Hugh Hudson

Paolo Uccello

ab ovo

VOLUME ONE

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Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

AODF	Archivio dell'Opera del Duomo di Firenze
ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
ASMC	Archivio di San Michele a Castello
BPRO	British Public Records Office
CRRMF	Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France
CRSGF	Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse dal Governo Francese
CRSPL	Corporazioni Religiose Soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo
IRR	Infrared Reflectography
KIF	Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz
MPAP	Magistrato dei Pupilli Avanti il Principato
NGL	National Gallery, London
NGV	National Gallery of Victoria
OPD	Opificio delle Pietre Dure
VT	Villa I Tatti

In the fifteenth century the Florentine calendar began on 25 March, the Feast of the Annunciation and the reputed date of the founding of the city. To avoid confusion dates are given in the modern calendar except when quoted.

Translations are by the author unless specified in the endnotes. Errors or anomalous spellings are not modified in transcriptions of documents.

Introduction

Around 1484 there occurred in Florence a remarkable episode in the early history of the collecting of Renaissance paintings. Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492), one of the city's most powerful citizens, sent a group of his acolytes to take by force Uccello's three *Battle* paintings from the residence of Damiano Bartolini, whence they were delivered to the Palazzo Medici on Via Larga in the north of the city.[1] Probably at this time, the arch shaped tops of the panels were sawn off and the gaps in the top corners, which would have accommodated corbels where they had previously been installed, were filled to suit their new surroundings.[2] These events are testimony to the acquisitive zeal that Uccello's works have occasionally inspired and an instance of the physical transformations that many of his works have undergone. Uccello was famous in his lifetime and his works have been coveted since, even if they were not always well looked after. There has probably been no more important collector of Uccello's paintings than Lorenzo, who had five installed in a room on the ground floor of the Palazzo Medici ('*chamera grande terrena detta la chamera di Lorenzo*').[3]

When in 1550 Giorgio Vasari published *Le vite de' piú eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* (*The Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors*) with a dedication to Lorenzo's great-grandson and heir to his collection, Cosimo de' Medici (1519–1574), he devoted a chapter to Uccello, and named him with Brunelleschi, Donatello, Ghiberti, and Masaccio as one of the remarkable generation that revived the art of Florence in the Renaissance. In so doing, Vasari flattered Medici taste and guaranteed Uccello's reputation for posterity.[4] Vasari lauded the most conspicuous highlights of Uccello's career, such as the *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in the Duomo and the *Flood and Recession of the Flood* in the Chiostro Verde of Santa Maria Novella. While referring to the fact that Uccello painted many small works to be found in houses across Florence, he scarcely mentioned the subjects of these works and it was only centuries later with the emergence of connoisseur art historians in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as James Arthur Crowe, Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle, Bernard Berenson, and Charles Loeser, that the task of reconstructing the entirety of Uccello's oeuvre was begun.

The first scholarly book on Uccello, Wilhelm Boeck's *Paolo Uccello: Der Florentiner Meister und Sein Werk* of 1939 (Berlin), appeared late in comparison with those

for the leading artists of the early Renaissance. It was not until John Pope-Hennessy's monograph of 1950 that an account of Uccello's career became a classic. However, changing scholarly opinion left the distinguished English critic's views increasingly isolated. Even in its second edition of 1969, his monograph did not adapt to the growing consensus concerning the attribution of works to Uccello, rejecting nine paintings now commonly accepted as Uccello's and ignoring others, such as the Oxford *Annunciation* and the Melbourne *Saint George*. Unknown works continued to emerge over the second half of the twentieth century, such as the lyrical Del Beccuto *Virgin and Child* identified by Alessandro Parronchi in 1969 in storage at the Museo di San Marco in Florence. In 1980 Carlo Volpe recognised Uccello's authorship of the enchanting *Adoration of the Child*, discovered in 1977 under a layer of whitewash in the sacristy of the church of San Martino Maggiore in Bologna, in a perspicacious article on Uccello's early career that appeared in the Italian journal *Paragone*. He also introduced the luminous *Profile Portrait of a Young Man* into the mainstream literature in the same article. It had gone virtually unnoticed by scholars in a private collection in Paris until the early twentieth century, before passing through the hands of various dealers and then entering another private collection in the United States around 1941. It is now housed in the Museum of Art in Indianapolis.[5] These and other works newly attributed to Uccello over the course of the twentieth century provide the impetus for this re-assessment of his oeuvre *ab ovo*.

Vasari's biography of Uccello is invaluable for its information about the locations of some of Uccello's major works in the mid-sixteenth century, but has proved to be unreliable for the details of his life, as shown by the discovery of archival evidence that contradicts Vasari since the seventeenth century.[6] New factual evidence continues to be found in Florentine archives. Two recent discoveries concern Uccello's membership of, and patronage by, Florentine confraternities.[7] While it is still the case that only four works by Uccello appearing in contemporary documents can be identified unequivocally with surviving works, all of them in the Duomo in Florence, the steady accumulation of historical data in Florentine Renaissance studies allows an increasingly rich and integrated study of the artist and the society in which he lived and worked. In particular, the importance of families and neighbours in the Florentine Renaissance has rightly been emphasised by social historians such as Dale Kent and William Kent,[8] and for art history too, the family and neighbourhood are important and under-researched influences on artists' lives,[9] although Anna Padoa Rizzo has conducted important research into the links between Uccello's family and his early patrons.[10] Chapter 1 provides a biography of the artist based on archival evidence, including a seventeenth-century document for the tombstone of Uccello and his father, which confirms that their family was armigerous, and an eighteenth-century genealogy of the most prominent

branch of Uccello's mother's family, providing evidence for his relationship to two presumed patrons.[11]

Chapter 2 examines Uccello's early career beyond Ghiberti's workshop, up to and including his stay in Venice, beginning in 1425. This period remains rather mysterious, notwithstanding the recent attributions of two paintings to the young Uccello, by Boskovits (1992) and Parronchi (1998). However, a series of fifteenth-century documents help shed light on the social context of Uccello's early activity in which he came into contact with networks of patronage from wealthy families and the ecclesiastical institutions they supported in Castello, to the northwest of Florence, and in the Santa Maria Novella quarter of Florence where he lived. Some new, specific observations concerning mosaics and *pavimenti* at San Marco in Venice support their attribution to Uccello, discussed by earlier commentators only in general terms. Chapter 3 examines the mural and panel paintings Uccello completed in the 1430s following his return to Florence from Venice, including little-studied works such as the Oxford *Annunciation* and Melbourne *Saint George*.

Uccello's name is synonymous with perspective and art historians have dedicated considerable efforts to establishing the formal characteristics of his use of perspective through visual analysis of works. The theoretical basis of Uccello's perspective has also been investigated through comparisons of his works with written sources.[12] However, there has been little analysis of the evidence provided by the contexts of Uccello's works for the interpretation of his use of perspective. Chapter 4 examines three of Uccello's most celebrated demonstrations of perspective from the point of view of their original or early contexts: the *Battle* paintings from the Bartolini residence in Via Porta Rossa, now in the National Gallery, London, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence; the *Nativity* from the Spedale di San Martino alla Scala, now in the reserve collection of the Uffizi; and the *Flood and Recession of the Flood* in the Chiostro Verde of Santa Maria Novella. It is proposed that there are quite varied and specific intentions in Uccello's uses of perspective in these works.

The political dimension of Uccello's work does not often receive the attention it deserves. Chapter 5 looks at his commissions in the Duomo in Florence, where his patrons in the Wool Merchants' Guild (Arte della Lana) included some of the wealthiest and most powerful and educated members of the Florentine Republic. Together, they articulated in images, political and religious subjects of great symbolic importance to the city. It is argued here that the iconography of the *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* reflects in part the political turmoil in the Florentine government caused by the recent failed war with Lucca. The following chapter is devoted to the *Battle* paintings, probably commissioned a few years later by a private patron, explicitly glorifying episodes from that war, and making politically

charged allusions to its conduct and its ramifications for the struggle for power between the conservative, oligarchic elite of the Albizzi family and its allies and the Medici family and its supporters.[13]

While there has long been speculation about the nature of Uccello's workshop, conservation science offers new means of addressing the problem. The development of infrared reflectography in the 1970s, as an improvement on the earlier method of infrared photography, provided a more powerful means of detecting underdrawing and *pentimenti* (changes made to a composition during its execution) under the surfaces of paintings and drawings).[14] Conservation campaigns have also transformed the appearance of works such as the *Virgin and Child* in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin, cleaned by the Istituto Centrale del Restauro di Roma in 1968, revealing even to the previously sceptical Pope-Hennessy that it is by Uccello.[15] Armed with such evidence the art historian is in a better position to determine how the physical make-up of artworks reveals their authorship, their artists' creative processes, when they were made, and sometimes even their meaning. Chapter 7 discusses the division of labour between Uccello and his workshop in the late 1440s and 1450s, proposing on the basis of conservation and stylistic evidence that Uccello had one or more assistants responsible for painting a series of small devotional works from his designs.

In Chapter 8 the creation of Uccello's paintings is described on the basis of the study of their materials and technique. New scientific analyses of three works were undertaken for this (for the Oxford *Annunciation*, the Melbourne *Saint George*, and the Karlsruhe *Adoration*). Unpublished technical examinations of Uccello's works were also consulted in the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France in Paris, the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe, and the National Gallery, London. This is the first attempt to survey Uccello's materials and technique, and it illustrates the diversity of his methods over his long career.[16] The small group of Uccello's late works is discussed in the following chapter, which may be characterised as exhibiting an appearance of charming innocence on the surface, belied by more serious—some might say extreme—themes of monastic self-denial and religious zeal.

The epilogue examines Uccello's critical reception, focussing on how art historians and connoisseurs have dealt with the problem of defining his oeuvre. A conservative estimate of the number of surviving works by Uccello in all media numbers under forty. However, over a hundred more works have been ascribed to him, largely a product of speculative attributions made before the more systematic connoisseurship of the late nineteenth century, but also a reflection of the changing conception of Uccello's style.

The considerable scope of Uccello's oeuvre defies easy categorisation along the lines of theoretical polarities such as Gothic and Renaissance style, chivalry and humanism,

superstition and science, or eccentricity and genius. Renaissance writers praised Uccello's variety, and his varied subject matter and manner reflect the complex and often contradictory culture of the Florentine Republic in the early Renaissance, engrossed as it was by discoveries about the classical past even while it made advances in the sciences, fiercely patriotic while admiring and collecting the art of other cultures, staunchly defensive of the faith while remaining circumspect about church power, enamoured of the rhetoric of war but often indecisive in its execution, and torn between the mystique of clan identity and the disputed political authority of the commune.

Notes for the Introduction

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[1] Caglioti, 2001, pp. 49–50.

[2] Roy and Gordon, 2001, pp. 11–13.

[3] Horne, 1901, p. 137.

[4] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, 60–72, 123: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[5] Volpe, 1980, pp. 3–28.

[6] The critical revision of Vasari's biography of Uccello began with Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie dei professori del disegne*, the first volume of which was published in 1686. It pointed out that Uccello could not have died in 1432 as Vasari wrote, since the documents for his commission for the *Equestrian Monument* in the Duomo were dated 1436 (Baldinucci, 1974–1975, vol. I, p. 450).

[7] Sebregondi, 1991, p. 190; Bernacchioni, 2003, pp. 418–419; Polizzotto, 2004, pp. 50 n. 128.

[8] For a review of recent developments in the field of Florentine Renaissance art history, including a discussion of the importance of contributions by social historians such as Dale Kent and William Kent, see: Wright and Narchand, 1998, pp. 1–12.

[9] Margaret Haines (2000, pp. 163–175) has discussed the value of, and difficulties in, researching artists' families in fifteenth-century Florence.

[10] Anna Padoa Rizzo (1990, pp. 56–59; 1991, pp. 8–9) has investigated Uccello's relations with his wealthy relative and presumed patron Deo di Deo del Beccuto.

[11] Wilhelm Boeck (1933b, pp. 274–275) first published an extensive list of documents concerning Uccello in his 1933 article on the artist, providing references for thirty-nine documents or series of documents, not all of which referred to Uccello directly. More documents were added to the list in his 1939 monograph (pp. 94–109).

[12] Many discussions of Uccello's works refer to his legendary use of perspective. For sustained analyses of the subject see: White (1987, Chapter 14), Parronchi (1957a, 1957b), Sindona, Rossi, Beccattini, and Gherardi (1972), and Borsi and Borsi (1994, Chapter 4).

[13] Merisalo, 1999, pp. xvi, 56; Caglioti, 2000, vol. I, pp. 266–267; Caglioti, 2001, pp. 45–46.

[14] Infrared reflectography was first described by J.R.J. van Asperen de Boer in his important 1970 PhD thesis written at the University of Amsterdam: *Infrared Reflectography: A Contribution to the Examination of Earlier European Paintings*.

[15] Pope-Hennessy, 1991, p. 90.

[16] Technical studies of individual works or small groups of works by Uccello have been published by Baldini (on the Florence *Battle*: 1954a), Brommelle (on the London *Saint George*: 1959), Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen (on the *Hunt in a Forest*: 1991), Dunkerton and Roy (on the London *Saint George*: 1998), Melli (on three drawings in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi: 1998, 1999), and Roy and Gordon (on the London *Battle*: 2001).

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A Life in the Archives

Four adjectives chosen by Vasari to describe Uccello in the *Vite* have haunted the literature on the artist ever since: 'solitary, strange, melancholy and poor' ('*solitario, strano, malinconico e povero*').[1] It is not known on what basis Vasari reconstructed the details of Uccello's biography, although he claimed to have had some information about the artist's drawings from his relatives. Vasari knew that Uccello was one of Ghiberti's workshop assistants, and that his daughter Antonia was also an artist, perhaps from documentary sources. He referred to a letter from the humanist writer Girolamo Campagnola to the scholar and collector Niccolò Leonico Tomeo describing Uccello's lost *Giants* in the Vitaliani house in Padua, and quoted an epigram written at the time of the artist's death. However, Vasari cannot have studied much original documentation from Uccello's lifetime, as is shown by his significant errors: Vasari wrote that Uccello died in 1432, when he actually died in 1475; Vasari gave his age at death as eighty-three, when it was about seventy-eight; and Vasari wrote that he was buried in Santa Maria Novella, when he was in fact buried in Santo Spirito on the other side of the Arno river.[2] Fortunately, sufficient archival evidence survives in the Florentine State Archive (Archivio di Stato di Firenze) to set the record straight about the facts of much of Uccello's life and to dispel any lingering elements of romantic caricature surrounding it.

In the six tax documents recording Uccello's age written in his lifetime, the point of central tendency for his birth date falls in 1397.[3] Direct evidence of Uccello's parentage comes from two sources. The first is his patronymic, recorded in his matriculation in the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild (Arte Medici e Speziale) as 'di Dono di Paolo',[4] indicating that his father's name is Dono (short for Donato), and his grandfather's name is Paolo. The second is Uccello's 1425 will, in which he stated that his father was buried in the church of Santo Spirito, and expressed his desire to be buried there also. The record of Uccello's death in the *Registri di morti* of the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild shows that this wish was granted ('*pagolo di ucello dipintore ri° in so spirito*').[5]

Since Gaetano Milanesi's 1878 annotations to Vasari's *Vite*, it has always been accepted that Uccello's father was Dono di Paolo, a barber-surgeon from Pratovecchio. He left this small town east of Florence, gaining his Florentine citizenship in 1373, and married Antonia di Giovanni Castello del Beccuto in 1387. Milanesi illustrated Uccello's *vita* with a coat of arms showing a chevron between three lion heads, beside a diagram of six generations of Uccello's family tree, from his grandfather to his great-grandson. He also discovered that Uccello's daughter Antonia was a Carmelite nun, and found confirmation of Vasari's claim that she was a painter in her description in the Florentine *Libri de' morti*. Problematically, he gave few references for his sources, and none of them was precise, making the verification of his discoveries difficult. Still, the majority of his evidence concerning Uccello's family has been accepted, and added to by others.[6] In 1939, Wilhelm Boeck published the date of Uccello's father's entry into the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild as 1395.[7] Only Milanesi's discovery of Uccello's coat of arms has passed without comment in the literature, perhaps because the image of Uccello provided by Vasari, as poor and isolated, seemed incompatible with Uccello having belonged to a distinguished family.

Unpublished archival evidence for Uccello's coat of arms does exist, however, in a manuscript housed in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. It collates the work of Stefano Rosselli (1598–1664), a Florentine antiquarian who recorded tombstones and coats of arms in the churches of his city: *Sepoltuario fiorentino ovvero descrizione delle chiese cappelle e sepolture loro armi et inscrizione della Città di Firenze e suoi contorni fatta da Stefano Rosselli*. It includes a record for a tombstone on the west side of a cloister of Santo Spirito, with the inscription: '*Doni Paolo, et filiorum suorum, et Descendentium*', and the coat of arms reproduced by Milanesi. Rosselli consulted a book belonging to the church, specifying that the tomb belonged to '*Dono di Paolo Barbiere*'.[8]

Despite his coat of arms, Uccello's father's profession, his migration to Florence, and his lack of a family name in the known references to him, do not suggest an especially high social standing.[9] In the will written in the month before he died, Uccello is referred to as '*Paulus olim doni donati uccelli pictor*'.[10] Since no earlier document includes the surname Donati, Uccello may have adapted it from his father's Christian name at the end of his life as a mark of social distinction, much as Piero di Cosimo seems to have adopted the surname Ubaldini late in his life. Although, there is no evidence that Uccello's descendents followed him in the use of the name.[11]

A seventeenth-century guide to Florence's noble families recorded that Uccello's mother was Antonia di Giovanni Castello del Beccuto.[12] Again, it is not clear where the information originated, although it can probably be attributed to the research of Florentine archivists. Generations of Florentine families have searched the city's archives for proof of

their nobility in the form of long and distinguished family trees. Not least among them were members of the del Beccuto family, by whom genealogical research survives from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although, by the eighteenth century descendents of the del Beccuto family had taken the name of the Orlandini family.[13] Such research might have uncovered or preserved the memory of the del Beccuto family's celebrated relation.

Even if women from prosperous families in the fifteenth century tended to marry below their social rank due to the shortage of suitable husbands, the high social status of Dono's wife's family indicates that his status could not have been too low either.[14] Another Florentine genealogical guide described the del Beccuto as an old family of the first rank ('*Famiglia antica del primo Cerchio*').[15] They were landowners, traders, and bankers, who had a coat of arms showing a red field with a white band ('*un' Campo roso entrovi una Banda bianca*').[16] Their principal Florentine residence was on the corner of Via de' Vecchietti and Via Teatina, on the small Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore, in front of one of the first churches built in Florence within the first city wall.

Like many well-to-do Florentine families, the del Beccuto invested in patronage at the local church, to provide a fitting place to bury and commemorate their dead, with two, or possibly three, chapels in Santa Maria Maggiore. According to Vasari, the family had the chapel to the left of the main altar painted in 1383 with scenes from the life of Saint John the Evangelist by an obscure artist called Lippo, whose *vita* actually included works by a number of artists, and nothing remains of the paintings that might help identify who was responsible. A tomb of a member of the Del Beccuto family, apparently reassembled from fragments of various original tombs, remains in the chapel, although it is not clear that the family had patronage rights there.[17] Deo Beccuti recorded that his father, Deo di Vanni—a spice merchant[18]—established a chapel dedicated to Saint Blaise in his testament that was notarised in 1386, without specifying its location within the church.[19] In the eighteenth century, however, Richa referred to a chapel founded in that year, third on the right from the entrance to the church, with a panel painting by the seventeenth-century artist Ottavio Vannini and his student Antonio Giusti. It showed the martyrdom of Saint Blaise, with Saints Michael and John the Evangelist.[20] An altarpiece that apparently stood in the chapel by 1423 is now lost.[21] The chapel remained in the del Beccuto family until at least the seventeenth century.[22] Further, Richa wrote that Deo di Vanni also had the chapel to the right of the main altar, where he recorded an inscription declaring Deo di Vanni's foundation of the chapel in 1383, in words that left little doubt as to his own view of his social standing: '*SEP. NOBILIS VIRI DEI VANNIS DE BECCVDIS SPECTABILIS/ HONORABILIS […]*'.[23]

A number of the del Beccuto family held important offices in the Florentine government and guilds from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth.[24] Deo di Vanni's son, Deo

di Deo del Beccuto (henceforth referred to as Deo Beccuti) was a Priore (one of nine members of the Signoria) for the San Giovanni district for two months in 1427,[25] was one of the sixteen Gonfalonieri di Compagnia in 1430, and one of the Dodici Buonomini in 1432 (both colleges advised the Signoria). He held offices in the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild on six occasions between 1413 and 1431, and the Mercantile Court (Mercanzia) in 1429 and 1430. Thanks to the detailed analysis of Florentine tax returns by social historians at Brown University, Providence, it has been established that he was head of the 137th wealthiest household in Florence in 1427.[26]

An eighteenth-century genealogy of the del Beccuto family, compiled by a descendent, Anton Ranieri Orlandini, shows the male lineage of the most prominent branch of the family, including Deo, but does not make any reference to Uccello's mother Antonia, or any woman born of the family for that matter. However, from her patronymic, 'di Giovanni di Castello' her grandfather's name is known to be Castello, which was not a particularly common name. There is, however, one person with that name in the genealogy, Deo's grandfather's brother. This suggests that Deo and Antonia may have been related through their grandfathers, which is supported by the age difference between Uccello and Deo. In 1427 Deo was fifty, while Uccello was about thirty, making Uccello approximately one generation younger than Deo.[27]

Castello di Lippo del Beccuto, tentatively identifiable in this way as Uccello's great-grandfather, lived in the parish of Santa Maria Maggiore, as is indicated in a notarial record that also supports the assessment of Uccello's relationship to Deo suggested here. It seems that when Castello died, the tutelage of his sons Vanni and Antonio was assumed by his nephew Deo di Vanni, keeping the two lineages of the family closely bound, an arrangement sanctioned by the *Pupilli*.[28] The name of one of Castello's sons, Vanni (short for Giovanni), corresponds with Uccello's grandfather's name, known from his mother's patronymic. This incidence of family solidarity provides a precedent for Deo di Deo del Beccuto's later tutelage of Uccello.

Castello di Lippo del Beccuto appears to have been a man of some social standing, whom the genealogy notes held the office of Priore in 1348, 1351, and 1355. Other archival evidence shows that he helped the Signoria fortify the *castello* at Calenzano against Visconti attack in 1352.[29] Castello's great-grandfather was Geremia del Beccuto, who had been employed by the Signoria to work on the road outside the Baptistery in 1289.[30] Thus, Uccello's mother's family had established a significant social status in Florence over many generations when Uccello was born. The genealogy also shows how the men of the family maintained its social standing over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by marrying women from important Florentine families, including the Carnesecchi, the Pitti, and the Machiavelli.[31] All of these families were prominent in the Guelf Party, a semi-official association

predominantly representing the interests of Florence's aristocratic, oligarchic families, and a Felice di Deo Beccuti, most probably Deo Beccuti's son, became an officer of the Guelf Party in 1459.[32]

Nothing is known of Uccello's education, except that the tax documents written in his elegant hand show that he was literate and numerate. Since children generally attended elementary school from about the age of six until about the age of twelve, Uccello's schooling might have continued until about 1409.[33] A document confirming Vasari's claim that Uccello worked in Ghiberti's shop was published by Thomas Patch in 1774 from the records of the seventeenth-century antiquarian Carlo Strozzi.[34] Strozzi was the *provveditore* (responsible for day-to-day property business) of the Merchants' Guild (Arte dei Mercatanti di Calimala). He conscientiously made annotated copies and compilations of the guild's documents, including the accounts for Ghiberti's works for the guild. Among these is a compilation of information concerning payments made to Ghiberti's assistants. Uccello is listed once as a junior workshop assistant ('*garzone di Bottega*'), receiving the small sums of five, and later seven florins a year, and again, this time without any qualification, receiving twenty-five florins per year.[35] *Garzoni* were youths who came daily to a master's shop without paying the fees to their guild required of apprentices, and in principle they could not go on to become masters.[36] The increasing rates of Uccello's salary suggest an increase in his status and responsibilities, although his highest salary was still well below the seventy-five florins paid to a number of Ghiberti's assistants.[37] Strozzi did not provide the dates for the payments, although the list in which Uccello's name appears is related to the second convention of 1407 for Ghiberti's first set of doors for the Baptistery, which serves as an approximate *terminus post quem.*

By dividing Uccello's total wages as a *garzone* by the annual rates of his salary, James Beck arrived at the approximate duration of his employment as a *garzone* as three years, and estimated that Uccello stayed on for about another fifteen months, probably as a young master. By correlating the second, significant increase in his rate of pay with his entry into the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild in October 1415, Beck arrived at the dates of Uccello's time in the shop as about 1412 to 1416, between the ages of about fifteen and nineteen.[38] It has, however, also been argued that the modest increases in Uccello's salary may simply reflect his growing experience in the shop, and that Uccello's membership of the guild would have required a much higher rate of pay. Thus, Uccello's four or so years in Ghiberti's workshop may have come to an end before October 1415.[39]

Among the other assistants who worked in Ghiberti's workshop at different times were Donatello, Michelozzo, Benozzo Gozzoli, and perhaps Luca della Robbia and Giovanni Toscani. Whether Masolino was among Ghiberti's assistants as has long been believed is

uncertain, and some believe it is unlikely.[40] Ghiberti was a perfectionist and he maintained scrupulous quality control in his first set of doors, so it is not possible to identify contributions by individual assistants,[41] let alone any contribution the young Uccello might have made. The circumstances in which Uccello learnt to paint remain a mystery. In Ghiberti's autobiography he claimed to have painted early in his career,[42] and in 1446 he accepted a commission for a fresco with another artist, which was ultimately undertaken by others.[43] However, no paintings by Ghiberti survive, nor any by his assistants that were clearly executed in Ghiberti's workshop, except perhaps for the polychroming of sculpture.

Uccello matriculated as a painter in the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild on 15 October 1415, at which time he was living in the *popolo* (the smallest administrative area in the vicinity of a church) of Santa Maria Nepotecosa, just south of the Duomo.[44] Uccello's relatively precocious entry into the guild at the age of about eighteen, and free of charge, was made possible by his father's membership of the guild, since barber-surgeons and painters belonged to the same guild.[45] Nevertheless, it must be assumed that Uccello had some years of specialised training in a painter's shop before being accepted as an independent practitioner in that art, possibly after leaving Ghiberti's shop and before joining the guild in 1415. It was one of the major guilds in Florence and included among its members some distinguished figures of Uccello's time, such as Leon Battista Alberti, physician, astronomer, architect and writer, and Marsilio Ficino, physician and man of letters.[46] Tommaso di Ser Giovanni, known as Masaccio, joined in 1422.[47] Uccello also joined the Confraternity of Saint Luke, the painter's confraternity, but as the document recording his inscription is partly illegible, the date can only be narrowed to between 1414 and 1423.[48]

In 1427 the Florentine commune introduced a new tax system: the Catasto. Those individuals who were sufficiently wealthy to be liable for the tax were required to list their assets, their creditors and debtors, and details of their immediate family. These tax records have long been recognised as one of the key sources of information for the lives of Florentine artists in the fifteenth century. The Catasto was recorded in two parts: the *portate* are statements provided by the individual being assessed or a person acting for them; the *campioni* were then drawn up by tax officials or scribes duplicating the information provided in the *portate* and assessing the amount of tax owed. Occasionally, the tax officials interpolated information into their records, so the two kinds of document should be studied together.[49] The amount of information the Catasto provides about artworks can be dishearteningly small, as it is with Uccello. With a few exceptions, Uccello's commissions must have been paid for in a timely fashion and so his patrons were not often recorded as debtors. However, an old debt from the Spedale di Sant'Antonio in Castello mentioned in his 1433 *portata* provides at least a clue to

a location, if not the precise nature of Uccello's early activity, which is discussed in the next chapter.

The period between 1415 and 1425 is the least documented of Uccello's career. The list of debtors declared in his 1427 *portata*, some still owing money in 1431, gives little insight into this period. There are references to a debt owed to Uccello in 1427 by a goldsmith called Giovanni, ('*avere da g⁰ horafo libri 7 ocircha*'), which was still owing in 1431. It presumably arose in the period before Uccello left Florence in 1425. There were a number of goldsmiths with the name Giovanni in Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century.[50] The 'Giovanni goldsmith' in question may be the same 'Giovanni goldsmith' who did the silverwork on the covers of the Confraternity of the Purification's statutes in 1439;[51] the confraternity had also commissioned work from Uccello a few years before, as will be discussed below. Another possibility is the goldsmith Giovanni di Chiaro Albizzelli who owned property adjacent to the del Beccuto family in Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore in the 1420s and who worked with Ghiberti at the Baptistery.[52] Given Uccello's training in the studio of a goldsmith it is not surprising that he would subsequently have had associations with other goldsmiths. Uccello was also owed money by a '*mazzo daogniano*', which probably relates to his activity as a landlord in the area of Ugnano ('daogniano' means 'from Ugnano'), a Vettorio di Giovanni who, as the tax return relates, ran away to Naples without paying his debt, and a Maestro Belaqua, specified as Andrea Belaqua in Uccello's 1431 *campione*.[53] The reasons for all these debts are not specified.

On 5 August 1425 Uccello wrote his will, which for a young man was something that might be done on the eve of a long journey. At the time, he was living in the *popolo* of Santa Maria Novella. He made the Spedale di Santa Maria Nuova his principal beneficiary, and provided for small donations to the Opera (board of works) of Santa Reparata (the former name of the Duomo, renamed Santa Maria del Fiore) and the Opera of the walls of Florence.[54] It was common practice for Florentines to leave small amounts in their wills to such communal institutions.[55]

Uccello's 1427 *portata* was submitted in July by Deo Beccuti, who described himself as Paolo's attorney, for a certain ser Bartolo di ser Donato Giannini ('*istritta p[er] me dio dj dio bechutj. p[r]ochuratore del detto pagholo…p[er] ser bartolo di ser donato gianinj*'). Deo explained to the tax officials that Uccello left for Venice more than two years ago (from Uccello's will it is known that it had actually been less than two years) and declared on Uccello's behalf a farm with a worker's house at Santo Stefano, in the Ugnano area, unremarkable agricultural land west of Florence. The farm was worked by a certain Andrea di Piero, producing grain and wine.[56] Although a distant relative, Deo was the most prominent member of Uccello's mothers' family at the time and this may explain why he assumed

responsibility for Uccello's tax affairs. Uccello's deceased father had been a migrant to Florence, and may have had fewer and less important relations in the city than Uccello's mother.

In fifteenth-century Florence the death of a young person's father could lead to the involvement of the Magistrato dei Pupilli, a communal institution providing judges and notaries to administer family property for orphans. No reference to Uccello has yet been found in the Pupilli records. However, the fact that Uccello left nothing to relatives in his will suggests that he was separated from, or had lost, his immediate family. This impression is strengthened by the fact that his tax return was submitted by a distant relative while he was in Venice. Ser Bartolo was Notaio (Notary) of the Signoria on a number of occasions from 1416 to 1438.[57] It remains unclear whether he helped administer Uccello's affairs following the death of his father, or simply asked Deo Beccuti to submit Uccello's *portata* while Uccello was away from Florence.

The introduction to William Kent's *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (1977) argued persuasively for the importance of the extended family in fifteenth-century Florentine society.[58] Dale Kent's *The Rise of the Medici Faction in Florence 1426–1434* (1978) also emphasised the importance of families in Florentine social, political, and professional life in the period. One source of evidence that Dale Kent used to support this view was Giovanni di Paolo Morelli's advice to his sons in his *Ricordi*.[59] Morelli, himself an orphan, wrote: 'if you find yourself deprived of relatives and alone and without counsel in your adversity, try to make contact with relations and take a relation to be your [surrogate] father. And this is wished, if possible: firstly look in your *gonfalone*, and if therein you can find a relation, try more keenly than elsewhere; if you cannot or there is no one you like or who is satisfactory, look in your quarter…choose as a relation a merchant, rich, from an old family of Florence, Guelf, in government'.[60] Deo Beccuti fulfilled all of Morelli's criteria for a good mentor for Uccello, and by 1425 Uccello was living close to Deo, in the Santa Maria Novella quarter in the northwest of Florence. Deo's position as an office-bearer in the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild, to which Uccello belonged, would have put him in a good position to assist his younger relative. Deo's own father must have died by the time Deo was about eleven, since the estate was inventoried by the Pupilli in 1388, giving him good reason to sympathise with Uccello's circumstances.[61] The contents of Deo di Vanni's small library, recorded by the Pupilli, was no doubt inherited in full or in part by his son Deo, and sheds some light on the intellectual milieu of Uccello's formation: it included ten books on law, a book on philosophy and medicine, and a book in French.[62]

Uccello's *portata* of January 1431 seems not to be autograph, since it is written in the third person ('*sua incharichi*'). Furthermore, the handwriting is very similar to that of Deo

Beccuti's *portate*, and so he may have submitted Uccello's 1431 *portata* as he had the previous one.[63] It is unclear whether Uccello was away at the time, perhaps still in Venice, or living peripatetically, or whether he simply relied on Deo Beccuti's financial expertise for tax matters at this stage of his career. The *portata* declares that Deo Beccuti owed Uccello a little over 36 *lire*.[64] Anna Padoa Rizzo has observed that this might have been for work Uccello had done since his return from Venice, as the amount was not recorded owing in Uccello's 1427 *portata*.[65] From a later *portata*, it is known that Uccello made an investment in the Florentine Monte on 9 March 1431.[66] Though not conclusive, these facts do suggest that Uccello may have returned to Florence by 1431.

On 23 March 1432 the Opera del Duomo in Florence wrote to Piero Beccanugi, the Florentine Orator in Venice, seeking information about Uccello's work in Venice. The letter described Uccello as a master mosaicist, and mentioned a figure of Saint Peter he made in 1425 on the façade of San Marco in Venice. Sadly, the work has not survived.[67] While the Opera was presumably considering Uccello for work at the Duomo, it is not known what it had in mind. Since it also took the opportunity to ask about the price of glass, it might have been planning the installation of stained glass windows in the Duomo, for which Uccello did later provide designs, or work in mosaic, for which glass tessera may be used.

Uccello's 1433 *portata* is written in the first person and so is apparently autograph ('*dinanzi avoi sigliorj uficialj delchatasto p[er] mepagolo didono dipintore*'). He stated that he was renting premises in Campo Corbolini, an area northwest of the centre of Florence in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, not far from Deo Beccuti's property. Deo now owed him the substantial sum of eighty-five florins.[68] Padoa Rizzo has associated Deo's debts to Uccello with the painting of the *Virgin and Child* formerly in a house of the del Beccuto family, as well as other unknown works.[69] Judging by its pointed arch shape and dimensions, the painting was probably located over a door. The size of the debt is considerable, too much for the painting alone to account for, notwithstanding its expensive gold ground and lapis lazuli pigment. Given that Uccello bought his house on 21 April 1434 for 110 florins, a commission from Uccello's relative for the painting and other works may have been in part intended to help secure his future. The house on Via della Scala, which terminates at its eastern end at Piazza di Santa Maria Novella, was in the *popolo* of the church of Santa Lucia. It was bought from a Lorenzo di Piero Lenzi, who was presumably the Lorenzo di Piero Lenzi who lived in the nearby Piazza d'Ognissanti in 1427.[70]

In August 1436 Uccello was paid by the Opera of the Duomo for painting the *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* on the north wall, in the left aisle of the Duomo,[71] which he signed: '♦*PAVLI* ♦*VGIELLI* ♦*OPVS* ♦'. The entries in the Opera's account books are the

earliest occasion that the name 'Uccello' appears, at least with unequivocal reference to the artist.[72] In the documents the patronymic 'di Dono' occurs more frequently. With the exception of one of Uccello's Catasto documents, now lost, and his second will, 'Uccello' was only used by the artist in his signatures, by patrons or collectors, by his guild, and in the references to his artistic activity by Filarete and Benedetto Dei.[73] Thus, there may be a relationship between the adoption of the name and his public persona as an artist, making it a variety of nom de plume, of the kind adopted by classical painters, according to Pliny.[74]

Pietro Roccasecca has rightly cast doubt on Vasari's uninspired suggestion that the name reflected the artist's penchant for depicting birds, suggesting instead that it might have resulted from a link with a Bolognese family, based on the similarity of the colours of the shield on which Uccello painted his signature in the Florence *Battle* and the colours of their arms.[75] It is true that Ghiberti variously used the surname of his mother's first husband (Ghiberti) and the patronymic for her second (di Bartolo), while claiming to be the legitimate child of the first marriage—he seems to have wanted the benefits of both.[76] However, there is no documentary evidence for contact between Uccello and any other person with that name. A simpler hypothesis is that he adopted it for the same reason Battista Alberti adopted the name Leon: for the association with him of the qualities of an animal. The lion is symbolic of courage and magnanimity;[77] for Uccello the virtuous qualities of a bird might have been independence and elevation, qualities that are certainly compatible with the singular and philosophical appearance of his works. This interpretation finds support in the epigram in Borghini's *Il Riposo* (1584): '[he] flew so high that he deserved not just the name Uccello, but even Phoenix' ('*Volò tant'alto che non pur d'uccello/ Cognome meritò, ma di Fenice*').[78] Adopted names of poetic meaning were not uncommon in fifteenth-century Florence; Antonio di Pietro Averlino took the name Filarete, meaning 'lover of virtue'.

Wordplay on names with animal associations is a longstanding habit of Florentine families. Uccello's mother's maiden name Beccuto is similar to the Italian verb *beccare*, meaning to peck. The del Beccuto family chose to allude to the association in the design of a very large, carved *pietra serena* lintel that was removed from their palazzo on the street of their name (Via del Beccuto, now Via de' Vecchietti), presumably at the time the building was demolished in the nineteenth century. The lintel is now housed in the Museo di San Marco, Florence. It shows the family's coat of arms inside a wreath in the centre with fluttering ribbons flowing to each side. At each end of the lintel is the head of a fantastic, bird-like creature with plumes splayed out at the back and a giant beak, a clear allusion to their family name.[79]

The documents from the late 1430s and 1440s suggest that Uccello's career was well established, and far from pursuing an isolated path as an artist, as Vasari would have it, he moved in the same circles as his colleagues. Account books belonging to the Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin and Saint Zanobi record that in December 1437 Uccello was commissioned to paint a *Saint Zanobi* and a *Pietà*, the latter over the door of its sacristy, at the Spedale di San Matteo (Hospital of Saint Matthew) on Piazza San Marco in Florence.[80] The *spedale* has undergone major renovations over the centuries, and these works are otherwise unknown, presumably because they were destroyed. From 1427 to 1444 the children's confraternity for which Uccello worked came under the stewardship of the adult Confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà, based at the *spedale*.[81] The subject matter of Uccello's two works thus reflects the dedication of the children's confraternity and that of the adult confraternity on which it depended, respectively. Uccello subsequently joined the adult confraternity,[82] whose members participated in acts of penitence and charity.[83] He is recorded as present in the confraternity, nicknamed the 'Hollow' or perhaps 'Grotto' of Saint Jerome (*'Buca' di San Girolamo*) between January and April 1438, and was still registered, though not present in May.[84] Among the other artists who belonged to the confraternity was the sculptor Luca di Simone della Robbia. Its rooms were on the east side, at the back of the *spedale* looking from the piazza, with an entrance from Via dell Sapienza (now called Via Cesare Battisti).[85] Vasari recorded that Uccello painted a *Saints Anthony Abbot, Cosmas, and Damian* in the same *spedale*, although nothing else is known of the work.[86] Judging by its iconography, the commission was possibly related to the *spedale* rather than a confraternity, since Saints Anthony, Cosmas, and Damian were associated with healing.[87]

An account book from the church of San Lorenzo shows that in March 1438 Uccello was paid the small sum of eight *lire* for the design or painting of a curtain for the high altar.[88] The curtain has not survived, nor any other record of it. In a document made in February 1439 by the Florentine notary Filippo di Cristofano, Uccello was recorded renting a house and land in an unspecified location. The notary had a number of artists among his clientele, including Neri di Bicci.[89] Since Uccello already owned a house, in which he lived alone, he probably used the rented premises as a workshop. Given the recent tendency to date the *Battle* paintings to the end of the 1430s,[90] he may have rented the premises to accommodate the large panels of this major commission.

In Uccello's 1442 *portata* he stated that he was renting a workshop from the Guelf Party and the Buondelmonti in the narrow laneway of Via delle Terme.[91] From 1429 to 1434 the premises had been occupied by the little known artist Scolaio di Giovanni. From 1467, after Uccello moved out, Domenico di Michelino and Domenico di Zanobi di Piero shared the premises as their workshop.[92] The area around Santi Apostoli, just north of the Ponte

Vecchio, contained the workshops of numerous painters, including at one time, Giovanni di Ser Giovanni called 'Scheggia', who was Masaccio's brother, and numerous cassone painters.[93] It was presumably in this workshop that Uccello prepared his next works for the Opera of the Duomo. A series of payments by the Opera is recorded from 1443 to 1445 for the painting of the *Clockface*, and for designing and painting stained glass windows, of which two survive: the *Nativity* and the *Resurrection*.[94]

The documents for Uccello from the 1450s continue to suggest an active professional life. Between 1450 and 1453 he was commissioned to paint a tabernacle for the Baptistery showing Saint John with Christ or the Virgin, which, if completed, has not been identified.[95] There is a brief reference to Uccello in February 1451 in a record of a deliberation by the Merchants' Guild. The significance of this is not clear, although it probably relates to a dispute involving his activity as a landlord at Ugnano.[96] On 13 March 1451, Uccello and the artist Ventura di Moro valued a tabernacle painted by Stefano d'Antonio di Vanni in Santa Margherita a Montici.[97] Stefano d'Antonio was trained by, and later became the partner in business of, Bicci di Lorenzo, in whose workshop Scheggia and Andrea di Giusto are also documented. Uccello's involvement in the valuation of his work may not have been entirely casual, since stylistic evidence shows that Uccello had a working relationship with one or more of the painters from that workshop in the 1430s, discussed in Chapter 3.[98] From December 1451 to February of the following year, Uccello received three payments for an unidentified panel painting, made for the brothers Jacopo and Giovanni d'Orsino Lanfredini.[99] The Lanfredini were one of the most prominent and powerful families in the *gonfalone* Drago of the Santo Spirito quarter,[100] and Jacopo and Giovanni Lanfredini, in particular, were highly respected members of the Medici inner-circle, in the latter part of the fifteenth century. One or both of them probably commissioned Antonio del Pollaiuolo's celebrated *Dancing Nudes* in their Villa La Gallina in the Arcetri area of Florence, near San Miniato al Monte.[101]

In February 1453 Uccello served as one of the captains (*capitani*) of the Confraternity of Saint Luke, an indication of the professional respect he had gained, and of his commitment to the social life of his profession.[102] In June of the same year Uccello made a figure of the Blessed Andrea Corsini for the Library of the Duomo, which has not survived.[103] The commission continued the martial iconography of Uccello's career, since Corsini was a fourteenth-century Florentine Carmelite who was said to have foretold Florence's victory over Milan at the battle of Anghiari in 1440, in an apparition at his sepulchre in Santa Maria del Carmine. In 1455, Uccello was paid for a *Crucifixion* and the decoration of a washbasin in the refectory of the Monastery of San Miniato al Monte. He painted with the assistance of Antonio di Papi, an artist with no known oeuvre, and no works corresponding to these payments have been found.[104] In February 1458 Uccello recorded in his *portata* that he was

owed money for some unspecified windows painted in the previous year for the glaziers Bernardo di Franceso and company, with whom he had already collaborated on the stained glass windows at the Duomo. He also indicated that he had moved his workshop to Piazza di San Giovanni, the main square of Florence.

