasari architetto*, *ibid.*, pp. 144–147 and Rubin, *Vasari* (see note 11), pp. 10–19.

100. Vasari, *Le vite 1568*.

architetto lo imito molto in dicesi opere, come chiaro si vede, perche molto lo diletta per esse cosa nuova. Questo mirabil edificio hauro in ogni cantone una bella discretione da esser conseruata, cioè di pilastro de dritto cantone non diminuisca, et arbitrarie correndo fu per le colonne minute quando giugnea al cantone ristaura tanto, quanto in la diminutione de la colona cio far cosa per venir a ritrovar il uito del pilastro, si come chiaro lo vedi qui fatto al fogno R. Circa le misure fu misurato col braccio di uolo in minuti scianta.

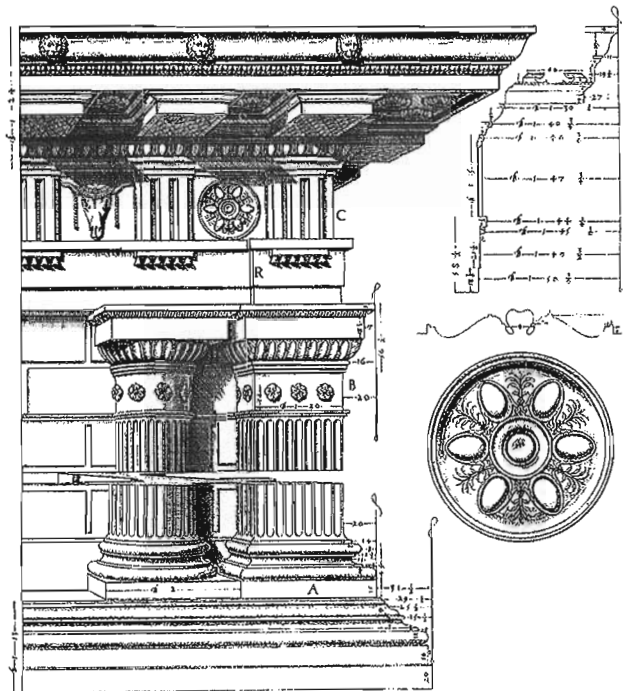


Figure 12. Antonio Labacco, Basilica Aemilia, *Libro appartenente all'architettura* (Rome, 1552).

and Vignola (1562) showed a Tuscan order almost indistinguishable from the Uffizi order. Moreover, their Doric, like the one that Antonio Labacco illustrated in his *Libro appartenente all'architettura* (1552) and Antonio da Sangallo used at the Palazzo Farnese (which Vasari mentions as exemplary), is far more ornamented and altogether different (figs. 10–12). Indeed, the Uffizi order does not even coincide with Vasari's own description of the Doric from his Introduction to architecture in the *Vite*. The square pedestal of its columns, the plain and *soda* entablature, and the unfluted shafts are much closer to his description of the Tuscan.<sup>101</sup> The resulting order is a Tuscan/Doric hybrid, a

101. ". . . e si fa nelle modenature delle cornici più semplici, così ne' capitelli o base et in ogni suo membro. I suoi zoccoli o piedistalli che gli vogliam chiamare, dove posano le colonne, sono quadri di proporzione, con l'aver da piè la sua fascia soda e così un'altra di sopra, che lo ricinga in cambio di cornice." Vasari, *Le vite 1550*, p. 31.



Figure 13. Giorgio Vasari, Detail of Uffizi colonnade, Florence. Photo: Alina Payne.



Figure 14. Giorgio Vasari, Detail of upper story, Uffizi colonnade, Florence. Photo: Alina Payne.

genuine embodiment of and a possible reference to the Etruscan Doric Alberti had proposed (figs. 13–14).

That such a conception of the Tuscan/Doric was current in Vasari's circles is confirmed by Cosimo Bartoli in his commentary on (and defense of hairline) Michelangelo's unorthodox order in the Laurentiana *ricetto* and his Sant' Apollonia portal.<sup>102</sup> According to Bartoli, Michelangelo "diede una conveniente, & bella proporzione alquanto più lunga allo Dorico", more importantly, he had invented "un'nuovo ordine"<sup>103</sup> (fig. 15). Like his personal version of the Composite that

102 Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici* (Venice, 1567), delivered as academy lectures circa 1550–1551. On Bartoli's lectures and their publication, see Judith Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli (1503–1572): The Career of a Florentine Polymath* (Genova: Droz, 1983), p. 253. Charles Davis has argued convincingly that the lectures were delivered circa 1550–1552. See Charles Davis, "Cosimo Bartoli and the Portal of Sant' Apollonia by Michelangelo," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts Florenz* 19 (1975):266.

103. Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante* (Venice: Francesco de Franceschi, 1567), p. 2v.

Vasari defined as a watershed for a modern unshackled architecture, Michelangelo's Doric—with slender and unfluted shafts, with an entablature lacking metopes, triglyphs, mutules, or any other distinct Doric feature (though in Vasari's case it included the Ionic dentil, probably taken from Vignola's Doric)—was likewise a modern invention. In fact, this was a Tuscan invention, a modern "Tuscan Doric" underwritten by Michelangelo's near-divine authority. That Bartoli should have seen this order in such a stylistic/nationalist light was completely in keeping with his lifelong efforts to obtain Cosimo's patronage by supporting his pro-Tuscan politics. It was also consistent with his treatment of the orders in the translation of *De re aedificatoria* (published in 1550 but approved by the Medici censors in 1548 and thus predating Vasari's *Lives*) where he exacerbated the ethnic thread already present in Alberti by changing the Italic order's name to Tuscan. This was no insignificant detail. The term "Italian" was too loaded given the then current language disputes (Giangiorgio Trissino vociferously advocating an Italian rather than Tuscan



Figure 15 Michelangelo Buonarroti, view of vestibule, Library of San Lorenzo, Florence. Photo: From Heinrich von Geymüller's *Michelangelo Buonarroti als Architekt*, 1904



Figure 16. View of Uffizi corridor, Florence. Photo: Alina Payne.



Figure 17 Piazza della Signoria, Florence. Photo: Alina Payne.

language), and Bartoli was evidently prepared to do violence to Alberti's text to avoid it.<sup>104</sup>

It has been duly noted that Vasari's Uffizi Doric presents striking resemblances to Michelangelo's, both in detailing and slenderness.<sup>105</sup> Yet Vasari's known admiration for his great compatriot may not have been

104. Cosimo Bartoli, *Leon Batista Alberti: "De re aedificatoria"* (Venice: Francesco de Franceschi, 1565; 1st ed. 1550). On Bartoli's ultimately vain effort to obtain permanent employment from Cosimo (despite his stint as ambassador in Venice), see Daniella Lamberini, "La fortuna delle machine senesi nel Cinquecento," in *Prima di Leonardo: Cultura delle machine a Siena nel Rinascimento* (Milan, 1991), pp. 135–146.

105. Conforti discusses the relationship between Vasari's strapwork for the window openings and Michelangelo's and reviews the scholarship on the subject. See Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (see note 98), pp. 60–62

the only reason behind this quotation. Bartoli's proud nationalism associated with architectural style suggests a politicized conception of *maniera* that may also have played a role in the Uffizi design.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, the "new" Doric of the Uffizi preserved two features of the greatest significance for Cosimo I: the traditional reference to the deities associated with the Doric (the warlords Zeus, Mars, and Hercules) and a reference to Tuscan primacy in the ancient and modern invention of the order.<sup>107</sup> A public and highly visible statement, such a "Medici order," enhanced by a string of Tuscan *viris illustribus* intended for niches within the colonnade (though this part of the project was completed much later), could convey at one glance a whole Medicean political

106. For Bartoli's influence on Vasari's notions of architecture, see *ibid.*; and Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (see note 11), p. 167

program set upon claiming Tuscan and Florentine preeminence in Italy<sup>108</sup> (figs. 16–17).