The same *portata* provides the first information about Uccello's wife Tomasa di Benedetto Malifici, aged twenty-five (compared with his sixty-two years!), his son Donato who was six, and his daughter Antonia who was one year and four months.[105] Even if Uccello married immediately after his 1442 *portata*, he would have been about forty-five, much older than the estimated average age of a man's first marriage in fifteenth-century Florence, which was between thirty and thirty-two.[106] At 200 florins, Tomasa's dowry was neither particularly small nor large for a Florentine artist's wife.[107] There were at least two Benedetto Malificis in Florence in 1427, one of whom might have become Uccello's father-in-law. By coincidence, both of them were named Benedetto di Piero, while neither of them was particularly wealthy. One of them resided on Via della Scala, where Uccello was living when he married, so perhaps he married locally.[108] Uccello followed an ancient custom by giving his father's name to his son and his mother's name to his daughter. In the *Libro dei morti di Firenze* Antonia was listed as a painter ('*pitoressa*') on her death, and this is confirmed in the archives of the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild, where her death was recorded on 9 February 1490. As a documented female painter in fifteenth-century Florence she is a rarity, and so it is very unlucky that no certain work by her is known.[109] Perhaps Uccello's children played with another child living a few blocks further east on Via della Scala from the mid-1460s: Piero di Lorenzo di Piero d'Antonio, the artist known as Piero di Cosimo.[110] Certainly, Piero's own fantastic imagery is indebted to Uccello's.[111] Piero would surely have known about his famous neighbour. Might his curiosity have led him to visit Uccello's house or workshop? Another artist living in the neighbourhood after 1470, who was influenced by Uccello, was Sandro Botticelli. His house was in the same *popolo* of Santa Lucia.[112]

Uccello stated in his 1458 *portata* that he reserved the house on his land at Ugnano for his own use, without specifying what that was. In 1455, 1458, and 1459 he added to his property at Ugnano with successive purchases of land.[113] Evidently, these were prosperous times for Uccello. He owned land from at least the age of twenty-eight until his old age, and seems only ever to have increased his land holdings, never to have sold off these investments. Land ownership, in addition to a house, was fairly common for prominent Florentine artists in Uccello's time.[114]

Two contemporaries of Uccello testify to his fame from the late 1450s. In 1457 Giovanni Rucellai boasted in his *zibaldone*, a kind of family memoir, that he had works by the greatest Italian artists in his palazzo. Among the famous painters he listed Antonio del

Pollaiuolo, Andrea del Verrocchio, Andrea del Castagno, and Paolo Uccello, although he did not specify what works of theirs he had.[115] Rucellai was a successful businessman from an old, established family, and was one of the most important architectural patrons in Florence in his lifetime. His celebrated palazzo is on Via della Vigna, not far from Via della Scala, where Uccello lived.[116] In his treatise on architecture and allied arts, written between 1460 and 1464, Filarete included a hypothetical project for a hall of civic justice, proposing that Uccello, 'outstanding master of painting' ('*solenne maestro di pittura*'), painted figures of Truth and Falsehood, Justice, and criminals there.[117] In 1470 the Florentine merchant (and inveterate list maker) Benedetto Dei recorded Uccello in his list of thirty-five painters' studios: 'a workshop of master Paolo Uccello of Florence' ('*Una bottegha di mastro Pagholo Ucello da Firenze*').[118]

Age does not seem to have hindered Uccello's career. In 1461 he received a commission to paint two walls in the cloister of the monastery at San Miniato al Monte.[119] And in 1465 Lorenzo di Matteo Morelli paid for a painting by Uccello, a *Saint George and the Dragon*, perhaps the work of that subject by Uccello now in the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris.[120] The names of Uccello and his son Donato then appear in entries dated between February 1467 and October 1469 in an account book of the Confraternity of Corpus Christi in Urbino, although they were not in Urbino for the entire period, since Uccello submitted his *portata* in Florence in August 1469.[121] The nature of their work is not specified, although it is recorded that gesso and pigments were brought from Florence, and the *Miracle of the Host*, formerly on the altar of the confraternity's church, was undoubtedly painted by Uccello during his stay. It is now housed in the Museo Civico in Urbino.[122] The altarpiece was subsequently painted by the Netherlandish artist'Giusto da Guanto', identified as Joos van Wassenhove. Uccello's patrons were attentive to his needs, paying for his and his son's beds and material for their clothes. Uccello may have undertaken other work in Urbino. If so, it has not yet been convincingly identified, despite attempts to do so.[123] In any event, in his early seventies Uccello worked for an important patron, creating a lively and innovative work.

Uccello wrote in his final *portata* of August 1469 that he still owned his home and land. He referred to his wife and son, but not his daughter, who had apparently left the family home at a young age, perhaps having already joined a nunnery. Uccello complained that he was old and unable to work, and his wife was infirm.[124] This has often been cited as though it were confirmation of Vasari's description of Uccello as a failed artist at the end of his career. More recently, art historians have come to recognise that Uccello, like other artists, probably exaggerated the difficulty of his circumstances to minimise taxation.[125] Scheggia described himself as infirm in his tax return of the same year, despite the recent increase in the number of his children,[126] and Brunelleschi made a similar claim in his 1442 *portata*: 'Also this finds

me old and unable to earn my living anymore' ('*Anchora mi truovo vechio e non poso piu valermi di mia industria*').[127] An indication that Uccello tenaciously pursued his art until the end of his life is the suit he brought in the Mercantile Court in the year before he died against the carpenter Domenico del Tasso, for an outstanding debt of three florins for two paintings he had done.[128] In November of 1475 Uccello wrote a new will, and on 12 December his death was recorded.[129]

Notes for Chapter 1

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[1] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 61: 1568 ed.

[2] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 69, 71: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[3] No record of Uccello's baptism has been found, and his birth date is unknown. It cannot be calculated precisely from other sources, since, as with many Tuscans of his generation, he recorded his age inconsistently (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, pp. 353–355). On 12 July 1427 Uccello's age was recorded by Deo Beccuti as 30 (ASF, Catasto, 55, San Giovanni Drago, fols 707–707v.), on 30 January 1431 Uccello's age was given as 33 by an anonymous writer, perhaps Deo Beccuti, (ASF, Catasto, 381, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 779), on 31 May 1433 Uccello gave his age as 36 (ASF, Catasto, 475, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 483), on 21 January 1442 he gave his age as 40 (ASF, Catasto, 625, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 1527, fol. 224), on 15 February 1458 he gave his age as 62 (ASF, Catasto, 826, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 2063, fols 56–57), and on 8 August 1469 he gave his age as 73 (ASF, Catasto, 926, vol. II, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 259v.).

[4] ASF, Arte Medici e Speziale, 21, fol. 69v.: '*Paulus olim doni paulj pitore*'.

[5] ASF, Registri di Morti, Medici e Speciali 1475–1486, 246, fol. 3v., in Boeck, 1939, p. 107. Uccello's death was registered on 12 December 1475.

[6] Milanesi (ed.), in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, pp. 204 n. [cross], 217 n. 3, 219. Padoa Rizzo (1991, p. 6) cited Herbert Horne's reference (Fondazione Horne, Florence, Spogli, G.VI.I) to the source for Dono di Paolo's citizenship as: ASF, Consigli Maggiori, Provissioni, Registri 1373, fol. 109. Although ASF, Archivi della Repubblica, Provvisioni, Registri, 61, microfilm reel 84, fol. 109 is for the year 1373, it does not include the name of Dono di Paolo, nor do the nearby pages. Presumably, the archive has been re-ordered since Horne's research. Boeck (1933b, p. 249) accepted Milanesi's identification of Uccello's father and gave the date of his entry into the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild as 1365, without specifying his sources.

[7] Boeck, 1939, p. 94.

[8] ASF, Manoscritti, 624, *Sepoltuario fiorentino ovvero descrizione delle chiese cappelle e sepolture loro armi et inscrizione della Città di Firenze e suoi contorni fatta da Stefano Rosselli*, 1657, vol. I, fol. 32. Although Milanesi did not refer to Rosselli's manuscript, he did refer to the tombstone and reproduced the coat of arms. In all probability, the tombstone prompted his identification of Uccello's father, given the correspondence between its inscription and the two pieces of information known about him. Rosselli's record of the tombstone was known to the scholar of Italian heraldry, Enrico Ceramelli-Papiani (1896–1976), whose notes are also in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. He copied the extract of Rosselli's book referring to Dono di Paolo's tombstone into a file for the Doni family, recognising that it might have belonged to Uccello's father, although he did not explain why he believed Uccello belonged to the Doni family (ASF, Ceramelli Papiani, 1792, 'f Doni'). Roccasecca (1997, p. 128 n. 6) cited the Ceramelli-Papiani file in his biography of Uccello without mentioning the tombstone. Roccasecca (1997, p. 125) followed Ceramelli-Papiani in identifying Uccello's family as the di Dono or Doni, stating that it was divided into two branches, one based in the quarter of Santo Spirito and the other in Santa Maria Novella, and that members of the family held public office

(Priori), citing the Papiani 1792 'fDoni' file and G.M. Mecatti, *Storia genealogica della nobilità cittadinanza di Firenze*, Napoli, 1754, vol. I, pp. 49, 288, 299, 306, 355.

[9] Kent, 1977, Chapter 5, especially pp. 245–254. In his discussion of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai families Kent underlined the importance of physical proximity in the maintenance of family alliances and power and the adoption of familial names as a status symbol in fifteenth-century Florence. See also: Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, pp. 537–543.

[10] ASF, Pace di Bambello di Pace, 7, 1471–1476, fol. 147, in Sindona, 1957, p. 44. Uccello's will is dated 11 November 1475.

[11] Waldman, 2000, p. 171.

[12] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 6. The source is in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Priorista Monaldi, II, 1, 29, *Storia della nobilità di Firenze scritta da Piero di Giovanni Monaldi*, *c*. 1626, p. 287v. Morozzi (ed.), 1988, p. 196. It was cited by Herbert Horne from a copy in the Biblioteca Comunale, Siena.

[13] ASF, Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia, 1693, 1694, Entrata e Uscita, Redita del Sig.(re) Ruberto di Filicce del Becuto, 1620–1621. Camilla Buini del Beccuto, widow of Ruberto di Felice del Beccuto, recorded that her son Felice was studying at the College of Nobility in Bologna. ASF, Manoscritti, 244, *Del Sergente Magiore Giovanni Vincenzio Coresi del Bruno Governatore S.A.R. della Città Presidio e Banda di Grossto 1720. Questo è l'originale del priorista in ristretto di Giuliano de Ricci del 1596. La rota delle famiglie che hanno riseduto di collegio mesa per ordine di alfabeto da Felice di Ruberto del Beccuto dal 1532 al 1606. Il catalogo de rotari della Republica Fiorentina dal 1282 al 1531. Il catalogo delle famiglie fiorentine che poi si dissero de grandi le quali l'anno 1215 A\avevano il Governo della città cioe godevano il Consolato R.A.* This source includes Felice's research into noble Florentine families. ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, Section 21, compiled by Anton Ranieri Orlandini, descendent of the del Beccuto family in 1752.

[14] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, pp. 417–419.

[15] Mecatti, 1971, p. 30.

[16] ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, no. 21, part 1 [unfoliated].

[17] The evidence for the patronage of the chapel on the left of the main altar is not entirely clear. Vasari (1969–1987, *testo*, vol. II, p. 298: 1568 ed.) claimed that this was the Beccuti Chapel. Paatz and Paatz, 1952–1955, vol. IV, p. 628. A tomb of a member of the Beccuti family, sometimes identified as Bruno Beccuti, is still in the chapel, bearing the family's coat of arms. Richa (1972, vol. III, p. 265) identified a Bruno del Beccuto as a Priore of Santa Maria Maggiore. Paatz and Paatz, 1952–1955, vol. IV, pp. 627–628, 632. Other evidence shows Carnesecchi patronage of the chapel. A tabernacle for the sacraments on the left wall of the chapel bears the date 1449 and the arms of the Carnesecchi family, and Bernardo Carnesecchi's tombstone, dated 1449, was recorded in the chapel in the eighteenth century. It is possible that the Beccuti and Carnesecchi families shared patronage rights to the chapel.

[18] Bec, 1967, p. 408.

[19] ASF, Catasto, 53, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 718v. Deo Beccuti recorded in his 1427 *portata* a debt relating to his family's chapel: '*Una chappella insanta maria maggiore di sanbiaggio debo dotare per lastro fatto per lo testameto dimio padre roghato per Ser nicholo mazzetti nel 1386*'.

[20] Richa, 1972, vol. III, p. 279.

[21] Paatz and Paatz, 1952–1955, vol. IV, p. 626.

[22] ASF, Libri di Commercio e di Famiglia, 1693, Entrata e Uscita, fol. 52v. Camilla Buini del Beccuto's account book, beginning in 1620, includes a reference to '*ma cappella d' san biagio d' s. maria mag^{re}*'.

[23] Richa, 1972, vol. III, p. 283. The full transcription is: '*SEP. NOBILIS VIRI DEI VANNIS DE BECCVDIS SPECTABILIS/ HONORABILIS QVI PRIMA DIE IVNII DOTAVIT AN. D. MCCCLXXXIII. ALTARE PRESENTIS CAPPELLE PRO ANIMA SVA ET SVOREM DESCENDENTIUM.*'

[24] Ciabani et al., 1992, p. 102.

[25] Petriboni and Rinaldi, 2001, p. 203.

[26] For the offices held by Deo Beccuti, see: Herlihy, Burr Litchfield, Molho, and Barducci (eds), 2002, on-line source, search by Deo Beccuti. For Deo Beccuti's relative wealth see: the same on-line source, 'List of the wealthiest households arranged by wealth' link.

[27] For Deo Beccuti's age: ASF, Catasto, 53, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 718v.

[28] Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Manoscritto 537, fol. 66r: '*1360 D.na Bancha filia ol. S. Silvestri Alamanni et uxor di S. Castelli Lippi del Beccuto pop. S. Maria Maioris et Silvester di S. D. Alamanni de Medicis et Thomasus di Giuntini Alamanni et Deus di S. Vannis del Beccuto tutores Vannis et Antoniis dil. d. Castelli*'; [fol. 67v] '*1363 D.na Bancha uxor di S. Castelli Lippi del Beccuto pop. S. maria Maioris, et filia di S. Silvestri Benincasa et eor. filii Pupilli et Tutoris*.' These transcriptions are by Dr Paolo Piccardi (http://digilander.libero.it/gasparo/manoscritti.htm, sighted 18 January 2007). My thanks to Mr Pierluigi Carnesecchi for making this research available. Castello di Lippo Beccuti was also recorded as from the *popolo* of Santa Maria Maggiore when his death was listed in Santa Maria Novella's *Libro dei morti* (under 16 January 1355). His inclusion suggests commemorative ceremonies may have been held in his honor at Santa Maria Novella, or he may even have been buried there (Calzolai, 1980, pp. 37–38).

[29] Gaye, 1839, vol. I, p. 504: an entry of 3 February 1353 from the Archivio delle Riformagioni di Firenze records that Amerigo da Sommaia, Castello di Lippo del Beccuto, and Benedetto di Giovanni Strozzi fortified the *castello* at Calenzano, on the western edge of Mount Morello.

[30] Gaye, 1839, vol. I, p. 419. The year of the document was transcribed by Gaye as MCCCLXXXIX, erroneously for MCCLXXXIX, judging by the chronological order followed for the other transcriptions Gaye provided.

[31] ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated.

[32] Zervas, 1987, pp. 54, 309.

[33] For childhood education and professional training in late Medieval and early Renaissance Florence, see: Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, pp. 563–584.

[34] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 101: 1568 ed. Patch's book *Le porte di San Giovanni di Firenze incise e illustrate*, published in Florence in 1774, is cited in Milanesi (ed.) in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, p. 203 n. 1.

[35] Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1956, p. 362. Strozzi's records, known as the *Spogli Strozziani*, are housed in the ASF.

[36] Padoa Rizzo and Frosinini, 1984, pp. 6–7; Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002a, pp. 29–30.

[37] ASF, *Libro della seconda, e terza porta di bronzo dalla Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista di Firenze. 1403. 23 Novembre*, in Müntz, 1890, pp. 15–18.

[38] Beck, 1980, p. 837.

[39] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, pp. 6–7.

[40] Galli, 1998, p. 89. While Masolino was included by Galli in the list of possible assistants in Ghiberti's shop, Bellucci and Frosinini (2002a, pp. 34–67) suggest instead that Masolino's apprenticeship was served with his father who was a house painter. Furthermore, they pointed out that Masolino's painting technique shows features that are not typical of Florentine painting, indicating a non-Florentine milieu for his formative period as an artist. Joannides (1993, p. 25) admitted that the 'Tommaso di Cristofano' in question could not be considered a certain reference to Masolino, but believed that it probably was, due to sixteenth-century sources supporting the identification, and Masolino's known associations, later in life, with former students of Ghiberti's shop.

[41] Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1956, p. 133.

[42] Ghiberti, 1998, pp. 92–93.

[43] Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1956, p. 418, citing documentation in the ASF for the fresco commission; and p. 404, citing documentation in the ASF referring to painting done for the niche of the statue of *Saint John the Baptist* at Orsanmichele. Tentative attributions of a panel and a mural painting to Ghiberti were made in Salmi, 1956, pp. 223–237, in the context of a discussion of Ghiberti's designs for stained glass windows in the Duomo of Florence.

[44] ASF, Arte Medici e Speziale, 21, fol. 69v.

[45] Fiorilli, 1920, pp. 7, 21.

[46] Staley, 1906, p. 266.

[47] Boskovits, 2002a, p. 53.

[48] ASF, Accademia del Disegno, 1, fol. 14v., Roccasecca (1997, p. 126 n. 8) transcribed the text as '*Pagholo di dono dipintore MCCCCX[…]IIJ*', describing the seventh numeral in the date as illegible, and arguing that it could have been an I or an X. It might also have been a V. The document was missing in 2003.

[49] Procacci, 1996, pp. 41–46.

[50] Guidotti, 1994, vol. II, pp. 7–11, 20–22, 49–50. Goldsmiths called Giovanni included Giovanni di Chiaro Albizzelli, who worked with Ghiberti, Giovanni di Giovanni, Giovanni di Jacopo Strozzi, Giovanni di Soldo and Giovanni di Ser Paolo Graziani.

[51] Polizzotto, 2004, pp. 38, 51 n. 130.

[52] Guidotti, 1994, vol. II, pp. 7–9.

[53] ASF, Catasto, 55, San Giovanni Drago, fols 707–707v. (*portata*); ASF, Catasto, 408, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 1042, fol. 467 (*campione*).

[54] Gaye, 1839, vol. I, pp. 147–148. Uccello's will is dated 5 August 1425.

[55] ASF, MPAP, 5, contains copies of numerous wills written in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in which it is common for one florin to be left to the Opera of Santa Reparata, Santa Maria Nuova, and the Opera of the walls of Florence.

[56] ASF, Catasto, 55, San Giovanni Drago, fols 707–707v., dated 12 July 1427.

[57] Herlihy, Burr Litchfield, Molho, and Barducci (eds), 2002, on-line source, search by Giannini: Ser Bartolo was elected Notaio of the Signoria in 1416, 1430, and 1438.

[58] Kent, 1977, pp. 3–17.

[59] Kent, 1978, p. 26.

[60] Morelli, 1969, pp. 263–264: '*se ti vedi menepossente di parenti e non vedi essere atato e consigliato nelle tue avversità, ingegnati d'imparentarti e torre uno parente che ti sia padre. E questo vuolu essere, se puoi: primamente cerca nel tuo gonfalone, e se ivi puoi imparentarti, fallo più avaccio che altrove; se non puoi o non v'è quello ti bisogna o ti sodisfaccia, cerca nel quartiere…fa che 'l parente tuo sia mercatente, sia ricco, sia antico a Firenze, sia guelfo, sia nello istato*'.

[61] Schiaparelli, 1983, vol. I, p. xvii.

[62] Bec, 1967, pp. 408–409, 411, citing ASF, Registro dei Pupilli, no. 4, fol 7v.: *Inventario de' beni trovammo aveano i figliuoli dì Deo di Vanni, di xij giugno, anno mccclxxxviij.*

[63] The writing of the name 'Deo di Deo Becchuti' in Beccuti's 1431 *portata* (ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 552) is almost identical to the writing of the name in Uccello's 1431 *portata*, in which Beccuti appears as a debtor (ASF, Catasto, 381, fol. 779), notably in the abbreviated form of the e's as short horizontal strokes. It cannot be excluded that Beccuti had a secretary write his and Uccello's Catasti.

[64] ASF, Catasto, 381, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 779. Though undated, the entry is between others dated 30 January 1431 in the series of *portate* compiled in chronological order, e.g., those beginning on fols 764 and 788. ASF, Catasto, 380, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 551: Beccuti's *portata* of 31 January 1431 shows the same amount owing to Uccello.

[65] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 26.

[66] ASF, Catasto, 826, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 2063, fol. 56v.

[67] AODF, Delib. 1425–1436, fol. 156v., in Poggi, 1988, vol. I, p. 147, doc. 773.

[68] ASF, Catasto, 475, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 483, dated 31 May 1433. Beccuti's 1433 Catasto includes the corresponding listing of 85 florins owing to Uccello. Catasto, 498, fol. 188, undated, but with others of 1433.

[69] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 26.

[70] For the purchase of the house, see: ASF, Catasto, 625, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 1527, fol. 224; for the possible vendor, see: Ginori Lisci, 1985, vol. I, pp. 290–291.

[71] Deliberazione, 1436–1442, fol. 3, in Poggi, 1988, vol. II, p. 125, doc. 2060.

[72] The on-line publication in 2004 of documents from the archives of the Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore brought to light a reference unknown in the Uccello literature. On 14 August 1434 a 'Paulus Uccelli' (the artist?) was listed with a group of men from the countryside parish of San Michele in Lezano owing money to the Duomo for gabelles (indirect taxes). M. Haines (ed.), 2004, on-line source, doc. o0202001.220g: [14 Aug. 1434] [*Littera*] *generalis quibuscumque [r]ectoribus comitatus/Item*

deliberaverunt quod eorum parte scribatur una littera omnibus rectoribus comitatus quod gravent ad ipsorum instantiam infrascriptos pro certis quantatibus pecunie debitores dicte Opere pro novis gabellis, prout apparet in r(u)b(rica)m comit(atus) a c. 153, quilibet ipsorum suam ratam cum iustificatione, quod si quis senserit se gravatum compareat coram eorum offitio recepturus iustitiam, nomina quorum sunt hec videlicet:/ Paulus Uccelli/ Iohannes Nuti/ Nannes Salvi/ Antonius Arrigi/ Antonius Gratie/ Arrighus Buonaiuti/ omus populi Sancti Michaelis de Lezano comitatus Florentie. Brocchi, 1967, pp. 192–199. The church of San Michele in Lezano (or Lizzano or Legano) is near the commune of San Piero a Sieve in the mountainous Mugello area to the north of Florence, an area traditionally dominated by the Medici family. I am grateful to don Gilberto Aranci, Archivista, Florence, for assistance locating San Michele in Lezano. In the fifteenth century gabelles were liable on the movement of works of art through Florence's city gates, but there is no indication in the document from the Duomo of the reason for the gabelle.

[73] Boeck (1939, p. 108) noted that Uccello's son was referred to as 'Donato Uccelli' in the *Registri di morti* of the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild on 16 July 1497.

[74] Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historiae*, XXXV, xxxvi, 71. According to Pliny, Parhassius adopted the boastful surnames 'Bon Viveur' and 'Prince of Painters'.

[75] Roccasecca, 1997, p. 126.

[76] Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1956, pp. 3–4.

[77] Kemp, 1991, p. 11.

[78] Borghini, 1967, p. 311.

[79] Cecchi, 1989b, p. 110. The lintel was described by Carocci as a modern reproduction of a fifteenth-century relief.

[80] Bernacchioni, 2003, pp. 418–419.

[81] Cole Ahl, 2000, pp. 46, 54. For more on the Confraternity of the Purification, see: Pollizzotto, 2004; and Matchette, 2000, pp. 74–101.

[82] Sebregondi, 1991, p. 3.

[83] Sebregondi, 1991, pp. 10–16.

[84] Rassegna, Classe D, 1432–1444, fols 42v., 46, Archivi della Compagnia di San Girolamo, della Compagnia di San Francesco Poverino dal 1790 e delle Compagnie Riunite, Florence, in Sebregondi, 1991, p. 190.

[85] Sebregondi, 1991, p. 3 and Fig. 2.

[86] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 63: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[87] For a fascinating discussion of Saint Anthony's cult in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and Hieronymous Bosch's oeuvre, see: Dixon, 2004, pp. 176–183. For a discussion of the iconography of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Florence in the fifteenth century, see: Sebregondi, 2002, pp. 75–105.

[88] Beck, 1989, pp. 17–18; Ruschi, 1993, p. 177. For a brief discussion of this work, see the Catalogue.

[89] ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, F 302, fol. 108v., in Fremantle, 1977, p. 70.

[90] For example, Caglioti, 2001, pp. 50–51.

[91] ASF, Catasto, 625, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 224.

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[92] Bernacchioni, 1990, pp. 5–6.

[93] Haines, 1999, pp. 41–44.

[94] Poggi, 1988, vol. I, pp. 143–145, vol. II, p. 162.

[95] Boeck, 1939, pp. 102–103.

[96] ASF, Calimala, Deliberazioni 1450–1451, in Gaye, 1839, vol. I, p. 147. The record mentions, 'a petition for the gift of Paolo the painter' before mentioning property of a 'Domenico and Paolo, sons of Piero Benvenuti from Ugnano'. The circumstances are not clear from the brief reference, although the gift may be of the kind traditionally given by tenant farmers to their landlord (Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, p. 262). The Merchants' Guild might have had an interest in the gift if Domenico, Paolo, or Piero Benvenuti, or anyone else had given it to Uccello while a debtor of theirs or someone else. ASF, Catasto, 625, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 1527, fol. 224: in his 1442 *portata* Uccello recorded a Stefano di Benvenuti as a neighbour of his property at Ugnano.

[97] Gaetano Milanesi published the information for the reference without citing its source, in Milanesi (ed.) in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, p. 211, n [cross]. Padoa Rizzo and Frosinini (1984, p. 29) cited the source as AODF, Deliberazioni, II, I, 92, fols 17v., 31, 45v.

[98] Frosinini (2003, pp. 29–31) observed that Uccello's co-worker on the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings in the Duomo in Prato was Andrea di Giusto, who is recorded working in Bicci di Lorenzo's workshop. Furthermore, Frosinini proposed that the second and third bays of the Old Testament cycle in the Chiostro Verde might have been executed by two artists from Bicci's workshop, Francesco d'Antonio and Scheggia, under Uccello's guidance (Padoa Rizzo and Frosinini, 1984, pp. 6–12).

[99] Corti and Hartt (1962, pp. 155–156, 161) described the brothers as unremarkable Florentine officials, although they each rose to hold the office of Gonfaloniere.

[100] Kent, 1977, p. 190.

[101] For a discussion of the Lanfredini and Pollaiuolo's mural cycle, see: Wright, 1998, pp. 47–77.

[102] ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, B 214, Ser Mariotto Baldesi, in Beck, 1979, pp. 4–5.

[103] AODF, Deliberazioni 1450–1454, fol. 113, in Poggi, 1933, p. 336.

[104] ASF, Convento Soppresso, 168, 147, fol. LV., in Saalman, 1964, p. 563.

[105] ASF, Catasto, 826, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm no. 2063, fols 56–57. Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore di Firenze, 2001–2005, on-line source: Registro, 1, fg 52, Masche e Femmine, 1451 Ottobre 26–1451 Novembre 2; and Registro: 1, fg 311, Maschi e Femmine, 1456 Ottobre 10–1456 Ottobre 17). Donato was baptised on 1 November 1451 and Antonia was baptised on 13 October 1456

[106] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, p. 87, based on data from 1427 to 1480.

[107] ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, Ser Pace di Bambello, 7, fol. 147, in Sindona, 1957, p. 44: '*Item reliquit et legavit domini Thomaxie eius uxori et filie olim benedicti malifici dotes suas quas dixit et asseruit esse florenos ducentos auri de sigillo.*' In Hatfield's (2003, p. LXI) list of Florentine artists' wives' dowries, Uccello's wife's dowry is larger than the one for Giusto d'Andrea's wife (50 gold florins *largi*) and Cosimo Roselli's wife (100 gold florins *largi*), but less than the one for Neri di Bicci's wife (340 florins *di suggello*) and Domenico Ghirlandaio's wife (590 gold florins *largi*).

[108] ASF, Catasto, 77, microfilm reel 142, fol. 213v., for the Benedetto di Piero Malifici living on Via della Scala; and ASF, Catasto, 65, microfilm reel 123, fol. 298, for the Benedetto di Piero Malifici living in the Santo Spirito quarter.

[109] Milanesi (ed., in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, p. 217 n. [asterisk, cross]) gave the date of Antonia's death in the *Libro dei morti di Firenze* as 9 February 1491. Parronchi (1965, pp. 174–178) found it in the *Libro dei Medici e Speziali*, 247, fol. 2v., under February 1489 (1490 in the modern calendar), recorded as: '*Suor Antonia pitoressa dell'Ordine del Carmino, a di 9 nel Carmino.*' He suggested the *Ordination of One of the Vecchietti* in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, bears her signature. However, Padoa Rizzo (1991, p. 132) observed that the paint surface is damaged and the signature not clearly legible.

[110] Geronimus, 2000, p. 164. Piero di Cosimo was born in 1462 and his family seems to have moved to a house on Via della Scala in the *popolo* of San Paolo between 1464 and 1466.

[111] Fermor, 1993, pp. 104–106.

[112] For Botticelli's biographical details, see: R. Lightbown, vol. I (throughout). Conspicuously, Uccello's eerily beautiful forest in the *Hunt in a Forest*, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, provided a precedent for the setting of Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* panels, executed with the assistance of his workshop, now housed in the Prado Museum in Madrid and a private collection

[113] ASF, Catasto, 826, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 2063, fol. 56v. (7 October 1455). ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, F 304, fol. 225v., in Fremantle, 1977, p. 70 (28 October 1458). ASF, Catasto, 926, vol. II, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 259, in Mather, 1948, p. 63 (17 September 1459).

[114] Mather, 1948, pp. 20–65. The sculptor Agostino di Duccio owned vineyards near those belonging to Uccello. Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, Andrea del Verrocchio, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Benozzo Gozzoli, Lorenzo and Neri di Bicci, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Francesco di Stefano (called Pesellino), Lorenzo Ghiberti, and Piero di Cosimo all owned agricultural land.

[115] Rucellai, 1960, pp. 23–24.

[116] Gilbert, 1988, p. 133.

[117] Averlino, 1972, vol. I, p. 285. Filarete also referred to two Florentine mosaicists, possibly referring to Uccello and Andrea del Castagno (p. 249).

[118] Benedetto Dei, 1470, *Memorie istoriche*, Ashburnham 644, Biblioteca Laurenziana di Firenze, in Gilbert 1988, p. 203. The list contained a number of artists who had been dead for many decades, such as Masaccio and Masolino, perhaps to make it appear more impressive.

[119] Venturini, 2005, p. 8.

[120] ASF, Archivio Gherardi, 137, fol. 13, in Beck, 1979, pp. 2–3, 5 n. 3.

[121] Moranti, 1990, pp. 206–214.

[122] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, pp. 111–112.

[123] The *Profile Portrait of a Lady* sometimes identified as Battista Sforza (private collection, location unknown) has been attributed to Uccello during his stay in Urbino (e.g. Venturi, 1930, pp. 64, 69), with decreasing regularity in recent times. The work is now usually attributed to the Master of the Castello Nativity. The *Famous Men* mural paintings in the Camera Picta of the Palazzo Ducale, Urbino, and a cassone with portraits of Battista Sforza and Federico da Montefeltro (private collection, Urbino) have

also been attributed to him in the Urbino period (Fontana, 1986, pp. 131–149), although neither of these attributions has found favour. For a discussion of the attribution of the *Famous Men* to Giovanni di Piermatteo Boccati, see: De Marchi, 2005, p. 76.

[124] ASF, Catasto, 926, vol. II, San Giovanni Drago, fols 259–259v., in Mather, 1948, pp. 63–64.

[125] Kemp, 1994, p. 12.

[126] Haines, 1999, p. 59.

[127] Mather, 1948, p. 53.

[128] ASF, Mercanzia, no. 1483, fol. 781v., in Beck, 1979, p. 4.

[129] For the will, see: ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, Ser Pace di Bambello, 7, fol. 147, in Sindona, 1957, p. 44. For the record of Uccello's death, see: ASF, Registri di Morti, Medici e Speciali 1475–1486, 246, fol. 3v., in Boeck, 1933b, p. 275. Gaye quoted briefly from a 1446 Catasto document for Uccello (Gaye, 1839, vol. I, p. 146), which was recorded as missing by Mather in 1948 (p. 64) and was not found by this author in 2003. There is also a brief, so far unexplained, reference to Uccello in 1458 in the *Codice magliabechiano* in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence (*Cl. XXV*, 392, fol. 228), in Boeck, 1939, p. 104, which this author was unable to consult.

2

Origins of a Career: From Castello to Venice

Studying the early lives of fifteenth-century artists can be extremely difficult, even the famous ones. Masaccio's career prior to his joining the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild in 1422 is still obscure, even though his entry would have been dependent on establishing a sound reputation. In the flurry of studies that appeared in 2002 to mark the sixth centenary of his birth, it was proposed by one author that Masaccio's first master in painting might have been his step-sister's husband, Mariotto di Cristofano.[1] Another author thought Masaccio spent part of his early career with his brother Scheggia in Lorenzo di Bicci's workshop, based on stylistic relationships between their works and documented, although indirect, associations.[2] Some suggested there was a possible early association with Fra Angelico, based on a technical similarity between their works,[3] while others emphasised the documentary links between Masaccio and the little known painter and miniaturist Niccolò di Ser Lappo, with whom he shared a workshop in the mid 1420s. As Anna Bernacchioni noted, the diverse indications of Masaccio's formative influences are suggestive of the fluidity of young artists' professional associations during the early fifteenth century.[4]

Even though more than four years of Uccello's training in Ghiberti's workshop are documented, the identification of his early works is even more difficult than it is for Masaccio. The mystery has only deepened following recent studies showing that two of his earliest securely attributed paintings sometimes thought to predate his trip to Venice in 1425 (the *Creation Stories* in Santa Maria Novella and the Del Beccuto *Virgin and Child*) more probably postdate his return to Florence some years later. Anna Padoa Rizzo has, however, shed new light on Uccello's early contact with networks of patronage through his family connections.[5]

Each of these trends in recent scholarship is advanced here. The Oxford *Annunciation* has sometimes been dated to the 1420s, however, technical and stylistic evidence discussed in this chapter and Chapter 8 suggests it is more likely to be nearly contemporary with the similar Melbourne *Saint George*, and so is dateable to the early 1430s. This chapter presents new evidence for Uccello's early association with his extended family and their social circle.

Nevertheless, there are only a few small panel paintings, part of a painted tabernacle, and lost paintings from a dismantled altarpiece to account for nearly ten years of his career, from around the time of his matriculation into the painters' guild in 1415 until his departure for Venice in 1425, and these are all uncertain attributions. Thus, no satisfying account of Uccello's early career as a painter is at present possible. While Uccello's activity in Venice is only slightly better documented, the stylistic evidence for the attribution to him of certain mosaics and *pavimenti* is at least a little stronger.

In Uccello's 1433 *portata* he reported an outstanding debt of 23 florins from more than twenty years before, owed to him by the Spedale di Sant'Antonio (Hospital of Saint Anthony) in Castello. An arrangement had been reached for the debt to be paid off in installments of 2 florins annually.[6] In 1413 Uccello would have been about sixteen years old. This clue to his early activity has not previously been investigated successfully. Castello was then a rural settlement dominated by wealthy Florentine families, between four and five miles northwest of Florence on the old road to Prato, traditionally called the Strada Maestra di Prato (now called Via Reginaldo Giuliano). The neighbouring villages were called Quarto and Quinto, at the fourth and fifth Roman milestones from the centre of Florence, respectively, as their names indicate. Castello is famous today for its Renaissance villas and gardens, including Le Brache, La Petraia, La Topaia, and Il Vivaio. The terrain rises sharply on the north side of Via Reginaldo Giuliano, to the foothills of Mount Morello, offering a privileged view over Florence and the Arno valley.

An account book in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze from the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr, based in Santa Maria Novella in Florence, shows that in August 1413 it reimbursed its *provveditore* in part for the acquisition of the property that included the Spedale di San Giovanni Battista e di Sant'Antonio at Castello ('*spedale di sato giovanni e di sato antonio da chastello*') on the road to Prato.[7] The *provveditore* of the confraternity and its *spedalingo* (administrator of the *spedale*) was the painter Michele di Giovanni del Tria, of whom very little is known, except that he painted a lost crucifix and other minor works for the confraternity.[8] Francesco and Niccolò di Simone Tornabuoni are mentioned in the document, apparently as financiers for the acquisition.[9]

The confraternity was established in Florence in the mid-thirteenth century to rally orthodox lay Catholics to the defence of the faith, as part of the church's widespread efforts to oppose heresy. Founded with a dedication to the Virgin, it first came to prominence in 1244–1245 at the time of Saint Peter Martyr's presence in the city, to whom it was given a secondary dedication.[10]   One of its most notable activities was the hiring of professional musicians to sing *laude* at religious festivals and for the commemoration of the dead, but it is

best known to art history as the patron of Duccio di Buoninsegna's monumental *Virgin and Child with Angels*, painted in 1285 (formerly in Santa Maria Novella, now in the Galleria degli Uffizi).[11]

The 1427 *portata* of Uccello's wealthy relative, Deo Beccuti, recorded that he owned land in Castello neighbouring the 'singing confraternity of Santa Maria Novella' ('*lachonpagnia dllolalde di santa maria novella*') and that he had provided Michele di Giovanni del Tria with the considerable sum of fifty-four florins to fix it up.[12] In his 1431 *portata* Deo Beccuti specified that the debt originated more than twenty years ago,[13] as Uccello said of his debt in 1433. It can hardly be insignificant that Uccello and his relative were owed money by the same *spedale* from around the same period, and neither was paid for two decades. As it happens, the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr experienced financial difficulties in the early fifteenth century, leading to the intervention of the convent to secure its assets in 1441.[14]

Vestiges of the façade of the *spedale* survive on Via Reginaldo Giuliano, near the corner of Via della Querciola. A stone doorway bears a carved cross and two inscriptions on the lintel: 'MDPM', as appears on the cover of one of the confraternity's account books from the fifteenth century, perhaps standing for 'Misericordia di Pietro Martire'.[15] A tabernacle on the facade of the house on the corner of the streets, now three doors away, formerly bore a representation of the Virgin. In 1906 Guido Carocci, Inspector of Excavations and Monuments for the city of Florence, saw a painting dating from the early fifteenth century in the tabernacle.[16] Sadly, no painting remains, except for some stars under the arch.[17] After a period in the second half of the fifteenth century in which ownership of the *spedale* was transferred to Santa Maria Novella, the confraternity regained possession, only to sell it to the Medici in 1534.[18] However, the buildings on the corner of the property were subsequently acquired by the del Beccuto family. Their arms are still on the façade, over the door of the *spedale* and over the tabernacle. In 1574, a Felice del Beccuto sold the property to a Lucrezia Rucellai.[19]

The most telling circumstance of Uccello's earliest known association outside of Ghiberti's workshop is the appearance of his wealthy relative Deo Beccuti as a neighbouring landlord and supporter of the *spedale* that owed Uccello money. As Anna Padoa Rizzo has shown, Deo appears repeatedly in the social context of Uccello's early activities. Although the precise nature of Uccello's relationship with the *spedale* remains undefined, it is not far-fetched to imagine Deo's guiding hand behind Uccello's receiving work there as a youth, even if the nature of such work is a matter for speculation. Since the *spedale* was acquired by the confraternity in 1413 or slightly before, Uccello's employer might well have been the confraternity.[20] Interestingly, the ser Bartolo Giannini for whom Deo Beccuti submitted

Uccello's 1427 *portata* was made a Capitano of the confraternity on 5 August 1413, two days after it acquired the *spedale* at Castello.[21] In light of the culture of reciprocal obligation in fifteenth-century Florence, of which more will be said in the next chapter, a reasonable hypothesis might be that in return for Deo's support for the renovations to the *spedale*, its *spedalingo*, the painter Michele di Giovanni del Tria, employed Deo's young relative on the project.[22]

The earliest work yet attributed to Uccello is the 'cut-out' *Crucifix* from the privately owned ex-church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini in Florence. It was published in 1998 by Alessandro Parronchi, who attempted to associate it with Uccello's debt from the Spedale di Sant'Antonio in Castello. Parronchi stated, incorrectly, that the 'oratory' of Sant'Antonio belonged to the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre ('*Religioni dei Cavalieri di San Sepolcro*') in the eighteenth century, of which the church of San Jacopo was its principal seat in Florence, and noted, correctly, that Uccello rented premises in Campo Corbolini in 1433. He attributed the *Crucifix* to Uccello on the basis of these supposed historical links and the work's style and date. At the bottom, a damaged inscription indicates that in '1413/ Ser Bartol[…] had this crucifix made […]'.[23] The *Crucifix* could conceivably relate to Uccello's involvement with the Spedale di Sant'Antonio in the countyside in around 1413 if it had somehow found its way to the church of San Jacopo in the city.

Parronchi believed the link between the spedale and the church was demonstrated in the documentation of the 1763 pastoral tour of the Florentine patrician Pietro Guadagni, as two sites he inventoried at this time.[24] However, Parronchi confused the Oratorio di Sant'Antonio Abate in Bagnolo, near Prato, which the church of San Jacopo did own, with the Spedale di Sant'Antonio in Castello, which it did not own, although it did possess land nearby in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.[25] A series of inventories of San Jacopo show only that the *Crucifix* was in the church from at least 1722,[26] and possibly as early as 1588.[27]

At the age of around sixteen the characteristics of Uccello's mature style would most likely not have been fully developed, yet the *Crucifix* does exhibit certain Uccelloesque traits. An almost complete figure 8 shape disposed horizontally in the drapery of the *Crucifix* also appears in Gabriel's drapery in the Oxford *Annunciation*, in the Angels' drapery in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* (Staatliche Kunsthalle) and, as alluded to by Parronchi, in the drapery of the figure of *Hope* in the Marcovaldi Chapel in Prato (traditionally called the 'Assumption Chapel'), but there in a modified form. Christ's massive body and small head are also similar to the proportions Uccello gave Adam in the lunette of the *Creation Stories* in the Chiostro Verde. The *Crucifix* closely follows a number of models by Lorenzo Monaco, one of the most influential painters in Florence in the early fifteenth century, and long before the *Crucifix*

came to light Georg Pudelko observed a dependence in Uccello's earliest surviving works on the style of Monaco.[28] Despite the uncertainty surrounding its patronage and early provenance, the San Jacopo *Crucifix* remains a candidate for Uccello's earliest surviving work.

The Villa di Macia on the corner of Via Fanfani and Via dei Perfetti Ricasoli, just a few streets away from the Spedale di Sant'Antonio, towards Florence, belonged to the Bartoli family until 1470, when it was acquired by the Lippi family. A street tabernacle on the site bearing the mural painting *Virgin and Child with God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Angels and Saints* came to be known as the Del Lippi tabernacle. It was a significant local landmark for the parish, called 'Santa Stefano dalla Vergine del Mazza', after the local church, Santa Stefano, the Virgin of the tabernacle, and Via del Mazza, the street corresponding to the present-day Via Perfetti Ricasoli.[29] The paintings have been detached and are now housed in the nearby church of Santa Maria Mater Dei a Lippi. A label previously on the tabernacle carried a Latin inscription indicating that 'Paolo Uccello painted this tabernacle in the year of Our Lord 1416 and Luca di Alberto del Lippi restored it on the 8th of October in the year of Our Lord 1716.'[30] The paintings are in a conservative, late Gothic style and if not for the label it is unlikely that they would ever have been associated with Uccello. So what trust can be put in the label?

Eighteenth-century attributions concerning fifteenth-century artists can be unreliable, as in the case of a lost painting, a *Virgin and Saints John the Evangelist, Jerome, and Mary Magdalene*, once on the wall behind the altar in the chapel of the Confraternity of Saint John the Baptist (known as the 'Scalzo') on the present day Via Cavour. Unpublished documents from the confraternity express uncertainty about its authorship. In a description of the rooms of 1708 the work was attributed to a pupil of Uccello, while in an index to the confraternity's documents of 1745 the painting was referred to as by Uccello in one entry and Salvadore di Giuliano in another.[31] However, Padoa Rizzo has noted that the Bartoli family had dealings with Uccello's relative Deo Beccuti.[32] Furthermore, the location of the tabernacle near Castello, where Deo Beccuti owned land and where Uccello had some association around 1413, but a few kilometres outside of Florence, is probably significant.[33] The coincidences of Uccello's name, the place, the time, and contact between the Bartoli and Deo Beccuti suggest that the tabernacle's label should not be disregarded.

There has been no consensus concerning the authorship of the paintings on the basis of their style. In 1968 Boskovits attributed them to the Master of Santa Verdiana,[34] subsequently identified as Tommaso del Mazza. However, his career is now thought to have ended in the first years of the fifteenth century and the Del Lippi tabernacle paintings were

not included in Deimling's entry for the artist in the *Corpus of Florentine Painting*.[35] In 1975 Boskovits re-attributed the paintings to Pietro Nelli, dating them between 1395 and 1400, thereby excluding any contribution by Uccello.[36] However, two authors have maintained the idea that Uccello was involved in the commission. Padoa Rizzo described the *sinopie* as identical in style with those in Uccello's *Creation Stories*, without proposing an identity for his putative collaborator.[37] In 1998 Parronchi wrote that Uccello worked on the tabernacle with the Master of Santa Verdiana, attributing to Uccello the *sinopie*, the Angel at the top right of the central scene and the figure of Saint Peter (erroneously identified as Saint Joseph), the two saints on the right side of the tabernacle, and possibly the vault with the four Evangelists.[38]

The *sinopia* for the central scene of the tabernacle does indeed have a similar style to the *sinopia* of Uccello's *Creation Stories*, with emphatic, rough outlines accompanied by webs of fine, more searching lines for contours of drapery. The *sinopie* for the saints on the sides of the tabernacle, however, seem more economical and controlled, notwithstanding the *pentimenti* in the positions of their heads. These stylistic differences suggest they may be by a different, more experienced artist than those in the central scene. While the eighteenth-century restoration necessitates caution in attributing the paintings to an individual master, the innocuous Gothic sensibility of the work is compatible with the style of Florentine painting from the end of the fourteenth century: the Virgin's over-size head is reminiscent of Agnolo Gaddi, in particular the *Virgin and Child* mural painting attributed to Gaddi in the Palazzo del Bacchino in Prato.[39] However, features such as the fictive spiral columns, gothic tracery, and simple, radial decoration of the haloes are occasionally still found in the work of eclectic artists working in the second decade of the fifteenth century, such as Francesco d'Antonio, although the style of the figures in the Del Lippi paintings is not his.