#### 4. Style, language, and politics

Vasari's Tuscan/Doric Uffizi colonnade, built when his star was at its zenith at Cosimo's court, suggests that he was aware of the ethnic thread in the contemporary conception of architectural *maniere*. It is therefore not surprising to find this thread also present in his *Lives*, as an additional model for charting the history of art as the "ordine delle maniere." The appropriateness and timeliness of this ethnic model would have been particularly striking in the 1540s when Vasari was conceiving the project of the *Vite*, especially as it found important parallels in the very publicly fought *questione della lingua* that was raging at the time. The debate centered on the consolidation of the Italian language, but a principal feature was the place of the Tuscan (even Florentine) dialect as consecrated by the "tre corone di Firenze," Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio<sup>109</sup>. This was no mere dispute among *letterati* but enjoyed the full attention of Cosimo I and his advisors. The political preeminence that he was seeking to attain was much buttressed, indeed instrumentally so, by the pro-Tuscan cultural imperialism he had initiated in the early years of his reign. His on-again off-again alliance with the pope in the 1540s meant a cautious game of historical precedence between Rome and Florence (the issue being which city was the first to have been founded in Italy and thereafter continuously settled);<sup>110</sup> his long-drawn precedence dispute with the duke of Ferrara



Figure 18. Cosimo Bartoli, *L'architettura di Leon Batista Alberti* (Florence 1550). Frontispiece.

added impetus to his efforts to demonstrate antiquity and leadership for his family and province;<sup>111</sup> finally his territorial ambitions over Siena, which would come to a head in the 1550s, meant an emphasis not only on *fiorentinità*, but also on *toscanità* as became a future grand duke of all Tuscany. Language and art were key elements in all these disputes. The architectural history of Alberti, with its emphasis on a Doric invented in Tuscany and an Italic Composite order as its two bookends, served his purposes well, and it should come as no surprise that Cosimo Bartoli published his translation of *De re aedificatoria* in 1550, precisely at this sensitive political juncture (fig. 18).

107 Conforti mentions two additional meanings of the Doric that Vasari probably derived from Serlio: a reference to royalty and a utilitarian implication (in keeping with the building's function as offices for magistrates). Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (see note 98), pp. 60–61.

108. Cosimo had intended the niches to contain sculptures of "fiorentini illustri nelle lettere, nelle armi e nei governi," a sculptural program intended to complement that of the Piazza della Signoria. However, the project was not executed till the nineteenth century.

109. On the debate on the Italian language, see Bruno Migliorini, "La questione della lingua," *Questioni e correnti di storia letteraria*, ed. U. Bosco et al. (Milan, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 1–76; and Maurizio Vitale, *L'oro nella lingua* (Milan, 1986).

110. The relationship between Paul III Farnese and Cosimo I was strained throughout the 1540s, starting from the aborted marriage alliance between Cosimo and the pope's niece and lasting till their reconciliation in 1549, when they were united in their disappointment at their treatment by Charles V over the territories of Piacenza and Piombino respectively. See Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del granducato di Toscana (sotto il governo della casa Medici)* (Florence: G. Cambiagi, 1781), vol. 1, p. 166ff.

111. On this precedence debate, see Robert Williams, "The Sala Grande in the Palazzo Vecchio and the Precedence Controversy between Florence and Ferrara," in *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court*, ed. Philip Jacks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 163–181, and for a more detailed political perspective, see Michel Plaisance, "Culture et politique à Florence de 1542 à 1551," in *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Italie à l'époque de la Renaissance 3*, eds. A. Rochon et al. (Paris: Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1974), pp. 149–228.

Moreover, the supporters of a Tuscan, even Florentine, language often drew on architecture to strengthen their arguments.<sup>112</sup> Such an association between the two discourses occurred precisely in those circles that Vasari frequented and that had a significant impact on the genesis of the *Vite*. Indeed, Bartoli, Lenzone, and others drew on architectural examples—often the very same ones Vasari would later use in his *Vite*—to buttress their positions. Thus, not only was Michelangelo an example of victorious *fiorentinità* but his practice of inventing new ornament as *mescolanze* was used by them to justify the inclusion of neologisms and modern idioms into the hallowed language of the great *trecentisti*.<sup>113</sup> Indeed Vasari's own idea to write an encyclopedic history of art in the *volgare* may be seen not only as a response to the larger project to establish the Tuscan language in all domains of culture, but also as one specifically influenced by current architectural discourse. The ambitiously comprehensive scope of the *Vite* was similar to the contemporary and much publicized effort of the Accademia della Virtù in the domain of architecture: to produce a Tuscan *volgare* Vitruvius with a complex set of subvolumes radiating from it.<sup>114</sup> The fact that Vasari included Claudio Tolomei among those present at the Farnese dinner that saw the genesis of his project although he was abroad on an embassy at the time, suggests the importance he attached to his association and familiarity with the group (that initially enjoyed the patronage of Vasari's own old friend and supporter Ippolito Medici). The real and fictitious presence of the humanists at the font of the project like so many godfathers extending their benediction must be read as an effort on Vasari's part to acknowledge a particular intellectual community that impacted on his thinking rather than an effort at