Uccello most likely learnt mural painting technique through collaborations with established practitioners. As an assistant, Uccello would have adopted the style of those with whom he worked. It is difficult to discern Uccello's style in any part of the tabernacle paintings other than the *sinopia* of the central scene. He may have collaborated with a more experienced artist whose name was forgotten in local sources, overshadowed by Uccello's subsequent fame, explaining why only Uccello was mentioned in the label. On the basis of the available stylistic and historical evidence Uccello's involvement in the painting of the tabernacle can be described as a plausible hypothesis.

In 1992 Miklós Boskovits published a charming, but small and damaged *Virgin and Child* in the so-called Martello Collection (named after the villa in Fiesole in which the collection is housed) as a work of Uccello. Its origins are unknown, the attribution being based on stylistic

criteria alone. The Virgin is depicted in half-length format, wearing a dark mantle with a deep-green lining, holding the Child in a dark pink cloth, against a gold ground with elaborate punchwork. Boskovits argued that the work is probably Florentine and dates from the first decades of the fifteenth century, noting that the Virgin's mantle, lined with green, is similar in versions of the subject painted by Gentile da Fabriano in Florence between 1420 and 1425. He also observed stylistic features related to Donatello and Masaccio, supporting the argument for a Florentine origin for the work.

The lively, robust Child is certainly comparable with Uccello's Del Beccuto *Virgin and Child* and Dublin *Virgin and Child*,[40] and the motif of the Child following the flight of a tiny bird also occurs in the Prato *Virgin and Child*, attributed to Uccello by Berti in 1961,[41] but here attributed to an anonymous workshop assistant (see Chapter 7). The decorative details of the Martello Collection *Virgin and Child*, such as the elaborate gold border of the mantle and the punchwork around the edge of the panel are much richer than in any other work attributed to Uccello. The punchwork does bear comparison with that in the halo of the San Jacopo *Crucifix*, but given that work's uncertain claim to Uccello's authorship, the correspondence does not greatly support the attribution of the *Virgin and Child* to him. Notwithstanding the looping of the drapery of the mantle under the Child, the drapery style is less geometric than in any other work attributed to Uccello. Thus, the attribution of the work to Uccello remains tentative.

Another artist whose style the Martello Collection *Virgin and Child* resembles is Fra Angelico, notably in the Virgin's pale skin and flushed pink cheeks, the robust Christ Child squirming in his mother's arms, and the warm palette of rich red, gold, and dusky pinks, characteristics also present in Angelico's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels* in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, datable to the early 1420s.[42] The recent Fra Angelico exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where the Rotterdam painting was shown, also brought to light two previously unpublished, small quatrefoil panels of the Annunciation from private collections (Cat 3A and B). In his insightful analysis of the works, Laurence Kanter attributed them to Fra Angelico at the beginning of his independent career, in the mid teens of the fifteenth century, on the basis of their delightful naturalism, the style of the heads and faces, and, most compelling of all, the close manner of the tooling of the haloes with that in the Rotterdam *Virgin and Child*.[43]

Features of the quatrefoil paintings, however, also bear strong resemblances to three works by Paolo Uccello that are datable to the 1430s. The distinctive, sketchy, wash-like execution of the 'grassy' ground in the quatrefoils is closely paralleled in the *Saint George and the Dragon* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, notably the unevenly applied horizontal brushstrokes overlaid with fine vertical strokes for blades of grass, scattered with

little blobs of colour for flowers. The long, thin, spiky-leaved lily stem with three main branches held in Gabriel's hand in the quatrefoil is similar to the one held by Gabriel standing before the Virgin in the *Annunciation* in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The expedient manner in which the painter of the quatrefoil shows Gabriel holding the lily stem in his left hand, peaking out from behind his leg, is also mirrored in the underdrawing of the Oxford *Annunciation*. Infrared reflectography of the Oxford painting shows that Uccello first depicted Gabriel holding the lily stem in his left hand, appearing from behind his sleeve, but in the paint layer amended the design to move the hand out of sight behind Gabriel's body. The herringbone pattern of the mordant gilt highlights on the feathers of Gabriel's wings in the quatrefoil recalls the gold sgraffito highlights in the Angels' wings of the *Adoration of the Child* in the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe. The Virgin's posture and drapery in the quatrefoil are very similar to those in the Oxford *Annunciation*, and the haloes in the quatrefoils, tooled with simple patterns consisting of a ring of small circles, each with a smaller circle inside, is closely matched by the haloes of the musical Angels in the Oxford picture. The principal difference between the two sets of haloes is that the quatrefoil haloes have punched stippling while the Oxford Angels' haloes do not. However, the seraphim in the mandorla surrounding God the Father in the Oxford picture do exhibit this technique. Furthermore, the 'simplicity and unabashed Gothicism of the two [quatrefoil] paintings–and their undisguised dependence on Ghiberti's models', said by Kanter to indicate an early date in Angelico's career, are also characteristics of Uccello's career in the early 1430s.

The influence of Angelico on the Oxford *Annunciation* and the Melbourne *Saint George* was recognised by Pudelko as early as 1935,[44] and the discovery of the quatrefoil paintings provides further proof of Uccello's stylistic closeness to Angelico. However, ultimately underlying the Oxford and Melbourne paintings are models by Lorenzo Monaco. The aristocratic figure of the Oxford Virgin recalls the one Monaco painted in the *Annunciation* for the Bartolini Salimbeni Chapel in Santa Trinita; the style of Saint George's refined and stylised white horse derives from the one in Monaco's *Adoration of the Magi* in the Galleria degli Uffizi.

The undeniable resemblance of the quatrefoil haloes to those in the Rotterdam *Virgin and Child*, which cannot be by Uccello, suggests an attribution of the quatrefoil paintings to Angelico. However, the many affinities between the quatrefoil paintings and those in Oxford, Melbourne, and Karlsruhe, points, in the opinion of this author, to a possible collaboration between Angelico and Uccello, and a dating to the late 1420s or early 1430s. Looking back from Uccello's first certain works, a possible scenario for Uccello's training and early career as a painter is one in close proximity to Monaco and his students, most likely including Angelico. This could conceivably have been as early as the mid-teens of the century in

Lorenzo Monaco's workshop, just before Uccello joined the painters' guild, and/or later, at the turn of the decade in Angelico's own shop.

Evidence of Uccello's rising fortunes in the early 1420s is provided by accounts of lost work from the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence. In 1510, Francesco Albertini, in his well-known guidebook to the monuments of Florence, attributed to Uccello the predella of an altarpiece in the church and the 'arch' above it, while he attributed the altarpiece to Masaccio.[45] Vasari gave more information and different attributions, describing an *Annunciation* in fresco and *Four Evangelists* in a vault above, which he gave to Uccello, while the altarpiece and predella were given to Masaccio.[46] In 1584 Raffaello Borghini thought the *Annunciation* Uccello's most commendable work.[47] Following the complete demolition of the chapel after 1653, an *Annunciation* by Uccello (the same one?) was recorded in guidebooks as fixed to a column in the church until the early nineteenth century, after which there are no further notices of it.[48] Since the *Annunciation* and *Four Evangelists* have not survived, their attribution to Uccello is not entirely certain, although the numerous references to his authorship from the early sixteenth century onwards do support the proposition.

Of the three scenes in the altarpiece described by Vasari, the panel depicting Saint Catherine is lost, the central panel showing the Virgin and Child has not been seen since it was stolen in the 1920s, although its appearance is known from photographs, and the *Saint Julian* is now housed in the Museo d'Arte Sacra in Florence. The two panels known to modern art historians are now attributed to Masolino on stylistic grounds. Vasari also described three predella panels: a *Scene from the Life of Saint Catherine* and a *Nativity*, which are lost, and a *Scene from the Life of Saint Julian*, which has been identified with the predella panel in the Museo Horne, Florence, on the basis of the analysis of its panel support. It is attributed to Masaccio on stylistic grounds, despite its extremely damaged condition.[49]

The decoration of the chapel, dedicated to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, was provided for in the will of Paolo di Berto di Grazino de' Carnesecchi, who died on 4 February 1428.[50] He was a prominent citizen, holding numerous important offices, and was also a leader of the Guelf Party.[51] Joannides argued that a notice of the chapel by Paolo di Berto in January 1427 describing it as furnished ('*fornita*') meant that the decoration had been completed by that time. The commission must have been completed before the end of 1425, by which time Masolino was in Hungary, and Uccello was in Venice. Joannides dated Masolino's contribution, and so presumably the whole commission, to around 1423 on stylistic evidence and the large workload Masolino had around 1424–1425.[52]

Vasari made remarkable claims for Uccello's contribution to the project, describing:

…an Annunciation in fresco, in which he made a building worthy of consideration, a new and difficult thing for those times, being the first that showed in a fine manner to artists and with grace and proportion, [it] showed how to make the lines escape [towards a vanishing point] and to show space on a plane, that is little and small, so much so that something that appears far seems large: and they who colour with good judgment of this, with grace adding the shadows in their place and the highlights, with colours, deceive the eye, such that the picture appears real and in relief. And not satisfied with doing this, he wanted also to show the great difficulty of some columns foreshortened by means of perspective, which bend round and break the corner of the vault, where there are the four Evangelists: a thing considered fine and difficult; and truly Paolo was ingenious and skillful in his profession.[53]

How Uccello might have become involved in this commission is unknown, although Padoa Rizzo has suggested it may have come about through his mother's family. The del Beccuto and the Carnesecchi families each owned large properties adjacent to Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore, indicating that they were among the leading citizens of the parish.[54] The church would have been a focus for their religious and social activities.[55] Like the Carnesecchi, the del Beccuto had patronage rights within the church, including the chapel dedicated to Saint Blaise. The genealogy of the del Beccuto family discussed in Chapter 1 shows that Deo Beccuti was in fact married to one Andreola di Zanobi Carnesecchi.[56] This adds some documentary support to the hypothesis of a social connection between Uccello and the patron. The marriage appears to have been a characteristic matrimonial alliance between members of wealthy and prominent Florentine patrician families.

The evidence for Uccello's *Annunciation* in the Carnesecchi Chapel suggests that around 1423 he was working with Masolino and Masaccio, two of the leading Florentine painters of the time. The commission is of considerable art historical interest as the possible beginning of Masolino's and Masaccio's collaboration, leading to their work in the Brancacci Chapel.[57] Judging from Vasari's comments, Uccello was at the leading edge of developments in painting in Florence prior to his trip to Venice. Contrary to some suggestions, the letter written by the Operai of the Duomo in 1432 seeking information on Uccello's work in Venice does not imply that there was no evidence in Florence of Uccello's skill as an independent artist.[58] It is more likely that the Operai wanted assurance that Uccello was capable of fulfilling work on an important public commission on a grand scale.

Even if specific information is scarce, a partial picture can be discerned from the documents and surviving works of the social and artistic circumstances within which Uccello's early career developed. As a young artist seeking to establish a career, Uccello would have been

alert to the possibilities in his local environment for patronage from wealthy families and the institutions they supported, such as *spedali* and churches. By 1425 Uccello was living in the Santa Maria Novella quarter of Florence and a few years after his return to Florence from Venice, he settled there permanently. It is not surprising that an early association would be with the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr, since it was based in Santa Maria Novella, the most important centre for artistic patronage in its quarter. The confraternity's members included a relatively large number of artists, probably attracted by the chance of winning commissions at the church and convent.[59] That the actual site of Uccello's earliest known association outside of Ghiberti's workshop was in Castello is also not difficult to explain, since, as will be shown, a number of the leading families in the quarter had associations with that area too. Castello has been all but overlooked in the literature on Uccello, but it is rich in associations with him during the early part of his career.[60] Uccello's wealthy relative Deo Beccuti owned properties in Castello as well as his properties near Santa Maria Novella in Florence. It was probably through Deo Beccuti that Uccello made a number of his early contacts with Florentine patrons from the landed patrician families of the Santa Maria Novella quarter, some of whom were immediate or near neighbours of Beccuti's in Castello as well as in Florence.

It may simply have been because Deo Beccuti was a prominent neighbour of the Spedale di Sant'Antonio that the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr gained financial support from him to renovate its buildings. Naturally, the geography of land ownership was a factor in determining the patterns of patronage and charity in fifteenth-century Florence as well as the surrounding countryside. Rural land ownership may not have been the most profitable use of capital. According to Vasari, Ghiberti bought the Villa Lepriano at Mount Morello, north of Castello. After spending on it twice as much as he derived from it, he sold it in disgust.[61] However, profit was not the only consideration for the wealthy. Land ownership was a way to maintain a diverse portfolio of investments and it conferred less tangible benefits, such as social prestige and the pleasures of life in country villas for which Tuscany is renowned.[62]

In some ways Castello has represented this ideal over the centuries. The Medici Villa Il Vivaio (now also called the Villa di Castello), just a few minutes walk uphill from the Spedale di Sant'Antonio, was renowned for its richly appointed buildings, decorated by Botticelli and his assistants in the fifteenth century, and its extensive, elaborately landscaped gardens.[63] The villa housed Botticelli's *Primavera* and *Birth of Venus* in the sixteenth century, while Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* was housed there in the eighteenth century (all three now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence). While these masterpieces were not commissioned for Il Vivaio, the Medici decision to move to Castello in 1477 and the subsequent decisions to relocate these works there probably reflect an appreciation of Castello's rural charm,

distinguished social history, and its tradition of architectural and artistic patronage.[64] Apart from the lost painting of the Virgin in the tabernacle on the corner of Via della Querciola, one of the most prominent artworks in the area was the mural painting *Annunciation with Saints Julian, Egidio, Michael and Anthony Abbot*, dated 1437 (now detached and in the reserve collection of the Uffizi). A villa built by the Carnesecchi family in the fourteenth century on the opposite side of the road from the Spedale di Sant'Antonio was acquired by the early fifteenth century by the Guidacci family, who commissioned Paolo Schiavo to paint the street tabernacle there.[65]

In the fifteenth century the social and business associations found in Florence were often paralleled in the nearby countryside.[66] Castello is northwest of Florence and so is closest to the Santa Maria Novella quarter of the city. Prominent families in and around Castello were also prominent in and around the Santa Maria Novella quarter, predominantly in the part closest to the centre of Florence.[67] These families included the del Beccuto, the Carnesecchi, the Tornabuoni, the Strozzi, the Rucellai, and the Bartolini, all powerful and wealthy families, and important patrons.[68] Uccello had reasons to be familiar with all of these families, although the modest price of his own house and its location further from the centre of Florence suggest that he could not afford to live among them.

Deo Beccuti married a woman of the Carnesecchi family, who were certainly important patrons in the fifteenth century. Like Deo, branches of the Carnesecchi family owned properties in Castello as well as the area around Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence. In Castello they owned the Casa Ridolfi (formerly 'Fossi') at l'Olmo a Castello, near the Spedale di Sant'Antonio.[69] The Villas Il Pozzino and Corsi, in and near Castello respectively, were also owned by the Carnesecchi in the early fifteenth century.[70] As discussed, Uccello is believed to have worked with Masaccio and Masolino on Paolo di Berto Carnesecchi's altarpiece in Santa Maria Maggiore. The patron's heirs also paid for services to be held at Santa Maria Novella following his death.[71] It was probably Paolo di Berto's nephew, Bernardo di Cristofano Carnesecchi who commissioned Domenico Veneziano's *Virgin and Child with God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Saints* for a street tabernacle in front of one of his houses on the Canto de' Carnesecchi. Like his uncle, Bernardo was a member of the Guelf Party.[72] The tabernacle was located at the point where the present day Via de' Banchi and Via de' Panzani meet, between Santa Maria Novella and Santa Maria Maggiore. The central scene and two fragments of saints' heads from the sides of the tabernacle are all that survive of Veneziano's paintings, now housed in the National Gallery, London. Dillian Gordon has observed the compositional similarities between the Del Lippi tabernacle paintings and those in Domenico Veneziano's tabernacle. In each, the Virgin is seated holding the Child between Saints, with God the Father sending the Holy Spirit from above.[73] The Carnesecchi family

also owned property adjacent to the street with the tabernacle near Castello.[74] Is the similarity between the two street tabernacles an accident, or did the Carnesecchi ask Veneziano to model his composition on the one near Castello?

Francesco and Niccolò di Simone Tornabuoni were among the wealthiest citizens of Florence at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and Francesco was a leader of the Guelf Party.[75] In 1413 they apparently financed the acquisition of the Spedale di Sant'Antonio for the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr. In 1422 Francesco was one of the Operai of Santa Maria Novella, and so might well have been involved in the first stages of the commission for the mural painting cycle in the Chiostro Verde on which Uccello later worked, and in 1427 Niccolò was an immediate neighbour of Deo Beccuti at Castello.[76] Francesco also purchased the Villa Le Brache and adjacent land on the same road as the *spedale* around 1427, only to sell the villa in July 1432 to the Uffiziali della diminuizione del Monte del Comune. It acquired the property for the *condottiere* Micheletto Attendolo da Cotignola, the hero of Uccello's *Battle* painting in Paris, the month after he contributed to the victory of Florence at the battle of San Romano. Ironically, Francesco, as the city's civilian war commissioner in 1431, had protested against Attendola's timidity in pursuing the war with Lucca.[77] Francesco continued to own land around the villa, which passed to his son Niccolò, whose brother, Giovanni di Francesco, re-acquired the villa for the family in 1488.[78]

The Tornaquinci family, of which the Tornabuoni family was a branch, was one of the oldest landowners in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, was among the founding donors of the church, and remained one of its leading patrons throughout the fifteenth century. Since the fourteenth century, members of the Tornaquinci and Tornabuoni families had also made bequests to the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr. Giovanni di Francesco Tornabuoni built the Palazzo Tornabuoni in the precinct inhabited by the Tornaquinci, between, and a little south of, Santa Maria Novella and Santa Maria Maggiore, on the street that now bears his family's name (Via dei Tornabuoni). In 1486 he was elected a Capitano of the confraternity, and in the same year he became its Provost. On this occasion the friars gave him patronage rights over the major chapel in the church and he subsequently commissioned Ghirlandaio to paint the chapel with the *Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist*.[79] To obtain patronage rights at Santa Maria Novella it evidently helped to have a good relationship with the confraternity.[80]

The Strozzi family had some thirty-six households in the Santa Maria Novella quarter in the last quarter of the fourteenth century and a chapel in its principal church. In the early fifteenth century Palla di Nofri degli Strozzi owned numerous properties around his palazzo adjacent to the Palazzo Tornabuoni, and in 1422 he added the Villa Petraia at Castello to his holdings, part of a series of land purchases made in the area to the west of Florence, in a

roughly triangular area between Castello, Prato, and Empoli. The Strozzi also owned the Villa I Rinieri, down the hill from La Petraia, in the early fifteenth century.[81] William Kent has analysed the complex land deals in which Palla absolved his tax debts to the local *gonfalone* by ceding to Benedetto Toschi, its administrator, certain rights over part of his estate and income.[82] In this way Toschi took control of Petraia and proceeds from this deal went towards the construction of the cloister of Santa Trinita, situated in the southern part of the Santa Maria Novella quarter. Fragmentary mural painting by Uccello of stories of Saint Francis remain in the church, although the patron is unknown.[83] However, Uccello had good reason to be familiar with the Strozzi Chapel in the church, since Ghiberti was involved in its decoration.[84] Furthermore, Palla Strozzi was one of three executive committee members elected by the Merchants' Guild to oversee the production of Ghiberti's first set of bronze doors for the Baptistery, on which commission Uccello probably also worked while he was in Ghiberti's shop.[85]

Palla Strozzi's son-in-law was Giovanni Rucellai, the proud owner of work by Uccello, as mentioned in Chapter 1. He built his palazzo on the corner of Via della Vigna Nuova and Via dei Palchetti in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, just west of Strozzi's palazzo. In 1427 most of the twenty-three Rucellai households in Florence were to be found in the Lion Rosso district of the quarter, and the family had a chapel on the right of the transept of the quarter's principal church. Rucellai were patrons of the church and also members of its order. Fra Andrea Rucellai, a distant relative of Giovanni, was at one time the *gubernator* of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr and other members of the family had dealings with the confraternity, for example, in paying for masses for the dead.[86] Giovanni Rucellai owned the Villa Quaracchi (or Villa Rucellai) near the road to Pistoia, to the west of Castello, and his family collectively owned the *spedale* in the countryside at Osmannoro, dedicated to Saint Bernard.[87] Giovanni Rucellai initially planned to build his tomb in Santa Maria Novella, but eventually decided in favour of the local church of San Pancrazio.[88] Kent has also analysed the complex land ownership arrangement between Rucellai and Strozzi, which allowed Rucellai to pay for the façade of Santa Maria Novella using the income from properties formerly owned by Strozzi. Rucellai had to win the patronage rights to the façade of the church from Turino di Baldese's heirs, since Turino had left an endowment for the principal door of the facade in a codicil to his will in the fourteenth century. Rucellai gave the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr the rights to use the Strozzi-Rucellai land to this end.[89] In such complex and potentially divisive arrangements the confraternity may have served to keep the negotiation of patronage at arms-length from the convent of Santa Maria Novella. As Wilson has observed, the confraternity was perhaps also 'helping the friars sidestep the delicate issue of material ownership by a mendicant order.'[90]

Another chapel in Santa Trinita belonged to the Bartolini family, who owned Uccello's *Battle* paintings in the fifteenth century. Lionardo di Bartolomeo Bartolini, the probable patron, kept the works in his home just south of the Palazzo Strozzi. He purchased the Villa Le Pergole at Quinto, not far from Il Vivaio in Castello, in the mid-fifteenth century.[91] It was here that his sons temporarily removed the paintings, before they were seized on Lorenzo de' Medici's orders around 1484.[92]

The patronage of a number of wealthy families in the Santa Maria Novella quarter developed along geographic lines. Patronage of the arts began at home, with the commissioning of painted furniture, devotional and secular panel and mural paintings, and street tabernacles. It often extended to the local church where chapels provided space to commemorate the family's dead, and depending on a family's means, they might acquire patronage rights at the principal church in the quarter, to achieve greater prominence. In addition, wealthy families owned or supported *spedali* and street tabernacles in the countryside, on or near their own properties there. Artistic patronage at sites such as these provided visual markers of an individual, family, or corporate presence in the area. The social bonds established through patronage in Florence were strengthened in the countryside by the fact that the same institutions, religious orders, and confraternities that families supported in town were often active in the surrounding countryside also.

The Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr played a significant role in the facilitation and administration of patronage in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, with documented links to numerous prominent families of the quarter and the outlying settlement of Castello. Uccello encountered this network early in his life, initially to his disadvantage, since the Spedale di Sant'Antonio did not pay him what it owed for twenty years. However, having established a connection with the area of Castello, it seems he maintained it, and later gained a commission in town from the Carnesecchi family, who possibly knew his work around Castello, and may have known him personally through a bond of marriage between their family and his.

However, Uccello's career developed far beyond the level of the Santa Maria Novella quarter, important though it was for his beginnings, and as it would remain for the rest of his life as his neighbourhood. He eventually worked for clients all over Florence. South of the Arno he worked for the Lanfredini and, according to Vasari, the Pugliese. In the east of Florence he worked for the Peruzzi, who lived in the Santa Croce area, and in the north of the city he worked for the Confraternity of the Purification at the Spedale di San Matteo. An important stage in the development of Uccello's career was his trip to Venice in 1425.

In 1424 the mosaicist at San Marco in Venice, Jacopo della Chiesa, died leaving unfinished the refacement of the upper level of the church that had been damaged in a fire in 1419. After

unsuccessful efforts to recall one of its former masters who had left the Veneto, the Venetian Senate looked to Florence for a replacement.[93] The choice of Uccello may have been suggested by Ghiberti, who travelled to Venice in October 1424 in the entourage of the Florentine ambassador Palla Strozzi. Together with Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, Strozzi was sent to Venice to try to secure an urgently needed alliance with the city against Milan. Ghiberti may have given advice on design problems faced by the Venetian authorities as a diplomatic gift from the Florentine embassy, and even provided designs for sculpture during his stay.[94] He was in a position to offer advice on mosaics, since they were made in relation to work by his shop.[95] Although there is no evidence that Uccello had experience in making mosaics at this time, it was not unusual for fifteenth-century Florentine artists to work in a variety of related media. Alesso Baldovinetti, for example, painted panels and mural paintings, made designs for intarsia, made and repaired mosaics, and designed and painted stained glass windows.[96]

Uccello's work as a mosaicist in Venice has been regarded as a turning point in the development of that artform in the city, although only one documented work is known and that has been lost.[97] It is probably Uccello's presence at San Marco that marks a significant moment in the development of the art in the city, as the first of a number of famous Florentine and local artists who raised its profile, rather than the influence of Uccello's work on the mosaics subsequently made there *per se*. The idea of a meeting of the Florentine Renaissance style of Uccello's background, with its nascent perspectival developments, and the art of the northern Italian courts and Byzantine influences in Venice is tantalising, the more so because no surviving work in Venice can be attributed to Uccello with certainty. The 1432 letter from the Operai of the Duomo in Florence mentioned a figure of Saint Peter by Uccello on the façade of San Marco.[98] It has since been replaced by another mosaic. However, Salmi identified a depiction of it on the far left of Gentile Bellini's painting of the façade of San Marco in his *Procession in San Marco Piazza* (Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice), showing a robed figure holding a book in one hand and a key in the other.[99] The *Saint Peter* seems to have been a relatively modest work, albeit prominently located.

The interior of San Marco is covered with mosaics of biblical figures and narratives against an extensive gold background, in the Byzantine style. In the upper registers and vaults there are geometric figures of spirals and rectilinear patterns. Salmi noted, in general terms, that some spiral designs are close to details of Uccello's windows in the Duomo in Florence, and are broadly comparable with details of his *Battle* paintings.[100] A more specific analysis reveals in clearer terms the basis for the attribution to Uccello of the designs for some mosaics and *pavimenti* in San Marco. The *Wheel with Ribbon* in the lunette of the fifth cupola in the atrium has in its centre a small design of two interlaced, star-shaped ribbons, very

similar to motifs in the decorative border of Uccello's *Resurrection* window. The principal form of the mosaic is a ribbon (or ribbons) interlaced around the spokes of a wheel, showing the front and the back of the ribbon as it passes around the wheel. This is strongly reminiscent of Vasari's description of drawings by Uccello showing 'shavings interlaced around sticks, which could be seen from behind and in front' ('*bruccioli in su i bastoni, che scortassero, perché si vedessi il didrento e 'l difuori*').[101] This correspondence is particularly significant because Vasari seems not to have known about Uccello's work in Venice, since he did not mention it in his *Vite*. The correspondence between his description of drawings by Uccello and the mosaic, not noted by Salmi, seems too close to be an accident, lending credibility to the attribution of the mosaic to Uccello. He may have taken drawings he made in Venice back to Florence or made similar, new ones there, where Vasari saw them.

The *Stellated Dodecahedron* in the floor below the Door of Saint Peter is one of the most impressive pieces of stonework in San Marco. This *pavimento* under the current main exit from the interior is walked over by thousands of visitors daily. Its humble position does not necessarily reflect the status of its designer. As Salmi noted, the representation of the polyhedron is reminiscent of the perspective drawing *Polyhedron with Seventy-Two Faces and Points* (Musée du Louvre, Paris) attributed to Uccello on the basis of Vasari's description of drawings by Uccello showing 'spheres of seventy-two faces and points' ('*palle a 72 facce a punte di diamanti*').[102] Unfortunately, Vasari did not mention drawings by Uccello showing dodecahedra, stellated (with points) or otherwise. While the earliest written description of a stellated dodecahedron may be Kepler's *Harmonices mundi* of 1619, it is not particularly difficult to draw one. No precise measurement or complex geometry is required if the figure is shown with one pentagram face on, as it is in the San Marco *pavimento*. Uccello was certainly capable of designing the *Stellated Dodecahedron*, and the meandering vine motifs in the mosaic border around the stonework are sufficiently similar to the pattern in the border of his *Resurrection* window in the Duomo in Florence to make the attribution to him plausible, and by extension an almost identical *pavimento* inside San Marco. Furthermore, the other *pavimento* of a stellated dodecahedron inside the church is surrounded by a circle of arrowhead shapes, very similar to Uccello's design for the decoration on the shield carried by the foot soldier at the far left of the *Battle* painting in Paris.

Plato recognised that there are only five regular solids, which are, in order of complexity: the tetrahedron, the octahedron, the icosahedron, the cube, and the dodecahedron. He equated God's invention of these figures with the creation of the universe, attributing the elements of fire, air, water, and earth to the first four regular solids, respectively.[103] The stellated dodecahedra at San Marco may thus refer to God's creation in its most developed form or totality.

A number of other figures and architectural designs in the mosaics inside San Marco, notably, the sophisticated classical buildings in the *Stories of the Virgin* in the Mascoli Chapel, have been attributed to Uccello or his influence, with decreasing regularity over the twentieth century.[104] In 1926 Longhi accepted Uccello's authorship of the Mascoli Chapel *Visitation*, but doubted whether Uccello's stay in Venice could have had a profound impact on local artists since Masaccio's most important developments in perspective occurred in Florence after Uccello had left.[105] In 1961 Fiocco mused that while Uccello may have renewed the school of mosaic making in Venice, his style was too abstract and in opposition to the prevailing culture to leave a mark on those who followed.[106] Be that as it may, Uccello's designs for mosaics and stonework in Venice followed precedents in Orsanmichele and San Lorenzo that are attributable, more or less directly, to Brunelleschi, as Salmi suggested.[107] The Florentine sources for the development of sophisticated geometry and perspective are older than Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel and *Trinity* paintings. Thus, Uccello's work in Venice may have been geographically but not conceptually removed from the development of perspective in Florence during his time in Venice, and the Venetian authorities' experiment with the Florentine artist seems to have been judged a success, given their employment of Castagno shortly thereafter.

Notes for Chapter 2

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[1] Boskovits, 2002a, pp. 53, 60.

[2] Berti, 2002, pp. 46–50. Berti proposed that Masaccio and his brother Scheggia trained in Lorenzo di Bicci's workshop, attributing to Masaccio a number of works that had previously been attributed to Lorenzo di Bicci.

[3] Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002a, pp. 41–42.

[4] Padoa Rizzo, 2002, pp. 247–261; Bernacchioni, 2002, pp. 264–265.

[5] The most important recent research into Uccello's early career has been that of Padoa Rizzo (1990, 1991).

[6] ASF, Catasto, 475, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 483, in Mather, 1948, p. 62.

[7] Wright, 1976, vol. II, p. 472, citing ASF, CRSGF, 102, 498, fol. 84. An early sixteenth-century reference to the property by the confraternity described it as 22.5 *staiora* including a house for the landlord, with its southern and eastern boundaries as the road leading to Prato and the road leading to the church of San Michele, respectively. Mannini, 1984, p. 142. A late sixteenth-century map of the area made by the Guelf Party shows that these roads correspond closely to the present day Via Reginaldo Giuliano and Via della Querciola, the latter also bearing the name given to the property: 'La Querciola'.

[8] Colnaghi (1986, p. 181) noted that Michele di Giovanni del Tria was born in 1369, lived near Santa Maria Novella, and was inscribed in the Confraternity of Saint Luke in 1400, but was not able to attribute any work to him securely. Hueck (1990, p. 35 n. 14) noted that he painted black letters in the Chiostrino dei Morti, and painted and gilded angels and painted a crucifix for the confraternity in the late fourteenth century.

[9] ASF, CRSGF, 102, 295, Entrata e Uscita, 1402–1414, fol. 212: *'mccccxiij […] adi iij da agosto*/ [left column] *a michele dj giovannj djpintore e sp[e]dalingho dello spe/dale di sa[n]to giovannj e dj sa[n]to antonio dachastello f[iorin]j* [crossed out]/ *f[iorin]j dugiento d['or]o p[er] parte di f[iorin]j treciento quindjci iqalj d[enar]j/ il detto spedale debe avere della detta conpagnia p[er] 1°/ podere coperato p[er] la detta conpagnia daldetto spedale/ con casa da signiore e dalavoratore eterra vigniata e/ lavorata posta nelpopolo di sa[n]to michele inchastello sichome/ sidjore daldetto michele vendiente p[er]lo detto spedale e p[er]lo/ detto michele espedale sidanno epaghano* [crossed out] *a bartolo/meo di lucha banchetty ebe p[er] la co[n]pagnia ep[er] me da fra/nciescho e nicholo di messer simone tornabuonj cioe idetty/ f[iorin]j dugiento posti ali[br]o a ca 175 q[u]esti sono della soma di f[iorin]j 400* [right column] *f[iorin]j cc - d['or]o*/ [left column] *a michele di giovannj espedalingho sop[r]adetto detto dj/ f[iorin]j cinqa[n]ta d['or]o iqalj d[enar]j ebe cotatj e sugiello porto edetto/ p[er] parte deldetto podere conperato detto di sop[r]a posti ali[br]o a ca 175* [right column] *f[iorin]j L - d['or]o* [left column] *soma q[u]esta f[iorin]j cclvj […] xxxiiij s[oldi] xiiij d[enar]j vj'*. I am grateful to Dr Lorenza Melli for help interpreting the document. Further references to the acquisition are found in ASF, CRSGF, 102, 321, Provisione, Deliberazione e Partiti, 1402–1414, fols 101, 103.

[10] Meersseman, 1951, pp. 51–196, especially pp. 62–66 for Florence. Meersseman, 1948, pp. 135–136. Lay confraternities dedicated to the Virgin were also established, either by Saint Peter Martyr or under

his influence, in numerous other Italian cities. On the confraternity at Santa Maria Novella, see: Wilson, 1992, pp. 109–118; Henderson, 1994, in many places, but especially pp. 170–175, 469–470; and Betka's 2001 PhD thesis, which discusses the confraternity at numerous points, particularly in relation to its Marian devotion.

[11] Wilson, 1992, pp. 109–118, 201–206.

[12] ASF, Catasto, 53, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 711v.: '*Uno podere a lolmo a chastello in sulla strada. popolo di sa/ michele lavora giovanni di domenicho..chasa dalavo/ratore che daprimo via dasechondo chiassolino da 1/3/ vrbano bartolini dal1/4 il detto./ Uno pezzo di terra a stra della detto popolo via da sechondo/ lachonpagnia dellolalde di santa maria novella da terzo/ gharuccio dipagholo gherucci dal 1/4 sudi [?] g° horlandini/ e ser tomaso chalandrinj*'; fol. 716: '*debitory didiserzione e debitori vari/ […] Michele dj g° deltria spedalingho danostro spedale dachastello de/be dare p[er]lo detto spedale iqalj ebisigniato per richop[r]ire e a/chonciare ildetto spedale nove dicharianarchj p[er]che apiu debitj/ ali[br]o 60 f[iorin]j54*'. Deo Beccuti's 1431 *portata* specified that he owned land adjacent to the 'confraternity of the spedale' in the popolo of San Michele in Castello: ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 549.

[13] ASF, Catasto, 380, fol. 550v.: '*…e mi debitore di f[iorin]j 54 piu che/ 20 anj fa a li[br]o 60*'.

[14] Henderson, 1994, pp. 171–175.

[15] ASF, CRSGF, 102, 298, Entrata e Uscita, 1455–1463. I am grateful to Dr Ursula Betka for suggesting this interpretation of the acronym.

[16] Carocci, 1906–1907, vol. I, p. 277.

[17] Mannini, 1984, p. 140. I am grateful to Francesca Fiorelli of the Soprintendenza Beni Artistici e Storici di Firenze, Pistoia e Prato, for confirming that no detached painting from the tabernacle is in storage at the Soprintendenza.

[18] According to Orlandi (1955, vol. II, p. 343 n. 31), the confraternity already owned the *spedale* by 1410, although he did not specify on what evidence this was based; (vol. II, p. 583) it transferred ownership of the *spedale* to Santa Maria Novella in 1452; (vol. II, pp. 342–343) and Fra Gabriele di Domenico di Niccolò Narucci conceded the *spedale* back to the confraternity in 1491. A 1675 copy of a 1525 record of the confraternity's property made for tax purposes (ASF, CRSGF, 102, 323, Entratto delle Case, fols 25v.–26v.) includes the *spedale* as an asset of the confraternity. In 1534 the *spedale* was sold with its farm by the confraternity to Cosimo I de' Medici, who had rented it from them since 1516. From 1486 it had been rented to a Bernardo di Stoldo Rinieri and from 1494, to a Cristofano di Bernardo Rinieri (Wright, 1976, vol. II, pp. 472–473). The Medici paid the local church of San Michele the *decima* (wine tax) due on the property from the middle of the sixteenth century until the nineteenth (ASMC, Decimario della Chiesa di San Michele a Castello, fol. 33).

[19] Carocci (1906–1907, vol. I, p. 277) named a Felice di Deo del Beccuto as the vendor in 1574. However, this may have been a mistake for Felice di Ruberto, who appears in the del Beccuto genealogy described in Chapter 1, with the dates 1537–1620.

[20] It is not possible to trace any payments made to Uccello by the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr after 1433, since the account books (*entrata - uscita*) are missing from 1428 to 1453, in the sources at ASF, CRSGF, 102.

[21] ASF, CRSGF, 102, 295, fol. 214.

[22] This may have been as an assistant, although it need not be entirely excluded that it was an independent artistic commission, since there are documented cases of artists in Florence accepting commissions before becoming masters, sometimes while working in another master's shop. On this subject, see: Hueck, 1972, p. 117. Uccello would presumably have begun to assume increasing independence as an artist prior to matriculating into the Doctors and Apothecaries' Guild in 1415.

[23] Parronchi, 1998, pp. 44–47. The inscription at the base of the cross reads: '*M˚CCCC˚XIII˚ ♦/ QUESTO ♦ CROCIFISO ♦ AFATO ♦ FAR ♦ S[ER] BARTOL[…]*'. Uccello was most likely known to a ser Bartolo, the one for whom Deo Beccuti submitted Uccello's 1427 *portata*, as discussed in the Chapter 1. Coincidentally, this ser Bartolo Giannini had been a Capitano of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr in 1413 (ASF, CRSGF, 102, 295, fol. 214). However, the remains of the patron's name on the third line of the inscription does not appear to include the name 'Giannini'. The ex-church of S. Jacopo and its artworks, including the *Crucifix*, were acquired by the società Faenza Service s.p.a. in the late 1990s (Bei, 2005, p. 12). From 1998 to 2004 the *Crucifix* was housed in the Director's office of the Museo di San Marco, Florence, while San Jacopo was restored.

[24] Parronchi, 1998, pp. 44, 47 n. 2.

[25] The oratory at Bagnolo is mentioned as belonging to the order based at San Jacopo in ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, Visita Priorale, vol. II, fol. 186: '…*Oratorio dedicato a S. Antonio/ Abate poco distante da l*ᵃ *Città di Prato, e dalla Strada/ Maestra in Riva di fiume Bagnolo posto nel popolo/ della V. chiesa prevania di S. Giovanni decollato comune di/ Monte Murlo, Potesteria di Campi…*'. I am grateful to Dr Ludovica Sebregondi (personal communication, 6 Nov. 2004) for pointing out that the Oratorio di Sant'Antonio a Bagnolo was located in the *potesteria* of Campi, in the *popolo* of San Giovanni Decollato di Monte Murlo, and belonged to the order based at San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini, as is also recorded in: ASF, CRSGF, 132, 164, fol. 550. San Jacopo is mentioned as a neighbouring landlord of Deo Beccuti at Castello in 1427, in: ASF, Catasto, 53, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 712. The Church's archives record that it owned land in Castello in 1763–1764: ASF, CRSGF, 132, 95, Visita Priorale, vol. II, fol. 193.

[26] The *Crucifix* appears in quite a few of the innumerable surviving inventories of San Jacopo. Between 1766 and 1768 it was listed in the sacristy (ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, vol. II, fols 133–133v.). The inventories of 1763–1764, 1754, and 1722 provide similar descriptions (ASF, CRSGF, 132: 95, Visita Priorale, vol. II, fols 98, 93; 161, vol. III, fol. 530; and 298 (one bundle), [fol. 2v.], respectively). However, the inventory of 1696 lists only 'a crucifix above the sacristy bench painted on wood' ('*un crocifisso sopra il banci di sagrestia dipinto di legno*', ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, vol. I, fol. 22v.). The inventory did not provide any date, attribution or any other information that might help to identify this as the work in question. However, its location in the sacristy makes the identification plausible because the 1722 inventory no longer listed a crucifix above the bench (ASF, CRSGF, 132, 298 (one bundle) [fol. 3]. The only other cross listed in the sacristy was in a box, described as: 'a wooden cross finished in blue, and embellished with gold with a Crucifix painted in oil' ('*una Croce di legno usata tocca d'azzurro, e filettata d'oro con Crocifisso dipinto a olio*'), which shows that it was not the *Crucifix* in

question.). Presumably, the *Crucifix* above the bench was taken down and adapted to function as a tabernacle between 1696 and 1722. Two earlier inventories, one of 1657 and another of 1651–1654, also list a crucifix over the bench in the sacristy (For the 1657 inventory: ASF, CRSGF, 132, 161, vol. II [fol. 27v.]; and for the 1651–1654 inventory: Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz, Biblioteca, 22/3, *Cabrero della Commenda in S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini fatta dall. Illmo Sig.^{r} Commendatore f. Bartolomeo Galilei*, 1651–1654, [fol. 54]).

The documents for the provenance of the *Crucifix* presented here were found and transcribed by this author in late 2003, following the lead published by Parronchi. Subsequently, Dr Ludovica Sebregondi's research on the same topic was brought to my attention. I am grateful to Dr Sebregondi for discussing her work on this subject (personal communication, 5 Nov. 2004).

[27] Sebregondi (2005, pp. 149–178) has since published transcriptions of three of the inventories specified in the note above (1657, 1696, and 1766–1768), together with others mentioning either the *Crucifix* dated 1413, or a crucifix above the bench in the sacristy, the earliest of the latter dating to 1588.

[28] Pudelko, 1934, pp. 250–253.

[29] Mannini, 1984, p. 150.

[30] Guarnieri, 1987, p. 136–137. The lost inscription read: '*ANNO DOMINI MCCCCXVI TABERNACULUM A PAULU UCCELLO DEPICTUM DINOTIUS ET LUCAS ALBERTUS DE LIPPIS RESTAUU RAVERUNT ANNO DOMINI MDCCXVI DIE VIII OCTOBRIS*'. For further discussion of the tabernacle, see: Mannini, 1984, p. 150.

[31] For the 1708 reference: ASF, CRSPL, Moreniana Misc. 99–4, fol. 47; for the 1745 reference: ASF, CRSPL, 1189:1, fols 11, 64. These references were kindly brought to my attention by Alana O'Brien, personal communication, 20 Mar. 2004.

[32] Padoa Rizzo, 1990, pp. 57–58. A debt owed to Deo Beccuti by a Luigi Bartoli is recorded in Deo Beccuti's 1433 *campione*: ASF, Catasto, 498, microfilm reel 1234, fol. 188.

[33] For the locations of Spedale di Sant'Antonio and the Del Lippi tabernacle, see also: Mannini, 1984, pp. 142, 146, 150.

[34] Boskovits (1968, p. 59) included the paintings as an addendum to a list of works by the Master of Santa Verdiana.

[35] Deimling, 2000, pp. 111–143, especially p. 143.

[36] Boskovits, 1975, p. 419.

[37] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 22.

[38] Parronchi (1998, pp. 44–46) also noted differences in the handling of perspective between the *sinopie* and the paint layers suggestive of the work of different artists.

[39] On this work, see: Boskovits, 1975, p. 303 and fig. 260.

[40] Boskovits, 1990, pp. 140–143.

[41] Berti, 1961, p. 298. The bird is difficult to see in the reproduction Berti published.

[42] Kanter, 2005, pp. 22–24. The attribution of the Rotterdam *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Two Angels* to the young Angelico was proposed by Roberto Longhi in 1928, and since Miklós Boskovits' endorsement in 1976 it has been routinely accepted.

[43] Kanter, 2005, pp. 22–24.

[44] Pudelko, 1935a, pp. 72–75 n. 8. The Angels' pastel robes in the Oxford *Annunciation* are reminiscent of Angelico's delicate palette, the procession of musical Angels is reminiscent of the ones in the central panel of Angelico's San Domenico predella in the National Gallery, London, and Gabriel's magic carpet ride on tipped-up whisps of cloud is paralleled in a number of Angelico's works, such as the two *Adoring Angels* in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin, although this motif originates in works of Lorenzo Monaco.

[45] Albertini, 1972, [p. 6].

[46] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 63–64: 1568 ed.

[47] Borghini, 1967, p. 309.

[48] Parronchi, 1964a, pp. 182–192. The *Annunciation* described by Vasari as a fresco may actually have been painted on panel and saved during the demolition of the chapel, or perhaps this is an early instance of the relocation of a fresco. Other possibilities include that writers after the demolition of the chapel mistook an *Annunciation* in the church by another artist for Uccello's version, or indeed, that another version by Uccello was in the church. Parronchi identified Uccello's *Annunciation* with the painting from the Goldmann Collection in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, usually attributed to Masolino. While Uccello's *Original Sin* scene in the Chiostro Verde shows that his style was sometimes very close to Masolino's, there is no feature of the Goldmann *Annunciation* that is distinctly Uccelloesque and Parronchi's suggestion has not been accepted.

[49] Joannides, 1993, p. 351; Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002b, pp. 81–86; Bellucci, Frosinini and Pani, 2002, p. 154.

[50] The date of Paolo di Berto's death is recorded as 4 February 1428 (when converted to the modern calendar) in a fifteenth-century document at ASF, CRSGF, 102 Appendice, 67, fol. 43: '*Rede d[i] paolo d[i] berto carnesechi dono dare f[iorin]j 5 lanno p[er] i fino/ i dieci annj p[er] uno rinovali […et?] pietaza p[…]ldecto paolo mori ad[i] 4 d[i] febraio 1427.*' Parronchi (1964a, p. 182) gave the date of Paolo Carnesecchi's death as 6 February 1427 without specifying his precise source, although he described most of the archival material from Santa Maria Maggiore referring to the Carnesecchi chapel as dating from the seventeenth century.

[51] Herlihy, Burr Litchfield, Molho, and Barducci (eds), 2002, on-line source, search by 'Carnesecchi'. His offices included Buonuomo, Gonfaloniere di Compagnia, Priore, and Gonfaloniere di Giustizia. For his offices in the Guelf Party, see: Zervas, 1987, pp. 262, 264, 266, 270, 282, 295.

[52] Joannides, 1993, p. 350.

[53] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 63–64: 1568 ed.

[54] Weissman, 1982, p. 9.

[55] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 8.

[56] The reference to Deo Beccuti's wife is in: ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated. The Tratte (Herlihy, Burr Litchfield, Molho, and Barducci (eds), 2002, on-line source, search by 'Carnesecchi') record three members of the Carnesecchi family with the name Zanobi: Zanobi di Berto, Zanobi di Simone, and Zanobi di Francesco. Further evidence of contact between Deo Beccuti and the Carnesecchi family is the debt of four florins recorded owing by Deo Beccuti to 'bertto carnesechi' in Deo's 1433 *campione*, at: ASF, Catasto, 498, San Giovanni Drago, microfilm reel 1234, fol. 188.

[57] Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002b, p. 86.

[58] For this suggestion, see: Roccasecca, 1997, p. 126.

[59] Wilson, 1992, p. 110.

[60] Only Parronchi (1974, p. 1) has mentioned Castello specifically, in his monograph: '*conferma evidente dell'inizio precocissimo della sua attività*' and in his article on the San Jacopo *Crucifix* (1998, pp. 44–47).

[61] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 195: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[62] Belle (1971, pp. 92–96) discussed the issue in relation to the reasons for the Strozzi family's investments in property.

[63] Lightbown, 1978, vol. I, pp. 129, 168.

[64] Wright, 1976, vol. I, p. 14. The Villa was acquired by Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici in 1477 on the advice of Lorenzo Il Magnifico. Amanda Lillie (2000, pp. 195–214) has discussed the practice of wealthy Florentine families acquiring rural properties distinguished by their previous owners or historic associations. For the provenances of Botticelli's paintings, see: Lightbown, 1978, vol. II, pp. 51–52, 64. For the provenance of Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, see: Pomilio and Ottino della Chiesa, 1967, p. 92, where it is stated that the work was transferred from the Medici gallery at the Uffizi to the villa at Castello after 1753, before being returned to the Uffizi in 1794.

[65] Guarnieri, 1987, pp. 156–157. The Guidacci and Da Verrazzano family coats of arms are still over the entrance to the tabernacle.

[66] Weissman, 1982, pp. 7–8. Contributing to the phenomenon of the mirroring of social links in the city and the country was the practice of thirteenth-century immigrants to Florence from the countryside settling in the area of the city closest to their place of origin, and the difficulty of finding housing and employment in the city, which encouraged the choice of places to live based on pre-existing friendship or kinship ties.

[67] For the ownership histories of the principal *palazzi* in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, see: Ginori Lisci, 1985, vol. II, pp. 115–322.

[68] For details of Tornabuoni, Strozzi and Carnesecchi families' land ownership in Castello in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see: Carocci, 1906–1907, vol. I, pp. 277–289; and Wright, 1976, vol. II, pp. 474–480.

[69] Carocci, 1906–1907, vol. I, p. 278.

[70] Lensi Orlandi, 1978, vol. I, *Di qua d'Arno*, pp. 22, 26.

[71] ASF, CRSGF, 102 Appendice, 67, fol. 43.

[72] Zervas, 1987, p. 312.

[73] Gordon, 2003, pp. 64–65.

[74] For the location of the Carnesecchi property, see: Mannini, 1984, p. 150. Perhaps Bernardo Carnesecchi also commissioned the *Crucifixion* by Giovanni di Francesco del Cervelliera da Rovenzzano in the chapel on the left of the main altar in Santa Maria Maggiore. For a brief discussion of the work, see: Ferro, 1990, p. 54. Paatz and Paatz, 1952–1955, vol. IV, pp. 627–628, 632. The painting may be contemporary with the tabernacle for the sacraments on the left wall of the chapel made in 1449, which bears the arms of the Carnesecchi family, and Bernardo Carnesecchi's tombstone, dated 1449, recorded in the chapel in the eighteenth century, but since lost. A date of 1449 for the *Crucifixion* is in keeping with the dates of Giovanni di Francesco's activity, as his securely attributed works date from the 1450s. For a recent summary of Giovanni di Francesco's career, see: Christiansen and Ceriana, 2005, pp. 283–284. Either the Carnesecchi or Boni families commissioned Masolino's *Virgin and Child* (Kunsthalle, Bremen) in 1423, which bears the arms of the two families, presumably commissioned for a wedding.

[75] Herlihy, Klapisch-Zuber, Burr Litchfield, and Molho (eds), 2002, on-line source, 'List of the wealthiest households arranged by wealth' link. For Francesco's role in the Guelf Party, see: Zervas, 1987, pp. 69, 272, 304.

[76] For the operai of Santa Maria Novaella, see: Orlandi, 1955, vol. II, pp. 499–501. For Niccolò Tornabuoni's property, see: ASF, Catasto, 53, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 712.

[77] Bayley, 1961, p. 107.

[78] For the commune's acquisition of the property, see: Lensi Orlandi, 1978, vol. I, *Di Qua d'Arno*, p. 25. For the Tornabuoni family's property holdings in the area, see: Simons, 1985, vol. I, pp. 173–174.

[79] Simons (1985, vol. I, Chapter 5, pp. 190–233) provided a detailed study of the associations between the Tornaquinci and Tornabuoni families, Santa Maria Novella, and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr.

[80] Henderson (1994, pp. 171–175) described the growing importance that the confraternity's role accepting bequests had on the nature of its activities over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and its relationship with the convent. Up to 93 per cent of the confraternity's income went to the convent for masses and other commemorative services for the dead.

[81] Lensi Orlandi, 1978, vol. I, *Di qua d'Arno*, p. 19.

[82] Kent, 1981, p. 48.

[83] The work is attributed to Uccello in sixteenth-century sources: Albertini, 1972, [p. 8]; Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 63: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[84] Belle, 1972, pp. 34, 92–96, 183–226.

[85] Belle, 1972, pp. 189–190.

[86] Kent, 1977, p. 282 n. 210.

[87] Kent, 1977, pp. 232–237; Kent, 1981, p. 62.

[88] Kent, 1981, pp. 57–61.

[89] Kent, 1981, p. 49, 60–61 n. 7. See also: Hatfield, 2004, pp. 86, 89–93, 95–96, 98.

[90] Wilson, 1992, p. 110.

[91] Lensi Orlandi, 1978, vol. I, *Di qua d'Arno*, p. 24.

[92] Merisalo, 1999, pp. XVI, 56; Caglioti, 2000, vol. I, pp. 266–267; Caglioti, 2001, pp. 45–46.

[93] Saccardo, 1896, pp. 32–33; Merkel, 1994, p. 313.

[94] Haines, 2001, pp. 57–63.

[95] Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess (1956, p. 404) cited a document in the ASF referring to mosaics in the niche for the sculpture of *Saint John the Baptist* at Orsanmichele.

[96] Wedgwood Kennedy, 1938, pp. 60–64, and pp. 236–238 for the transcription of Baldovinetti's *Ricordi*.

[97] Merkel, 1994, p. 313.

[98] Poggi, 1988, vol. I, p. 147, doc. 773.

[99] Salmi, 1950, pp. 22–23.

[100] Salmi, 1977, p. 373.

[101] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 63: 1550 ed.

[102] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 62: 1568 ed.

[103] Emmer, 1982, pp. 277–278, 280–281.

[104] A recent author to support the idea of Uccello's involvement in designing the Mascoli Chapel mosaics is Bertelli (1994, pp. 386–391), who attributed the three *tondi* in the vault, showing the Virgin and Child, Daniel, and Isaiah, respectively, and perhaps some features of the *Death of the Virgin* to Uccello before 1430, the rest of the mosaics he attributed to Vecchietta, Giambono and Andrea del Castagno.

[105] Longhi, 1926, p. 129.

[106] Fiocco, 1961, pp. 153–154.

[107] Salmi, 1977, pp. 373–374.

3

The 1430s: *'Buono Componitore e Vario'*

Uccello returned to Florence from Venice sometime after 12 July 1427, when Deo Beccuti submitted Uccello's *portata* in his absence, but it is not known precisely when he returned, where he settled, whether he lived alone or with others, or why he returned at this time.[1] The original locations of his paintings datable to the 1430s, where they are known, suggest he worked mainly in Florence, with sojourns in Prato and Bologna.[2] Since there is no mention of workshop premises in his *portate* of the early 1430s, he might have worked on small commissions from home, and executed mural paintings in his patrons' homes and in their chapels, churches, and convents.

Uccello's erstwhile collaborators Masaccio and Masolino no longer dominated Florentine art as they once had; Masaccio died in Rome in 1428, and Masolino is not documented in the city after 1429. Yet, the artistic situation in Florence did not change radically, so much as continue to evolve. Stylistic evidence suggests Uccello resumed contact with Ghiberti's shop, though in what capacity is uncertain, and other artists carried on the development of Masaccio's and Masolino's styles. In 1433 Ghiberti made the marble frame for Fra Angelico's Linaiuoli altarpiece (Museo di San Marco, Florence), the painting exhibits the influence of Masaccio's monumentality and Masolino's refined, linear style. Fra Filippo Lippi's earliest works date from this period, such as the *Rules of the Carmelite Order* (Museo di Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence) showing the influence of Masaccio's rugged, sculptural style. Domenico Veneziano emerged as a leading artist in Florence in the 1430s, initially inspired by Uccello's geometric style, and in 1439 Piero della Francesca was attracted to the flourishing artistic scene in Florence, working as Domenico's assistant on mural paintings in the church of Sant'Egidio (now lost). Shortly after the artist's death, Cristoforo Landino described Uccello as a *'buon componitore e vario'* ('good composer of pictures and varied'), an apt description of the heterogeneous nature of Uccello's works from the 1430s, a decade marked by changes in taste in Florentine art.[3]

The *Creation Stories* in the leftmost bay of the east wall of the Chiostro Verde in the former Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (now the Museo di Santa Maria Novella) can be placed among the first works painted by Uccello following his return to the city from Venice. In the lunette with the *Creation of the Animals and Creation of Adam* the figures are gracefully modelled in a pale green colour with whitish highlights and brownish shadows, the animals and landscape are predominantly beige, the trees, grass, and flowers are coloured more or less naturally, while the sky is an eerie red. The black and white striped stringcourse around the lunette illusionistically mimics the polychrome masonry in the cloister, to the point of being in single-pioint perspective along the bottom. On the left of the lunette God the Father stands magisterially blessing an assortment of natural and mythical animals. Unfortunately, the paint surface has suffered losses even in modern times. An old photograph shows fish jumping out of the water at God the Father's feet, the 'lifelike fish with scales' ('*pesci con le squame vivissimi*') described by Vasari, which have since disappeared.[4] On the right, God the Father reaches forward to raise Adam from the ground.

Much of the lower half of the *Creation of Eve and the Original Sin* is destroyed, probably by flood damage. On the left, God the Father blesses Eve, who kneels before Him with her hands joined in worship. On the right, Adam and Eve stand on either side of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, around which the serpent is coiled, whose woman's head gazes implacably at Eve. The serpent's head bears a resemblance to the lamia created by God the Father at the upper left, a classical embodiment of unscrupulous curiosity.[5] One might wonder whether Uccello's composition implies an element of divine culpability in the Fall, through God's introduction of such unfettered curiosity into His creation.

The *Stories of Genesis* is one of the most enigmatic fifteenth-century mural painting cycles in Florence. This is due to the almost complete absence of contemporary documentation for the cycle, because of the generally poor state of preservation of the paintings, and—excepting those by Paolo Uccello—their unremarkable quality. These factors have seemingly acted as a disincentive to scholars to work on the problems of interpretation related to the cycle.[6] The cloister in which the cycle is located is called the Chiostro Verde (the 'Green Cloister') because of the colour of the green earth pigment (*terra verde*) that dominates the palette of the cycle. The practice of painting in an almost monochrome palette may be associated with economy on the part of patrons, but is also a matter of taste. *Terra verde* was an inexpensive pigment, readily available from Italian deposits, unlike some pigments such as lapis lazuli, which had to be imported at great cost. Monochrome painting is found on the reverses of some double-sided altarpieces, such as the *Pietà* on the reverse of Giovanni Toscani's *Virgin and Child with Saints Jerome and Catherine* triptych (Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti, Florence), where it can be assumed the patron did not wish to lavish

expense on costly pigments and the artist's labour for a subsidiary aspect of the work. It has also been suggested that *terra verde* painting imitates the appearance of bronze relief sculpture, and so lends its subject matter the authority of antiquity.[7] Traditionally, however, bronze sculpture might be gilded but not otherwise coloured.[8] Whereas, when Uccello and the other artists active in the Chiostro Verde used *terra verde* they included other colours, particularly red and orange, no doubt because these create a lively contrast with green. Monochrome painting is also a feature of many early Netherlandish illuminated manuscripts, and so it may well reflect simply a taste for an abstract mode of representation not related specifically to monumental painting.

The *terra verde* palette of the *Stories of Genesis* cycle is, nevertheless, appropriate for its context, since it does not compete with the architecture of the cloister, and acts as a prelude to the vibrantly coloured mural paintings inside the adjacent chapter house, executed by Andrea di Bonaiuto and other, yet to be identified, fourteenth-century artists. Masaccio's *Sagra* (now lost) was painted in *terra verde* in the cloister beside the church of Santa Maria del Carmine sometime after the early 1420s,[9] showing that its use at Santa Maria Novella was not an isolated instance in Florence in the early fifteenth century.

The construction of the Chiostro Verde is not well documented, but according to the historian Wood Brown it probably progressed from *c.* 1350 to *c.* 1360.[10] Similarly, the patronage of the project is not clear. The arms of the Benvenuti di Puccio family are found over the door leading from the Chiostro Verde into the vestibule before the Chiostro Grande, the opposite door to the Chiostro Grande, the door to the staircase that led to the dormitory, and the door leading into the church.[11] The arms of the Guidalotti family are found in the cloister in front of the chapter house, which it financed, while those of the Da Castiglioni are found on the columns on the eastern side of the cloister, and those of the Alberti are found on the columns on the southern and western sides.[12]

The document most frequently associated with the mural painting cycle in the Chiostro Verde is the 1348 will of the wealthy wool merchant Turino di Baldese, leaving the enormous sum of 1000 florins to paint the whole of the Old Testament in the nave of Santa Maria Novella.[13] There are, however, many unanswered questions surrounding the implementation of Turino's bequest. It is not known why there was a delay of about seventy years, why the cycle was painted in the cloister rather than inside the church, why only scenes from the Book of Genesis were chosen from the Old Testament to be depicted, or why artists of indifferent ability were employed for the bulk of the work given the large amount of money originally available. Nor is it clear why a distinguished artist—as Uccello was—received a commission to paint only the first and fourth bays of the east wall.[14]

The function of the Chiostro Verde is relatively clear. It was used by the friars for protection from the elements when moving between their buildings and the church. Access to the dormitory was originally through a door in the left side of the north wall of the cloister, until it was blocked off to allow veneration of a miraculous painting of the Virgin and Child above the door. A door in the northwest corner of the cloister leads to the vestibule before the Chiostro Grande. The old refectory, now housing museum exhibits from the convent, is along the west side of the cloister, adjoining the former Ubriachi Chapel. The door to the chapter house is in the middle of the north wall, the entrance to the Chiostrino dei Morti (a small cemetery) is a little further along the same wall, and access to the church is in the northeast corner of the cloister. Of course, the cloister also provided a secluded space conducive to quiet meditation. Yet the cloister was not solely for the use of the friars. The Dominican order reached out to the urban population of Florence, particularly through preaching, teaching, and diplomacy, and the Chiostro Verde and chapter house were the parts of the convent most accessible to the lay community.

The chapter house mural paintings comprise images of Dominican propaganda, including depictions of Saint Dominic, the founder of the order, Saint Thomas Aquinas, its pre-eminent theologian, and Saint Peter Martyr, its famous preacher. The Dominican iconography extends outside the chapter house into the cloister, where on the right side of the north wall the *Tree of the Dominican Order* was painted by an anonymous artist, possibly in the late fourteenth century, showing busts of important Dominicans in roundels on the Tree of Life on which Christ is crucified. The vaults around the cloister are also painted with numerous tondi containing busts of Dominicans.

William Hood interpreted the choice of an Old Testament subject for the nave of Santa Maria Novella during the middle of the fourteenth century (and its eventual realization in the Chiostro Verde) as an extension of the Dominicans' self-aggrandising representation found in the mural paintings in the chapter house, inasmuch as the subject recalled Old Testament cycles at important ecclesiastical sites in Rome such as Old Saint Peter's and San Paolo fuori le mura, and the revered Dominican church at Monte Cassino. Drawing attention to the presence of two popes and sessions of the Council of Florence at Santa Maria Novella in the first half of the fifteenth century, Hood described the Chiostro Verde as the setting for dramas of importance to Florence and beyond, and a '*locus classicus*' for self-representation in mural paintings in Florentine cloisters.[15] This interpretation, though, is somewhat at odds with the modest quality of the majority of the cycle's execution.

In significant contrast, Cecilia Frosinini saw in the subject matter of the patriarchs (on the south and west walls) a possible reference to the Dominicans, but in a more austere light, as mendicants identifying with the patriarchs who lived humbly 'in tents in the promised land

as travellers in a strange land', to paraphrase Hebrews Chapter 11: 9, with the restrained palette of the cycle complementing the message of austerity.[16] This interpretation, on the other hand, sits uneasily with the lavish use of marble cladding on the façade of the chapter house and the magnificence of the cloister's architecture as a whole. It is possible, however, that the subject matter is not essentially self-referential, and so does not presuppose a high degree of consistency with the ambience or program (such as it may be) of the cloister and the chapter house. Rather, in this semi-public location, it might contain a different kind of message relating to those who visited the convent from outside.

While Turino's probable patronage of the Chiostro Verde cycle has long been acknowledged in the literature, the relevance of his association with the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr to the cycle has not. In 1340, prior to writing his will, Turino served as one of the captains of the confraternity.[17] Over a hundred years later, in 1458, Turino's heirs were effectively living rent-free in a house belonging to the confraternity because of a dispute over the family's patronage rights at the church, an indication of the ongoing involvement of the confraternity in the administration of Turino's legacy.[18] As will be shown, the confraternity was involved in facilitating some of the most important patronage at Santa Maria Novella.

John Henderson has noted the growing significance of the confraternity's role in accepting bequests from its members and the wider community over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for its relationship with the convent. Up to ninety-three percent of the confraternity's income went to the convent for masses and other commemorative services for the dead. In 1441, when the confraternity had financial difficulties, the convent intervened to keep its assets secure.[19] The friars accommodated the confraternity with privileged places to meet. By the early fourteenth century it met in a chapel on the right side of the transept, but later yielded the chapel to the Bardi di Vernio family. Debate still surrounds the original location of Duccio's monumental *Virgin and Child with Angels* commissioned by the confraternity in 1285 (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi).[20] In any event, this magnificent work illustrates the confraternity's importance as a patron at Santa Maria Novella in its own right. Interestingly, the confraternity had a relatively high proportion of painters as members, who may have been attracted by the possibility of gaining commissions in one of the most important and richly patronized churches in Florence.[21] Artists were also useful to the confraternity for supervising its artistic commissions.[22] In addition to spaces to meet within the church, the friars accorded the confraternity's members burial privileges in the Chiostrino dei Morti, the cemetery beside the church where the friars were themselves buried.[23]

The confraternity was also involved in the administration of artistic patronage by wealthy individuals and families in Santa Maria Novella that was not directly related to its own activities. Giovanni Rucellai's patronage of Alberti's famous marble façade for the

church was implemented in the second half of the fifteenth century partly through the confraternity. Bill Kent has analysed the complex land ownership arrangements that allowed Rucellai to pay for the façade using income from properties formerly owned by his father-in-law Palla di Nofri degli Strozzi. In fact, Rucellai had to win the patronage rights to the façade of the church from Turino di Baldese's heirs, since Turino had also left an endowment for the principal door of the facade in a codicil to his will. Rucellai gave the confraternity the use of land as payment towards his project.[24] In such complex and potentially divisive arrangements, the confraternity may have served to keep the negotiation of patronage at arm's length from the convent. Furthermore, as Blake Wilson has observed, the confraternity was perhaps also 'helping the friars sidestep the delicate issue of material ownership by a mendicant order.'[25]

Another prestigious commission in the church that seems to have involved the confraternity was Ghirlandaio's mural painting cycle *Scenes from the Lives of the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist* in the chapel behind the high altar. In 1486 Giovanni di Francesco Tornabuoni was elected a captain of the confraternity, and in the same year he became provost, at which time he was also given patronage rights over the chapel.[26] To gain patronage rights at Santa Maria Novella it evidently helped to have good relations with its confraternity. The transparency of the friars' mutually beneficial arrangements with patrons in the confraternity was gently mocked by Boccaccio in the First Story of the Seventh Day of the *Decameron*:

> There was once in Florence, in the quarter of San Brancazio, a wool comber called Gianni Lotteringhi, a man more fortunate in his craft than wise in other things, for, savoring of the simpleton, he was very often made captain of the Laudsingers of Santa Maria Novella and had the governance of their confraternity, and he many a time had other little offices of the same kind, much swelling his sense of self-importance. These were assigned him because, being a man of substance, he gave many good victuals to the friars, and they, getting of him often, this one a pair of hose, that one a gown and another a scapulary, taught him in return many goodly orisons and gave him the paternoster in the vulgar tongue, the Song of Saint Alexis, the Lamentation of Saint Bernard, the Canticle of Madam Matilda and suchlike trumpery, all which he held very dear and kept very diligently for his soul's health.[27]

At this point it is worth considering how Boccaccio's cynicism might reflect on the idea of civil society in early Renaissance Florence, based on a notion of the existence of relationships of reciprocal obligation among its population. Since Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860, an idealised view of the Florentine state has existed of the city's republican government as a model of liberty for modern

societies, unoppressed by a dynastic tyranny, as were neighbouring city-states such as Milan.[28] Certainly, the greater distribution of power in Florence would have limited opportunities for individuals, families, or factions to abuse their authority, but this begs the question of whether exploitative (or uncivil) relationships may have been less conspicuous but just as pervasive. This is not really the place to try to assess how altruistic the motivations of Santa Maria Novella's donors were, or how genuine was the friars' commitment to honouring them. On the face of it, though, the ubiquitous coats of arms within the convent suggest that donors demanded lasting and unmistakable recognition of their giving. Any lack of faith that the terms of their support would be accepted and their generosity adequately recognised would have been well founded. The friars did not always fulfil their donors' wishes, as is indicated by Turino's unrealised bequests, the first for a mural painting cycle within the church, and a second for the construction of the church's principal door. Furthermore, as shall be explained below, it seems the convent's Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr did not always honour its debts to donors or artists either. The perhaps inevitable tension between giving and receiving in such transactions could lead to a breakdown of civil society, or a least place strains on it. In such cases two parties could retreat within their relationship towards a position of promoting their own interests. Boccaccio shows that donors' acts of generosity could be interpreted as self-serving, and the friars' acknowledgments of these as half-hearted or even insincere.

Returning to the Chiostro Verde, there are other reasons to associate its cycle with the confraternity, apart from the fact that the presumed donor had been one of its captains. Another of its captains is believed to have contributed to the construction of the cloister in the mid-fourteenth century: Luca Alberti's arms are carved below one of the capitals in the cloister.[29] While another important fourteenth-century donor and presumed member of the confraternity, Baldassare di Simone degli Ubriachi, nominated the confraternity in his will as administrators of his bequests to the friars for services to be held in his family chapel along the west side of the Chiostro Verde.[30] The arms on the capitals of the columns in the refectory, which adjoins the Ubriachi Chapel on the western side of the cloister, have been identified as those of Fra Michele de' Pilastri.[31] His family had many connections with Santa Maria Novella, including a certain Pilastro di Cione who served as captain of the confraternity on more than one occasion.[32]

Moreover, the Chiostro Verde was also used by the confraternity, whose members processed from the Chiostrino dei Morti through the cloister and into the church on the second Sunday of every month, as well as on major feasts, and for special commemorative ceremonies for the dead. During these processions members of the confraternity filed in pairs, each holding a lit candle, with an image of the Virgin carried at the head of the procession.[33]

Regardless of the route taken by the processions through the cloister, they would invariably have passed at least part of the *Stories of Genesis* cycle: Uccello's *Creation Stories* in the first bay beside the entrance to the church. The confraternity also joined the friars in celebrating *pietanze*—commemorative meals eaten with the family of the deceased in the refectory after a mass had been celebrated in the church for the dead.[34] To enter the refectory members of the confraternity would most likely have passed through the Chiostro Verde.

The intimate relationship between the confraternity and the friars is further suggested by the encouragement given to the confraternity's activities, such as the hundred days' indulgence granted to them by Cardinal Nicola da Prato in 1304 for their processions.[35] The reciprocal nature of the relationship is indicated by the financial support given by members of the confraternity for the building, decoration, and maintenance of the church, as has been described.[36] So when the friars eventually commissioned a cycle approximating the one Turino had wanted, they might well have considered the project in relation to the confraternity to which he and some of their most important donors belonged, in such matters as its iconography, its location within the building complex, and perhaps even the artists commissioned, given that the confraternity traditionally had a high proportion of painters as members.

Reconstructing the execution of the commission and interpreting its iconographic program are, however, not straightforward matters. The cycle is divided between six bays on each of the east, south, and west walls, making eighteen bays altogether, of which the paintings in the fifth and sixth bays on the east wall are now all but completely destroyed. The cycle represents episodes from Genesis, Chapters 1 to 34. Although Uccello painted the *Creation Stories*, the earliest episodes from Genesis depicted in the cycle, it does not necessarily follow that he was the first artist to work on the cycle, as has been supposed.[37] In fact, the more archaic style of the paintings on the south and west walls, depicting scenes from the stories of Abraham to Simeon and Levi, suggests they are earlier than Uccello's paintings by about a decade, probably dating to the early 1420s, as Cecilia Frosinini has recently proposed.[38] Hood suggested that the Dominican Master General Fra Leonardo Dati might have initiated the execution of the cycle, based primarily on a seventeenth-century archival note stating that in 1423 he 'had some pictures painted in the second cloister'.[39] There are three principal cloisters at Santa Maria Novella, which are in order of age: the Chiostrino dei Morti (it was alternatively referred to as the 'Chiostro Vecchio'[40]), the Chiostro Verde, and the Chiostro Grande. Thus, it is likely that the 'second cloister' referred to is the Chiostro Verde, and so *c*. 1423 seems a likely date for the painting of its south and west walls.

One aspect of the cloister's history that does not seem to have been considered in relation to the chronology of its mural painting cycle is the existence of a door leading from the church into the cloister in the 1420s, which seems to have been walled up *c.* 1430.[41] The door was just to the north of Masaccio's *Trinity* in the western wall of the church's nave, and would probably have been aligned with the middle of the east side of the cloister, opposite the opening in the low wall around the perimeter of the cloister providing access to the garden.[42] Thus, the door would have opened onto the cloister in the third bay, where the *Stories of Lamech and the Annunciation of the Flood to Noah* (above) and *Entrance of the Animals and Noah's Family into the Ark* (below) were painted. Since these scenes are important to the narrative flow of the cycle on the east wall, it seems probable that the planning of that part of the cycle presupposes the walling up of the door and so may postdate *c.* 1430, although it cannot be excluded that the plans for the walling up of the door preceded their implementation.

Frosinini has also addressed the difficult question of the identities of the other artists who worked on the cycle, attributing the paintings on the south wall to Mariotto di Cristofano and his workshop, the first bay of the west wall tentatively to Dello Delli based on Vasari's testimony, and the rest of the west wall to an anonymous artist. Frosinini proposed that the east wall was the last to be painted, in the 1430s and 1440s, attributing the first and fourth bays to Uccello. The second and third bays she gave to Uccello's workshop, tentatively identifying the assistants as Francesco d'Antonio and Scheggia, and the fragmentary paintings in the fifth and sixth bays she gave to an anonymous Florentine artist. For Frosinini, the cycle was begun on the south and west walls as a depiction of scenes from the lives of biblical patriarchs, and completed on the east wall as a more comprehensive account of Genesis, starting with the creation of Adam and Eve and the animals. She noted in particular the curious absence from the Genesis cycle of the story of Joseph, who is traditionally interpreted as prefiguring Christ—an indication that the cycle may have been truncated.[43] This absence is indeed curious, since the popularity of the story is suggested by the mural paintings of that subject dating from the mid-fifteenth century in the *altana* (covered terrace) of Giovanni Rucellai's palazzo, in the same quarter of Florence as Santa Maria Novella.[44] Be that as it may, it is not likely that the original plans for the iconography of the Chiostro Verde cycle and the changes they apparently underwent will ever be entirely clear in the absence of contemporary documentation.[45]

As it was painted, however, the iconography of the cycle represents the lineage of God's chosen people continuing over many generations, sometimes experiencing deliverance from adversity, prosperity, happy marriages, and miraculous conceptions, but also threatened by extinction through infertility, murderous sibling rivalry, and marriage out of the extended

family. The tenacity of God's chosen people through trials and tribulations is perhaps to be interpreted as a lesson on the importance of maintaining the integrity of the family and social cohesion by keeping faith with God's injunctions. Genesis contains two of God's covenants with man. First, that after the Universal Flood He would never again send another to destroy the earth, symbolized by the rainbow (Chapter 9: 8–17), and second, that God would guarantee the survival of Abraham's lineage, to be marked by the circumcision of eight-day-old boys (Chapter 17: 1–21). The second covenant was not actually depicted in the cycle, presumably because circumcision is not a Christian rite.

The iconography of the Chiostro Verde cycle can perhaps then be interpreted as a declaration of the Dominican interest in promoting civil harmony through maintaining good relations in Florence within and between families,[46] a cause to which they had long dedicated great efforts,[47] and a subject frequently written about by Florentine chroniclers and poets since the thirteenth century.[48] In 1479–1480 Giovanni Caroli (1429–1503), a friar of Santa Maria Novella, wrote his *Vite fratrum* on the history of the convent. In it he described the gradual construction of the conventual complex in terms of its influence over the historical development of the city as a whole, emphasising in particular the influence of Dominican culture over the city's political life. To quote Salvatore Camporeale's analysis of the text: 'in these terms, he sees the original function of the Dominican convent as fulfilled in the larger community of the Florentine people.'[49]

Santa Maria Novella can easily be seen as a locus of communal conciliation. Cardinal Latino Malabranca, originally a friar from the convent, famously reconciled Florence's warring Guelf and Ghibelline factions in the thirteenth century (the former loyal to the pope, the latter to the emperor) by calling a parliament of the community including church and civil authorities, at which he called for peace. To achieve this end he espoused, in particular, intermarriage between the city's leading families. The Cardinal laid the foundation stone of Santa Maria Novella's nave the day after his parliament was held[50]—the massive edifice a potent symbol of the convent and its church as a source of stability in the community, which coincidentally forms the east side of the Chiostro Verde.

It is appropriate then that the most compelling scene from the cycle, Uccello's *Flood and the Recession of the Flood*, depicts the moment in which the whole community is held accountable for its actions, and one family alone survives due to its obedience to God, its resourcefulness, and cohesion. The prosperity of the convent depended on the prosperity and peaceful co-existence of Florentine families. The lay members of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr who regularly processed through the cloister, coming from some of Florence's most prominent families, might well have been intended as a key audience for such a lesson. And as a *laudesi* confraternity they might also have been well prepared to receive such a

message, since at least one fourteenth-century Florentine *lauda*, *Venite adorare, per pace pregare*, called on the Virgin to bring peace to the city.[51]

There is further evidence suggesting the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr and Uccello both would have been attentive to a message about social harmony. As Daniel Lesnick has observed, the friars of Santa Maria Novella were drawn disproportionately from Florence's patrician and *popolo grasso* (wealthy merchant and banking class) families, and so had a certain vested interest in advancing the cause of this élite. In the thirteenth century many members of this class were involved in the widespread conflict between Guelfs and Ghibellines, which also had an economic dimension since political supremacy facilitated economic dominance (the property of the defeated faction could be alienated to the advantage of the victor). The Dominicans had a natural alliance with the Guelfs because of their fealty to the papacy. Thus, when Peter of Verona (later Saint Peter Martyr) became active in the Inquisition's pursuit of heretics in the 1240s, it seems he took the opportunity to assist the Guelfs by persecuting prominent Ghibellines. And the confraternity he founded at Santa Maria Novella initially had a militant aspect, as muscular enforcers of the Inquisition's persecution of alleged Ghibelline heretics. Yet by the late 1270s the Guelfs had grown tired of the conflict, calling upon the Dominicans to help broker a peace with the Ghibellines.[52]

As a distinguished family in their area, Uccello's mother's family, the del Beccuto, were certainly known to the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella long before the artist's time. Their names appear in the convent's lists of the deceased in the fourteenth century.[53] It is almost certain, however, that the family was already known to the friars by the thirteenth century. A genealogical manuscript by a descendant of the del Beccuto family housed in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze records that two of the family's patriarchs, Lottieri (d. 1295) and his brother Dottore Jacopo were participants at the Battle of Montaperti (where the Guelfs were famously routed), and subsequently were parties to Cardinal Latino's peace ('*Pace Latina*'),[54] most likely as Guelf *mallevadori* (guarantors of the peace).[55] Thus, Uccello's involvement with the Chiostro Verde cycle could hardly be more appropriate in view of the theme proposed here for the cycle as a lesson on communal conciliation. Uccello's maternal family was demonstrably involved in Florence's long history of factional conflict and reconciliation.[56]

There is a gap of around seventeen years between Uccello's involvement with the Spedale di Sant'Antonio and his painting of the *Creation Scenes*. Is it possible that the young artist was remembered at Santa Maria Novella from the earlier episode? Certainly, Uccello did not forget the *spedale* owned by the confraternity at Santa Maria Novella, which owed him money until 1433. Similarly, Deo Beccuti did not forget the confraternity to which he had given money, when he claimed the amount as a tax exemption in 1427 and 1431.

Francesco Tornabuoni, who apparently helped fund the acquisition of the *spedale* in 1413, was one of the Operai of Santa Maria Novella in 1422 and so he might well have been involved in the commission for the cycle in the Chiostro Verde.[57]

In addition, the Opera of Santa Maria Novella could hardly have been oblivious to Masaccio's *Trinity* inside the church as an indication of the quality that could be achieved in mural painting in the second half of the 1420s.[58] When it came to commissioning the scenes on the east wall of the Chiostro Verde, quality would have been more of an issue than for the south and west walls. The east wall runs alongside the external wall of the church and its proximity to the church, particularly the door providing access to the interior, increases its visual importance. If the Opera was looking for a mural painter of Masaccio's standing at the end of the 1420s, Uccello would seem to have been the only available candidate who had worked with Masaccio on equal terms. Uccello's much praised contribution to the Carnesecchi Chapel, where he worked with Masolino and Masaccio around 1423, was in the nearby church of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Having secured Uccello's services, it seems strange that he initially only finished one bay. The authorities might have allowed Uccello to delegate the second and third bays to an assistant or assistants if he had an important commission elsewhere. Alternatively, the patrons may simply have experienced a temporary embarrassment of funds. That Uccello supervised the planning of the following scenes very closely is open to question, since the second bay departs from the layout of Uccello's bay in the division of the upper and lower scenes below the level of the top of the corbels on the sides of the bays and the quality of the paintings is markedly inferior to the ones he painted.

A work probably painted shortly after the *Creation Stories* and not very far away, is the detached mural painting of the *Virgin and Child* now in the Museo di San Marco, Florence. A label attached to it indicates that it was removed from one of the houses of the del Beccuto family.[59] The most likely original location would be the Palazzo Del Beccuto opposite Santa Maria Maggiore, destroyed during the nineteenth-century remodelling of central Florence. Judging by its pointed-arch shape and modest dimensions, the painting was probably originally over a door. Deo Beccuti owned property opposite Santa Maria Maggiore in the first half of the fifteenth century, in the area subsequently occupied by the Palazzo Del Beccuto, and Uccello's *portate* for 1431 and 1433 indicate that Deo owed him first 36 *lire* and then 85 florins. Padoa Rizzo has plausibly associated these debts with the *Virgin and Child*, and has observed that since no amount was declared owing by Deo in Uccello's 1427 *portata* the painting should probably be dated to the early 1430s.[60]

A precedent for the depiction of the Virgin and Child can be found in a polychrome stucco *Virgin and Child* in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The Museum attributes the work in its current label to Ghiberti's workshop, suggesting that it is based on a lost model by Ghiberti dateable to between 1425 and 1450.[61] Similar high-relief sculptures were also made in large numbers by Donatello and, possibly, Brunelleschi.[62] The Victoria and Albert Museum stucco shows the Virgin carrying the Child in a life-size, half-length format, with the Virgin wearing a blue mantle lined with red. The arrangement of the figures and the shape and colouring of the drapery are very close to those in Uccello's painting. In both works the Child's sleeve is red, although the sleeve in Uccello's work is cut with an elegant, tailored slit along the side, with a white border. Uccello adapted the composition to fill the arch format by extending the drapery flowing in a breeze to the right and by showing the Virgin holding flowers to the left. The flowers might possibly be a reference to the recent re-dedication of the Duomo as Santa Maria del Fiore (Holy Mary of the flower), itself an allusion to the city's name.[63] While virtually nothing is known of Uccello's activity in Ghiberti's workshop, it is possible that as a junior assistant he may have been involved in such undemanding tasks as the painting of workshop productions like the Victoria and Albert Museum's sculpture. Although, it was not necessarily this version of the many made in the shop, which was the source for Uccello's painting.

Inventories show that panel paintings of the Virgin were ubiquitous in fifteenth-century Florentine houses, with some houses containing more than one.[64] More durable representations of the Virgin and Child in a half-length format, either as mural paintings or relief sculptures, looking down benevolently from a tabernacle on the outside of a building or in the arch above a doorway must have been extremely common also, judging by the numerous examples that have survived. Ghiberti, Donatello and possibly Brunelleschi, and their workshops, made small-scale works in terracotta and stucco and painted murals that served a simple devotional and talismanic function for the everyday life of Florentine citizens as the del Beccuto family's *Virgin and Child* would have done for them. The precious gold ground and lapis lazuli pigment used to depict the Virgin and Child simultaneously communicated to the viewer the family's piety and prosperity.

Two small works probably also made for domestic contexts during this period are the *Annunciation* in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the *Saint George* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Nothing certain is known about their provenances before they emerged in British collections in the mid-nineteenth century. The earliest known owner of the *Annunciation*, the Honourable W.T.H. Fox-Strangways (1795–1865), is believed to have formed his collection largely in Florence, where he was the British Secretary of Legation from 1825 to 1828. He donated the *Annunciation*, Uccello's *Hunt* and many other Italian

Renaissance paintings to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in 1850.[65] The *Saint George* is first recorded as belonging to the British art dealer Samuel Woodburn, among a large number of Italian early Renaissance paintings he offered for sale to the National Gallery, London, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Judging by the number of Florentine artists represented in the group offered, the collection was probably also put together in Florence.[66]

The Annunciation is one of the most popular and important subjects in religious painting of the Florentine Renaissance, given its frequency and the special veneration of certain famous images in Florentine churches, such as the mural painting in Santissima Annunziata, which according to legend was completed by an Angel.[67] The Feast of the Annunciation was celebrated on 25 March, reputed to be the founding date of the city. Until 1416 it was the principal feast of the Duomo, supplanted in that year by the Feast of the Purification.[68] The Annunciation held special significance for women, due to the miraculous power of certain images, such as the one in Santissima Annunziata, to improve fecundity, and no doubt because the Virgin, a woman, is the principal human subject.[69]

In the Oxford *Annunciation* the Virgin sits in a portico with a book in her lap, looking ahead in meditation, apparently unaware that a procession of Angels is playing musical instruments in the heavens above. In front of the procession, God the Father places a *mazzocchio* (a circular headdress) on Gabriel's head and gives him lilies to present to the Virgin, while Gabriel leans forward to kiss His hand. In a second moment of the narrative Gabriel flies down towards the Virgin, and in a third moment he appears before the Virgin while the Holy Spirit swoops under the portico towards her. Giovanni da Calvoli's *Meditationes vitae Christi* (*Meditations on the Life of Christ*) describes the dispatch of Gabriel:

> And Gabriel, with glad and joyful face, kneeled with bowed head, respectful and reverent, received attentively the embassy of his Lord. Then he arose cheerfully and gaily and flew down from heaven and in a minute stood before the Virgin, who was in a room of her little house. But his flight was not so swift that God did not enter before him, and thus the Holy Trinity was present, entering before the messenger.[70]

Uccello's emphatic depiction of the narrative, with three representations of Gabriel, calls to mind the descriptions of *sacra rappresentazione* performed in Florence throughout the fifteenth century, for which there were mechanical devices allowing the performers to appear to fly up and down. These were impressive productions; Masolino painted the props for the *sacra rappresentazione* of the Ascension at the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in 1425,[71] and Brunelleschi is thought to have designed mechanisms for *sacra rappresentazione*, such as the one at Santissima Annunziata recorded by Abraham of Suzdal:

Above, on the tribune, one saw God the Father surrounded by more than five hundred burning lamps that revolved continually while moving up and down. Boys dressed in white representing angels were around Him, some with cymbals [cembalo], others with flute or harp, making a joyful spectacle of inexpressible beauty. After some time an angel dispatched by God descended on two hempen ropes…to announce the Conception. The angel was a handsome youth dressed in a garment white as snow and decorated in gold, exactly as one sees the angels of Heaven in paintings.[72]

The procession of Angels playing horns, drums and pipes, and the figure of Gabriel descending from the sky in Uccello's *Annunciation* certainly make a theatrical impression.

The bed glimpsed through the open door of the portico is a common feature of fourteenth and fifteenth-century Annunciation scenes. Here too, it seems to be significant, as a reference to the divine, quasi-conjugal nature of the Annunciation. In the landscape a low, rectangular structure extends beyond the left edge of the picture. It seems to be filled with water and so might represent a water trough, as in the similar feature of Lorenzo Monaco's *Flight into Egypt* predella panel from the Bartolini Salimbeni altarpiece. As such, it might be construed as a symbol of the Virgin's purity, or an allusion to the trials soon to be encountered following the Virgin's conception. The form of the structure is also similar to Christ's tomb in Uccello's *Resurrection* window in the Duomo in Florence; as an open tomb it might refer to the ultimate purpose of the Annunciation: Christ's redemption of humanity through his death and resurrection.

As with the *Creation Stories*, Ghiberti's influence is strongly felt in the Oxford *Annunciation*. The composition is dominated by the perspectival representation of the portico with simplified, Corinthian-like capitals, and God the Father in the top left corner, much as in Ghiberti's *Isaac and Jacob* panel from the *Doors of Paradise*. The underdrawing and incisions in the *Annunciation* indicate that the arch facing the viewer and the top of the doorway leading inside were originally round, while the former was finally painted as a pointed arch and the latter was painted as a rectangular aperture. The repetition of round arches in the earlier stage of the composition would have been closer to the architecture of the *Isaac and Jacob* panel. Like Ghiberti, Uccello included a curtain hanging on the bed draped up over a horizontal support, to soften the hard lines of the architecture, and as in Ghiberti's relief, the narrative in Uccello's painting unfolds around the architectural setting.

Pudelko was the first to recognise that the *Annunciation* is by the same hand as the *Saint George*, which has never been denied since.[73] Scientific analysis shows they are technically similar: notably, each has a single piece of fine-weave cloth as an interlayer covering most of the panel, as discussed in Chapter 8. They also share an iconographic detail: the papal tiara worn by God the Father, a relatively uncommon feature in Florentine art of the

early fifteenth century. While nothing is known of the works' patron or patrons, this feature and the ostentatious use of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli may be indicative of an association with the Guelf Party, the aristocratic association loyal to the papacy, to which a number of Uccello's relatives and patrons belonged.[74] The Guelf Party's arms show an eagle holding a dragon in its claws, and since its members included all of Florence's knights, the subject of Saint George and the dragon would have been a particularly pertinent one for them.