achieving a chronicler's factual veracity with respect to the dinner itself.<sup>115</sup>

The debate on language and the transformation of the Accademia degli Umidi into the Accademia Fiorentina, with a powerful though unwritten brief to support, popularize, and institutionalize a particular version of Tuscan culture, was an essential component of the Medici political program of the 1540s. As Michel Plaisance has shown, the writings of Carlo Lenzone on the language of Dante, Gimabullari's *Il Gello* (a rebuttal to the Ferrara-based *Orlando furioso* by Ariosto), and Gello's *Dell' origine di Firenze* all played their part in the Rome/Florence/Ferrara dispute.<sup>116</sup> A historicized language—in this case placing the foundation of Florence and the origins of the Tuscan language at the time of Noah and the Flood (the Etruscans being the supposed descendants of the Aramaic tribes)—was an essential weapon for Cosimo in his claim for precedence.<sup>117</sup> There were those who resisted such single-minded historical manipulations and opposed the iron-fisted Medicean control over the Accademia Fiorentina or claimed that the Tuscan poets had drawn on the provençal language. The consequences were dire. Indeed, the fate of Giovanni Antonio Grazzini (Il Lasca) and Benedetto Varchi, who held these views, demonstrates the dangers such independence caused. One was slowly forced out of the academy, while the other was essentially framed for rape and imprisoned, and held on the index until he recanted (when he was graciously readmitted into the fold).<sup>118</sup>

Much has been made of Vasari's Tuscan *campanilismo*, which was already noticed by Lodovico Dolce in 1557, and, a century later, caused a polemic

112 As I have shown elsewhere the architectural discourse blended neatly into that of the language debates. On the relationship between the *questione della lingua*, Florentine academics, and architecture, see Payne, "Architects and Academies" (see note 50).

113 On Vasari's own *lingua mescolata* on the model of Macchiavelli's, see Rosanna Bettarini, "Vasari scrittore: come la Torrentina diventa Giuntina," in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, pp. 485–500.

114. On Tolomei's political and literary career, see Luigi Sbaragli, *Claudio Tolomei umanista senese del Cinquecento* (Siena: Accademia per le Arti e per le Lettere, 1939). For Tolomei's Vitruvian project, see Pietro Cataneo and Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, *Trattati: Con l'aggiunta degli scritti di architettura di Alvise Cornaro, Francesco Giorgi, Claudio Tolomei, Giangiorgio Trissino, Giorgio Vasari*, ed E Bassi and M. Walcher Casotti (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1985).

115. For Tolomei's mentorship of Vasari, see Frey, *Literarischer Nachlass* (see note 15), vol. 1, p. 2; Vasari's effort to perform an autopsy of the works he describes may also have been influenced by the methods of the architects-archaeologists and of Tolomei in particular. See, for example, Vasari's statement that closely echoes Tolomei's description of his Vitruvian project: ". . . a quali [writings of other artists] ancora che io abbia aggiustato fede come giustamente si conveniva, ho pur sempre voluto riscontrar l'opere con la veduta." Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 916.