The small size of the *Saint George* suggests, as it does for the Oxford *Annunciation*, that it was made for a domestic context. Though the *Saint George* lacks its original frame, judging by the way the composition fits comfortably within the current format of the panel, it does not seem to have been cut down significantly. The round top of the paint surface is probably original, as is the case with the Karlsruhe *Adoration* where traces of the original arch-shaped frame remain. In the *Saint George* the cloth interlayer stops at a point below the arch, presumably because it was easier not to cut the cloth to follow the round part of the panel. Furthermore, the sunburst behind God the Father fits perfectly with the arch format. Given its different dimensions and shape, the *Saint George* was probably not part of an integral ensemble with the Oxford *Annunciation*, as has been implied might be the case.[75] The *Saint George* may have been set within a tabernacle-style frame to hang on a wall or to stand on a piece of furniture. Two small areas of restoration on the vertical edges of the painting at the springing of the arch suggest that the original frame had pillasters, whose capitals impinged slightly onto the surface of the painting.

In Martin Davies' somewhat ambivalent comments on the quality of the London *Saint George and the Dragon* (National Gallery) he described its fantastic imagery as fit for a nursery.[76] In the Melbourne *Saint George* the prominent and reassuring presence of God the Father, the glorification of military combat, the fantastic imagery, and witty, though straightforward, iconography suggest that it may indeed have been intended for a young man's room, or was made for a family home with a male child. There is some evidence that young men of distinguished Florentine Renaissance families had religious paintings in their rooms. At the age of twenty-two or three Lorenzo de' Medici had a painting of the Virgin in his room, which may have been commissioned for him rather than by him.[77] Giovanni Dominici (1356–1420), a Dominican preacher at Santa Maria Novella, wrote the *Treatise on Family Rule* (*Trattato del governo familiare*) in which he listed five means to instruct children how to love God, much quoted by modern art historians. The first means was to have paintings and sculptures around the house showing child saints or the Virgin with the Child, 'in which your child, before them, may delight in something similar and be rapt in something similar, with acts and signs pleasing to a child' ('*nelle quali il tuo figliuolo, ancor nelle fasce, si diletti come simile e dal simile rapito, con atti e segni grati alla infanzia.*').[78] While the

Saint George does not show a child saint or the infant Christ, it does have a subject likely to appeal to a young person. Indeed, Vasari recorded that there was a children's confraternity in Florence dedicated to Saint George.[79] Less often quoted by art historians is Dominici's warning against exposing children to pagan influences, the 'poisonous cunning of the old serpent' ('*velenosa malizia dell'antico serpente*') threatening Christians who stray from the faith.[80] The dragon in the *Saint George* is a delightful embodiment of the pagan threat that Dominici warned of, as the following discussion of the work's iconography will show.

Iacopo da Varazze's popular thirteenth-century book on the lives of the saints, the *Legenda aurea* (*Golden Legend*), provides a likely source for Uccello's version of Saint George's story. In it, the saint wounds the dragon with his lance before tethering it with the princess' girdle and leading it into the town of Silena, where George proclaims that he will kill the beast if the townspeople convert to Christianity, which they do in their thousands.[81] In Uccello's painting though, the princess is shown bearing a length of chain with a collar to use as the dragon's tether, rather than immodestly removing her girdle. The *Legenda aurea* also provides clues to the work's symbolic content. The story of the saint's life begins with the first of three etymologies for the name 'Giorgio', deriving from the words *geos*, meaning earth, and *orge*, meaning to cultivate. Thus, the saint is one who symbolically tills the earth, and so is associated with agriculture. This etymology has resonance in the latter part of the saint's story. After his victory over the dragon, Saint George infuriated a pagan prefect with his anti-pagan proclamations. Consequently, the saint was subjected to a series of tortures, each one usually fatal in itself: he was beaten to pieces; branded with hot irons until his insides came out, which were then doused in salt; he was poisoned, and then severely poisoned; he was cut by blade-bearing wheels until the wheels were broken; and he was bathed in molten lead. Miraculously, the saint recovered from each of these ordeals, only to be dragged through the streets and beheaded, which finally proved too much even for him! Nevertheless, the saint's miraculous powers of resurrection are analogous to the rebirth of crops each spring.[82]

Another significant feature of the *Saint George* associated with resurrection is the sunburst around God the Father. The association of God the Father with the sun is extremely common in Renaissance iconography, for example it is recorded in Filarete's architectural treatise.[83] The saint's halo of gold rays is a minor version of God the Father's nimbus and the crescent shapes on the dragon's wings may be emblems of the moon. The name of the town in the *Legenda aurea*, Silena, is similar to the name of the Greek moon goddess, Selene, who was also the goddess of magic.[84] The pagan town, terrorised by the dragon, is rescued by the Christian warrior, or at a deeper level, the town is terrorised by pagan worship, embodied by the dragon, and is liberated from its pagan state by the Christian warrior. The victory of the

saint over the dragon represents, then, the victory of Christianity over paganism, day over night, and life over death. This symbolism is also present in Uccello's painting of the subject in Paris, which has the crescent moon in the top right corner and some golden rays (of sunlight) in the top left corner.[85] The Paris version has honey-coloured crescent shapes inside the dark circles on the dragon's wings, corresponding to the gold crescents in the Melbourne version, reinforcing the solar/lunar imagery.

Like the Oxford *Annunciation*, the *Saint George* shows a clear resemblance to the compositional and narrative formulae in Ghiberti's *Doors of Paradise*, in particular the *David and Goliath* scene. As in the relief, the composition of the *Saint George* positions the fighting across the front of the picture field with discarded weapons scattered on the ground, surrounded by a rocky backdrop, and a walled town filling almost the entire width of the picture field above. In both works, the foreground figures are seen from above while the cities are seen *di sotto in su*, thereby increasing the sense of space. In the early 1430s the project for the *Doors of Paradise* was the most prestigious artistic commission in Florence. Uccello's privileged use of the designs for its panels, which would have been accessible only to the patrons (the Merchants' Guild) and Ghiberti's workshop and associates, may represent a strategy aimed at winning back his Florentine clientele, particularly wealthy merchants, through association with this important project. Other influences in the *Saint George* seem more exotic, such as the Byzantine-looking entrance to the dragon's cave in the lower left of the landscape, something Uccello might have seen in Greek icons in Venice.

By the mid-1430s Uccello's clientele was indeed growing, and his reputation was spreading rapidly, as is shown by his commission for the *Stories of the Virgin and Saint Stephen* in the Marcovaldi Chapel, the first chapel on the right of the main altar in the *pieve* of Santo Stefano in Prato, now the Duomo. This was a major commission for Uccello; as far as is known it was the only time he assumed responsibility for the painting of a chapel, for which demanding task he probably hired one or two assistants. It also constitutes arguably the most important surviving mural painting cycle in a Tuscan chapel after Masaccio and Masolino ceased work in the Brancacci Chapel in the second half of the 1420s. Curiously, Vasari omitted Uccello's name from the long list of painters who admired the Brancacci Chapel paintings, even though, as shall be demonstrated, the Marcovaldi Chapel shows that Uccello was certainly among them.

The Marcovaldi Chapel is not even mentioned in the *Vite*, although Filippo Lippi's paintings in the adjacent chapel are discussed at length. Perhaps in the gloom of the confined, poorly lit chapel, and seeing Andrea di Guisto's mediocre paintings at ground level, Vasari did not look up to notice Uccello's works above, setting a precedent for their critical neglect

in the following centuries.[86] Perhaps the paintings were already obscured by smoke and dust in the mid-sixteenth century. Their cleaning in 1964 revealed that despite the influence of Masaccio, the paintings are characterised more by light-heartedness, bright colours, and a delight in geometric pattern-making than austerity, monumentality, or gritty realism.[87] As such, they represent a key moment in the transition of Tuscan painting from the stern earnestness of Masaccio's and Masolino's Brancacci Chapel paintings to Domenico Veneziano's sparkling delicacy in his Saint Lucy altarpiece (*c*. late 1430s to early 1440s, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).

The most extensive discussion of the Marcovaldi Chapel to date occurs in Padoa Rizzo's monograph of 1997, which gives valuable consideration to the delicate task of disentangling the individual hands responsible for the *giornate* and their *sinopie*. The realisation that Uccello almost certainly worked with assistance over the entire cycle helps to explain the doubts of the many critics in the past who hesitated to attribute the cycle to him.[88] All critics have been in agreement, however, that Andrea di Giusto completed the cycle from mid-way through the *Stoning of Saint Stephen*. He finished that scene and each of the bottom scenes in their entirety. The slightly crude, angular manner of his style reflects his training in Lorenzo di Bicci's workshop, where, incidentally, he might have met Masaccio. Andrea worked as Masaccio's assistant on the Pisa altarpiece in 1426.[89]

Padoa Rizzo discussed a number of documents describing the dedication of the chapel to the Assumption in 1435, although none refers to its decoration. In November of that year the Spogli del Diplomatico mention that 'Michele di Giovannino di Sandro, manufacturer of wool and merchant of Prato, knowing old age and wishing to provide for his soul, founds a chapel in the *pieve* of Prato dedicated to the Blessed Virgin of the Assumption…' ('*Michele di Giovannino di Sandro lanaiolo e mercante di Prato conoscendosi in età senile e volendo provvedere all'anima sua, fonda una cappella nella pieve di Prato sotto l'invocazione della Beata Vergine dell'Assunzione…*'). In the same year the chapel was mentioned in Michele Marcovaldi's Catasto, specifying that the famous relic of the Virgin's girdle was (temporarily) exhibited there ('*la chappella ove si mostra la cintola di nostra donna di Prato*)'.[90] According to the *Legenda aurea* Saint Thomas took the Virgin's girdle to prove that she ascended bodily into Heaven.[91] The relic was of great importance for the ritual life of the church, and was normally kept in a dedicated chapel with mural paintings by Agnolo Gaddi in the northwest corner of the nave. It was exhibited to the public annually from a purpose-built pulpit on the exterior of the church, begun by Donatello and Michelozzo in the period immediately prior to the foundation of Marcovaldi's chapel. Proof that Marcovaldi's chapel was the chapel to the right of the altar and not another in the church is provided by his family's coat of arms showing a lion rampant, formerly on its back wall.[92]

Any altar or fittings from the fifteenth century that might once have been in the chapel are gone; the mural paintings are all that remain of Marcovaldi's patronage. On the right wall of the chapel are the *Stories of the Virgin*, reflecting the dedication of the chapel to the Assumption of the Virgin, comprising, from top to bottom: the *Birth of the Virgin*; the *Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple*; and the *Marriage of the Virgin*. On the left wall are the *Stories of Saint Stephen*, reflecting the dedication of the church, comprising, from top to bottom: the *Disputation of Saint Stephen*; the *Stoning of Saint Stephen*; and the *Recovery of the Bodies of Saints Stephen and Lawrence*. In the vault are female embodiments of four virtues: faith, hope, charity, and fortitude; on the underside of the arch leading into the chapel are four male saints: Francis, Paul, Dominic, and Jerome. The paintings on the rear wall were adversely affected by the installation of an altar in 1665, removed from the chapel in the nineteenth century, and the paintings on the rear wall have all been removed too, including an image of the *Blessed Jacopone da Todi* and the Marcovaldi coat of arms. Apart from later paintings of Saints Peter and Paul in niches, no other paintings have survived from the back wall. No fifteenth-century representation of the Assumption remains, although the putative original altarpiece may have shown the subject.[93]

The tall, narrow dimensions of the chapel forced Uccello to compose his scenes tightly, avoiding complex narrative arrangements in favour of depicting key moments in the narrative focussed on the protagonist of each scene. The composition of the *Birth of the Virgin* follows a traditional model in use since at least the fourteenth century, as seen in Bernardo Daddi's depiction of the subject in the Pancrazio polyptych (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), although the spatial configuration of Uccello's composition is more modern in its geometric regularity. Unlike the celebrated *A Birth Scene* (Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem) painted on a *desco da parto* by Masaccio or a talented associate in the mid-1420s, Uccello's birth scene is an all-female affair. The increadibly tall and elegant visitors on the right of Uccello's scene (one of whom is wearing platform shoes) could be called the ancestors of Ghirlandaio's magnificently dressed visitors in his version of the subject in the choir of Santa Maria Novella, and are presumably flattering depictions of the female members of the Marcovaldi family. Interestingly, the *Disputation* scene on the opposite wall contains only men, creating a formal balance across the top register of the cycle along gender lines, reinforcing the gender division between the principal subjects of the cycle, in turn echoed by the gender balance between the virtues and saints in the vault and under the arch. In addition to expressing loyalty to the church's patron saint and its most famous relic, the cycle perhaps contains a gendered allegorical commentary: the courage and piety of the martyr Saint Stephen presented as an exemplum for the behaviour of men, the purity and obedience of the Virgin presented as an exemplum for women—appropriate messages for a family chapel.

The *Birth of the Virgin* shows Uccello at play with the formal elements of composition, exploring the relationships between organic and geometric forms. Evidence of Uccello's taste for pure geometrical figures is the pointed coffering, similar to that in the Oxford *Annunciation* and on the underside of the sarcophagus of the *Equestrian Monument*. The abstract pattern-making is emphasised by the broad areas of high key colours: lime green, bright orange and red. However, certain details of the painting are quite sensual, such as the gleaming, transparent wine and water-filled carafes carried on the tray by a young woman in the background, an uncharacteristic hint of Flemishness in Uccello's oeuvre. The curvaceous attendant descending the stairs at the left is rather sensuous too. The flowing drapery of the woman's headdress is reminiscent of Gabriel's drapery in the Oxford *Annunciation* and the Angels' drapery in the Karlsruhe *Adoration*.

The *Presentation of the Virgin* takes place in an open-air temple, against a mountainous landscape. The rusticated wall in steep perspective at the left was evidently inspired by the building on the left of Masaccio's *Healing of Tabetha* in the Brancacci Chapel. The Virgin climbs the fifteen steps to the Temple described in the *Legenda aurea* as analogous to the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. The *Legenda aurea* also says the Temple was built on raised ground so that the stairs were the only way to approach the altar, and that the Virgin was placed at the bottom of the stairs, climbing them on her own, much as Uccello shows the scene. Furthermore, in the *Legenda aurea* the priest of the Temple is described as the pontiff ('*pontefice*'), explaining why he wears a papal tiara in the painting.[94] The kneeling figure at the right of the *Presentation* must be the patron, Michele, flatteringly depicted much younger than his sixty-four years of age in 1435.[95] The standing figure to his right, looking out towards the viewer has been thought by some to be the artist's self-portrait, a self-deprecating representation if the identification is correct, although he has also been identified as perhaps the patron's son, Piero.[96]

The *Disputation of Saint Stephen* depicts a scene of the saint's story as it is told in the Bible (Acts 6–7), of the reception of his controversial views on Christ's new dispensation. Stephen was accused by certain Jewish authorities of predicting Christ's destruction of the Temple and the customs introduced by Moses. The composition of the scene shows affinities with Masaccio's *Tribute Money* in the Brancacci Chapel, with Saint Stephen taking Christ's place in the middle of a semi-circle of solidly-built male figures. The expressions of scepticism and exasperation on the faces of the Jewish authorities are innovative, compared with the expressionless faces of so many fourteenth-century mural paintings. In this, Uccello may have taken a cue from Masacccio's grieving Adam and Eve in the Brancacci Chapel, although Uccello's figures are more satirical in intent. The building behind the figures in Uccello's version would seem to represent the Temple in Jerusalem, although it is oddly not

the same as the rotunda in the *Presentation*. It was Stephen's scandalous argument that the Temple was not the house of God—since God's throne is Heaven and His footstool is earth—which led to his demise.

Also curious is the anomalous depiction of light in the *Disputation*. The other five scenes on the lateral walls are painted as lit from the direction of the chapel's window, whereas the *Disputation* is painted as lit from the direction of the church interior.[97] Did Uccello rush the commission, which he abandoned mid-way through the scene below? The figures in the *Stoning of Saint Stephen* are identical in style to Andrea di Giusto's in the *Marriage of the Virgin*, while the architecture is closer to that in the scenes painted by Uccello. The execution of this scene was evidently divided between the two artists, following an overall design by Uccello. Like Lorenzo Monaco in his *Meeting of Joachim and Anna* mural painting from the Bartolini Salimbeni Chapel, Uccello set Jerusalem next to an expanse of water, crossed by a sailing boat. The *Recovery of the Bodies of Saints Stephen and Lawrence* at the bottom of the left wall is entirely by Andrea. The fact that his work is confined to the two lowest scenes and the lower half of one of the middle scenes shows that he completed the cycle on his own, no doubt because Uccello left for Florence to take up the important commission for the *Equestrian Monument* in the Duomo in 1436.

The long history of uncertainty as to Uccello's authorship of the majority of the Prato cycle is understandable, given the appearance of atypical passages of execution. A number of the faces are rather banal, painted with broad, rounded features not seen elsewhere in Uccello's oeuvre. Nevertheless, the conception of all the scenes is certainly attributable to him. Uccello may have worked quickly on the project, but it seems certain that he worked with assistants, as yet unidentified.[98] The tentative attribution of the second and third bays of the Chiostro Verde to Francesco d'Antonio and Scheggia, and the presence of Andrea di Giusto in the Marcovaldi Chapel suggests there might have been of a coterie of artists with connections to Uccello, Masolino, Masaccio, and Lorenzo di Bicci in the early 1430s, willing to form temporary professional alliances as commissions arose. Uccello's work on the Carnesecchi altarpiece would have given him entrée to such a group.[99]

Further evidence of Uccello's rapidly growing reputation in the 1430s came to light only in 1977. The *Adoration of the Child* was discovered beneath whitewash on the east wall of the sacristy in the Church of San Martino Maggiore in Bologna.[100] The discovery was exceptional not only because there had been no prior knowledge that Uccello worked in Bologna, but also because there was *no* mural painting by a famous Florentine, early Renaissance artist in the city. Nevertheless, there have, of course, always been important links between the two cities. In January 1431 the celebrated bishop of Bologna, Nicolò Albergati, stayed at Santa Maria

Novella in Florence as the papal ambassador to the Signoria,[101] where Uccello might already have completed his first scenes in the Chiostro Verde. One of Albergati's responsibilities in Bologna was to conduct pastoral visits to churches ensuring their maintenance, including the visit he made to the church of San Martino Maggiore on 29 August 1437.[102] He oversaw a program of devotional revival in Bologna during his bishopric, from 1417 to 1443, relying heavily on confraternities to produce new shrines, *sacra rappresentazione*, and processions. In these endeavours the Bolognese sometimes looked to Florence for models of devotional practice. Albergati was also a supporter of leading humanists and so his taste may have run to avant-garde artists such as Uccello.[103] Many art historians believe that Van Eyck's portrait of an ecclesiastic in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is a portrait of Albergati, as it was identified in the seventeenth century,[104] and Panofsky believed Van Eyck depicted Albergati as Saint Jerome in the small painting at the Detroit Institute of Arts, sometimes now attributed to Van Eyck's workshop.[105] Through a figure such as Albergati Uccello could have been recommended to a patron at San Martino.

Uccello incised a date into the *Adoration* in an area of drapery in the foreground that has given rise to a great deal of discussion. That the date is original is indicated by the nature of its incisions, for which a fine instrument must have been used, creating slight ridges along the length of some strokes where the still wet material (*arriccio* or *intonaco*?) was pushed to one side.[106] The partial legibility of the date, due to the damaged condition of the paint surface, and issues concerning Uccello's stylistic development, have led to different readings: 1431, or more commonly 1437, while some authors have dated the work to around 1435 or possibly 1436, without reference to how the last digit appears.[107] Volpe thought 1431 improbable on the grounds that the work would have been too precocious for Uccello, and decided in favour of the similar looking 1437. It is possible in fact to discern a horizontal mark (incision?) at the base of the last numeral, suggesting that the figure may be a Z shaped 2, which could make the date 1432. However, since the last digit is very small and the surface is very damaged, the reading of the date is far from clear, and any one of the dates 1431, 1432, or 1437 could be possible, based only on the appearance of the inscription.

The discovery of the painting came too late to save it from being damaged from the installation of wiring and a window into the wall. However, the remains of an enchanting composition have survived. It shows a robust Christ leaning on one arm on the ground, the Virgin kneeling in adoration at the left, a fragment of a standing Joseph further to the left, and two kneeling worshippers, and one standing, on the right. The composition is artfully arranged in large areas of contrasting colours, surrounded by a red, architectonic, fictive frame. The naturalism of the painting has led to its being described as the first true nocturnal scene in Italian painting.[108] Christ does not have a halo, an uncommon concession to

naturalism it early Renaissance Italy, though common enough in Netherlandish art of the period. In the background, behind two large shelters, the Magi stand in a nocturnal landscape looking into the sky where a crescent moon bathes the scene in an eerie light. The beautifully foreshortened ox and ass stand behind Christ, the ass looking up with a delightfully timid expression. The massive frame defines the pictorial field in a way that prefigures or follows, depending on what date the painting is given, Alberti's description in *De pictura* (1435) of painting as providing a view through a window.[109]

The figure of the Christ Child reclining on one arm is paralleled in a number of polychrome stucco reliefs of the Nativity from the circle of Donatello. Examples are housed in the Museo Bardini, Florence, the Staatliche Museum, Berlin, and the Museum of Art, Chicago. There is no known model by Donatello and the authorship of the reliefs remains uncertain.[110] The *Adoration* also shows Uccello's admiration of Masaccio's paintings in the Brancacci Chapel and the *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella. The large, heavily draped, kneeling figures in the foreground of the *Adoration* resemble Masaccio's donors in the *Trinity*. The foreshortened pyramid shaped points on the inside edge of the fictive frame are similar to the foreshortened points on the underside of the arch in the *Trinity*, and the decorative beading pattern behind the points is the same as the one below the lintel in the *Trinity*. The clarity and depth of the spatial construction of the entire composition of the *Adoration* is also analogous to Masaccio's style. This undeniable influence of Masaccio shows that Uccello must have returned to Florence from Venice before painting the Bologna *Adoration*.

The identity of the three fragmentary figures at the right as saints or donors is uncertain. The foremost figure, whose sex is impossible to determine, is kneeling in front of the Child with their hands crossed over their chest in adoration. The second figure has a woman's face and is kneeling behind the first, praying with a rosary in her hands. The third is standing and, again, their sex is unclear. It has been suggested that these might be members of a lay confraternity linked to the Carmelites who administered the church in the fifteenth century,[111] which could be supported by the fact that two of the figures are wearing red robes, perhaps the costume of an organisation or order.[112] It has also been suggested that they may be a secular family of donors.[113] The *sinopia* shows that initially two coats of arms (surmounted by crosses?) were to feature prominently in the composition. Although these details were not executed in the final paint layers, they must be related to the work's initial patronage. Paired coats of arms in Renaissance panel paintings usually signify a marriage alliance between two prominent families. Explicit familial insignia are rarer in mural paintings with religious subjects, and perhaps this is why Uccello's coats of arms were abandoned: the impropriety of self promotion in a religious context was held to be too great.

Still, the coats of arms tend to suggest that the commission originated with one or more individuals, rather than a collective patron, such as a confraternity.

There is another reason to find 1437 a happy date for Uccello's commission in Bologna. For in that year the papal curia was in the city, having moved from Florence the year before. It brought with it some of Europe's leading writers, such as Leon Battista Alberti, and leading musicians, such as Guillaume Dufay. Other humanists without curial office then came to Bologna in its wake, such as Lapo da Castoglionchio the Younger. It can easily be imagined that a Bolognese statesperson, inspired by the dazzling array of cultural stars in his city, rose to the occasion to commission a work in the most up to date manner. To demonstrate his cultural credentials he employed the Florentine artist of the moment: Paolo Uccello, who had recently completed the *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood*, the humanist monument par excellence in Florence at the time.

Interestingly, we find in Lapo da Castiglionchio's *De curia commodis* (*On the Benefits of the Curia*), written in Ferrara in 1438 in the wake of the curia's relocation there, an argument that may account for a novel aspect of Uccello's composition. Previously, wealthy Florentines had used the cult of the Magi as a means of reconciling their wealth with the humility of Christ's low birth and poverty. Wealthy Florentines were depicted in paintings and sculpture being introduced to the new-born Christ by the Magi, whose wealth and magnificence provided a precedence for their own, and one which was not found displeasing in the eyes of the Lord.[114] In Lapo's text, however, a principal and curious argument is the acceptability of the curia's luxurious lifestyle in view of the fact that men could not aspire to the same holiness as God. According to Lapo, Christ was born into poverty to make his holiness more apparent, to assuage any doubts that he attracted followers for spiritual reasons rather than through the prospect of material gain. In the fifteenth century, by which time Christ's church was well established, Lapo argued it was no longer necessary to maintain this stratagem, and indeed a magnificent curia helped demonstrate the church's fitness for its role as the priesthood, a social position that Lapo points out in ancient cultures had traditionally been accompanied by beauty and finery.[115]

It is perhaps a similar sentiment expressed in Uccello's painting, in which the Magi have lost their intercessor role, subordinated to a position in the distant background, having been beaten to the site of Christ's birth by the magnificently dressed contemporary worshippers who show no qualm about presenting themselves directly to the naked Christ Child in their expensive fur-lined, woollen garments. But this is, in any event, no meek, humble child, but a baby Hercules confidently reclining on one arm and holding in his hand a ball with the alpha and omega symbolising the universe—as his plaything.

Two panel paintings datable to the late 1430s and early 1440s represent a new direction in Uccello's work and in Florentine painting, turning towards a richer, more atmospheric, and poetic aesthetic. The Karlsruhe *Adoration of the Child with the Virgin, Angels, Saints Joseph, Jerome, Mary Magdalene, and Eustace* is one of only two surviving works with a representation of Saint Jerome by Uccello (the other being the *Scenes from the Lives of Holy Fathers* in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence), and as Annamaria Bernacchioni has suggested, its iconography may be related to Uccello's membership of the Confraternity of Saint Jerome in 1438. Bernacchioni drew attention to the particular importance that the Nativity held for Saint Jerome, who visited the grotto in Bethlehem where it was believed the holy family found refuge. According to one account, Jerome was buried in a tomb excavated below the grotto.[116] The extensive use of glazing over gold leaf in the work, similar to that in the *Battle* paintings, suggests that it probably does date to the late 1430s, as discussed in Chapter 8. However, there can be no certainty of a connection between the imagery of the Karlsruhe *Adoration* and Uccello's membership of the confraternity as long as its original owner remains unknown,[117] and the work's provenance is unknown before 1837 when it was purchased for the collection of the grand dukes of Baden. In 1856 it was transferred to its present home, the Staatliche Kunsthalle in Karlsruhe.[118]

The subject is an Adoration rather than a Nativity, since Saints Jerome, Mary Magdalene, and Eustace are included anachronistically. Saint Jerome is identified by his attributes of a lion and a cardinal's hat, Mary Magdalene by her long hair, and Eustace by his luxurious clothes, soldier's sword, and hunter's hound and deer.[119] While elements of the composition such as the despondent Joseph (unhappy because he can not provide well for his family) are probably drawn from commonly available sources such as Giovanni da Calvoli's *Meditationes vitae Christi*,[120] Uccello created a novel treatment of the subject in Florentine art, which proved influential to artists such as Filippo Lippi and the Master of the Castello Nativity. The nocturnal landscape setting creates a mood of mystery, while the rich, ornamental designs of the brocade cloths, the Angel's wings with their exotic looking feathers (ostrich or parrot?), and the tapestry-like pattern of the lawn and the oak thicket mark a growing taste for courtly richness, refinement, and poetic fantasy.

Filippo Lippi's *Adoration of the Child with Saints Ilarione, Jerome and Mary Magdalene and Angels* (from the Annalena Convent, now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) shows formal affinities with the Karlsruhe *Adoration*. Apart from the similar subject matter, with two of the same saints, the curious way in which Lippi depicted Saint Ilarione up to his shoulders in a hole beside the holy family and the way that Mary Magdalene is positioned behind a wall to one side, are reminiscent of the isolated position of the saints in Uccello's work. The effect in each case is to create a figurative distance between the

worshipper (saint or viewer) and the worshipped (the holy family), heightening the visionary quality of the image. As Megan Holmes has observed, two other similar versions of the subject by Lippi, one from the Palazzo Medici Chapel (now in the Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) and another said to have come from a cell in the hermitage at the Camaldoli (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence), were Medici commissions.[121]

The taste for rich and poetic imagery that the Karlsruhe *Adoration* represents may have been stimulated in Florence by some of the city's leading citizens who attended the Council of Ferrara in 1438, bringing the Council to Florence the following year. Frances Ames-Lewis suggested that Piero di Cosimo de' Medici probably commissioned Domenico Veneziano's *Adoration of the Magi* tondo (Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), a work generally dated *c.* 1439–1441, which is replete with courtly refinement influenced by Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello, following his experiences with the Florentine delegation of the court of Leonello d'Este.[122] Indeed, Pisanello was in Ferrara at the time of the Council, where he drew Emperor John VIII Palaeologus.[123] Pisanello and his workshop also drew the elaborate costumes of the Este court, which were influenced by French fashions. Men's overgarments were objects of particular splendour, made of metres of gold brocade and expensive fur.[124] The similarity of Eustace's costume in the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, with its neatly pleated skirt of gold brocade and ermine trim, to the costumes in the Berlin tondo confirms that they belong to a similar moment in Florentine art.

If the Karlsruhe *Adoration* is an early expression of the revival in Florence of the taste of the north Italian courts, some features of its composition suggest that the transformation of Florentine traditions was not entire. Christ and the Angels have foreshortened haloes, while the Virgin, Joseph, Jerome, Mary Magdalene, and Eustace do not. The palm tree directly above Christ is depicted as a perfectly symmetrical, conspicuously regular form, in contrast to the organic forms of the oak trees. Are the more three-dimensional and geometric features indicative of Christ's divine status, an association of divinity with perspective and order? Furthermore, an intriguing pattern of correspondences is apparent in the composition: Saint Jerome's bald pate, curly grey locks at the back and sides of his head and grey beard mirror Joseph's appearance, Mary Magdalene's long blonde hair and flowing fur-lined mantle bordered in gold resemble the Virgin's, while Eustace's short, blond curly hair mirrors Christ's hair. The ox and the ass at the left correspond to the buck and hound at the lower right, while the tiny deer at the right corresponds to the lion at the bottom left. Everywhere in the composition the number three is significant: there are three boats in the harbour, three angels on the left and three on the right, three animals behind the Holy Family (who number three, of course), and there are three saints with three animals below. Might the

saints be standing in for a secular patron whose family had recently grown to number three, paying homage to the ideal family? Whatever meaning the play of perspective and correspondences in the composition may have, they show that Uccello did not entirely abandon his earlier habits when embracing the new richer taste in imagery.

Another smallish work in a hybrid 'courtly' style is the Quarate predella (Museo Diocesano, Florence), a single panel with three painted scenes set against a gold ground: *Saint John at Patmos*, the *Adoration of the Magi*, and *Saints James and Ansano*.[125] The elaborate costume of the Magus furthest to the right is particularly close to those in the Berlin tondo, in the design of the sleeve of the overgarment providing the wearer with the option of a cuff to insert the hand or a slit for the whole arm. This concession to practicality only emphasises the impracticality of the enormous gathered sleeves, which served as markers of nobility. The bouffant hairstyle of the page holding the horse's reins is reminiscent of the way Leonello d'Este wore his hair in the medal made of him by Pisanello around 1441 (an example is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Inv. 678–1865). Furthermore, the unforeshortened haloes like those in the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, suggest a revival in the taste for the surface-oriented ornament of Gentile da Fabriano. The Karlsruhe *Adoration* and the Quarate predella have often been attributed to artists other than Uccello in the past, due, perhaps, to an underestimation of the extent to which taste in painting changed in Florence over the course of the 1430s—and of Uccello's ability to respond accordingly.

Notes for Chapter 3

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[1] Frosinini (1995, p. 207) suggested that Uccello may have been sought out by the Opera del Duomo in Florence for the decoration of the chapel of Saint Zanobi discussed in 1431, possibly involving the making of mosaics on the basis of Uccello's designs.

[2] Mode (1972, pp. 369–377) suggested that Uccello might have worked with Masolino on mural paintings in Rome, after leaving Venice and before returning to settle in Florence. He attributed to Uccello the first figures in the lost *Famous Men* cycle in the *sala theatri* of the Palazzo Orsini at Monte Giordano, Rome, known from copies and derivative manuscripts, with a date of *c*. 1430. He also suggested tentatively that Uccello might have assisted Masolino with part of the *Crucifixion* scene in the mural painting cycle in the chapel of Saint Catherine in San Clemente, Rome, of *c*. 1428–1430, which is unlikely as the style of the *sinopia* drawing is not Uccello's.

[3] Landino, 1974, p. 124.

[4] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 66: 1550 ed. (and 1568 ed.). For the old photograph, see: VT Fototeca, Paolo Uccello, Florence. Most important for assessing the date of the *Creation Stories* is Paatz's observation (1934, p. 142) that the depiction of God the Father raising Adam from the ground is almost identical, though reversed, to Ghiberti's depiction of the subject in the *Doors of Paradise*. The exact dates of production for the panels of the *Doors of Paradise* are unknown but must fall between 1425, when Ghiberti received the commission, and April 1437, when all the panels were cast. If the conception of the figural composition of God the Father creating Adam is credited to Ghiberti as it probably should be, then the *Creation Stories* should be dated to the period after Uccello's return to Florence sometime after July 1427.

[5] Edward Topsell's seventeenth-century bestiary described the lamia as a creature capable of changing shape and of appearing and disappearing at will, which in classical mythology terrorised children in revenge for the murder of the children she bore Jupiter, by his wife Juno. In addition, Topsell paraphrased Plutarch, saying that the lamia put in its eyes when it left home, prying into the affairs of those around it with uncanny perception, but removed them when it returned home. Topsell quoted Plutarch's satirical suggestion that the lamia stalked the streets of Florence, so criticising the Florentines' habit of prying into the affairs of others while remaining ignorant of their own (1658, p. 353).

[6] Much of the following discussion of Uccello's involvement with the Chiostro Verde Genesis cycle is due for publication in: 'Paolo Uccello and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr: Themes of Reciprocal Obligation in Life and Art', in *Sociability and its Discontents: Civil Society, Social Capital and their Alternatives in European and Australian Society*, N. Eckstein and N. Terpstra (eds), proceedings of a conference held at the University of Sydney 19–21 August 2005. Important recent publications dealing with all or part of the cycle include: Wakayama, 1982, pp. 93–106; Hood, 1993, pp. 137–145; Borsi and Borsi, 1994, pp. 178–187, 287–290, and 323–325; and Frosinini, 2003, 27–37.

[7] This is the explanation given by Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 181) for the use of *terra verde* in the Chiostro Verde.

[8] A similar debate has surrounded the use of *terra verde* in Uccello's *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in Florence Cathedral; see: Hudson, 2006, p. 17.

[9] Berti, 1990a, p. 154.

[10] Wood Brown, 1902, pp. 83–84.

[11] Strehlke, 2003, p. 21, n. 106.

[12] Wood Brown, 1902, p. 83. See also: Castelli, 1982, pp. 76–77.

[13] The first author to suggest the project originated with Turino di Baldese's testament may have been Giuseppe Richa in 1755 (1754–1762), 3 (*Del quartiere di S. M.a Novella*), pp. 80–81). The relevant part of the will, dated 22 July 1348, reads as follows (the transcription is from Orlandi, 1955, II, pp. 436–437):

> *Item pro remedio anime sue legavit de bonis suis libras mille de quibus libris mille disposuit voluit et mandavit pingi in ecclesia sancta marie novelle de flor. ad honorem omnipotentis dei et virginis gloriose et totius celestis curie in dicto loco quo magis placuerit infrascripto suo executori storiam (sic) totius testamenti veteris sad (? forse scil.) a principio usque ad finem.*
>
> *Et fecit et reliquit ad hec executorem et fidei comissarium religiosum et honestum virum fratrem Jacobum passavantis ord. fratrum pred. de Flor. si tune viveret et si tunc non viveret fecit et reliquit executorem ad predicta loco dicti fratris Jacobi religiosum virum fratrem Miccaelem Buti Baldi dicti ord. fratrum pred. de Flor…. (se anche questi fosse venuto a mancare lasciava esecutore) priorem fratrum predicatorum florentini conventus pro tempore existentem …Et predictam storiam pingi voluit et mandavit ut profertur a die obitus dicti testatoris ad unum annum…*

[14] Frosinini, 2003, pp. 27–31.

[15] Hood, 1993, pp. 137–145.

[16] Frosinini, 2003, p. 38.

[17] Orlandi, 1955, 1, pp. 457–459, p. 529 n. 24, and p. 538. Following an outbreak of the plague in 1349, Turino added a codicil to his will to give a further 300 florins for the construction of the principal door to the church.

[18] Kent, 1981, pp. 69–70 n. 7.

[19] Henderson, 1994, pp. 171–175.

[20] Hueck, 1990, pp. 41–43; and Betka, 2001, pp. 99–106.

[21] Wilson, 1992 p. 110.

[22] As noted by Hueck (1990, p. 35), concerning the presence of the artist Dino di Benivieni as one of the confraternity's two *operai* involved in the commission for Duccio's painting.

[23] Wood Brown, 1902, pp. 87–88.

[24] Kent, 1981, p. 49 and pp. 60–61 n. 7. See also: Hatfield, 2004, pp. 86, 89–93, 95–96, 98.

[25] Wilson, 1992, p. 110.

[26] Simons (1985, I, Chapter 5, pp. 190–233) provided a detailed study of the associations between the Tornaquinci/Tornabuoni family, Santa Maria Novella, and the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr.

[27] Boccaccio, 1982, 2, pp. 489–490. The quoted translation is by J. Payne.

[28] Burckhardt, 1990, especially pp. 65–73.

[29] Castelli, 1982, pp. 76–77.

[30] Trexler (1987, p. 87 n. 40, and p. 158) speculated that the *Adoration of the Magi* relief over the door leading to the Ubriachi Chapel next to the Chiostro Verde might depict Baldassare about to be presented to the infant Christ by his namesake Magi. The kneeling donor figure is shown wearing a friar-like habit, which Trexler suggested was that of the Confraternity of Saint Peter Martyr. Ultimately, Baldassare was not buried in the chapel, which was instead donated by a descendent to the Confraternity of the Innocenti in January 1467.

[31] Wood Brown, 1902, pp. 84–85.

[32] Calzolai, 1980, p. 140 n. 496.

[33] Betka, 2001, pp. 38–39.

[34] Betka, 2001, pp. 300–301, and 356.

[35] Wilson, 1992, p. 111.

[36] Orlandi compiled records of numerous donations and bequests to the confraternity that would have aided the operation of Santa Maria Novella as a whole (for example: Orlandi, 1955, I, pp. 246, 314–315, 322–323, 334, 342–343, 363, 407, 457–459, 529 n. 24, and pp. 538, 552, and 612). See also: Betka, 2001, pp. 31–32.

[37] Wakayama (1982, pp. 93–106) proposed that Uccello received the commission for the entire cycle, for which he established the design and which he began painting *c*. 1424–1425, but only completed the first bay before leaving to work in Venice. Upon returning to Florence, according to Wakayama, Uccello would have found the cycle completed by other artists, and would have had to execute his painting in the fourth bay in place of a previously existing one. This would have been a special commission to mark the success of the Council of Florence in an allegorical manner through the motifs of the two arks, representing the Latin and Greek churches.

[38] Frosinini, 2003, pp. 28–29.

[39] Hood (1993, pp. 139 and 144) ignored the Chiostrino dei Morti, but thought the Chiostro Grande (which he interpreted as the 'second cloister') might have been referred to in error for the Chiostro Verde (the 'first cloister'). He still acknowledged that funds for Turino di Baldese's unrealised Old Testament cycle in the nave of the church might have been used for the Chiostro Verde cycle.

[40] Paatz, and Paatz, 1952-1955, III, p. 669.

[41] Orlandi, 1955, II, p. 402.

[42] The door was also opposite the door in the east wall of the church that provided the main access to the church for the congregation in the fifteenth century. For a diagram of the location of the two doors, see: Coolidge, 1966, Fig. 1. This door was walled up during Vasari's renovations in the sixteenth century (Verdon, 2002, pp. 173–74), but was re-opened in the twentieth century.

[43] Frosinini, 2003, pp. 28–30. The subject of the artists who worked on the cycle was also addressed at length by Pudelko (1935, pp. 71–89). He attributed the first and fourth bays of the east wall to Uccello, the second and third bays of the east wall and the first bay of the west wall to Dello Delli, all the bays

on the south wall to the Master of the Bargello Tondo, and the second to sixth bays on the west wall to the Pseudo Ambrogio Baldese, whom he argued could be identified with Bonaiuto di Giovanni. His opinions have not found general acceptance, but neither has there been any consensus concerning the attributions.

[44] On these paintings, see: Salvini, 1981, pp. 241–252.

[45] The cycle might originally have been intended to show only scenes from four generations of God's chosen family from Abraham to Simeon and Levi. However, it cannot be excluded that the cycle was always intended to begin with the *Creation Scenes*, even if the execution actually began with the stories of Abraham.

[46] For a recent discussion of Florentine families and their relationship with the state in an 'Age of Consensus', see: Najemy, 2006, pp. 219–249.

[47] Verdon (2002, especially pp. 174–175) argued that the iconography of Masaccio's *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella can be interpreted within the context of the Dominicans' activities dating from the thirteenth century aimed at maintaining social cohesion within and between Florentine families. For a detailed discussion of the Dominicans' relations with Florentine families and their efforts to maintain peace between them, primarily in the thirteenth century, see: Lesnick, 1989, pp. 63–95.

[48] Rubinstein, 1942, pp. 218–221.

[49] Camporeale, 1990, p. 462.

[50] Verdon, 2002, pp. 174–175.

[51] Wilson and Barbieri, 1995, pp. xiii–xiv, xxv–xxxi, xxxvii, lxxiii, and xcii. Two *laude* praying for peace, catalogued in this edition as numbers 43 and 83, are found in a mid-fourteenth-century *laudario* of the Confraternity of Santo Spirito, which met in the Florentine church with the same dedication.

[52] Lesnick, 1989, pp. 82–85.

[53] The death of his maternal great-grandfather, Castello di Lippo Beccuti of the neighbouring parish of Santa Maria Maggiore, was recorded in the convent's *Libro dei morti* (under 16 January, 1355), perhaps because commemorative ceremonies were held in his honor at Santa Maria Novella, or he may even have been buried there. So too, the death was recorded of a certain Lapa, wife of Vanni del Beccuto (Uccello's grandmother?) (under 12 June, 1340): Calzolai, 1980, pp. 37–38, and 100.

[54] ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated: '*Lottieri +1295 Nella Guerra d'Arbia col Dottore Jacopo/ Suo Fratello, con Jacopo di Cresta Suo Cugino nel 1260 = e nella Pace Latina con i Sudd^i/ e col Cav.^{re} Adimaro e Fato [?] altri Suoi Fratellis Carnalis nel/ 1290 = fu de' Sig.^{ri} nel 1293 e 1294.*' The '*Guerra d'Arbia*' refers to the river Arbia in the valley in which the town of Montaperti is found. The genealogy was decreed on 17 June 1752, as is indicated on its cover.

[55] Ottokar (1962, p. 76) noted that three members of the del Beccuto family were on the list of *mallevadori* in the peace of 1280, but did not name them individually.

[56] Furthermore, two members of the family bore the title '*Dottore*' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, indicating they were professors (ASF, Deputazione Sopra la Nobilità e Cittadinanza, 15, section 21, part 1, unfoliated: Lottieri's brother, '*Dottore Jacopo*' and Lottieri's grandson, '*M' Jacopo*

Dottore +1320'). Their expertise was quite possibly in jurisprudence—suggested by the fact that the family owned no fewer than ten volumes on law by the early fifteenth century (Bec, 1967, pp. 408–409, 411, citing ASF, Registro dei Pupilli, no. 4, fol 7ᵛ: *Inventario de' beni trovammo aveano i figliuoli dì Deo di Vanni, di xij giugno, anno mccclxxxviij*). Knowledge of the law in Uccello's maternal family would have been even more appropriate for the artist working on a commission alluding to conflict resolution.

[57] Orlandi, 1955, vol. II, pp. 499–501.

[58] Orlandi, 1955, vol. II, pp. 499–501. In 1422, '*Franciscum domini Simonis de Tornabuonis, Johannem Andree Minerbetti, Blaxium Jacobi domini Blaxii de Guasconibus de Florentia et Johannem Silvestri carradorem etc.*' were listed as the Operai of Santa Maria Novella. Later members of the *opera* are not known.

[59] Parronchi, 1969, p. 104.

[60] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 26. Authors who have dated the *Virgin and Child* earlier include: Volpe, 1980, p. 18 (1420); Cecchi, 1989a, p. 110 (1420s–1430s); and Angelini, 1990a, p. 73 (before 1425).

[61] Pope-Hennessy (Pope-Hennessy and Lightbown, 1964, pp. 59–61) attributed the work to an anonymous Florentine artist of the first half of the fifteenth century, with the admission that it might be based on a superior original by Ghiberti. Neri Lusanna, Faedo, and Santi, 1986, p. 245, cat. nos 170–171. Two polychrome stucco works of similar design are housed in the Museo Bardini in Florence. Neri Lusanna, Faedo, and Santi catalogued them in 1986 as by the workshop of Ghiberti, explaining that the attribution derives from Wilhelm von Bode's observation of the stylistic proximity of a similar work in the Berlin Gallery with the style of Ghiberti's east doors for the Florence Baptistery. The hypothetical lost prototype by Ghiberti was dated by Neri Lusanna, Faedo, and Santi to before 1427, based on the supposition that a similar Venetian version of the subject, by Bartolomeo Buon and dated 1427 might have been influenced by works Ghiberti took to Venice in 1424 or 1425.

[62] Anna Jolly identified many hundreds of Renaissance reliefs of the Virgin and Child, many by Donatello and his followers, in her book *Madonnas by Donatello and His Circle* (1998). Luciano Bellosi (2002, pp. 25–30) suggested that a group of more than 80 half-length representations of the Virgin and Child in terracotta in collections around the world might be associated with the Master of the Orsanmichele Saint Peter, whom he identified tentatively as Filippo Brunelleschi.

[63] As suggested by Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 284. For a discussion of the significance of the dedication of Santa Maria del Fiore in the early fifteenth century, see: Bergstein, 1991, pp. 673–719.

[64] Numerous household inventories are included in ASF, MPAP, 27, Libro di Deliberazione, 1417–1418. The inventory of Arrigi Bandini Falconeri's goods on fols 198v.–202 included four panel paintings described as showing the Virgin.

[65] Whistler, 2001, p. 2. For the hypothesis that Fox-Strangways acquired many of his Italian Renaissance paintings from a Florentine artist and restorer called Gotti, see: Lloyd, 1977, p. xxiii.

[66] The provenance of the *Saint George*: *c.* 1846, offered by the dealer Samuel Woodburn to the National Gallery, London; 9–11 June 1860, Christie's, London, Samuel Woodburn sale, lot 59, bought by 'Campanari'; 12 June 1863, Christie's, London, Reverend Walter Davenport Bromley sale, lot 135,

bought by 'Burton'; 1867, acquired from Mrs. F.W. Burton for the James Carnegie Collection, Kinnaird Castle; after 1922, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland from Sir Charles Alexander Carnegie; 1949, Ellis and Smith, London; 1949, acquired by Agnews, London; 1949, acquired by the Felton Bequest for the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

[67] Jolly (P.H.), 1998, p. 369.

[68] Cole Ahl, 2000, p. 56.

[69] Jolly (P.H.), 1998, pp. 369–370.

[70] [Da Calvoli], 1961, p. 16, trans. I. Ragusa.

[71] Pochat, 1978, p. 232.

[72] Battisti, 1981, p. 300, 382 n. 2.

[73] Pudelko, 1935a, pp. 72–75 n. 8.

[74] The absence of information about the patron or patrons of these works, and the complexity of the relationship between Florence and the papacy in the early fifteenth century make it difficult to determine what specific meaning, if any, the papal tiara might have. For a discussion of the relations between Florence and the papacy in the early fifteenth century, see: Partner, 1968, pp. 381–402.

[75] Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 346.

[76] Davies, 1959, p. 314.

[77] Paoletti, 1992, p. 198 n. 11.

[78] Dominici, 1955, pp. 25–26. The gold and silver in the Melbourne *Saint George* would not have pleased Dominici who warned against their use in religious paintings, lest the viewer become more idolatrous that faithful.

[79] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 372: 1568 ed.

[80] Dominici, 1955, pp. 28–29.

[81] Hoff (Hoff and Devapriam, 1995, p. 165) believed that the Melbourne painting actually depicts another version of the story by Petrus de Natalibus in which the saint first wounds the dragon with his lance and then cuts off its head with his sword in a single blow. However, the composition of the *Saint George* cannot depict that version of the story since the saint's sword is shown on the ground. Given that the dragon is holding the saint with his claws and tail, that the saint is using his left hand to hold the dragon, and seems to be holding at most a dagger in his right hand, it is not likely that he is in a position to cut off the dragon's head with a single blow. Furthermore, the princess is shown with a length of chain, with a collar attached, ready to tether the dragon.

[82] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, pp. 325–331. For a discussion of this iconography, mainly in relation to Uccello's London *Saint George*, see: Foster, 1986, pp. 13–14; and Foster and Tudor-Craig, 1986, pp. 25–39.

[83] Averlino, 1972, vol. I, pp. 248–249.

[84] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, p. 325.

[85] Davies (1959, p. 310) wondered whether the rays in the sky of the Paris *Saint George* were original. Although they are sketchy in their execution, this should not necessarily be considered grounds for

considering them later additions since a number of details in the painting are sketchy in their execution, such as the jumping deer near the top of the left edge of the painting.

[86] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 132, 335–337: 1550 and 1568 eds. More recently, Berti (2002, pp. 40–43) still left Uccello off the list of artist admirers of the Brancacci Chapel.

[87] For the conservation history of the chapel, see: Padoa Rizzo, 1997, pp. 115–116.

[88] Padoa Rizzo, *La Cappella dell'Assunta nel Duomo di Prato*, Prato, 1997.

[89] Berti, 2002, p. 48.

[90] Padoa Rizzo, 1997, pp. 35–36. The only other early reference to the chapel is the complaint recorded in 1448 that the window, having been removed for around two years, made the church cold and humid ([Marchini], 1969, p. 52; Padoa Rizzo, 1997, pp. 35–38).

[91] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, p. 637.

[92] [Marchini], 1969, pp. 51–52. The arms above the arch outside the chapel, showing a yellow horizontal bar against a red background and two birds on either side of a plant, have not been identified. Marchini identified the plant as sugar cane and suggested the family might have been named Zuccheri.

[93] [Marchini], 1969, p. 51. The coat of arms was repainted by Pietro Pezzati in 1871, and subsequently detached. It is now displayed in the Museo di Pittura Murale in Prato.

[94] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, pp. 729–730, referring to Psalms 120–134.

[95] Padoa Rizzo, 1997, p. 37.

[96] Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 299) suggested the figure might be Uccello's self-portrait; Padoa Rizzo (1997, p. 44) proposed that it is the patron's son.

[97] Borsook (1980, p. 81) believed that the left and right walls were painted in tandem from scaffolding crossing the entire chapel, based on the uniformity of technique of the scenes at the same height.

[98] Padoa Rizzo (1997, pp. 83–98) suggested that the execution of the *giornate* was probably divided between Uccello and an assistant or assistants, working on two scenes on each level concurrently, with Uccello responsible for the execution of the more important parts, such as portraits.

[99] As noted in: Frosinini, 2003, p. 30. Laura Cavazzini (1999, p. 23) has also noted affinities between Uccello's Marcovaldi Chapel paintings and Scheggia's *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* in the church of San Francesco, Arezzo.

[100] D'Amico, 1981, p. 51.

[101] As recorded in the account of the fifteenth-century diarist Bartolomeo del Corazza (1991, p. 71.)

[102] Piana, 1986, pp. 26–54, especially p. 47.

[103] Terpstra, 1995, pp. 19–37.

[104] Borchert et al., 2002, p. 235. The work's owner in the seventeenth century, the Antwerp dealer Peter Steven, described it as a portrait of Albergati in an annotation to Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*.

[105] Panofsky, 1954, pp. 102–108. For a more recent assessment of the work, see: Hall, 1998, pp. 11–33.

[106] D'Amico (1981, p. 59) stated that the date was executed in the *intonaco*.

[107] Lollini, 1994, p. 120 (1431); Volpe, 1980, pp. 8–9 (1437); Angelini, 1990a, p. 73, and Bellosi, Angelini, and Ragionieri, 1991, pp. 927–928 (*c.* 1435); Eisler, 1982, p. 71 (possibly 1436).

[108] Sicari, 2002, p. 379.

[109] Alberti, 1972, pp. 54–55.

[110] Herzner (1986, p. 158) dated one example in the Museo Bardini to *c*. 1465. Jolly (A., 1998, pp. 133–134) identified two variants of the composition in a number of stuccoes by followers of Donatello. The first variant is exemplified by Inv. no. 1200 in the Museo Bardini, the second variant is exemplified by Inv. no. 1201 in the same museum. The latter is closer to the Bologna *Adoration* in the Child's nakedness and reclining position, while the former is closer in the ball held by the Child. Jolly attributed the design of the first variant to Donatello and the second variant to an anonymous follower of Donatello who had worked in his Paduan workshop. The question remains open whether the anonymous artist or artists responsible for the Donatelloesque Nativities borrowed the motif of the Christ Child from Uccello's Bologna *Adoration* or whether Uccello borrowed the motif from a lost work by Donatello.

[111] D'Amico, 1981, p. 53.

[112] D'Amico (1981, p. 53) suggested that the worshippers might belong to a lay confraternity associated with the Carmelites who owned the church.

[113] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 64.

[114] On the cult of the Magi in late Medieval and early Renaissance Florence, see: Trexler, 1987, pp. 75–167.

[115] Celenza, 1999, especially pp. 207–215.

[116] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, p. 876.

[117] Bernacchioni (2003, pp. 416–418, 420–421 n. 15) provided fewer iconographic grounds for the inclusion of the other two saints, except that Magdalene was, like Jerome, a penitent, and Eustace was, like Jerome, a saint who saw visions, the latter feature in iconographic sympathy with the surreal, vision-like composition of the work. In a footnote she noted that Eustace's feast day was celebrated by the Confraternity of the Purification, for which Uccello had worked, and which came under the supervision of the Confraternity of Saint Jerome during Uccello's membership of it. Sebregondi, 1991, p. 4. In 1488, Antonio di Bartolomeo was paid by the Confraternity of Saint Jerome for the execution in fresco of stories of Saint Jerome and Saint Mary Magdalene in its courtyard (*corticino*).

[118] Dresel, Lüdke, and Vey, 1992, p. 119.

[119] Dresel, Lüdke, and Vey (1992, p. 118) identified the saint on the right as Julian, although he is more usually identified as Eustace. In Florentine painting of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Saint Julian is often depicted as a middle-aged man with a beard, wearing a long, blue, miniver-lined robe, a long red surcoat and carrying a sword in its sheath. This is the case in Giovanni dal Ponte's *Saint Julian* (*c*. 1430), Lorenzo di Bicci's *Saints Julian and Zanobius* (late 1300s or early 1400s), and Niccolo di Pietro Gerini's *Saint Julian* (before 1415), all in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence. Saint Eustace is depicted in Piero and Antonio Pollaiuolo's *Saints James between Saints Vincent and Eustace* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence) as a young man with a robe that falls above the knees, red hose, an ermine-lined cape and a sword in its sheath. Thus, the third saint in the *Adoration* corresponds more closely to depictions of Eustace than Julian.

[120] Dresel, Lüdke, and Vey, 1992, pp. 114–115.

[121] Holmes, 1999, p. 176.

[122] Ames-Lewis, 1987, p. 5. For the date of the work, see: Wohl, 1980, pp. 120–122.

[123] Syson, Gordon, and Avery-Quash, 2001, pp. 29–34. Pisanello's drawings of the Emperor John VIII Palaeologus are in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

[124] Syson, Gordon, and Avery-Quash, 2001, pp. 70–74.

[125] Little is known of the provenance of this work. Until 1908 at least it was in San Bartolomeo, Quarate, Bagno a Ripoli, and was later transferred to the Museo Diocesano, Florence (Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 109).

4

Perspective: Form and Symbol

For Eugène Müntz, the eminent nineteenth-century historian of Renaissance art, Uccello represented the decisive advance of Italian early Renaissance realism over early Netherlandish realism. This was due to the Italian artist's scientific approach to perspective, rather than an empirical one, even if he took the approach to extremes.[1] It has become a truism that early Netherlandish artists, such as Jan van Eyck, depicted space empirically, while their Italian contemporaries, such as Uccello, depicted space scientifically. If Netherlandish artists before the late 1450s did not align the majority of the orthogonals of their compositions to a single point,[2] they were certainly able to create a sophisticated illusion of space. It is difficult to think of a Florentine work of the early fifteenth century that can rival for complexity of spatial conception Van Eyck's *Giovanni (?) Arnolfini and his Wife* in the National Gallery, London, in which the layout of the rest of the room beyond the picture plane can be reconstructed from the reflection in the mirror and the reflections of light on the objects depicted in the room, as well as the shadows they cast. Conversely, the traditional belief in the scientific nature of Florentine Renaissance perspective is open to question. To what extent is it scientific? The belief in its scientific nature derives from the traditional understanding of how it developed in the early 1400s, in the theories and practices of the architect-artists Brunelleschi and Alberti, for whom a sophisticated grasp of spatial relationships was a professional requirement. However, the origins of Florentine single-point perspective are not as well documented as might be wished, and its uses are more varied than commonly recognised.

Standard modern accounts often follow the chronology sketched by Erwin Panofsky in his classic essay 'Perspective as Symbolic Form', which has been followed in a somewhat doctrinaire manner, attributing the invention of single-point perspective to Brunelleschi in the early decades of the fifteenth century, while Donatello is often said to have been the first to apply it to relief sculpture, Masaccio the first to apply it to large-scale painting, and Alberti the first to put it down in writing.[3] Uccello's longstanding reputation as a leading practitioner

of perspective has since been somewhat clouded, and so it is worth re-examining the evidence for the development of single-point perspective here, and for Uccello's role in it.

Brunelleschi was indeed referred to as a 'perspectivist' in a letter written in 1413 by the poet Domenico da Prato to Alessandro di Michele Rondinelli ('*prespettivo, ingegnoso uomo Filippo di ser Brunellescho, ragguardevole di virtudi e di fama*'), a tantalizingly early but laconic source. The sculptor and architect Filarete credited Brunelleschi with the invention of the modern rules of perspective in his treatise on architecture, written *c.* 1460–1464, as did Antonio di Tuccio de' Manetti in his short collection of biographies of Renaissance Florence's most remarkable men, written *c.* 1494–1497.[4] Evidently, Brunelleschi's contribution to the development of perspective impressed his contemporaries and followers. However, there is no surviving written description of his actual technique, or a perspective depiction definitely by Brunelleschi with which to reconstruct it.[5]

In his extended biography of Brunelleschi, Manetti famously described two panels painted by Brunelleschi (now lost) showing perspectival depictions of views of the Baptistery from the door of the Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. Manetti explained how Brunelleschi demonstrated the verisimilitude of his depiction of the Baptistery by making a tiny hole in the reverse of the panel through which the viewer looked to see a mirror held in place facing the panel. With one eye, the viewer observed a reflection of the depiction of the Baptistery on the obverse of the panel through the hole, that is, from the point prescribed by Brunelleschi, presumably the point at which the perspective construction gave a convincing impression. Manetti called Brunelleschi's perspective scientific because it involved a rule 'setting down properly and rationally the reductions and enlargements of near and distant objects in correct proportion to the distance in which they are shown', but what that rule was Manetti did not say, probably because many decades after the event he did not know.[6] Brunelleschi's preparatory design for the perspective would have been obscured when he coloured the image, as Manetti informs us he did.

Donatello's impressive *Saint George and the Dragon* marble relief on the base of his statue of Saint George, made for the niche of the Armourers' Guild on the outside of Orsanmichele just along from the Baptistery (now in Florence's Bargello Museum), is datable to the late teens of the fifteenth century. It has been described as among the earliest surviving instances of the application of the new perspective.[7] However, linear perspective is confined to the facade of the small building behind the princess and the pavement within, visible through a doorway, minor features in which the perspective seems in fact to be rather irregular. The astonishingly sophisticated perspective of Donatello's *Banquet of Herod* relief for the baptismal font in Siena, executed in the mid 1420s, shows that Donatello was indeed among the pioneers in the development of linear perspective, even though his use of it here is

still irregular, inasmuch as the vanishing point is not centred, and the architectural features are conspicuously disorderly. The informal visual jumble created by the irregular perspective contributes to the composition's freshness, the daring innovation of the complex, multilayered depiction of space is accentuated by the contrivedly casual and idiosyncratic composition.

Masaccio's *Trinity* (*c*. 1425–1427) is unquestionably among the earliest surviving paintings in which the two key features of Florentine single-point perspective are apparent, at least in the barrel vault if not the entire composition. These features are converging orthogonals (the lateral edges on the sides of box shapes parallel to the picture plane converge to a single point) and proportionally diminishing spatial values (the forms shown receding into the distance diminish in size at a regular rate). It has been assumed that Brunelleschi must have inspired or designed the fictive architecture in this work,[8] and that the appearance of mathematical precision is part of its religious meaning.[9] Certainly, the classical architecture is much more elaborate and close to Brunelleschi's style than in any other work of Masaccio, and the perspective is a much more important feature of the work than in any other work of Masaccio, but their collaboration on this painting remains hypothetical.

As the *Trinity* is such a spectacular and early example of single-point perspective, writers sometimes succumb to the temptation of overestimating its mathematical precision and ignoring its precedents in perspective painting. The idea that its perspective is entirely mathematically precise must be treated with some caution. There is probably no Renaissance painting in which every line and shape conforms precisely to an overall perspective plan. In 1996, J.V. Field published a thorough review of Renaissance approaches to perspective, including that of the *Trinity* after having made new measurements of the paint surface, concluding: 'Like other artists of the fifteenth century, Masaccio and Donatello were interested in a form of truth that was essentially visual rather than mathematical, though mathematics might be used in attaining to it. That a picture that is so impressively visually correct as the Trinity can turn out to be mathematically faulty is a warning against confusing artist with mathematician.' According to Field, the abaci—the flat blocks surmounting the capitals in the four corners of the vault—are not consistently measured, those at the front are too long to have been planned mathematically.[10] The idea that Masaccio was the first to create large-scale paintings in single-point perspective also needs to be treated with caution. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers alternatively give Uccello and Masaccio the credit for pioneering the use of perspective in painting, and Masolino's contribution has often been overlooked. However, given the low survival rate for their early works, it is unlikely that the priority of their respective contributions to the development of single-point perspective in painting will ever be determined securely.

Alberti's treatise on painting *De pictura* written in Latin in 1435 (and translated into the vernacular as *Della pittura* in 1436) includes the best-known description of a method providing the two key features of single-point perspective. The method exploits geometry rather than calculation to depict a pavement of squares in perspective. Alberti frankly admitted at the outset of his text that 'Mathematicians measure the shapes and forms of things in the mind alone and divorced entirely from matter. We, on the other hand, who wish to talk of things that are visible, will express ourselves in cruder terms.[11] Indeed, a modern mathematical analysis of Alberti's perspective method has found it wanting, in terms of determining the precise relationship between horizontal, vertical, and orthogonal proportions.[12]

Furthermore, while Alberti's single-point perspective generates a consistent diminution of scale in forms as they recede into space in front of the viewer, this is at the expense of visual consistency across the picture plane. The further forms are laterally from the centre, the greater is their distortion. Piero della Francesca addressed this problem in the twelfth proposition of the second book of *De prospectiva pingendi* (*On Perspective for Painting*), but could not accept that peripheral distortion occurred.[13] Leonardo da Vinci's surviving notes on the subject, however, indicate that he realised it did.[14] In other words, the single-point perspective method is neither an entirely mathematically precise method of depicting space in two dimensions, nor an entirely consistent approximation of it, but rather a system for creating a degree of illusion of regularly constructed space, one that privileges the diminution of forms away from the picture plane. Nevertheless, this marked a significant change from fourteenth-century practices and would make a lasting impact on the visual art of the West. Uccello, however, had apparently demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of perspective more than a decade before Alberti wrote *De pictura*, as will be discussed further below, and was not one to repeat formulaic approaches in his art. For Uccello, the method described by Alberti was a convention that was not theoretically binding, it did not override other aims of his art, such as formal, narrative, and symbolic concerns.

Much of the literature dealing with Uccello's use of perspective has examined its formal qualities, through detailed studies of the linear constructions of his compositions, or has examined its theoretical basis, through the comparison of his works with written sources on perspective.[15] Parronchi surveyed the corpus of Uccello's paintings, finding in them a consistent refusal of the limits of 'orthodox' Brunelleschian and Albertian single-point perspective. For Parronchi, evidence of this was found in Uccello's diverse vanishing points for separate parts of his compositions, such as the two vanishing points for the arks in the *Flood*.[16] Similarly, Sindona emphasised the diversity, eccentricity, and lack of formal unity in Uccello's works as indications of his pluralistic philosophical approach to perspective. For

Sindona, Uccello had no single, ideal method of perspective to be attained, rather perspective was a means of creating multiple and varied formal and symbolic relationships between subjects and objects within his pictures.[17]

From the point of view of the simplistic Brunelleschi-Donatello-Masaccio-Alberti genealogy of single-point perspective alluded to by many writers, Uccello represents an offshoot of the family descended from Ghiberti's distant branch of the family, as it were. Ghiberti's professional rivalry with Brunelleschi has coloured the accounts of his status as one of the founders of Renaissance art, such that he is depicted as belonging to an opposing camp in his art as well as his professional politics. As far as the formal qualities of Ghiberti's perspective is concerned, a number of the architectural depictions in the *Doors of Paradise* (formerly San Giovanni, Florence, now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence) are constructed using the two key features of Florentine perspective: converging orthogonals and proportionally diminishing transversal spatial values. The fact that his figures are often modelled using lyric, Gothic forms does not alter the orthodox single-point perspective underlying his compositional schemes, when he chose to use it.[18] Uccello was certainly influenced by Ghiberti's lyric figure style and may have learnt his perspective technique with Ghiberti also, but this does not necessarily put him at odds with the conventional usage, nor does it mean that Uccello did not contribute to the development of the convention.

Vasari leaves little room for doubt that Uccello was among the leaders in the development of perspective in painting in Florence, in his description of the lost *Annunciation* by Uccello in Santa Maria Maggiore: 'the first that showed in a fine manner to artists and with grace and proportion, [it] showed how to make the lines escape [towards a vanishing point] and to show space on a plane, that is little and small, so much so that something that appears far seems large.'[19] It can easily be imagined that Uccello took great pains to make his work impressive in the church where it would be seen regularly by members of his mother's extended family. The *Annunciation* was painted around 1423, before Masaccio's *Trinity* and paintings in the Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine, and it would have made an impression on Masaccio, who worked on the same commission.[20]

The widespread belief in the mathematical precision of the perspective in the *Trinity* is testimony to the brilliant manner with which Masaccio composed and painted it, using symmetry, pure geometric forms, and strong definition of forms through contrasts of light and shade. However, its emphatic sense of sobriety and order represents a particular moment in the development of early Renaissance Florentine painting, appropriate for a grave depiction of the crucified Christ, but in many ways it is the exception rather than the rule. To take its apparently rational depiction of space as an expression of the fundamental character of Florentine Renaissance perspective would be to ignore the specificity of its meaning in its

context and the plurality of meanings that perspective may have in other contexts. Perspective is not invariably used to create a realistic impression of space. The diversity of Uccello's subsequent uses of perspective, at times using single-point perspective in a more or less conventional manner, as in the architectural features of the *Equestrian Monument*, and at times departing from it, as in the *Nativity* from the Spedale di San Martino alla Scala, is indicative of the fluidity of his style and the subtlety of his approach to his art.[21] A measure of Uccello's subtlety can be found, or at least looked for, in the extent to which he tailored his use of perspective to the intended contexts of his works. To date, little attention has been given to this side of the equation, that is, the significance of the patrons' tastes, the functions of Uccello's works in their original settings, and the intellectual climates associated with these places.

Uccello's representation of the detritus of war, the broken lances, shields, and bodies on the ground of his *Battle* paintings now in the National Gallery, London, the Musée du Louvre in Paris, and the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, invite explanation because of the curious way in which Uccello has arranged some of these haphazardly fallen objects in a regular, perspectival grid. Even the grass and clover conspire to grow in patches aligned with the grid. Had Uccello wanted to introduce a perspectival depiction of space into these compositions in a realistic manner, he might simply have shown the regular diminution of the outlines of fields under cultivation, somewhat as he did in the Paris *Saint George*. So what might Uccello's intention have been in creating these conspicuously contrived depictions of perspective?

Fifteenth-century written sources on perspective do not say much about its potential for expressing symbolic meaning. The most detailed accounts from this period are didactic, such as Alberti's and Filarete's instructions on perspectival methods. Such technical texts can account for the form but not the content of Uccello's *Battle* paintings. However, by examining the context of the earliest reference to the works, as well as contemporary examples of perspectival depictions in Florence, it is possible to link the *Battle* paintings to a visual culture that admired skill in artifice, not only of the dry, academic kind, but of wit, irony, and originality.

In 2001 Francesco Caglioti published the earliest documentary reference to the *Battle* paintings, which he found in the Bartolini-Salimbeni family's private archive. Andrea Bartolini's *zibaldone*, written between 1479 and 1493, refers to the paintings in the Camera Grande in his family's residence in Via Porta Rossa, a few blocks to the west of the Piazza della Signoria in the centre of Florence. The building and its contents had belonged to his father, Lionardo Bartolini, who died in 1479. They were displayed with another painting

depicting caged lions, in a room furnished with various kinds of beds, chests, a large wooden bench decorated with a perspectival design, and large cupboards with scenes in perspective. Caglioti tentatively identified these scenes with the paintings in chiaroscuro by Uccello that Vasari saw in the garden of the Bartolini palazzo at Gualfonda (now Valfonda).[22] This hypothesis has to recommend it the fact that Vasari described the paintings as belonging to the category of furniture painting.[23] In any case, many of the objects in the room included some kind of perspectival representation. Although Andrea's *zibaldone* does not prove that the *Battle* paintings were commissioned for the Camera Grande or, indeed, that they were commissioned by a member of the Bartolini family at all, it does show they were displayed early in their history in a domestic interior belonging to a man with a taste for perspectival representations.

Whether the prominence of perspective in the decorative scheme of the Bartolini Camera Grande was common in early Renaissance Florentine domestic interiors is difficult to establish because of the scarcity of comparably detailed records for the contents of other houses. Furthermore, there are few other instances of such contrived use of perspective as occurs in the *Battle* panels. One example is Masolino's *Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore* (Museo e Gallerie Nazionali di Capidimonte, Naples), with its small clouds mysteriously aligned in diminishing perspective in the sky. The subject is the miraculous snowfall in Rome that allowed the pope to trace the foundations of the church on the ground. Masolino's unnaturally arranged clouds emphasise the uncanny nature of the events taking place beneath Christ and the Virgin in the sky, where nature conspires with man to honour the Virgin with the founding of a church dedicated to her.

A fifteenth-century interior decoration in which perspective features prominently is found in the Sacrestia delle Messe in the Duomo of Florence. Its brilliant intarsia work was begun in 1436, probably just a few years before the *Battle* paintings, by two *équipes*: Agnolo di Lazzaro and company, including Scheggia; and Antonio di Manetto and company.[24] The intarsia panels depict illusionistic still-lives with foreshortened half-open lattice shutters on cupboards containing multi-facetted candlesticks and books, chests of drawers, vases of flowers, garlands of fruit, and cherubim playfully climbing trellises and balancing vases on their heads. The representation of fictive drawers in a room with many real ones makes a characteristic trompe l'oeil visual pun. Many of the fictive objects appear to be casually arranged, creating opportunities for the artists to depict a variety of foreshortenings, such as the lattice shutters in various positions of openness, and drawers alternatively open and closed. The contrived casualness of the arrangement of the objects depicted extends to the sculptures in the sacristy, providing the opportunity for a more audacious visual pun. The cherubim with wicked grins on their faces sitting behind the taps of Buggiano's marble

handwashing basin are smiling because the position of the taps makes it seem as though *they* are passing water when the taps are running.

The most obvious analogy between the perspective in Uccello's *Battle* paintings and the intarsia of the Sacrestia delle Messe is the similarity of the design of Uccello's *mazzocchi* and the numerous polyhedral objects in the intarsia, such as the candlesticks, chalice, and books. In both the painted and carpentry depictions of objects, the dazzling quality of precision geometry is the only justification for the investment of such considerable effort in the execution of these details. The intarsia rings designed by Scheggia on the south wall of the sacristy, in particular the wheels with diamonds that seem to spin, demonstrate a delight in the optical effects that sophisticated draftsmanship and craftsmanship can create.

Evidence that fifteenth-century viewers appreciated the virtuoso perspective skills of painting and intarsia in similar terms is provided by an anonymous poet who described Piero de' Medici's study in the Palazzo Medici on Via Larga in 1459, where he saw:

> an exit [door] done with such art that I take it
>
> for true relief—and it's flat intarsia—
>
> Which gives into the triumphal and lovely study,
>
> that has such talent and order and measure
>
> that it represents angelic exultation,
>
> With complete art in inlays and painting,
>
> in perspective and carvings sublime,
>
> and in great mastery of architecture.
>
> There are great numbers of highly ornate books
>
> and vases of alabaster and chalcedony
>
> that are decorated with gold and silver.
>
> And all things there are beautiful and good,
>
> some by nature and others by human talent.
>
> made thus with whole perfection.[25]

Relevant too is the poet's observation that the perfection of the interior resulted from the combination of nature and artifice, since the interplay between these is what animates Uccello's perspective in the *Battle* paintings, Masolino's perspective in the *Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore*, and the perspective in the intarsia in the Sacrestia delle Messe.

If the depiction of the caged lions by an unidentified artist in the Bartolini Camera Grande was a large-scale work like the *Battle* paintings, as seems possible from the fact that it was considered worth recording by Andrea, it may also be suggestive of a taste for ironic or witty displays of pictorial illusionism. The potential in the depiction of lions for engendering fear increases with the skill of the artist. The cage might have served as an ironic reassurance

to the viewer of their safety, an allusion to the artist's skill in imitating reality. In the 1550 edition of the *Vite* Vasari described works on canvas by Pesello in the Palazzo Medici, including one 'of lions, looking out from a grate, which appear very lifelike'. In the 1568 edition Vasari also credited Uccello with canvases in the Palazzo Medici, perhaps the same ones, of 'lions fighting among themselves, with movements and ferocity so terrible they appear alive.'[26] Classical anecdotes concerning the skill of artists in counterfeiting nature, and the fear, or lack of it, this could engender were known in Renaissance Florence. Ghiberti related in his *I commentarii* Pliny's story of the Greek painter Zeuxis who painted a boy holding grapes. Seeing that birds came to peck the grapes, Zeuxis felt that the grapes were better painted than the boy, who, had he been better represented, would have scared the birds away.[27]

Even a patron with a taste for sober, classical architecture could commission more playful styles in painting. The *Thebaïd* and *Stories of Joseph* mural paintings in the *altana* (covered terrace) of Giovanni Rucellai's palazzo, not far from the Bartolini residence, have been attributed to Giovanni di Francesco and are datable to the late 1450s.[28] They are close enough to Uccello's style to have once been attributed to him and so they provide another, particularly pertinent, case of the prominent use of perspective in a large-scale decoration for a domestic context.[29] The context is also pertinent because the paintings are in a building with an austere and relatively regular façade designed for Rucellai by Alberti. Alberti also provided Rucellai with the sober, symmetrical, and regular designs for the façade of Santa Maria Novella, and for his tomb in the church of San Pancrazio. Thus, the eccentric use of perspective in the mural paintings in the *altana* seems significant. While the fictive architecture in the *Stories of Joseph* reflects the monumentality of the real architecture surrounding it, there are diverse vanishing points emphatically different from one scene to the next, and not symmetrical within each scene. The use of perspective is very similar in these respects to that in Uccello's *Miracle of the Host* in Urbino. The bold checkerboard patterns on the floors and the ceilings of Giovanni di Francesco's fictive architecture represent a stylised use of perspective, giving it what in modern terms could be described as a jazzy quality.

Whether in the sober environment of a church or the dignified palazzo of a patrician, perspective representations embellished architectural spaces to inspire admiration of artists' skill not just through faithful imitations of reality or academic displays of mathematical precision, but in witty plays on the blurred distinction between the natural and artificial, and irreverent negations of convention. The contrived arrangement of the broken lances and the turf in the *Battle* paintings can be understood as a playful and self-conscious subversion of the illusionism achieved in Uccello's paintings. They are a virtuoso display of linear perspective and a witty acknowledgment of the artifice of painting.

An example of a different approach to perspective by Uccello was once found in the Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala, subsequently re-named San Martino alla Scala, on the street where Uccello lived, Via della Scala. The *spedale* was founded in the early fourteenth century by a local benefactor, Cione di Lapo Pollini, and took on the role of caring for abandoned children.[30] Its administration was subsequently taken over by the Silk Guild, which built the Spedale degli Innocenti as an orphanage in the first half of the fifteenth century. The smallish mural painting of the *Nativity* (140 by 215 cm) was previously in the arch above the door leading from the cloister of the Spedale di San Martino alla Scala into the narthex of its chapel. It has been detached, and is now stored with its *sinopia* in the reserve collection of the Uffizi, due to its poor condition.

While no documentary evidence for the work's commission has been found, Bernacchioni has suggested that the commission might be related to the presence of the Confraternity of the Archangel Raphael in the *spedale*.[31] The confraternity moved into the chapel and rooms in the *spedale* between the present Via degli Orti Oricellari and the courtyard by 1427, which it renovated at its own expense. The confraternity had prominent supporters, including Pope Eugenius IV. He approved an alternative name for it, the Confraternity of the Nativity of Our Lord, in recognition of the impressive nativity play it performed in 1430. He also issued bulls to obtain accommodation for the confraternity at the *spedale*, not far from the entrance to his apartment at Santa Maria Novella. The confraternity might well have known the paintings Uccello executed in 1437 for the Confraternity of the Purification at the Spedale di San Matteo, since that confraternity was a splinter group that had separated from them in 1427. The groups maintained good relations after the split, visiting each other every year on the feast days of their patron saints.[32] Thus, Uccello was a local artist whose work the Confraternity of the Nativity would have known.

The *sinopia* of Uccello's painting is probably unique in the history of Renaissance mural painting in showing only a perspective grid, devoid of the usual figures, buildings, or landscape elements. On the basis of the grid, Uccello might have depicted a scene in single-point perspective with the major orthogonals leading to the centre of the top of the rectangle, or a scene in two-point perspective with the major orthogonals leading to the top corners of the rectangle, or both simultaneously. However, he chose none of these options. Instead, Uccello depicted the front of the shelter for the ox and the ass parallel to the picture plane, but diminishing in perspective to the right. A *pavimento* is visible in the landscape on the left, which, like the shelter, is parallel to the picture plane, but diminishes in perspective to the left. The result is a very curious depiction of space, positioning in the centre of the image the kind of distorted forms more often confined to the lateral edges of a single-point perspective picture. The composition is quite different in this respect from Uccello's design for the

Nativity window in the Duomo, with its much more conventional depiction of space, leading one to suspect that Uccello had specific intentions in composing the painting as he did.

Parronchi interpreted the separate vanishing points in the *Nativity* as a critique of Brunelleschian and Albertian orthodox single-point perspective. He related this approach specifically to Vitellione's observation in Book III of his *Perspectiva* that an object is only seen distinctly when it falls on the central axis between the viewer's eyes.[33] If this theoretical interpretation of Uccello's imagery seems quite erudite for a *spedale* for abandoned children housing a confraternity for children, it may be relevant that Brunelleschi had been one of the Operai of the Silk Guild that administered the *spedale*, although his duties related to the construction of the Spedale degli Innocenti in the 1420s, some time before Uccello's work was painted.[34] Even so, there seems to be no definite imagery within the composition, such as blurred images at the lateral edges, to support Parronchi's interpretation. Franco and Stefano Borsi interpreted the bi-focal perspective of the *Nativity* as an allusion to the duality of Christ's incarnation, divine and human.[35]

Alternatively, the divergence of the perspectival views towards the right and the left in Uccello's *Nativity*, with the view to the right dominating, may have a moral and religious significance. The prominence of the sheep in the left foreground, at the point where the two perspective views separate, recalls the passage in the Bible in Matthew 25: 32–46 from Christ's discourse on the Mount of Olives describing the separation of the sheep from the goats:

> And before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:
>
> And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.
>
> Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
>
> For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
>
> Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me.
>
> Then shall the righteous answer him, saying Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?
>
> When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?
>
> Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
>
> And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.
>
> Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.[36]

Part of the same text (the latter part of Matthew 25: 34) provides the key inscription in the fourteenth-century mural painting *Allegory of Mercy* in the Sala dell'Udienza of the Misericordia in the Piazza di San Giovanni in Florence, one of the most important charitable institutions in Florence in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Like the Spedale di San Martino alla Scala, it cared for foundlings, among its other charitable activities. The *Allegory of Mercy* has been described as the earliest instance of the representation of the works of mercy in an Italian philanthropic institution, and as such the model for a number of mural painting cycles of similar subject matter in Tuscany, some of them in *spedali*.[37] The centrality of the parable of the sheep and the goats for the mission of charitable hospitals is further suggested by the document for Marguerite de Bourgogne's foundation of the Hôpital de Tonnerre in Burgundy of 1293, in which the acts of charity described in the parable are mentioned.[38] If the iconography of Uccello's *Nativity* relates to this text also, it may be interpreted as an allusion to the charitable work undertaken at the *spedale*, especially for children. While the children might be reassured that they will be cared for at the *spedale* by the image of the Virgin adoring the Christ Child, or (metaphorically) by the image of the shepherds watching over their flocks, the administrators of the *spedale* would be assured that their charitable work would not go unrewarded by Christ.

The *Nativity* also hints at the punishment Christ alluded to for those who did not act mercifully. While the dominant view of the Christian story of the nativity leads to the vanishing point on the right (traditionally the virtuous side), the subsidiary one leads to a tiny gallows in the distant landscape at the left (traditionally the 'sinister' side). That the motif of the gallows might not just be an insignificant landscape feature, but a symbol, is suggested by the figure of Securitas in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Effects of Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, whose attribute is a hanged man and gallows. . Furthermore, the hanged man calls to mind Judas Iscariot, himself a foundling according to medieval legend.[39] The iconography of the *Nativity* apparently represents two paths: the Christian path leading to eternal life on the right, and another leading to ignominy on the left, a moral message on the rewards for charity and the danger of straying from the Christian path. The idea of murals

containing moral warnings of this kind in a secular context is contained in Filarete's hypothetical project for painted figures of Truth and Falsehood, Justice and criminals, in his proposal for a hall of civic justice, with…

> …thieves and traitors and all those vices that merit death, and with them their punishments and manner of execution, according to their crimes.
>
> And this because they frighten those who enter and to give an example to those who wish to take it, and so those who will be brought here will soon see what their end will be […] and so were painted all the things that were suited to the building. Paolo Uccello with other companions painted it; he is a great master of painting.[40]

The compelling drama of the *Flood* is created through Uccello's powerful combination of perspective and narrative. Framed by the scene of the massive ark in the floodwaters on the left and the scene of the ark come to rest on the earth at the right, the figures and landscape along the central axis are buffeted by the storm. In the distance, haunting, cloaked figures lie paralysed on the ground. A bolt from the sky blasts a tree, sending leaves flying in the gale rushing towards the viewer, along with rain drops that splash and bounce off the walls of the ark. Floating tables and barrels offer precarious refuge to the victims of the flood, shown in various states of desperation. The ultimate futility of their fight for survival taking place at the left is shown by the bloated corpses lying on the ground at the right. The prominent use of perspective dramatises the whole composition by creating an impression of the enormity of the arks, and of the events unfolding around them.

The complex and unusual imagery in the *Stories of Noah* has suggested to many that it represents more than a straightforward illustration of the events concerning the flood in Genesis Chapters 6 to 9. Edgar Wind noted that the representation of the ark in the *Sacrifice and Drunkenness of Noah*, like Ghiberti's ark in the *Gates of Paradise*, is pyramid shaped, and supposed that it had been inspired by the comparable description in Origen's third century *In Genesim homiliae* (*Homilies on Genesis*), without, however, drawing any conclusions on what it might mean for the interpretation of these works in their immediate contexts.[41] As a traditional bulwark of theological orthodoxy, Santa Maria Novella might seem an unlikely place to allude to the writings of a controversial early Christian writer such as Origen, some of whose views had been condemned at the Church's Fifth Ecumenical Council in 556, for which reason mid-fifteenth-century Florentine apologists kept their pro-Origen writings to themselves during their lifetimes.[42] On the other hand, none other than Fra Jacopo Passavanti, named in Turino di Baldese's will as executor of his bequest for the painting of an Old Testament cycle in Santa Maria Novella, had rendered into the vernacular a pseudo-Origen homily on Mary Magdalene.[43] Creighton Gilbert rejected the specificity of

Wind's hypothesis on the basis that the majority of early writers had described the the ark as pyramid shaped, but left open the possibility of an influence of patristic studies in Florence on depictions of the Old Testament at this time.[44] This at least suggests that Uccello's and Ghiberti's imagery might reflect learned study of the Old Testament in their environment.

A much more specific and nearly contemporary influence has been seen in the iconography of Uccello's *Stories of Noah*, a view that has found some acceptance in the literature. This is Eiko Wakayama's proposal that they contain an allegory of the unification of the Latin and Greek churches at the Council of Florence. Pope Eugenius IV convened some sessions of the Council at Santa Maria Novella in 1439, with Emperor John VIII Palaeologus, the Patriarch Joseph of Constantinople, and their entourages. The decree unifying the Latin and Greek Churches was signed on 5 July. Wakayama described the success of the Council as the most important religious event for the Christian world in the first half of the fifteenth century, and so a commemoration of the event might well have been desired at Santa Maria Novella. Uccello depicted two different arks in the composition, distinguished by the different positions of the nails and the proportions of other structural elements. Given that Christian symbolism of the period commonly identified the Church with an ark, Wakayama proposed that the two arks represent the Latin and Greek Churches. Wakayama identified the figure of Noah emerging from the ark on the right as a portrait of Joseph of Constantinople, the blessing figure in the foreground as a portrait of Pope Eugenius, and a number of the figures in the *Sacrifice of Noah* below were tentatively identified as other protagonists in the Council.[45] Allegorical and more explicit references to the Council have been seen in a number of artistic projects undertaken in Florence in the mid-fifteenth century, including Gozzoli's mural paintings and Lippi's altarpiece for the Palazzo Medici Chapel.[46]

If the literal and allegorical meanings of the *Stories of Noah* can be interpreted reasonably, the formal qualities of the composition remain somewhat mysterious. Unlike Masaccio's *Trinity*, literally on the other side of the wall of the church, in which the apparently rational perspective, symmetry, and visual order serve to unify the composition, to underline the message of the unity of the Trinity, and to clarify mankind's position in the divine order, Uccello's imagery is enigmatically inconsistent and disordered: the ark on the left stretches an immeasurable distance to the vanishing point while only the short side of the ark on the right is shown. Space and time are unusually compressed in his composition. While the narrative unfolds from left to right, the point at which the first scene ends and the second begins is not clearly defined, and the alignment of the arks in perspective creates a mental impression oscillating between a vision of a single scene (like the view of buildings lining the sides of a street) and two scenes (the same structure viewed from different sides).

Temporal disjuncture occurs at another level: some figures wear semi-classical robes appropriate for Old Testament figures and others wear ultra-modern headwear (*mazzocchi*), as though Uccello intended to extend a warning to his contemporaries by showing them among the biblical victims of God's punishment. In a sense, the flood represents not only the history of God's punishment of early man, it is always pertinent to any person contemplating their relationship with Him. Despite God's covenant promising that there would never be another universal retribution for human sin, it must have seemed that His punishment was unending, particularly during the plagues that decimated the population of Florence throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and the floods that repeatedly inundated the city. Ironically, the work itself has been damaged by floodwater, which destroyed the lower part of the paint surface. The Universal Flood happened once, the threat of divine punishment is always imminent, in everyday life and at the Last Judgment. The association between the Flood and the Last Judgment is made explicit in Christ's discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24: 37–42): 'But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be […] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.'[47]

The curious contrast of the infinitely large ark on the left and the smaller visible dimensions of the ark on the right and the paradox of the specificity of the biblical narrative and the universality of its theological meaning may seem enigmatically inconsistent. However, one does not need to look far for a written equivalent of Uccello's themes of geometry, infinity, and human uncertainty in the divine cosmos. It can be found in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa, called Cusanus, a humanist ecclesiastic who assisted Pope Eugenius in the negotiations for the unification of the Latin and Greek churches.[48] In 1437 he was one of the papal delegates sent to Constantinople with an invitation to the leaders of the Greek Church to meet with the leaders of the Latin Church, and as a reward for his services he was made a cardinal in 1448.[49] According to Wakayama, Uccello may have included a portrait of Cusanus as the genuflecting figure at the far left of the *Sacrifice of Noah* scene.[50] His most famous work, *De docta ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*), was written in 1440. In its postscript, he related how he experienced a kind of epiphany returning by boat from Constantinople. He realised how a person perceives their position to be the unmoving centre of the universe no matter where they might be, whether on the earth, the moon, Mars or the sun. Thus, the centre of the universe can be experienced everywhere and yet is nowhere, just as God is everywhere and nowhere. Cusanus' metaphorical break with geocentrism was cited for centuries as a precedent for Copernicus' argument that the earth turns around the sun.

While hardly scientific, Cusanus' arguments can be considered progressive in their abandonment of the Aristotelian view of man and earth being at the centre of the universe and their message that to approach an understanding of objective reality, one must take into account one's subjective point of view, the principle of relativity.[51]

Of particular relevance to the interpretation of Uccello's approach to perspective are Cusanus' quasi-geometric proofs of God's incommensurability with the knowable universe. Although Cusanus affirmed that God created the world using arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the *quadrivium* or four of the liberal arts comprising the basic courses of a Medieval university)[52] he used logical arguments to demonstrate the incompatibility of standard geometry and the concept of infinity, or put another way, the incommensurability of the human mind and divinity. In one instance he argued that an infinitely large circle would be equivalent to an infinitely long straight line whose circumference is everywhere and whose centre is nowhere.[53] If this sounds paradoxical, that was evidently Cusanus' intention, to show that the finite logical tools available to the human mind are insufficient to understand God's infinite reality. Cusanus' demonstrations of the ambiguities of infinite geometry parallel to some extent Uccello's use of perspective, in as much as both highlight the ambiguity of geometry, rather than its ability to represent a clear, comprehensible order.