116. Michel Plaisance, "Culture et politique à Florence" (see note 111).

117. Pierfrancesco Giambullari, *Il Gello* (Florence: Torrentino, 1549; 1st. ed. Florence: Doni, 1546), pp. 110–111.

118. The incident took place in 1545. In 1546 Varchi was attacking his detractors, but was already isolated. In 1547 on the occasion of his funeral oration for Bembo, he still attacks the Aramei, the pro-Cosimo faction within the academy. For example, during Bartoli's consulship (1548) Varchi read nothing at the academy gatherings. Plaisance, "Culture et politique" (see note 111), pp. 85, 199, and 216.

between the Florentine Baldinucci and the Bolognese Malvasia.<sup>119</sup> Of the 133 lives in the 1550 edition, 104 are Tuscan, and the majority Florentine. Siena, for example, was little represented (and mostly in the Trecento).<sup>120</sup> Moreover, the bookends of Vasari's history are both Tuscan (and Florentine): at one end Giotto, Cimabue, and Brunelleschi, at the other Michelangelo. This was certainly more a political than patriotic move on Vasari's part. Such regional chauvinism coming from a native of Arezzo was more of an artificial construction than it may now seem. Indeed, the immensely flattering dedicatory letter to Cosimo I, with its unstinting praise of Medici patronage and its role in spearheading and promoting the *rinascità* of the arts, lays bare both his motives and method.<sup>121</sup>

Traditionally it is the second edition of the *Lives* (1568) that has been read as a politicized statement and the work of a courtier, not the 1550 edition, which continues to be seen as the more aesthetics-driven and style-oriented version of the two.<sup>122</sup> Yet the 1540s, when Vasari wrote and published his *Lives*, was a particularly sensitive period in Tuscan politics. This was the time when Cosimo was not only consolidating his regime vis-à-vis the pope, the emperor, and his neighbors, but also changing the whole structure of Florentine government from republicanism to a neo-feudal/ absolutist system. The publication pattern in this transitional period is most revealing.<sup>123</sup> In 1542 Cosimo disbanded the Accademia degli Humidi and founded the Accademia Fiorentina

(which now absorbed also the *Studio*, the university, and raised the status of the consul of the academy to that of rector), thus signalling a shift of control towards the state.<sup>124</sup> In 1546, following upon a series of pamphlet-based skirmishes between members of various political persuasions, Giambullari, one of the leaders of the pro-Cosimo faction, published *Il Gello* (in which he argued for the historical precedence of Florence over any other Italian city) based on Gello's unpublished but highly influential *Dell' origine di Firenze*. In 1547, when the severity laws were passed and when Cosimo's rule hardened, a reform of the Academy (when Il Lasca and Doni were excluded) also followed—its new statutes required that every academican publish in order to remain a member and thus placed significant emphasis on the publication industry. This was also the year when Torrentino became the official state printer and when Giambullari became consul of the academy. In 1548—the year of Bartoli's consulship—the censors approved his translation of Alberti and Carlo Lenzone's *In difesa de la lingua fiorentina e di Dante* (a spirited exposition in support of the Florentine *volgare*) and in the following year the now established ducal Torrentino presses reprinted Giambullari's *Il Gello*. On the eleventh of March 1549 the tyrannical law "La Polverina" was passed. The government had taken control of all public activities.

Perhaps one of the most significant publication events during this early phase of Cosimo's rule was Paolo Giovio's *Historiarum sui temporis* (printed by Torrentino, the first volume in 1550 and the second in 1552), which dealt with the sensitive period leading up to and including Cosimo's reign. Perceived as a potentially important political instrument, it was discussed at great length "in *prudentialibus*" during 1549 with the duke's personal secretary, Lelio Torelli.<sup>125</sup> That the results were in keeping with Cosimo's political needs is confirmed by the fact that the book was offered as a gift to all heads of state: pope, emperor, kings, and princes. Its usefulness was striking: in his history Giovio both created and consecrated the myth of Florence as the chosen city, a centre of great culture and art, and the myth of the Golden Age during the pontificate of the Medici pope Leo X.<sup>126</sup>

119. Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' Professori del disegno* (Florence, 1681–1728); Carlo Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice* (Bologna, 1678). On the Baldinucci/Malvasia polemic, see Schlosser, *Letteratura artistica* (see note 8), pp. 529–530; Paola Barocchi, "Le postille di Sel Migliore alle *Vite* vasariane," in *Il Vasari* (see note 51), pp. 439–448.