Curiously, Uccello depicted the *mazzocchio* prominently facing the viewer in the foreground of the *Flood* with two squares of the same colour adjacent. Since the depiction of the *mazzocchio* seems to have been altered in the course of its execution,[54] it is not likely that this was a mistake, but rather a deliberate deviation from the usual alternating pattern. In itself this is typical of Uccello's predilection for disrupting conventional visual patterns, but might it also have a symbolic meaning? In light of the work's iconography of the human experience of spatial and temporal disjuncture in the divine cosmos, it might be noted that circles are a common symbol of eternity, while this circle has a beginning and an end. Was Uccello making a subtle allusion to the contradicition between the human understanding of history with a past, present, and future, and divinely infinite time?

As an important contributor to the Council of Florence hosted in part in Santa Maria Novella, Cusanus' ideas can legitimately be considered part of the intellectual environment in which Uccello's *Stories of Noah* were created. Cusanus' contacts with Florentine humanists are well documented.[55] Since Rudolf Wittkower's 1949 study of Alberti's design for the façade of Santa Maria Novella, completed in the decades after Uccello's *Flood* was painted there, many authors have seen the influence of Cusanus' writings on Alberti's theoretical and practical works.[56] Cusanus' emphasis on the importance of originality in creation is in particular sympathy with the novelty of Uccello's imagery. Moffitt Watts observed of Cusanus' approach to writing that his:

…stress upon the active, creative nature of man causes Cusanus to resist systematic treatment of his subject. He does not employ any of the formal logical or rhetorical modes of reasoning or persuasion espoused by his contemporaries. He clearly finds it neither interesting nor fruitful to present his reader with foregone or facile conclusions, whether his own or others'. He chooses, instead, deliberately to confront his reader with all the awkwardness, ambiguity, and sudden pithy insight of his own thought processes.[57]

Not only the views he expressed, but also the way he expressed them, make Cusanus something of a humanist counterpart to Uccello the painter.

Notes for Chapter 4

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[1] Müntz, 1889, pp. 328–346.

[2] Maryan Ainsworth (1994, p. 43) described Petrus Christus' *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints Jerome and Francis* of 1457 (Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt am Man) as perhaps the first Netherlandish painting in single-point perspective.

[3] The literature on perspective is enormous: a classic text is E. Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. C.S. Wood, New York, 1991 (orig. German ed. *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg*, 1924–1925, Leipzig and Berlin, 1927, pp. 258–330); a commonly cited text is J. White, *The Birth and Rebirth of Pictorial Space*, 3rd ed., London and Boston, 1987 (orig. ed. London, 1957); and a useful recent text is J.V. Field, *The Invention of Infinity: Mathematics and Art in the Renaissance*, Oxford, New York, and Toronto, 1997.

[4] Benigni, 1977, p. 97, citing A. Wesselofsky's appendix to his introduction to *Il Paradiso degli Allberti* by Giovanni da Prato (Bologna, 1867, part 2, pp. 330–337); Averlino, 1972, vol. II, p. 657; Manetti, 1957, p. 336.

[5] The metal relief book cover *Christ Healing the Man Possessed by a Demon* (Musée du Louvre, Paris) is sometimes still attributed to Brunelleschi, following a suggestion by Roberto Longhi, (for example in Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 145), but this view is not generally held. Ceriana (2005, p. 120) attributed it to an anonymous Florentine goldsmith probably following a design by Alberti.

[6] Manetti, 1970, pp. 42–47.

[7] For example: Beck, 1999, p. 94, caption to fig. 70.

[8] Cristiani Testi, 1985, p. 109; Goffen, 1998a, p. 9.

[9] Goffen, 1998b, p. 53.

[10] Field, 1997, pp. 55–56, 61.

[11] Alberti, 1972, pp. 36–37.

[12] Tsuji (1996, pp. 63–77) critiqued the mathematical precision of Italian Renaissance perspective.

[13] Field, 1997, pp. 93–97.

[14] White (1987, pp. 207–215) interpreted the testimony of Benvenuto Cellini concerning Leonardo's lost manuscript on perspective and Leonardo's surviving writings and diagrams on the subject to conclude that Leonardo had considered a method of depicting space in a curvilinear fashion, one that could have eliminated lateral distortion but which would have made flat objects appear round. Pedretti (1964, pp. 163–174) rejected White's interpretation, proposing that Leonardo's solution to the problem of lateral distortion in single-point perspective was simply to employ a narrow angle of vision.

[15] The bibliography on the subject of Renaissance perspective is enormous. Panofsky's seminal essay on the development of Western perspective (1927), which mentioned Uccello only in passing (p. 66), set the template for the subsequent standard treatments of the topic.

[16] Parronchi, 1957a, pp. 3–32.

[17] Sindona, Rossi, Becattini, and Gherardi, 1972, especially pp. 7–11, 17–18, 26–27.

[18] Bloom (1969, pp. 164–169) argued that Ghiberti sometimes used a traditional, modular form of perspective, based on a rule-of-thumb ratio for the heights of objects within compositions according to

their distance from the viewer, as well as the single-point perspective method, and that he adopted the latter, or not, depending on how suitable it was to the kind of composition he wished to create.

[19] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 63–64, 1568 ed.: '… *una Nunziata in fresco, nella qual fece un casamento degno di considerazione e cosa nuova e difficile in que' tempi, per essere stata la prima che si mostrasse con bella maniera agli artefici e con grazia e proporzione, mostrando il modo di fare sfuggire le linee e fare che in un piano lo spazio, che è poco e piccolo, acquisti tanto che paia assai lontano e largo: e coloro che con giudizio sanno a questo con grazia aggiugnere l'ombre a' suoi luoghi e i lumi con colori, fanno senza dubbio che l'oc[c]hio s'inganna, ché pare che la pittura sia viva e di rilievo. E nongli bastando questo, volle anco mostrare maggiore difficultà in alcune colonne che scórtano per via di prospettiva, le quali ripiegandosi rompono il canto vivo della volta, dove sono i quattro Evangelisti: la qual cosa fu tenuta bella e difficile; e invero Paulo in quella professione fu ingegnoso e valente.*'

[20] For a discussion of the Carnesecchi Chapel commission, see Chapter 2. While Berti (1967, pp. 77–78) acknowledged the primacy of Uccello's *Annunciation* and its significance for Masaccio's *Trinity*, he saw this relationship in adversarial terms, as representative of a fundamental opposition between Uccello as an upholder of Ghibertian and Medieval perspective and Masaccio as an upholder of Brunelleschian and, by implication, Renaissance perspective.

[21] Paatz (1934, pp. 119–120) rejected the idea of a dichotomy in Uccello's works between Gothic figurative-irrationalism ('*figurative-irrazionalista*') and Renaissance constructed-rationalism ('*costruttiva-razionalista*'), emphasising instead the ultimate single root of these forms: Uccello's desire to explore different means of expression in art.

[22] Caglioti, 2001, pp. 49–50.

[23] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 69: 1568 ed.

[24] For the sacristy, see: Haines, 1983.

[25] The translation is from: Hatfield, 1970, pp. 235–236.

[26] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 372: 1550 and 1568 eds: '*alcune tele di leoni i quali s'affacciano a una grata, che paiono vivissimi*'; Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 65: 1568 ed.: '*alcuni leoni che combattevono fra loro, con movenze e fierrezze tanto terribili che parevono vivi*'.

[27] Ghiberti, 1998, pp. 69–70. Kemp (1997, p. 80) noted two things that Renaissance artists might have realised from Pliny's stories of Classical art and artists: that major Classical artists were figures of some fame, and that virtuosic imitations of nature were considered a supreme achievement.

[28] Salvini, 1981, pp. 241–252.

[29] Ginori Lisci, 1985, vol. I, p. 217.

[30] Paatz and Paatz, 1952–1955, vol. IV, pp. 133–134.

[31] Bernacchioni, 2003, pp. 419–420.

[32] Eisenbichler, 1998, pp. 26, 30, 35–37.

[33] Parronchi, 1957a, pp. 14–15.

[34] Saalman, 1993, pp. 38–39.

[35] Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 313.

[36] Bible, Authorised King James Version, 1998, Matthew, pp. 37–38. I am indebted to Astrid Krautschneider for suggesting the parable of the sheep and the goats might relate to the iconography of the *Nativity* following a paper I gave in a postgraduate symposium at The University of Melbourne, 10 Jun. 2004.

[37] Levin, 2004, pp. 41–50

[38] Dunlop, 1990, p. 93.

[39] Thanks to Tim Ould, the first of several colleagues who have suggested to me the potential allusion to Judas in the figure of the hanged man. Interestingly, Boswell (1988, p. 154) interpreted the Christ Child as a quasi-foundling figure, given his apparent separation from God the Father and the modesty of the circumstances he was born into. This could potentially make the dualism of Uccello's *Nativity* even more pronounced (right and left, Christ and Judas, the 'good foundling' and the 'bad foundling'). Also, see Boswell (p. 367) for the medieval legend of Judas' abandonment as a child.

[40] Averlino, 1972, vol. I, p. 285.

[41] Wind, 1983, p. 50.

[42] Wind, 1983, pp. 48, 55.

[43] Crouzel, 1971, pp. 75, 80.

[44] Gilbert, 1959, p. 84 n. 40.

[45] Wakayama, 1982, pp. 96–106. Previously, Ames-Lewis (1974, pp. 103–104) and Eisler (1974, pp. 529–530) had tentatively identified the standing figure as Leon Battista Alberti. Marino (1991, pp. 241, 243–244, 251–344) developed Wakayama's hypothesis, interpreting the *Stories of Noah* as a more complex allegory of the theological, political, and historical context surrounding the Council. Marino interpreted the iconography to refer to such diverse events and people as the Council of Basel, the Council of Florence, Pope Eugenius IV, Anti-Pope Felice, and the threat of Turkish invaders.

[46] Crum, 1996, pp. 403–417. The *Night Sky* in the cupola of the Old Sacristy at San Lorenzo has also been interpreted as an allusion to the Council through its representation of the stars as they were seen in Florence on 6 July 1439, the day the union of the Latin and Greek churches was proclaimed, see: Cox-Rearick, 1984, pp. 166–167.

[47] Bible, Authorised King James Version, 1998, Matthew 24: 37–42, p. 36.

[48] A number of authors have seen a relationship between Cusanus' writings and Uccello's approach to perspective, but not in similar terms to those proposed here. Pudelko (1935b, p. 34) referred to Cusanus' Platonism as belonging to the same culture as Uccello's works, one that contemplates the universe through mathematics. Berti (1967, p. 11) saw in Cusanus' writings on the incommensurability of man's faculty for understanding and God's creation a warning against pride in human achievement in knowledge, of the kind that he thought Uccello was guilty of in his excessive use of perspective. Sindona (Sindona, Rossi, Becattini, and Gherardi, 1972, pp. 17–18) saw the basis of Renaissance perspective in two phenomena: the freedom to focus on any point of view, analogous to Cusanus' conception of the universe as infinite with any place in it capable of being considered the centre; and the imposition of an artificial unity on the diversity and multiplicity of the world, analogous to

Cusanus' theory that God is equivalent to the coincidence of opposites, interpreted by Sindona as the opposites of multiplicity and singularity.

[49] Moffitt Watts, 1982, pp. 1–6.

[50] Wakayama, 1982, p. 105.

[51] Harries, 2001, pp. 22–40; Watts, 1982, pp. 36–37.

[52] Hopkins, 1981, p. 122. The trivium, the other division of the liberal arts, comprised logic, rhetoric, and grammar.

[53] Hopkins, 1981, pp. 63–66.

[54] A number of curved incisions for the edges of the *mazzocchio* visible on the surface of the painting do not correspond to the final painted version, suggesting that Uccello altered its position. Campani (1910, p. 204) observed that the outlines of the figure wearing the *mazzocchio* had been altered three times, as could be seen on the reverse of the paint layer when it was detached.

[55] Vasoli, 2002, pp. 75–89.

[56] Germ, 2001, pp. 11–18.

[57] Moffitt Watts, 1982, p. 31.

5

Santa Maria del Fiore

For an artist whose style and significance have sometimes proved elusive to art historians, it is ironic that four enormous and readily comprehensible works by him are to be found in the heart of Florence, in the Duomo called Santa Maria del Fiore. His paintings there rival in size those of his contemporaries and his signature on the *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* is the most conspicuous in the church. The Operai of the Duomo must have allowed this and granted Uccello successive commissions because of their high regard for him, even if their relationship might well have been strained by the repeated revisions of their projects. The success of Uccello's works in the Duomo is shown by their influence on artists working both inside the church and further afield. Castagno used Uccello's *Equestrian Monument* as his model for its pendant the *Equestrian Monument for Niccolò da Tolentino* in 1455–1456.[1] Uccello's *Nativity* window inspired the composition of Filippo Lippi's *Adoration of the Christ Child*, painted for the Annalena nunnery (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence),[2] his *Resurrection* window is reflected in Luca della Robbia's *Resurrection* and *Ascension* reliefs above the sacristy doors in the Duomo, as well as Verrocchio's *Resurrection of Christ* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence), and his *Clockface with Four Male Heads* inspired the format of Giovanni di Francesco's *Virgin and Child with the Four Evangelists (?)* (Federigo Museum, Berlin) and seems to have been imitated in the design of the clockface on the tower of the Signoria in Siena.[3]

Construction of the Cathedral began in the late thirteenth century, with supervision of the building work and its decoration given in 1331 to the wealthy and powerful Arte della Lana (Wool Merchants' Guild), whose members also frequently held prominent offices in the Florentine government. This was a consequence of the political system of republican Florence, which reserved government offices for members of the city's professional guilds. The government then delegated the maintenance of many of the city's key secular and religious institutions to the guilds. Thus, involvement with the commissioning of buildings and artworks was a fact of life for Florence's politicians, and was indeed a way to advance their political interests. The documents of the Wool Merchants' Guild in the Archivio di Stato

di Firenze (Florentine State Archive) include a volume recording in Latin the terms of its members who served as *camarlinghi* (treasurers; *camerariis* in Latin) and *operai* (building supervisors; *operariis* in Latin): the so-called *Codice membranaceo contenente un registro per le diverse magistrature dell'Arte* (*Membranous Codex Containing a Register of the Various Offices of the Guild*). By the mid-1430s their staggered individual terms were limited to six and four months, respectively, with one *camarlingho* and eight *operai* usually in office at any one time.[4]

When Uccello first appears in the Cathedral's records, the letter written in 1432 by the Operai to enquire about his work at San Marco in Venice, none of the *camarlinghi* or *operai* is known to have a connection with him. Thus, Uccello's employment at the Cathedral seems to have come about by means other than prior association with them. However, his former master, Lorenzo Ghiberti, had been involved in work at the Cathedral since Uccello was a boy, was made a *capomaestro* (chief supervisor) of the cupola in 1420, and remained a *provveditore* (responsible for the day-to-day running of an institution) at the Cathedral until 1436.[5] Thus, he would have been in a good position to help his former assistant secure work there. Be that as it may, Uccello's important commissions at Santa Maria Novella and Santo Stefano in Prato demonstrate that he was one of the leading mural painters in Tuscany in the early 1430s, making him an obvious candidate for commissions in the Cathedral, and his experience working in Venice was a distinction that would have elevated him above the level of many of his local competitors in the eyes of the *operai*.

Uccello's first documented commission at the Cathedral was to commemorate a celebrated figure of fourteenth-century Italian warfare, Sir John Hawkwood (*c.* 1323–1394), the English military commander who came to the Italian peninsula with a company of English mercenaries during a lull in the Hundred Years War between England and France. After harassing the papacy at Avignon, the English companies took the most lucrative offers from among the constantly warring Italian states, taking payment both to conduct military campaigns for employers and to leave others in peace. Because of this, the *condottieri* (from the Italian word for their contract of employment: *condotta*) often had a fraught relationship with their Italian hosts. Their services became essential, to do without them exposed a state to its rivals' mercenaries or to the mercenaries' own terrorising, yet the mercenaries were inclined to renege on their contracts without compunction, accepting more favourable offers from their employers' enemies. Their massacres of civilians added to their infamy, notorious among them the slaughter at Cesena led by Hawkwood in papal service in 1377. Internal conditions added to Florentine dependence on *condottieri* despite their uncongenial behaviour. The power of the city's knights, drawn from the ranks of the nobility, had been limited to curb their arrogant disregard for the rights of fellow citizens, while the merchant

class became reluctant to leave their businesses to take up arms in defence of the city, or to allow their workers to do so.[6]

Hawkwood was for much of his career employed by the despotic Visconti regime of Milan and its sometime allies Pisa, Lucca, and Siena, when he came into conflict with Florence, the principal obstruction to the extension of Visconti political ambitions southward over the peninsula. Hawkwood became particularly close to his Milanese employer through his marriage to Bernabò Visconti's illegitimate daughter, Donnina, in 1377. Previously, in 1363 and 1364, while working for Pisa, Hawkwood had initiated a campaign of harassment of Florence, famously attacking the Brunelleschi family's Villa Petraia in Castello, taking the fortified village of Figline, defeating the Florentine commander Ranuccio Farnese at Incisa, setting fire to the Florentine *contado*, and taunting the Florentines from outside their city walls. However, towards the end of Hawkwood's career he was won over to the Florentine side by the spectacular salaries and privileges it could afford. He subsequently enjoyed no decisive military victory over the Visconti, indeed his most significant triumph is recognized as a difficult retreat over the river Oglio. Nevertheless, Hawkwood maintained Florence's position while the Visconti regime declined through internal conflict and attrition.

The political significance of the *condottieri* in Renaissance Italy is indicated by the enormous financial rewards and honours they were given. In 1375 Florence granted Hawkwood and his company 130,000 florins, and gave Hawkwood a five-year salary of 600 florins, and a lifetime annual pension of 1200 florins, simply to desist attacking the city and its interests. In 1391 he was promised 2000 florins annually to enter Florence's employ, as well as 2000 florins for the dowry of each of his three daughters, an annual pension of 1000 florins for his wife should she outlive him, and Florentine citizenship for himself and his male descendents.[7]

Two of the honours bestowed on *condottieri* were portraits installed in public places and state funerals. In the early years of the fifteenth century a polychrome wood statue of Paolo Savelli on horseback atop a marble sarcophagus was installed in the Basilica dei Frari in Venice.[8] In 1328 Simone Martini painted a portrait of Guidoriccio da Fogliano in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, showing the *condottiere* on horseback in a landscape with the castles he had captured for his employers. Around 1363 a papier-maché equestrian monument for Pietro Farnese was placed on a Roman sarcophagus in the Cathedral in Florence.[9] Not surprisingly given the subject matter, there was an element of rivalry between Italian cities in the commissioning of such monuments. In Florence a portrait of the enemy *condottiere* Niccolò Piccinino, probably hanging upside-down in chains, was painted on the walls of the Palazzo della Signoria in 1428. Two years later a more flattering painting of Piccinino was made on a wall in Lucca, in gratitude for having saved it from the Florentines with whom

they had been at war since 1429.[10] In 1433 Florence upped the ante by renewing plans for a depiction of Hawkwood in the Cathedral, symbolically its most important site.

The scholarly investigation of the *Equestrian Monument* began as early as 1686, with the first volume of Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie dei professori del disegne*, in which documents from the Opera del Duomo (the cathedral's board of works) relating to the commission were first published.[11] Transcriptions were eventually made by Giovanni Poggi in 1909.[12] Eve Borsook then explored the technical, historical, and cultural context of the *Equestrian Monument* in four extensively researched publications between 1960 and 2001, and, importantly, began the investigation of the political context of the commission, a task that was taken up by Franco and Stefano Borsi, and Wendy Wegener in separate publications in 1992 and 1995, respectively.[13] In 1998 and 1999 Lorenza Melli published the results of an illuminating investigation of the *Study for the Equestrian Monument* housed in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence.[14] Nevertheless, one source of information has been neglected to date: the records made by the Wool Merchants' Guild of the *camarlinghi* and *operai* in office at the time of the commission. These can be used to begin to reconstruct the political allegiances of those responsible for determining the work's iconography, helping to interpret the *Equestrian Monument* further in the context of the factional disputes that divided Florence following the failed war with Lucca. Furthermore, the duration of the office holders' tenures may also help account for the evolving form the work took over the duration of the commission.

Borsook demonstrated how the cult of exemplary individuals was promoted in Florence through such activities as the translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, the collection of biographies of famous Greek and Roman men, under the influence of the humanist Chancellor Coluccio Salutati (1375–1406) and his disciple and successor Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444).[15] A project to honour eight Florentine worthies with marble monuments was initiated at the end of the fourteenth century when the Signoria discussed the idea during Salutati's chancellorship. In the end, the project was realized, under Bruni, in the Cathedral in a greatly modified form. Uccello's *Equestrian Monument* belongs to a series of four fictive tombs painted in pairs on the north and south aisle walls of the Cathedral for two *condottieri*, Sir John Hawkwood and Niccolò da Tolentino (the latter painted by Andrea del Castagno in 1455–1456), and two ecclesiastics, Cardinal Corsini (painted in 1422 by an unrecorded artist, perhaps Giovanni dal Ponte) and Fra Luigi de' Marsili (painted in 1439 by Bicci di Lorenzo). Interestingly, Salutati had written to the humanist Cardinal Pietro Corsini at Avignon for Latin translations of Plutarch's works, and Corsini may even have supplied Salutati rubrics for a translation of the *Parallel Lives* by 1394, while Fra Luigi de' Marsili was among Florence's leading humanists.[16] Thus, the four fictive monuments may be loosely tied

together by the common thread of humanist culture: the warriors on the north wall glorified in the light of the humanist culture created by the scholars on the south wall.[17] The reason for the Opera's unprecedented decision to commission painted rather than sculpted monuments is unclear, but may be attributed to thrift or haste. In the period of great activity prior to the consecration of the Cathedral in 1436 some of its furnishings were improvised in inexpensive materials with a view to replacing them with permanent fixtures in due course.[18] A belief in the power of painting to create a vivid impression in the Cathedral's bare, lofty interior may also lie behind the decision.[19]

A monument in marble to the English *condottiere* had been proposed by the Signoria while he was still alive, to be 'adorned with such stone and marble figures and armorial ensigns as shall seem convenient, either to the magnificence of the Commune of Florence, or to the honour and lasting fame of the said Sir John', and this was agreed to by the Opera in 1393.[20] Hawkwood died in March of the following year and a lavish funeral was held in Florence. The procession began at the Piazza della Signoria, moving to the Baptistery where his bier, draped in rich crimson velvet and gold brocade, was placed over the baptismal font. His remains were then interred in the choir of the Cathedral.[21] Meanwhile, a depiction of Hawkwood was painted, as Giovanni di Paolo Morelli noted in his *Ricordi*: 'He was very loyal and faithful to our Commune and, when he died, he was painted for posterity in the Camera del Comune'.[22] However, King Richard II interrupted the plans for Hawkwood's tomb by successfully petitioning Florence for Hawkwood's remains in 1395, and rather than a marble monument in the Cathedral, a painted one was made by Agnolo Gaddi and Giuliano d'Arrigio (Pesello) in the same year.[23] It is unclear whether this was intended as a model for how the final version would look in stone, or whether enthusiasm for an expensive marble monument had waned following the loss to Britain of Hawkwood's remains, at which time the authorities became reconciled to the view that a painted monument would suffice.

Whatever the case, less than forty years later the painting had outlived its usefulness. On 13 July 1433 the Opera agreed to place notices at the Cathedral, the Baptistery, and Orsanmichele, announcing a competition for a model or design for a new monument to Hawkwood.[24] Borsook posed some cogent questions about the re-initiation of the project. Why re-commemorate Hawkwood instead of honouring any of the other men of diverse achievements originally considered for commemoration, but yet to be honoured? Borsook proposed a number of possible pragmatic motivations for the decision: Hawkwood's existing painting may have needed replacing, possibly due to water damage from a broken window recorded nearby at the time, or it may have succumbed to the program of renovation for the church interior being implemented in the fifteenth century. It might, though, be countered that damaged paintings can be more cheaply restored than re-commissioned, and that old-

fashioned ones can be updated. Gaddi and Pesello were artists of repute, whose work would not likely have been lightly dismissed.

However, Borsook began to connect the project with its political context, noting that the wisdom of hiring *condottieri* had been a matter of public debate in Florence for some time. Bruni's tractate *De militia*, dedicated to Rinaldo degli Albizzi in 1420, had argued for the maintenance of a Florentine militia of knights. At the end of the war with Lucca the subject was again very relevant. The most recent military commander for the city, Niccolò da Tolentino, had not been very successful, was considered impetuous and grasping, and was a controversial figure due to his close ties with the Medici. This may explain why the Opera, then under the influence of the rival Albizzi faction, looked to an earlier *condottiere* to commemorate, one who might be viewed as successful, prudent, and more loyal to the commune.[25] Wendy Wegener expanded on the *Equestrian Monument*'s links to the war with Lucca, which had recently challenged Florence to show its mettle in the commemoration of a successful military commander in the war between the two cities. The war was concluded on 26 April 1433, at great cost and with few gains, before Florence had responded. Just a few months after the end of the war, then, the Florentine leadership had good cause to try to reclaim something of the city's military pride, and Hawkwood may have been considered a more successful warrior than any of the current crop. Wegener developed Borsook's argument, suggesting Hawkwood may have been chosen for re-commemoration as an uncontroversial *condottiere* from the not-too-distant past, acceptable to the Albizzi and Medici regimes, whose legacy could be used to promote the practice of using mercenaries, and whose indiscretions, such as they were, would have been long forgotten.[26]

There is no doubt that Hawkwood was successful in defending Florence, even if his achievements were exaggerated by the Florentines.[27] Whether he was impartial in dealing with Florence's internal politics, how loyal he was to the city, and whether his misdeeds were forgotten by its citizens are, however, moot points. After all, Hawkwood and his troops had been used to protect the Signoria during the suppression of the revolt of the *arti minori* (lesser guilds) in January 1382, allowing the restoration of the Guelf oligarchy of the *arti maggiori* (the principal guilds, including the Wool Merchants' Guild), headed by Maso degli Albizzi. The Albizzi and their supporters then gradually entrenched themselves in the centre of Florentine politics until their undoing in 1434. The fact that Hawkwood resisted becoming involved in the suppression of more riots in March may demonstrate a reluctance to become a tool of the new regime, rather than even-handedness.[28]

The Florentines were also forced to entice, cajole, and bribe the recalcitrant *condottiere* to remain in their service. A grandfather of an *operaio* who revived the *Equestrian Monument* in 1433, Guido di Soletto del Pera Baldovinetti, was one of a number

of ambassadors sent to southern Italy to plead for Hawkwood's return to Florence's service in 1389, unsuccessfully.[29] The chronicler of fourteenth-century Florentine war and politics, Donato Velluti, was the grandfather of another *operaio*, Donato di Michele Velluti, who served two terms during the *Equestrian Monument* commission. The elder Velluti recorded Hawkwood's faithful service as captain, but in the period when he served Florence's enemies.[30]

So when Morelli referred to Hawkwood as 'loyal and faithful to our Commune', how is he to be understood? In his *Ricordi*, a manuscript relating the history of his family and of Florence, and containing words of advice to his sons on how they could get ahead in the city, Morelli also portrayed himself as loyal to the commune, but was frank about his aristocratic, Guelf perspective, distinguishing himself and his family from parvenus, artisans, and the lower classes.[31] For example, he advised his sons to associate with '*buoni uomini antichi di Firenze, guelfi e leali al Comune*' ('good men, long established in Florence, Guelf and loyal to the Commune').[32] For Morelli, loyalty to the commune was on a par with loyalty to the Guelf Party and its aristocratic values, and so it can be construed to have a specifically conservative political significance for him. Morelli served as *operaio* at the Cathedral in the interlude between the decision to hold a competition for the *Equestrian Monument* and the awarding of the commission, from January 1435, and his perspective was most likely shared by other representatives of Florence's social élite in the Opera.

Regardless of what popular sentiment may have grown up around the figure of Hawkwood after his death, the Florentine élite had long memories, were not likely to be taken in by propaganda, whether their own or someone else's, and were undoubtedly aware that the ultimate interest of *condottieri* such as Hawkwood was self-interest, but that this was not necessarily antithetical to their own, or their view of the commune's best interests. In the case of the most ambitious members of Florentine society, their self-interest and their view of the interests of the commune would have held much in common. Perhaps, then, there was also an element of self-interest on the part of the Albizzi faction in the choice of Hawkwood as the subject of commemoration in 1433.

September of that year saw the culmination of anti-Medici sentiment, growing in some quarters of Florence since the war, with the expulsion from Florence of leading members of the Medici faction by their enemies among Florence's oligarchic families. Cosimo and Averardo de' Medici were charged, among other things, with having conspired 'to induce the people of Florence to enter into a war with the Lucchesi, which was almost the ruin not only of the Florentine Republic, but of the conditions of all Italy.'[33] The hyperbole betrays the blame-shifting nature of the allegation; records suggest that in reality a majority of

the Florentine *reggimento* had initially been in favour of the war with Lucca, including such leading figures as Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Neri Capponi.[34]

This major political upheaval coincided with a disruption to the orderly appointments by the Wool Merchants' Guild of its *camarlinghi*. New *camarlinghi* had taken office without interruption on the first of January and July for many years. At the beginning of 1434, however, a reorganisation was instigated ('*postea vigore reformationis sup[er]stetit*') resulting in a delay of one month, and whose name appears in the list in February? None other than Giovanni di Messer Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi, one of the leading figures of the anti-Medici party, who had also been a strong advocate of the war[35] ('*Iohan[n]es d[omi]ni raynaldi de Albizis* ['Albizis' crossed out] *gianifiglazis p[ro] vj m[en]sib[us] Inceptis die p^io febr[uarij] 1433.*'). The scribe made a telling mistake, initially giving the surname as Albizzi, the family that provided one of the most aggressive opponents of the Medici, Rinaldo degli Albizzi.

The lists of the *camarlinghi* and *operai* show that members of the Albizzi faction were consolidating power in the lead up to the events of September 1433. The *camarlinghi* Andrea di Vieri Rondinelli and Piero di Giovanni Panciatichi held the purse strings for a year between them, from July 1432 until July 1433, two weeks before the competition for the new Hawkwood commission was agreed to. Allowing for a few weeks in which the plans for the monument might have been discussed and the budget allocated, the project may well have been a legacy from the term of the latter *camarlingho*. An Albizzi faction sympathiser in the Opera not long before the announcement of the competition was Francesco di Messer Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi, who joined in January 1433. Another, Andrea di Vieri Rondinelli, joined in April, Matteo di Nuccio Solosmei, joined in May but departed on 12 June, and Guido di Soletto del Pera Baldovinetti, joined at the beginning of July. Thus, when the competition for the commission was agreed to on 13 July, two of the eight *operai* are identifiable as from the Albizzi faction, with a third having been replaced only the day before. Subsequently, others also served as *operai*: Filippo di Bernardo Guadagni, from September; Antonio di Lionardo Raffacani and Jacopo di Messer Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi, from January 1434; Biagio di Jacopo Guasconi, from May; Mariotto di Niccolò Baldovinetti, from July; and Bernardo di Ser Lodovico Doffi, from September.[36]

By September 1434, however, the power base of the Albizzi faction was unravelling. The Medici were recalled to Florence, and their enemies were in turn expelled, including Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his son Ormanno, or they were fined or barred from holding public office, punishments affecting every one of their supporters listed above.[37] The ascendency of the Albizzi faction in 1433 may explain why the project for a new Hawkwood monument in the Cathedral was initiated. Hawkwood became a hero in the period at the end of the fourteenth century when Florentine politics began to be dominated by the conservative,

oligarchic élite, led by Maso degli Albizzi, Rinaldo's father. The commission to re-commemorate Hawkwood was then, perhaps, an attempt to rekindle the memory of his military competence as a much-needed boost for the current regime whose own competence had become suspect. Hawkwood's success had laid the foundation for the period of political stability that the Albizzi regime had enjoyed at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth; he had in fact stood guard during the establishment of the regime, and it had been the Albizzi regime that had originally commemorated him in such a lavish manner.

Work resumed on Hawkwood's monument under the new Medici-friendly regime in 1436. Why? Perhaps because the project had already won the approval of the Opera and to stop it would have caused further unwanted disruption. A low-key resumption of power was a characteristic strategy of returned exile families in Florence, intended to avoid providing remaining pockets of resistance a pretext for consolidating their opposition.[38] The Medici faction may also have believed the monument could be moulded to its advantage, by thwarting Hawkwood's apotheosis as an Albizzi faction hero, converting him to a non-partisan hero around whom all Florentines could rally, as Borsook suggested.[39] Perhaps they even felt it could be subtly manipulated to counter the accusations of warmongering made against them, as shall be discussed below. Unlike the then recently completed mural paintings in the Brancacci Chapel, which some scholars believe were vandalized to remove portraits of members of the Brancacci family exiled in 1434 with other members of the Albizzi faction, the *Equestrian Monument* could be made acceptable to the new regime by fine-tuning details of the as yet unfinished commission.[40]

While no prominent member of the Medici faction had served as *camarlingho* or *operaio* in the period of the commission prior to September 1434,[41] subsequently, the exertion of Medici-friendly influence could have been made through Antonio di Bartolomeo Corbinelli, appointed *camarlingho* on 1 July 1436, or Giuntino di Giudo Giuntini, appointed *operaio* on 1 January 1435, Giovanni di Cocco Donati, appointed *operaio* on 18 January 1436, and Giovenco di Antonio de' Medici, the cousin of Cosimo de' Medici, appointed *operaio* on 1 March 1436.[42] Thus, one of the eight *operai* in office when the project was resumed on 18 May was a Medici, and a Medici supporter had left office the day before. Another Medici supporter, Neri di Gino Capponi was appointed *operaio* on 14 June 1436.[43] But for that matter, pro-Medici sentiment might have been expressed by any member of the Opera sufficiently astute to tell which way the political wind was blowing, an unmistakeable sign of which was Cosimo de' Medici's term as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia (effectively the mayor) in January and February of 1435.[44] It seems, though, that the Medici at the beginning of their regime were slightly less rigorous in their control of the Opera than the Albizzi had

been at the end of theirs. Two members of the Albizzi faction would serve at the Cathedral during the remainder of the period in which the commission for the *Equestrian Monument* continued: Donato di Michele Velluti[45] and Bartolomeo Fortini.[46]

On 18 March 1436 the Opera declared its intention to continue with the project, albeit in somewhat vague terms. On 26 May further deliberations were entered into, and on 30 May Uccello was awarded the commission to paint the monument in *terra verde* (literally 'green earth').[47] This represents a break from the manner of the earlier Corsini monument, painted in black and white in imitation of marble. Perhaps the appearance of the Corsini monument was considered not quite dramatic enough to compete with the Cathedral's massive bare walls, accounting for the introduction of colour and the increased scale in the next in the series of monuments.[48] Like Uccello's *Creation Stories*, painted in *terra verde* in the Chiostro Verde of Santa Maria Novella in the late 1420s or early 1430s, the *Equestrian Monument* depends for its visual force on the contrast between the light green earth pigment used for the subject, with some features picked out in stronger colours for clarity, and the deep red of the background. The colouring of the subject does not strictly imitate bronze sculpture, which traditionally may be gilded but not otherwise coloured, or stone or wood, which if painted, were usually coloured naturalistically.[49] Still, there can be little doubt that the image alludes to a sculptural monument, and who better than Uccello, a painter trained in the workshop of one of Florence's leading sculptors, to carry out such a commission?

For the design of the horse Uccello may have recalled antique examples: the celebrated gilded bronze horses of San Marco in Venice, as is often suggested. For the sarcophagus, Uccello drew inspiration from a modern model in Donatello and Michelozzo's *Tomb of Baldassare Cossa* in the Baptistery, made in the 1420s.[50] Uccello created a forceful design overall, restrained in its ornament, but enlivened by the glittering play of light and shadow over its geometrically conceived forms. The design makes a compromise between the profile view of the horse and rider, on the one hand, and the looming *di sotto in su* (seen from below) depiction of the sarcophagus and base, on the other. This represents an exaggeration of the strategies sometimes used in raised tomb sculptures to provide the observer with a satisfactory view of the deceased: their sculpted bodies are sometimes gently tipped up on their biers to allow the observer on the ground to see more of their face.[51] Uccello took advantage of his medium to achieve a degree of legibility in this respect that would have been almost impossible in sculpture. He also included refinements only a painter could achieve: the thin, fluttering ribbons trailing across the top of the sarcophagus, of a type commonly depicted flat against the supporting background surface in relief sculpture, are here shown dancing delicately on their edges across the sarcophagus. Similarly, the strands of the horse's tail are much finer than would have been feasible in any traditional sculptural medium. Thus,

the work represents an episode in the debate over the relative merits of painting and sculpture, known as the *paragone*.[52]

The execution of the monument, however, did not go smoothly. On 28 June the Opera decided with its *capomaestro* that the part of the painting showing the horse and rider should be erased, and on 6 July a new horse and rider were ordered.[53] The significance of this intervention by the patron has been recognized by Zervas as a rare documented case of the active role that a patron could play in the development and execution of an early Renaissance work of art.[54] Regrettably, the record does not explain precisely why the project was revised, only that it was 'not painted as it should be'.[55] Franco and Stefano Borsi assumed that since Uccello was eventually paid for the first and second versions of the horse and rider, his work must not have been at fault, rather, the setback resulted from an inefficiency of the Opera.[56] Two other pieces of circumstantial evidence tend to support this view.

First, following a penetrating analysis of the *Study for the Equestrian Monument* in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Lorenza Melli has shown that the drawing bears numerous modifications made in a second stage of its execution, which may correspond to changes made by Uccello to the initial design at the request of the Opera. Where Hawkwood was initially depicted in the drawing in armour from head to foot, in the revised version of the drawing he wears armour only on the lower half of his body, exposing his head and showing him wearing a *giornea* (here a sleeveless jacket) and mantle. In the second version he is shorter and his legs are less far forward. The position of the horse's reins and right, rear hoof were also modified, as was the perspective of the sarcophagus, which was altered from a profile view to *di sotto in su*. The changes made the rider less imposing and militaristic, and more humanist in character, as an identifiable individual in a more relaxed posture. The changes also made the horse's stance less firmly planted on the sarcophagus and more delicately balanced, with only two hooves carrying its weight. It is not clear whether Uccello chiselled the first painting of the horse and rider off the wall of the Cathedral and started afresh, or whether he painted the modifications over the top of the first version, although some technical and documentary evidence has been interpreted to suggest the latter.[57]

If the Opera initially approved the design as it was in the first phase of the drawing, why would it have been dissatisfied with the first version as it was painted? This question is all the more pertinent in light of the fact that Uccello's study is squared up to enlarge the design accurately on the wall. Indeed, it is famously the earliest surviving Renaissance drawing to have been treated in this manner. There is, however, evidence that Uccello had previously used this technique, and so would have been eminently qualified to reproduce his design on the wall of the Cathedral accurately.[58] The reason for the revision to the design more likely arose not with Uccello but with the corporate nature of the Opera, with its

constantly changing personnel. Five of the *operai* in office when the commission was given to Uccello, who apparently approved the design in its first incarnation, were still in office when the revision was ordered. However, one of the original members had been replaced, as occurred from time to time due to other commitments, on 13 June, just over a fortnight before the change was ordered, and two new members had joined the Opera on 14 June, one of whom was the very prominent citizen Neri di Gino Capponi. Furthermore, the terms of two of the original *operai* finished at the end of June, to be replaced by two new members at the beginning of July.[59]

The second piece of circumstantial evidence supporting the idea that the revision resulted from the patrons' change of mind is that the end of June represented the first occasion since the commission was awarded that new members outnumbered incumbent members in the Opera. Even if the order to revise the commission was made a little prematurely, two days before the precise moment of transition, the two departing members would probably have had less power to stop the change in their last days in office, if indeed they had wanted to. It is tempting to deduce that Capponi, described by William Kent as the second most powerful man in Florence from 1434 (after Cosimo de' Medici),[60] whose opinion would have carried more weight than most *operai*, might have exerted some particular influence on the execution of the project at this point. Capponi only served two weeks of his four-month term, just long enough to see the order made for the revision to the first version of the *Equestrian Monument*, before taking up his appointment as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia in July.[61] As one of the Dieci di Balìa (Florence's war committee made up of ten of its wealthiest citizens) during the conflict with Lucca, Capponi was deeply involved in Florence's war efforts and worked closely with its *condottieri*. He had a serious dispute with Rinaldo degli Albizzi over the prosecution of the war, and grew somewhat closer to the Medici as a result, becoming a supporter of theirs by 1434.[62] Might he have intervened in the commission for the *Equestrian Monument*, to take the Albizzi hero down a peg as it were, reducing him from a daunting militaristic figure to a less threatening one? Such a move could have found support in many quarters of Florence, notably among the Medici. While this seems a plausible hypothesis, on the limited evidence available about the Opera's deliberations at this point it must remain a matter for conjecture.

The *Equestrian Monument* was effectively finished in time for the benediction of the Cathedral's newly completed cupola by the bishop of Fiesole on 30 August. The next day two recently-appointed *operai*, Francesco di Benedetto di Caroccio Strozzi and Simone di Nofri Bonacorsi, assessed the value of Uccello's work, for which he was paid on the same day.[63] However, yet more fine-tuning of the monument was required. On 17 December, a decision was made to renew the inscription under the direction of Bartolomeo di Ser Benedetto Fortini,

appointed *operaio* on the 6th of that month. The nature of the first version of the inscription is unrecorded, and the document of the Opera's deliberation does not specify whether Uccello was the artist who modified it. Notwithstanding a few minor differences to the script used in the signature, the crisp, elegant, humanist letters of the second (and current) version of the inscription are, however, consistent with Uccello's style. The fact that the Opera ordered a change to the project under the direction of a new *operaio* three-and-a-half months after Uccello's work had been assessed and paid for is yet another indication that the Opera was capable of changing its mind about the form of one of its commissions and that this might be related to its changing personnel. Very much later, probably in 1524, the decorative painted frame was added with its elaborate torchères and fantastic creatures, altering the work's aspect yet again.[64]

The wording of the inscription on the *Equestrian Monument*'s sarcophagus imitates part of a classical panegyric for Fabius Maximus,[65] indicating that it depicts 'John Hawkwood, British knight, most prudent leader of his age and most expert in the art of war.' The panegyric was known to fifteenth-century scholars from a stone tablet, now housed in the Museo Archeologico in Florence. The inscription makes the *Equestrian Monument* an allegorical portrait, depicting Hawkwood as a modern Fabius Maximus.[66] The Romans made Quintus Fabius Maximus a dictator (a magistrate with extraordinary powers) in the third century BC to repel Hannibal, who had been marauding Tuscany as well as many other parts of Italy. Fabius tailed his foe, hampering his raiding parties, picking off his troops at opportune moments, and gradually wearing his opponent down without engaging in a full-blown battle. This strategy, though effective in minimising Hannibal's threat, earned Fabius Rome's dissatisfaction and the sobriquet 'the dawdler' (*cunctator*). In time, however, his caution came to be praised.[67] Uccello's depiction of Hawkwood's horse, with only its two left legs firmly planted on the sarcophagus, elicited consternation from Giorgio Vasari, who thought this stance unnatural.[68] Specialists, however, have identified the pace as an amble (*ambio*), perhaps an allusion to Fabius the 'dawdler' and Hawkwood the 'prudent'.[69] The poised gait was also used for the foremost horse drawing Federico da Montefeltro's chariot on the reverse of Piero della Francesca's double portrait of the ruler and his wife, housed in the Galleria degli Uffizi, whose Latin inscription similarly relates the male subject to the tradition of Roman military leadership.[70]

The humanist program of the *Equestrian Monument* certainly partakes of Leonardo Bruni's republican rhetoric. His famous *Laudatio Florentinae urbis* (*Panegyric to the City of Florence*) was composed in 1403–1404 following the collapse of the Visconti empire. Like its classical model, Aelius Aristides' *Panathenaicus*, Bruni's text praises a city that resisted the despotism of a neighbouring state:[71]

Now this interest in republicanism is not new to the Florentine people, nor did it begin (as some people think) only a short time since. Rather, this struggle against tyranny was begun a long time ago when certain evil men undertook the worst crime of all—the destruction of the liberty, honour, and dignity of the Roman people. At that time, fired by a desire for freedom, the Florentines adopted their penchant for fighting and their zeal for the republican side, and this attitude has persisted down to the present day. If at other times these political factions were called by different names, still they were not really different. From the beginning Florence has always been united in one and the same cause against the invaders of the Roman state and it has constantly persevered in this policy to the present time. By Jove, this was caused by a just hatred of tyranny more than by the well-deserved respect due to the ancient fatherland. For who could bear that the Roman state, acquired with the kind of virtue that Camillus, Publicola, Fabricius, Curtius, Fabius, Regulus, Scipio, Marcellus, the Catos, and countless other very honourable and chaste men displayed, fell into the hands and under the domination of Caligula and other monsters and vile tyrants who were innocent of no vice and redeemed by no virtue?[72]

By logic such as this, Hawkwood, as an instrument of Florence's military resistance to the Visconti, could be viewed as a continuation of Florence's traditional resistance to tyranny and defence of its republic, and as such a worthy heir to the Roman defenders of their republic, such as Fabius.