120. On the virtual absence of Siena from the *Lives*, see the eighteenth-century revisions to Vasari by Guglielmo della Valle. On this topic, see Giuliano Ercoli, "L'edizione delle vite di Guglielmo della Valle," in *Il Vasari*, pp. 93–108.

121. E perciòché questi tali [artefici] sono stati quasi tutti Toscani e la piú parte suoi Fiorentini e molti d'essi da gli illustrissimi antichi suoi con ogni sorte di premii e di onori incitati et aiutati a mettere in opera, si può dire che nel suo stato, anzi nella sua felicissima casa sono rinate e per beneficio de' suoi medesimi, abbia il mondo queste bellissime arti ricuperate e che per esse nobilitato e rimbellito sia." Vasari, *Le vite*, p. 3.

122. Wazbinski, "L'idée de l'histoire" (see note 14), pp. 18–19.

123. I am relying particularly on Galluzzi, *Istoria del granducato* (see note 110); Michel Plaisance, "Culture et politique" (see note 111); Idem, "Une première affirmation de la politique de Côme Ier: La transformation de l'académie des 'Humidi' en académie Florentine (1540–1542)," in *Les écrivains et le pouvoir en Italie à l'époque de la renaissance* 2, ed. A. Rochon et al. (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1973), pp. 361–435.

124. Galluzzi, *Istoria del granducato*, pp. 308–309.

125. "Editoria e società," in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (Florence: Centro Di, Alinari and Scala, 1980), pp. 249–302, particularly p. 285.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 287. See also T. C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio: The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 229–244.



Figure 19 Giorgio Vasari, Cosimo I and His Artists, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.



As a former protégé of the Medici and as someone in contact with the pro-Medici faction within the academy, Vasari must have been well acquainted with this political-cultural context.<sup>127</sup> And his Farnese vignette, in which he places the origin of the *Vite* in a milieu that included both the historian Giovio and the indefatigable campaigner for the Tuscan language, Tolomei, is a clue to his perception of the context for his own project.<sup>128</sup> Endorsing the Medici position was moreover a matter of shrewd business. After completing the frescoes in the Cancellaria for cardinal Farnese in 1546, and aware of their lukewarm reception, he was more than ever on the lookout for steady patronage. The early promise of Cosimo's support after Vasari had designed the *apparati* for the baptism of prince Francesco had not borne much fruit, and the *Vite* offered an opportunity to claim his attention once more.<sup>129</sup>

Conversely, given this political context, the news of Vasari's project in 1546 must have struck a sensitive chord among his friends and supporters—the *Aramei*, Pierfrancesco Giambullari, Carlo Lenzone, Cosimo Bartoli, and Vincenzo Borghini—who could see the value of his work in furthering their cause. Indeed, their sustained activity on Vasari's behalf (advising, editing, seeing the manuscript through the press) cannot be understood only as a gesture of selfless friendship. It was they (with Don Miniato Pitti) who recommended most strongly that Vasari abandon Doni as publisher when his star began to fade at court in favour of Torrentino, the rising official printer;<sup>130</sup> it was Giambullari who urged Vasari to rush so much at the end—presumably to reinforce the group's activities at a critical political moment (1549–1550)—that Michaelangelo's life was

half-printed before it was entirely written and he had to forgo the artists' portraits he had planned to include all along; and it was still Giambullari, Giovio, and Borghini who insisted he dedicate the work to Cosimo.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, it was Giambullari and Bartoli who wrote repeatedly to Vasari urging him to complete the manuscript and not get distracted by his recent marriage, a note of irritation to his apparent lackadaisical approach only just hidden between the lines.<sup>132</sup> Coached by such eager editors, Vasari could not but strengthen the political edge that was already a part of his schema. Unlike the 1568 edition of the *Lives* that together with the frescoes in the Palazzo della Signoria exalted and glorified Cosimo's successes as *faits accomplis*, the 1550 edition reflected the as yet insecure nature of his claims and was a weapon to be used "in action," not a monument on the other side of a successfully completed campaign (fig. 19).

In the context of a discussion of Vasari's historical method, this can only remain a sketch of his response to a particular political climate and its protagonists. Yet there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the political aspects of style were a significant feature of his 1550 *Lives*. Ultimately, his history of art draws on two models: on that of the historical sequencing of styles in an ascending scale (*ordine delle maniere*); and on that of an ethnic *maniera* that remains a constant and ultimately stationary historical feature that exists in a positive tension with the linear progress-based template.

Both found a powerful precedent in architecture. Indeed, the significance of the architectural corpus of texts for Vasari's conception of a history of art cannot be underestimated, and it must take its rightful place alongside his other contemporary and ancient sources. In the 1540s when Vasari first conceived the format for the *Lives* (using material he had been gathering for some time previously) architecture offered him the most

127 Conforti has argued that Vasari was aware of and responded to the Medicean ambition to claim historical and political primacy for Florence and Tuscany in both written and built work. However, she does not address the moment (and the context) when this adherence occurs—whether in connection with the 1550 edition of the *Lives* or the 1568 edition. See Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (see note 98), p. 41. Rubin notes that Vasari was probably influenced by his academician friends' position on the language dispute, though she is less concerned with its political implications. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, pp. 182–185.

128. For Tolomei's role in the language debate, see Luigi Sbaragli, *Claudio Tolomei umanista senese del Cinquecento* (Siena: Accademia per le Arti e per le Lettere, 1939).

129. Even so Vasari was not to enjoy Cosimo's favour till late in 1554, after his artists had died or were too ill to work any longer: Tribolo had died in 1550, del Tasso in 1555, and Baccio d'Agnolo also in 1555. On this issue see, Conforti, *Vasari architetto* (see note 98) and Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (see note 11).

130. Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass* (see note 15),

131. *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 265, 267, Vasari's dedication of the third part to the newly elected pope (formerly cardinal del Monte) was only a last minute decision that scholars have interpreted as evidence of Vasari's uncertainty of obtaining patronage from Cosimo and his wish to hedge his bets by also appealing to another former patron. However, del Monte (elected in 1550) was Cosimo's candidate and hence this dedication was de facto another pro-Medici gesture. Galluzzi, *Istoria del granducato*, pp. 202–207.

132 See letters of Bartoli and Giambullari in Frey, *Literarisches Nachlass*, p. 247. Rubin sees Borghini as the principal editor of the *Vite*. Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, p. 111. Charles Hope places Giambullari in this role, and indeed attributes to him and his circle of friends the *proemii* to Vasari's *Vite*. See Charles Hope, "Can You Trust Vasari?" *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 5, 1995).

potent and developed body of theory and criticism associated with a visual art.<sup>133</sup> Despite such texts as Varchi's *Due lezioni* (1546) or the activities of such critics as Aretino, no equivalents to the treatises written by the many commentators of Vitruvius (among which were Jean Cousin, known to Vasari), by Francesco di Giorgio, Serlio, and particularly by Alberti, could be found in the figural arts. The painting and sculpture treatises by Gaurico, Piero della Francesca, or Alberti were primarily practice oriented (not that Vasari was acquainted with all of them); and the work by Dolce, Cellini, Borghini, Bocchi, Lomazzo, and Zuccaro lay still in the future (and that by Pino, Biondo, and Doni had been nearly simultaneous with Vasari's own). Important though Alberti's excursus on the painted *istoria* in *Della pittura* may have been (and continues to be for us), it did not compare in breadth and depth to his *De re aedificatoria*. As regards a theory of the figural arts, Leonardo stood alone, yet his written work had not been available to Vasari. To be sure, some of the later artistic literature affected the 1568 edition of the *Lives*. Enlarged and revised, with its edges smoothed and polished, lacking the innovating and gritty energy of the first, it certainly drew on the work of others, but this was work that it had itself deeply influenced. A testimony if not a victim of its own success, the second edition was ultimately a record of its own reception. From the point of view of innovation then, it was the 1550 edition that had been the true path-breaking work. And for this original, indeed inaugural, conception of a history of art, at that moment in time, architecture had played an important role.

If Vasari blended his linear model with a cyclical one, thus setting the foundation for the stratigraphic conception of history we still practice, the ethnic line running through and across the cyclical one held the possibilities of another type of history. In this model, which I will call *fluid*, stylistic distinctions between high and low, early and late, catastrophe and *renaissance*, receded behind a continuous ethnic or, better still, nationalistic narrative. The fact that this model was dependent on and privileged a particular political imperative is proven by the historical practices of the

nineteenth century—a period similarly characterized by national unrest and nation building. The *Kulturkampf* of an emerging German nation played itself out on the terrain of the Gothic style, the continuous and uninterrupted style of a northern sensibility, as Julius Langbehn and others were beginning to argue.<sup>134</sup> The *deuxième empire* interest in the *patrimoine* and the *monuments historiques* charted a French Gothic destiny.<sup>135</sup> The model took an even more outspoken turn on the eve of World War I at the hands of architectural historians and critics like Hermann Muthesius, Wilhelm Worringer, Adolf Behne, and Karl Scheffler and left its mark on art history once again.<sup>136</sup> Wölfflin's seminal proposal of a history of style saw the light of print in 1915.<sup>137</sup> To be sure, *Principles of Art History* was not itself politically conceived, yet it testified to another high-watermark for the relevance of style to history writing and to a political context that favoured it. In the four centuries since Vasari had published the *Vite*, his hybrid blend of historical models had resolved itself into ethnic time, or to paraphrase Pomian, into *le temps des nations*.

134. Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Leipzig: C. L. Hirschfeld, 1890). An examination of the relationship between Romanticism, nationalism, and history writing is too vast a topic to address here. Suffice it to note that architecture and style played a significant role in the period texts (e.g., Goethe, Herder, and so on). For a specific discussion of architectural style debates and their political contexts in nineteenth-century Germany, see Michael Lewis, *The Politics of the German Gothic Revival: August Reichensperger* (New York: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1993); for a more general northern context, see Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

135. On Viollet-le-Duc's blend of politics and style in his restoration projects, see most recently Kevin Murphy, *Memory and Modernity, Viollet-le-Duc at Vézelay* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

136. See Hermann Muthesius, *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst* (1902); Wilhelm Worringer, *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1910); Karl Scheffler, *Der Geist der Gotik* (1922, but written a good twenty years earlier); Adolf Behne, *Die Wiederkehr der Kunst* (1918).

137. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (1915).

133. Already Schlosser noted the important presence of the "già imponente letteratura sull'architettura" in the years preceding Vasari's publication. Schlosser, *La letteratura* (see note 8), pp. 297–298. Rubin has also acknowledged the significance of the architectural corpus but principally with respect to its impact on Vasari's language (and listed relevant bibliography). Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari* (see note 11) pp. 254–245

**RES 40 autumn 2001**

*Desedimenting time*



## Res 40 Autumn 2001

---

### *Anthropology and aesthetics*

#### Contents

##### *Desedimenting time*

- 5 EDITORIAL  
**MARVIN TRACHTENBERG**  
Desedimenting time: Gothic column/paradigm shifter
- 28 **ANNE-MARIE SANKOVITCH**  
The myth of the "myth of the medieval": Gothic architecture in Vasari's *rinascita* and Panofsky's Renaissance
- 51 **ALINA PAYNE**  
Vasari, architecture, and the origins of historicizing art
- // **BENJAMIN DAVID**  
Past and present in Sieneese painting: 1350–1550
- 101 **JONATHAN HAY**  
Toward a disjunctive diachronics of Chinese art history
- 113 **PRISCILLA P. SOUCEK**  
Walter Pater, Bernard Berenson, and the reception of Persian manuscript illustration
- 129 **NICHOLAS NEWMAN**  
In the name of rococo
- 135 **ERIKA NAGINSKI**  
Riegl, archaeology, and the periodization of culture
- 153 **MATTHEW BIRO**  
History at a standstill. Walter Benjamin, Otto Dix, and the question of stratigraphy
- 177 **ROBERT BORK**  
Pros and cons of stratigraphic models in art history
- 
- 188 **JAMES O. CASWELL**  
Lines of communication: Some "secrets of the trade" in Chinese painters' use of "perspectives"
- 211 **SHERWIN SIMMONS**  
Men of nails: Monuments , expressionism , fetishes , Dadaism
- 239 **JANINE MILEAF**  
Body to politics. Surrealist exhibition of the tribal and the modern at the anti-Imperialist exhibition and the Galerie Charles Ratton