Despite Bruni's commentary with its description of Florence's love of fighting, the *Equestrian Monument* does not speak of military force so much as diligence: the inscription refers to prudence and expertise. In the wake of the disastrous war with Lucca and its socially divisive outcome, it is not surprising to find a somewhat cooler attitude to war being expressed in Florence in 1436. In the bronze sculptures made for them by Donatello, the Medici tempered triumphalism in the commissioning of monuments referring to the defence of the Florentine republic by masking the message in allegory and valorising the underdog, be it David in his battle with Goliath, or Judith and her struggle with Holofernes,[73] and to these might be added their probable influence over Uccello's fictive sculpture alluding to Fabius Maximus' conflict with Hannibal. Although the first two were nominally private commissions, they would have been visible to the many important visitors to the Medici palazzo. Uccello's *Battle* paintings commemorating (at least in part) an episode in the war with Lucca were most probably not Medici commissions as was long assumed, but were more likely commissioned by a Medici supporter, Lionardo Bartolini, in the late 1430s. It may have been because they were commissioned by a less conspicuous patron than the Medici that a much more triumphant and explicit depiction of the defence of Florence could be represented in these works. After Niccolò da Tolentino's death in 1434 the return of the Medici to Florence made it possible for his body to be brought to the city where it was interred in the

Cathedral with great ceremony in March 1435.[74] However, it was only decades later, when the Medici were firmly established in power in the city and old resentments had subsided, that a lasting monument to commemorate Tolentino's achievements was painted by Andrea del Castagno as a pendant for Uccello's monument for Hawkwood in the Cathedral.

Below the cupola of the Duomo is the entrance to the Sagrestia delle Messe, with its impressive intarsia panels. Margaret Haines suggested that Uccello might have been designed some of the intarsia on the north side of the sacristy, work that was undertaken by Antonio di Manetti and one or more assistants between 1436 and 1445.[75] Vasari described Uccello and Brunelleschi as models for the perspective woodwork of Benedetto da Maiano, including that in the sacristy of the Duomo, although it was actually Giuliano da Maiano who worked there in the 1460s.[76] As Haines noted, given the nature of Uccello's work in mosaic and probably *pavimento* at San Marco in Venice, his designs for stained glass in the Duomo in Florence, and his presence in the Duomo in 1436 when work on the sacristy began, he is a plausible candidate as a contributor to the project, although there is no unmistakeable sign of his involvement.

It was not until the early years of the next decade that Uccello certainly worked again in the Duomo. Inside the façade of the Duomo, over the principal door, is the *Coronation of the Virgin* in mosaic, traditionally attributed to Gaddo Gaddi, and above that the large clock, with four male heads with haloes painted in the corners. An entry in the Opera del Duomo's accounts dated 22 February 1443 records a payment of forty *lire* to Uccello for the *Clockface*. Another entry on 2 April records a payment of ten *lire* for one hundred and twenty-five pieces of gold leaf used to gild a star, presumably the hand of the clock, and for painting the blue field around it.[77] Conservation of the *Clockface* by the Gabinetto dei Restauri della Soprintendenza alle Gallerie was undertaken between 1963 and 1968.[78] A number of layers of later overpainting were removed, revealing the *Clockface* as it now appears. However, beneath the layer with the blue field in the centre of the clock, corresponding to the description of Uccello's work in the document for the second payment, yet another layer was found with a green centre and a fictive frame around the circumference. The fictive frame is just visible in some photographs, due to losses in the blue layer. Similarly, losses to the dark (blue?) background behind the heads in the corners reveal the presence of a light blue layer, especially around the head in the bottom right corner.

The documentary evidence for the commission is somewhat ambiguous, and the two payments have been interpreted as reflecting either two phases of the commission for the *Clockface* corresponding to the changes made to its colour and design, or two kinds of reimbursement, the first for labour and the second for more expensive materials.[79] However, it

is inconceivable that Uccello did not submit a presentation drawing for such an enormous commission (it is well over six metres high by six metres wide), and highly unlikely that he would have significantly altered its design solely on his own initiative, especially given its prominent location where his progress could be followed. Comparing the *Study for the Equestrian Monument* with the finished painting, it seems that Uccello was given a little latitude by the Opera in determining the shapes of certain contours and perhaps in adding small areas of colour, but not in subtracting any major detail; every feature in the drawing appears in the painting without significant alteration. Since the changes to the *Clockface* involve the omission of a significant feature of the original design, it seems likely that the change was ordered by the Opera for its own reasons, perhaps to improve its legibility: the gold hand of the clock would be easier to see against a plain, dark-blue background. Uccello might well have been in agreement about the desirability of this modification after seeing the partially completed work from the floor of the Cathedral for the first time.

Uccello's earlier difficulty with the Opera during the commission for the *Equestrian Monument*, and his considerable experience at the peak of his career in the 1440s, make any lack of care on his part in the execution of the *Clockface* unlikely. Furthermore, the Opera went on to award Uccello three more commissions in 1443 and 1444 for the designs of enormous stained glass windows in the drum of the cupola (of which two survive: the *Nativity* and the *Resurrection*), not something to be expected for an artist guilty of committing serial errors or wilful behaviour in the execution of commissions, but a reward to be expected for an artist capable of satisfying the Opera's fastidious requirements.[80]

The hand of the clock is a modern restoration in the shape of a star with an orb at the tip of the longest ray, based on the documented reference to a star. The star shape may allude to the Star of Bethlehem, and so to the birth of Christ, from which point the recording of time begins in the Christian calendar. The fictive frame shown in perspective reinforces the pure geometry of the circle of the clock face and the square of the clock's mounting. Masolino's *Pietà* (Museo della Collegiata, Empoli) of 1424 provides a precedent for the simple, architectural frame seen in perspective, with torsos instead of heads in the circles. The heads in the *Clockface* have been identified either as prophets or, more commonly in recent times, the Evangelists, and as the latter may refer to the end of time.[81] The Book of Ezekiel describes four creatures, each with four faces in the likeness of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, which appeared to Ezekiel in a series of visions of the destruction and restoration of Jerusalem.[82] The animals' faces were traditionally interpreted by Christian writers as symbols of the four Evangelists.[83] At the beginning of Saint John's description of his vision of the Apocalypse in Revelation 4: 7–8, he described four beasts: 'And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face of a man and the fourth beast was like a

flying eagle' saying 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.'[84] Perhaps, then, the four Evangelists around the Star of Bethlehem allude to the infinite time of God the Father on one hand, and the finite time between Christ's birth and his imminent return at the Apocalypse, on the other.

In the same year Uccello painted the *Clockface*, the Opera awarded a series of commissions for the design and manufacture of the enormous stained glass windows in the drum of the cupola. After the completion of much of the cupola in 1434, the first of the stained-glass windows in the drum to be created had been the *Coronation of the Virgin* above the chapel of Saint Zanobi.[85] Perhaps after a comparison between full-size cartoons by Ghiberti and Donatello placed in situ,[86] Donatello's design was chosen. Only in 1443 did work resume on the cycle of windows showing scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin. Uccello's designs were employed for the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity* and the *Resurrection*; Ghiberti designed the *Ascension of Christ*, the *Agony in the Garden* and the *Presentation in the Temple*, and Castagno, the *Deposition from the Cross*. The Opera's accounts suggest that Uccello was also paid for a design for the *Ascension*. However, Ghiberti's design was used, and it has been argued that the association of the *Ascension* with Uccello was a scribe's error.[87]

In the *Resurrection*, Christ's elegant body rises in a reversed S curve from the tomb, backed by a sunburst in a deep blue sky, with dozing soldiers on either side of the tomb. The fluttering standard, the symbol of his resurrection, coincidently bears the same features as the Florentine arms, displayed prominently at the point of the arch over the main chapel, below and to the right of the *Resurrection* window. The symbolic affinity was made more direct at the end of the century when Savonarola proposed that Florence should elect Christ its king, which it did in 1528.[88] Furthermore, the large flowers on his robes and in the border of the window allude to the name of the cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore, itself an allusion to the name of the city and the tradition that the city was founded in a field of flowers.

The banal design of the flowers in the *Resurrection* and *Nativity*, however, must have been added by an artist other than Uccello. Similar floral motifs appear in Ghiberti's designs for windows in the façade of the Duomo, the tribune, and in the drum. A decision was probably made early on to use the stained glass windows to create the impression of a field of flowers. Whether the origin of the motif and the reason for its continued use may be attributed to the Opera, to Ghiberti or his influence, or to the workers who made the windows is uncertain.[89] Another feature of Uccello's *Resurrection* window related to Ghiberti's window designs is the circular arrangement of the lead framework in the sky, also seen in Ghiberti's *Ascension* and *Presentation*, and Castagno's *Deposition*, but not in Donatello's *Coronation of the Virgin*. The composition of the *Nativity* develops the style of Uccello's Karlsruhe

Adoration in its evocative, richly coloured nocturnal setting. Indeed, the compact figure of the Christ Child sucking a finger while holding out the other hand to the Virgin in each work is the same, only reversed. Unfortunately, Uccello's *Annunciation* window was destroyed in a storm and the remnants were removed in 1828, before any record of its appearance was made.[90]

Uccello's name appears one last time in the account books of the Opera del Duomo, in June 1453, making a figure of the Blessed Andrea Corsini for the Library of the Duomo in the Church of Saint Pier Celoro.[91] Corsini was said to have foretold the city's victory over Milan at the battle of Anghiari in 1440, in an apparition at his sepulchre in Santa Maria del Carmine. His cult almost immediately received papal sanction, and in 1441 Filippo Lippi was involved in making a casket related to Corsini, possibly used to house his body for public viewings. Uccello's commission was no doubt part of a program of propaganda intended to promote Corsini's cult. In 1464 six Florentine citizens petitioned the pope for his beatification, which was eventually effected in the seventeenth century.[92] Corsini's cult provides another instance of the intimate links between expressions of religious faith and patriotism in Renaissance Florence.

Notes for Chapter 5

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[1] Much of the following discussion of Uccello's works in Santa Maria del Fiore has been published in this author's 'The Politics of War: Paolo Uccello's *Equestrian Monument for Sir John Hawkwood* in the Cathedral of Florence', *Parergon*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2006, pp. 1–34. The proposal for Castagno's monument, recorded on 19 October 1440, indicated it should follow the design of Uccello's *Equestrian Monument*, as recorded in: Gaye, 1839, vol. I, pp. 562–563.

[2] Holmes, 1999, p. 174.

[3] For Giovanni di Franceco's work, see: Giovannozzi, 1934, p. 344; for an image of the lost clockface on the tower of the Siena Signoria, see Sano di Pietro's painting *San Bernardino Preaching in the Piazza del Campo* (Cathedral, Siena).

[4] The term '*membranaceo*' (membranous) describes a manuscript produced on leaves of unspecified animal skin. For an account of the administrative structure of the Opera del Duomo, see: Zervas, 1987, pp. 338–340, where it is noted that the number of *operai* who served at one time after 1410 was six. By the time of the *Equestrian Monument* commission, however, it was usually eight, sometimes briefly falling to six or rising to ten.

[5] Saalman, 1980, pp. 56–57, 69, 133.

[6] Bayley, 1961, pp. 3–58.

[7] John Temple-Leader's and Giuseppe Marcotti's classic biography *Sir John Hawkwood: Story of a Condottiere*, 1889, has been largely superceded by William Caferro's *John Hawkwood: An English Mercenary in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, 2006: pp. 43–61 (on Hawkwood's entry into Italy); 62–94 (on the role of *condottiere* in Italy in the fourteenth century); 97–208 (on his service for Pisa and Milan); 193–195 (on his marriage to Donnina); 22, 97–115 (on his 1363–1364 campaign against Florence); 188–190 (on Cesena); 164, 175 (on Florence's 1375 settlement); 299 (on Florence's 1391 terms); 16, 20 (on the reasons for his popularity in Florence).

[8] Augusti, [1994].

[9] Borsook, 2001, pp. 62–63.

[10] Mallett, 1974, pp. 94–95.

[11] Baldinucci, 1974–1975; vol. I, p. 450.

[12] Poggi, 1988.

[13] Borsook, 1960, pp. 149–150; Borsook, 1980, pp. 74–79; Borsook, 1982, pp. 44–51; Borsook, 2001, pp. 59–78; Borsi and Borsi, 1994, pp. 302–305; Wegener, 1995, pp. 129–167.

[14] Melli, 1998, pp. 1–15, 33–35; Melli, 1999, pp. 261–272. Other important studies include Meiss, 1979, p. 23, which argued that the work was originally painted some distance above the stone dado on which it currently rests, and Kent 2000, pp. 272–274, which examined the *Equestrian Monument* in the context of Cosimo de' Medici's patronage.

[15] Borsook, 1982, pp. 44–51.

[16] Witt, 1983, pp. 302–303.

[17] On the monuments in the Cathedral, see Frosinini, 1995, pp. 194–201, in which the Corsini monument is attributed to Giovanni di Marco, called Giovanni dal Ponte; and Borsook, 2001, pp. 59–

78. Others to be commemorated in the Cathedral in the fifteenth century included the poet Dante, the artist Giotto, and the architect-engineer Brunelleschi.

[18] Amy (1998, pp. 176–189) discussed this practice in relation to other mural paintings commissioned for Florence Cathedral in the 1430s. A cycle of *Apostles* (identified by Amy as painted in 1436 by Bicci di Lorenzo, Lippo di Andrea, Rossello di Jacopo Franchi, and Giovanni di Marcho, but since destroyed) was to be replaced or augmented by a commission in 1503 to Michelangelo for sculptures of the Apostles. Between 1435 and 1439 a wooden choir and altars for the radiating chapels were ordered and built, to be replaced by marble versions, beginning as early as 1439.

[19] Borsook, 2001, p. 75.

[20] Temple-Leader and Marcotti, 1889, pp. 276–277, the translation is by Leader Scott; Poggi, 1988, vol. II, pp. 123–124, doc. 2052.

[21] Caferro, 2006, pp. 314–317.

[22] Morelli, 1969, p. 316: '*Fu uomo molto leale e fedele al nostro Comune e, come fu morto, fu dipinto per fama nella Camera del Comune*'.

[23] Poggi, 1933, pp. 322–323.

[24] Poggi, 1988, vol. II, p. 124, doc. 2054.

[25] Borsook, 1980, p. 75; Borsook, 1982, p. 45; Borsook, 2001, pp. 64–68. For the *De Militia*, see: Bayley, 1961.

[26] Wegener, 1995, pp. 153–162.

[27] Caferro (2006, pp. 305–306) attributed a substantial amount of Hawkwood's glory for his famous retreat over the river Oglio to the Florentine propaganda machine.

[28] Caferro, 2006, pp. 227–228; Bayley, 1961, pp. 69, 194–195. Molho (1965, pp. 182–239, especially p. 193) observed that Hawkwood entered Florence's employ prior to the establishment of the Albizzi regime, but was personally inclined towards the politics of the *arti maggiori* (to which the Albizzi faction belonged). Gene Brucker (1977, pp. 60–101) described the end of the *arti minori* government as not a spectacular gain for the Albizzi family and the Guelf Party, since extreme conservative elements were restrained under the new regime, however, he noted that the Albizzi increased their power in the later crisis of 1393. For an account of the struggle for power of the conservative, oligarchic élite in Florentine politics in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in relation to their association with the Guelf Party, see: Zervas, 1987, pp. 13–46.

[29] Caferro, 2006, p. 282.

[30] Velluti, 1914, Tavola I. In the extensive genealogy of the Velluti family included in this edition, only one 'Michele' is present: one of the sons of the author of the *Cronica*. Hawkwood is mentioned in Velluti's *Cronica* on pp. 238, 280, 284, and 285. Donato di Michele Velluti served as *operaio* from May 1434 and July 1436; see the Appendix for a transcription of these and all subsequent offices referred to in this article.

[31] Brucker, 1977, pp. 36–37.

[32] Morelli, 1969, p. 196.

[33] Kent, 1978, p. 257, the translation is Kent's.

[34] Kent, 1978, p. 258; Brucker, 1977, pp. 496–497.

[35] Kent, 1978, pp. 258, 294, 296, 317–319, 325, 356.

[36] ASF, Arte della Lana, 39, fols 27, 41–41v.

[37] Kent, 1978, pp. 294–330, 355–356.

[38] Bayley, 1961, p. 69.

[39] Borsook, 1982, p. 45.

[40] For a recent review of Heinrich Brockhaus' proposal that portraits of the Brancacci family were defaced in the *Saint Peter Raising the Son of Theophilus and Saint Peter Enthroned as Bishop of Antioch* scene, following their expulsion from Florence in 1434 (published in 'Die Brancacci-Kapelle in Florenz', *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Instituts in Florenz*, III (1930), pp. 160–182) see: Spike, 1995, pp. 124–132. For a rejection of this hypothesis, see: Joannides, 1991, p. 26.

[41] Due to intermarriage among Florence's leading families, it would have been difficult to exclude all those with a connection to the Medici from the Opera, thus, Giovanni di Foresi Salviati, who married Valenza de' Medici, served as *operaio* from October 1433. Furthermore, his distant cousin Alamanno di Jacopo Salviati, who married Caterina de' Medici, has been identified as a Medici supporter (Kent, 1978, p. 353). For the relations between the Salviati and Medici families, see: Hurtubise, 1985, pp. 46–52 (p. 48 for Giovanni Salviati; Annexe A for the genealogy showing the relationship between Giovanni and Alamanno).

[42] Kent (2000, p. 273) noted the close relationship of Giovenco and Cosimo, and the presence of the former on the Opera at the time of the commission as a likely conduit of the interests of the latter in relation to the commission.

[43] ASF, Arte della Lana, 39, fols 27, 41v.–42.

[44] Kent, 1978, p. 343.

[45] Based largely on Kent's 'List of those exiled or otherwise punished by the Balìa of 1434', 1978, pp. 355–357. It is not clear why it was deemed acceptable for Velluti to take office in July 1436 under the Medici. Perhaps it was because in September 1434 he had confessed to corruption during his term as *gonfaloniere*, accepting a large fine, thus rendering him a less potent political force (Bayley, 1961, p. 139).

[46] Borsook, 1982, p. 47 n. 30; Rubinstein, 1966, p. 18 n.5.

[47] Poggi, 1988, vol. II, p. 124, docs 2055–2058.

[48] As suggested by Borsook, 2001, pp. 69, 75.

[49] Borsook (1982, p. 46) proposed that the choice of *terra verde* may have been intended as an allusion specifically to a bronze monument, inspired by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's freshly completed translation of Plutarch's biography of the Roman general Fabius Maximus. Plutarch related that an equestrian monument in bronze was erected in Maximus' honour on the Roman Capitol. Wegener (1995, pp. 134–135) cast doubt on this hypothesis, observing that the sarcophagus and base of the monument, usually made of stone in bronze equestrian monuments, are in the same green paint as the horse and rider. Furthermore, Wegener noted that the monument was not gilded, as antique bronze sculptures frequently were, and that the horse's trappings and other details are painted in red

and black, in a manner unusual for bronze sculptures. Examples of naturalistically painted wood and stone sculpture are found in the hose and rider and sarcophagus of the *Equestrian Monument for Paolo Savelli* in the Basilica dei Frari, Venice.

[50] Borsook, 2001, p. 73.

[51] An example is the tomb of Gian Antonio, son of the famous condottiere Gattamelata, in the Santo at Padua.

[52] For a discussion of the rivalry between sculpture and painting in the early fifteenth century, including a brief reference to the *Equestrian Monument*, see: Châtelet, 1999, pp. 707–714.

[53] Poggi, 1988, vol. II: p. 124, doc. 2058; p. 125, doc. 2059.

[54] Zervas, 1987, p. 5.

[55] The translation is Caferro's (2006, p. 321).

[56] Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 303.

[57] Melli (1998, p. 14; 1999, p. 270) believed Uccello probably did not remove the first version of the horse and rider to paint the second version on a fresh *intonaco* (the last fine layer of plaster that absorbs the pigment in fresco painting), but applied the modifications *a secco* (pigment applied in an autonomous binder over the dried *intonaco*) over the first version. Melli argued that the relatively small sum Uccello received for the commission does not suggest that a complete repainting of the horse and rider occurred, and that areas of losses in the surface of the mural painting reported during restoration in the nineteenth century correspond to changes present in the study, losses that might have resulted from degraded *a secco* applications. Indeed, the outline of the earlier version of the horse's rear right hoof appears to be visible beneath the red background surrounding the final version. Although, no similar traces of the earlier version are visible through losses elsewhere on the surface of the mural painting.

[58] Borsook, 1980, pp. 81–83: In the *Presentation of the Virgin* and the *Stoning of Saint Stephen* scenes in the Marcovaldi Chapel (also known as the Assunta Chapel) of the Cathedral in Prato the walls were marked out with grids of squares, made by snapping string rubbed with chalk against the damp *arricci* (the preparatory layers of mural paintings). Curiously, the alignment of the squaring on the *Study for the Equestrian Monument* is not consistent over the entire support, perhaps because Uccello applied the squaring over the first version of the drawing and then reconfigured the support to better accommodate the changes he made for the second version?

[59] ASF, Arte della Lana, 39, fols 41v.–42.

[60] Kent, 1977, p. 223.

[61] Mecatti, [1977], vol. II, p. 405.

[62] Kent, 1978, pp. 259–260, 264; Bayley, 1961, pp. 100–101, 114–115, 130–131. Albizzi believed Capponi overstepped his authority in attempting to recruit assistance for Florence's war effort from the pope, and had Capponi exiled from Florence in 1432, only to see the sentence revoked, allowing Capponi return a few months later. In 1434, sensing a conspiracy between Capponi and the exiled Medici, Albizzi began compiling evidence to indict him, which came to nothing when the priors

quashed his plan. F.W. Kent (1977, pp. 222–223) described the increasingly close relationship between Neri Capponi and Cosimo de' Medici after 1434 as probably a '*mariage de convenance*'.

[63] Poggi, 1988, vol. II, p. 125, doc. 2060. Strozzi was appointed on 1 July, Bonacorsi at the end of June. ASF, Arte della Lana, 39, fol. 42.

[64] Borsook, 1980, p. 77. The authorship of the frame is unrecorded, but is compatible with Credi's style and his documented restoration of the *Equestrian Monument* in 1524.

[65] Saxl, 1941, p. 25 n. 2.

[66] Borsook, 1982, p. 47; Borsook, 2001, p. 73. The translation of the inscription is Caferro's (2006, p. 318).

[67] The story of Fabius Maximus' role in the Hannibalic War was told by the Classical historian Appian of Alexandria (*c*. 95 – *c*. 165), 1955–1964, vol. I.

[68] Vasari, 1966–1987, vol. III, p. 68: 1568 ed.

[69] Baldinucci, 1974–1975, vol. I, pp. 442–446; Temple-Leader and Marcotti, 1889, pp. 295–296.

[70] Aronberg Lavin, 2002, pp. 260–264.

[71] Witt, 1983, p. 123.

[72] Bruni, 1978, pp. 151–152; the translation is by B.G. Kohl.

[73] For a comprehensive discussion of Donatello's bronze *David* (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) and *Judith and Holofernes* (Palazzo Vecchio, Florence), see Caglioti, 2000. Interestingly, Caglioti (2000, vol. I, pp. 153–181) argued for a date for the *David* in the second half of the 1430s, roughly contemporary with Uccello's *Equestrian Monument*, suggesting that the two works may partake of the same culture of physically grand monuments tempered by a certain iconographic modesty (Hawkwood as a prudent leader, David as a humble youth). In their commissions the Medici developed an idea already formulated in Donatello's marble *David* carved for the Cathedral in 1408, subsequently acquired by the Signoria for its palazzo in 1416, where its inscription read: 'To those who fight bravely for their country God procures victory even against the most formidable enemies' ('*Pro patria fortiter dimicantibus etiam adversus terribilissimos hostes Deus prestat victoriam*'). The inscription from Donatello's marble *David* now housed in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence is given in Latin and translated into Italian in Caglioti, 2000, vol. I, p. 206.

[74] Griffiths, 1978, p. 315.

[75] Haines, 1983, pp. 107–111.

[76] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 523–524: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[77] Poggi, 1988, vol. II, p. 162, docs 2238, 2240.

[78] Baldini, 2000, p. 38 n. 2. The treatment was conducted under the direction of Dino Dini, with the assistance of Guido Botticelli and Sabino Giovannoni.

[79] Frosinini, 1995, p. 205; Baldini, 2000, pp. 37–38. Where Frosinini saw the second payment as above all a reimbursement for Uccello's expenses, Baldini interpreted the second payment as relating to the revised version of the commission.

[80] Poggi, 1988, vol. I: p. 143, doc. 750; p. 144, doc. 754; and p. 145, doc. 761.

[81] Baldini (2000, pp. 47–48) identified the subjects as the four Evangelists on the basis of similarities between their physiognomies and the Evangelists' attributes of man, eagle, lion, and bull.

[82] Bible, Authorised King James Version, 1998, Ezekiel 1:10, p. 904.

[83] For example, in Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, pp. 852–853.

[84] Bible, Authorised King James Version, 1998, Revelation 4: 7, p. 303.

[85] Poggi, 1988, vol. I, p. 137, doc. 719.

[86] Martin, 2001, pp. 552–565.

[87] The Opera del Duomo's accounts record a payment to Uccello on 2 May 1443 of 40 *lire* for the design of the *Ascension* window. Poggi (1933, pp. 334–336) argued this was a scribe's error, who should have written 'Resurrection' when he wrote 'Ascension', because the existing *Ascension* window was in fact designed by Ghiberti as other payments record, as the style of the window demonstrates, and as Ghiberti testified in his *I commentarii*. Poggi interpreted the amount of 40 *lire* declared owing to Uccello on 8 July for the *Resurrection* as evidence of a revision of the same commission.

[88] O'Gorman (1965, pp. 502–504) discussed these events in relation to the iconography of Andrea del Sarto's *Holy Family with the Infant Saint John* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

[89] Martin (2001, pp. 566–567) argued that the designs for all the windows in the drum were modified by the makers of the windows, in the addition of banal borders and flowers on the robes, except in the case of Donatello's *Coronation of the Virgin*. However, the border of Uccello's *Resurrection* is more sophisticated than many of the others, and is probably mostly or entirely his own design.

[90] Acidini Luchinat, 1995, p. 279.

[91] AODF, Deliberazioni 1450–1454, fol. 113, in Poggi, 1933, p. 336.

[92] Holmes, 1999, pp. 102–103.

6

The *Battle* Paintings

Famous works of art frequently attract varying and sometimes incompatible interpretations. Uccello's *Niccolò da Tolentino at the Battle of San Romano* in the National Gallery, London, *The Unhorsing of Sienese Troops at the Battle of San Romano* in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, and *Michelotto Attendolo at the Head of Florentine Troops* in the Musée du Louvre, Paris—known collectively as the *Battle* paintings—have generated lively and long-running debates among art historians. For a change, these disagreements have not been about their attribution. The Florence panel is signed '♦ *PAVLI* ♦ *VGIELI* ♦ *OPVS* ♦' and Uccello's authorship of the three panels has never been doubted. However, art historians have disagreed with each other and occasionally changed their own minds about almost everything else to do with the paintings: who commissioned them, when, and where for, who they represent, which battle is depicted, whether it is one battle or two, when the shapes of the panels were altered and by whom, when they were overpainted, and numerous other related questions. Recent lengthy re-appraisals of the paintings published by Caglioti (2000, 2001) and Gordon (2003) have resolved many uncertainties through the presentation of new documentary and scientific evidence, and they have narrowed the parameters for defining the quantities that remain unknown. Still, there are a number of important questions that merit discussion. Can the three panels have been commissioned as part of an integral ensemble, even over a period of time, given the distinct differences of scale and composition between them? Apart from the use of perspective discussed in Chapter 4, what might the paintings have meant to their fifteenth-century audience?

In the nineteenth century, the *Battle* paintings in London, Florence, and Paris were sometimes believed to comprise three of the four works by Uccello seen by Vasari in the sixteenth century in the Bartolini *palazzo* at Gualfonda in Florence, which he said included portraits of military commanders.[1] The paintings at Gualfonda were the only military paintings by Uccello that Vasari described as painted on wood, as the surviving works are. While Vasari described the subjects of some other paintings by Uccello in the Palazzo Medici as 'horses and other animals' (1550) or 'mounted men at arms' (1568), he described these as

canvases.[2] In 1901, Herbert Horne, the distinguished English collector, connoisseur, and art historian, published a stinging criticism of the current misapprehension in the British *Monthly Review* journal, pointing out that the description of the works by Uccello in the 1492 inventory of the Palazzo Medici was a more reliable source than Vasari, and that its description of three battle paintings by Uccello on wood corresponded better with the works in London, Florence, and Paris, than the ones formerly at Gualfonda. Furthermore, he noted that the inventory specified that the subject represented was the battle of San Romano of 1432, not the Battle of San Egidio of 1416, as had been supposed from Vasari's description of the works at Gualfonda. Having demolished two myths about the paintings in London, Florence, and Paris, he then created another three. Horne assumed that because the *Battle* paintings belonged to the Medici in the late fifteenth century, they must have been commissioned by the Medici, specifically, Cosimo de' Medici. He assumed that because they were recorded in the Palazzo Medici on Via Larga, they must have been commissioned for its decoration in the mid-1450s, and he assumed that because the three works were called the '*Rout of San Romano*' at the end of the fifteenth century that was indeed what all three represented.[3]

While Cosimo was generally considered to be the works' patron until the end of the twentieth century, it became increasingly apparent over the second half of the century that the sizes and shapes of the panels did not fit precisely with the room they were believed to have been in at the time of the 1492 inventory.[4] This led to a questioning of the tie between the commission for the panels and the building of the *palazzo* on Via Larga, and it was suggested they might have been painted for the Medici's previous *palazzo*, earlier than the mid-1450s.[5] Thanks to the publication of documents by Outi Merisalo and Francesco Caglioti from 1999 to 2001, it is now known that the Medici acquired rather than commissioned the works. They had previously belonged to Damiano and Andrea Bartolini, who inherited them jointly from their father Lionardo, who is the person most likely to have commissioned them.[6]

As discussed in Chapter 4, the *Battle* paintings appear in an account of 1480 describing Lionardo Bartolini's Camera Grande in his *palazzo* in Florence, at which time the paintings were referred to as the '*Rout of Niccholò Piccinino*'.[7] Lionardo was a rich and powerful banker who was elected to the Dieci di Balìa and the Signoria, was a captain of the Guelf Party, and became Gonfaloniere di Giustizia in 1459. He was one of the Operai for the Mercantile Court, along with Piero de' Medici, who was followed in the role by his son Lorenzo. Andrew Butterfield has suggested that all of the Operai were members of the inner circle of the Medici faction. Lionardo seems to have acted as a Medici agent from the 1450s, and he expressed his loyalty to them by naming two sons after their patron saints, Cosmas and Damian. Like the Medici, he was patron to Filippo Lippi, commissioning a tondo from the

artist, sometimes identified with the *Virgin and Child with the Birth of the Virgin* now in the Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.[8] Indeed, patronage of leading artists ran in the family. In 1407 Lionardo's father and uncle, Bartolomeo and Salimbene di Lionardo Bartolini Salimbeni, provided for the maintenance of their family chapel in the church of Santa Trinita, where Lorenzo Monaco executed the altarpiece and mural paintings in the early 1420s.[9]

In his will of 1477, Lionardo left all his belongings jointly to his youngest sons, Marco, Damiano, and Andrea. The elder brothers contested the will and the matter was arbitrated by a committee of three prominent citizens, including Lorenzo de' Medici. The matter was resolved in favour of Damiano and Andrea, Marco having died in 1480. In 1483 Damiano took possession of the *Battle* paintings, for himself and Andrea, as Andrea had moved to Milan. The following year Andrea wrote to Niccolò Michelozzi, Lorenzo de' Medici's secretary, regarding the ceding of an important work of art, evidently the *Battle* paintings. In 1486 Andrea returned to Florence and in the next year the division of the inheritance was recorded, with no mention of the *Battle* paintings, presumably because they had already been seized by Lorenzo. Caglioti, who uncovered much of the works' pre-Medici history, proposed that the *Battle* paintings were probably commissioned by Lionardo Bartolini in 1438 when he married for the second time, and that they were appropriated by Lorenzo in 1484, following the correspondence between Andrea and Lorenzo's secretary in February and March of that year.[10]

The three paintings were next referred to as the *Rout of San Romano* in the inventory of Lorenzo de' Medici's belongings taken in 1492 following his death, known from a copy made in 1512. They were displayed over wainscoting with a *Battle between Dragons and Lions* and a *Story of Paris (?)* by Uccello, and a *Hunt* by Francesco di Pesello.[11] Lorenzo's room contained an eclectic mix of paintings, including a large and valuable *Adoration of the Magi* tondo listed as a work of Fra Angelico (now often described as by Fra Angelico and Filippo Lippi or Lippi alone and housed in the National Gallery of Art, Washington),[12] a tabernacle depicting the head of Saint Bastiano, figures and coats of arms by Squarcione, unattributed paintings of Saint Jerome and the duke of Urbino, and a *Portrait of Duke Ghaleazo* by Piero Pollaiuolo (now in the Galleria degli Uffizi).[13]

The *Battle* paintings then appear in a 1495 document recording a deliberation of the Sindaci, responding to a request by Damiano Bartolini for the restitution of his half-share of the '*Rout of the Tower at San Romano*' or the '*Rout of Niccholò Piccinino*' ('*La rotta della Torre a San Romano*' siue '*La rotta de Nicolo Picino*'). Damiano testified that the works had been in his and his brother Andrea's house in Quinto, northwest of Florence, and that they were seized by force from his residence (presumably in Florence) on Lorenzo de' Medici's orders by a group of men including Francione, a carpenter. His account was confirmed by

witnesses.[14] The paintings were later recorded in a 1598 Medici inventory, so whatever the outcome of Damiano's claim, they ultimately remained in Medici ownership.[15] The London panel left the Medici Collection after 1787, passing through the Giraldi Collection to the Lombardi Baldi Collection, from which it was acquired by the National Gallery, London, in 1857. The Paris panel left the Medici Collection, presumably at the same time as the London panel, also passing through the Lombardi Baldi Collection to the Campana Collection, from which it was acquired for the Museé Napoleon III in the early 1860s, and eventually became a part of the Musée du Louvre. While the Florence panel was transferred to the Galleria degli Uffizi by 1796.[16]

To state the obvious, for three paintings by the same artist of similar subject matter that are documented in common ownership from 1480 to 1787, and that have been referred to jointly (by various titles) since the fifteenth century, the *Battle* paintings are distinctly different in appearance. Some of these differences are due to Uccello and some to how they have been treated subsequently. However, even allowing for considerable damage to the paint surfaces, the three paintings do not form a continuous or even highly consistent composition, and there are major differences between the scale of the figures in the London and Florence panels, compared with those in the Paris panel, and major differences between the landscapes of all three panels, more pronounced between the London and Florence panels and the Paris panel. These differences raise a doubt as to whether the three panels could have formed a single commission.

In many respects the London and Florence panels form a natural pair, while the panel in Paris is different and may not have been displayed with the other two originally. The most significant discrepancy between the panels is the size of the figures and horses in the London and Florence panels, which are smaller than those in the Paris panel. The viewing position is also higher in the first two than in the last, and there are differences between the type of armour and the horses' paraphernalia in the first two and the last.[17] The differences in the landscapes are considerable between all three, suggesting that the painting of the panels may have taken so long that Uccello's style actually developed in the time it took to paint them. However, the first two still show visible landscapes, while the last has only a background of a dark screen of trees. Furthermore, the London *Battle* takes place on an unnatural pink ground, paralleled to an extent in the pinkish-beige ground in the London *Saint George*, and the similar pinkish-white ground in Scheggia's *Triumph of Fame* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Presumably, this colour was chosen for aesthetic reasons. It gives the scene a lively feel, and throws the figures in strong relief. The Florence panel has a mid-brown ground, while the Paris panel has a greyish-brown ground. The landscape in the background

of the London panel is predominantly grey-brown with a few trees and a little grass, the landscape in the Florence panel is more evenly brown with more greenery in the trees and tussocks of grass, while the landscape in the Paris panel is almost entirely black, save for the tips of some faintly-visible leaves. From the visual evidence it seems that either Uccello was granted considerable latitude in developing the composition of the panels as he worked on them, or the commission itself was not unified, but consisted of two or even three individual commissions that have subsequently been grouped together and treated by art historians as though they belonged to a single commission.

Having seen that the works experienced at least two changes of ownership and three relocations in the fifteenth century, resulting in changing circumstances of installation or storage, it is not surprising that the works were altered to suit their different surroundings. Baldini's investigation of the Florence *Battle* in the early 1950s brought to light the work's complex physical history. Examination of the panel revealed that the top corners are filled with separate pieces of wood, whose grain runs in a different direction from the main planks of the panel. Furthermore, the right hand corner addition has a piece of cloth interlayer covering the whole surface of the added wood, while the rest of the panel has cloth interlayers only over the joins between the planks. The gaps that the additions filled were, judging by their size, shape, and location, intended to allow the painting to fit between corbels in a vaulted room. The angle of the original edges in the upper corners led Baldini to suppose that the top of the panel had originally been arch-shaped. Presumably, at an early stage of its history the panel had been significantly reconfigured to give it a rectangular shape, by removing the arch-shaped top of the panel, filling the gaps in the corners and painting the corner additions to match the composition of the rest of the panel.

At the time of Baldini's examination, investigations at the National Gallery, London, and the Musée du Louvre confirmed that similar changes had occurred to the other panels. The fact that the corner gaps at the top of the London and Florence panels were of different sizes, but in mirror-image format, led Baldini to suppose that the London and Florence panels were pendants, while the different disposition of the gaps in the Paris panel suggested to him that it had been placed at a ninety degree angle to these, on an adjacent wall to the right.[18] The results of the most recent comparative technical analyses of the three works, published by Dillian Gordon in 2003, suggest that the cutting of the tops of the panels and the adding of the corner inserts date to the late fifteenth century, most probably when they were seized by Lorenzo de' Medici around 1484.[19]

Confusion about the subject matter of the three paintings is evident as early as the fifteenth century. In 1480 they were described as the '*Rout of Niccolò Piccinino*', in 1492 they were

described as the '*Rout of San Romano*', and in 1495, as both. The battle of San Romano took place on 1 June 1432, while Piccinino was defeated at the battle of Anghiari on 29 June 1440. The problem is that Piccinino does not appear in the accounts of the battle of San Romano. Either the earliest description of the subject is incorrect or the subject is not one battle but two.[20] Identifying the protagonists in the three paintings is also problematic. The symbol of the knot on the standard of the London painting identifies the captain as Niccolò da Tolentino, since it also appears in Andrea del Castagno's *Equestrian Monument for Niccolò da Tolentino* in the Duomo in Florence. The captain in the Paris painting has been identified as Micheletto Attendolo da Catignola, since his standard bears, in heraldic terms: '2 and 3 barry undée, argent and sable', similar to the arms on the monument of his relative Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, and Micheletto is known from written accounts to have been the other principal Florentine *condottiere* at the battle of San Romano.[21] It has been proposed that the figure behind Tolentino in the London painting is also Micheletto, since he bears Attendolo arms on his surcoat.[22]

None of the Sienese can be identified securely. The knight being unhorsed in the centre of the Florence panel is traditionally identified as Bernadino della Ciarda, one of the commanders of the Sienese troops during the war of which the battle of San Romano was a part.[23] However, there is no evidence to confirm that it is he who is represented, and written accounts do not relate that he fell at the battle of San Romano, but rather that he fled.[24] The arms of one of the Sienese are close in form, if not colour, to those of the Petrucci family, who were represented at the battle of San Romano by Antonio Petrucci, and it has been suggested that the unhorsed knight in the Florence panel might be Antonio or an allusion to him.[25] Significantly, Piccinino cannot be identified anywhere.

Even before the descriptions of the paintings as the rout of Niccolò Piccinino came to light in 1999, the differences in scale, composition, and style of the Paris painting had led some scholars to believe that it was not contemporary with those in London and Florence. Furthermore, the prominence in the Paris panel of Micheletto, who was not feted as a hero of the battle of San Romano, led Julia Maria Lessanutti to suggest that the Paris panel represented a depiction of the battle of Anghiari, in which Micheletto was the hero, and in which Niccholò Piccinino was defeated. The three panels may have come to be known as the rout of Niccolò Piccinino because the importance of that victory far exceeded that of the battle of San Romano in terms of territory gained for Florence and for the final demise of the Albizzi faction.[26] The Albizzi had contravened their 1434 ban by leaving their place of exile, coming within one hundred miles of Florence, and worst of all, fighting against Florentine forces in concert with Piccinino, the duke of Milan's *condottiere*. For these offences they were duly punished. In 1440 Bartolommeo de' Burelli da Cesena, a member of the Dieci di

Balìa and *capitano del popolo*, ordered that the rebels' portraits be painted on the façade of the Bargello, hanging upside down, that is, already dead. The commission for this grisly subject was awarded to Castagno.[27]

The Paris panel may well be of a different subject and a different date than the other two. It cannot be said whether it was commissioned to be installed next to the others, whether it ever had a pendant, now lost, or whether it was an entirely autonomous work of art. It is worth remembering that the Bartolini family probably commissioned other depictions of military leaders from Uccello. Vasari identified the paintings in chiaroscuro in the Bartolini palazzo at Gualfonda in the sixteenth century as 'Paulo Orsino, Ottobuono da Parma, Luca da Canale, and Carlo Malatesti Lord of Rimini', whom he described as 'all captains general of those times'.[28] Perhaps, then, the fact that the *condottieri* had served Florence was more important than the specific details of their individual achievements.

It is possible to determine the likely order in which the London, Florence, and Paris paintings were executed. The differences between the backgrounds in the London and Florence panels show a significant development in Uccello's representation of landscape. The action in the foreground of the former is completely separated from the background by a screen of orange trees, rose bushes, and pomegranate trees, growing higher at the sides. This compositional format is essentially the same as for the Melbourne *Saint George* of the early 1430s, in which the rock formation plays the same role as the trees in the London painting, rising at the sides to form a backdrop for the figures in the foreground, and forming an enclosed, stage-like space in the foreground. Another similarity between the Melbourne and London works is the way the background landscapes are painted in broad, flat areas of light tonality contrasted with dark, sinuous bands indicating undulations in the landscape like sand dunes.

The landscape of the Florence *Battle* shows a more complex representation of space, and so is probably slightly later. Uccello used a screen of greenery only on the sides, for a *repoussoir* effect. This allows the landscape to extend into the background more gradually, even if he still placed the principal action in the foreground to maintain a degree of consistency with the composition of the London panel. In the Florence panel the detailed representation of subdivided fields, some under cultivation, the varied lighting over the fields, as though shadows are cast by clouds passing overhead, and the interweaving of narrative and landscape, as with the foot soldiers appearing over the hill in the middle distance, provide a visually rich setting for the action in the foreground. The incident in the landscape is richer too, with a hound chasing rabbits and a tiny group of figures at the upper left holding jugs around a half-barrel, possibly making wine. The dark foliage and twisted boughs of the pine trees are familiar features of the Tuscan countryside. No painter since Ambrogio Lorenzetti in

the *Effects of Good and Bad Government* in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena had done more to capture the rustic beauty of the Tuscan landscape. The Florence *Battle* explains why Uccello was remembered by Landino as a specialist in the depiction of animals, landscape, and perspective.[29]

The background of the Paris *Battle* consists only of a screen of dark foliage, in which little detail is discernable. The sense of developing sophistication in the representation of landscape between the London and the Florence paintings suggests that while the works were probably conceived at the same time as an ensemble, they were executed in succession, with the London panel painted first and the Florence panel second. The reason for placing the Paris panel third in the chronology is not to do with the landscape, but its principal subject: Micheletto, who became a hero later than Tolentino.

There are differing accounts of the battle of San Romano, an episode in the war between Florence and Lucca and its allies Milan, Siena, and Genoa, which lasted from 1429 to 1433. However, they do not contradict each other on the following basic details. On 1 June 1432, in the valley of the Arno river, mid-way between Florence and Pisa, Niccolò da Tolentino was leading Florentine troops when he engaged the Sienese enemy near the tower of San Romano and the town of Montopoli. Micheletto Attendolo, who was leading another group of Florentine troops some distance away, subsequently joined the battle. The enemy withdrew, leaving numerous troops to be taken prisoner. Accounts vary as to whom, out of Tolentino and Attendolo, deserved the most credit, although in Florence the battle was celebrated as a victory for Tolentino, the captain general of the Florentine troops.[30]

It is difficult to make firm connections between many of the details in the London and Florence paintings and what is known to have taken place historically at the battle of San Romano. Despite the wealth of detail in the paintings, they lack any unmistakeable topographical references, such as the tower of San Romano or the town of Montopoli in the background. Their purpose is not so much to provide a literal depiction of the events as they happened, as to celebrate the contribution of the *condottiere* to the glorious outcome. Perhaps this is why there is no consensus as to which of the numerous sources available to Uccello he actually used for his depiction of the battle.[31] Nevertheless, a likely source is the diary of the Florentine Luca di Maso degli Albizzi, who, with Tolentino, was given the task by the Dieci di Balìa of organising the campaign that led to the battle,[32] since it seems that the paintings were commissioned by one of the Dieci, Lionardo Bartolini. Nevertheless, the account of the battle may have been filtered through the patron or put together from a variety of sources.

Modern historians agree that the battle of San Romano was a brief triumph for the Florentines in the war with Lucca that achieved little overall.[33] So why the lavish depiction of

it in Uccello's enormous paintings? Perhaps more important for the interpretation of the subject matter of the paintings than the battle's significance for the Florentine struggle for regional dominance is its significance for the honour of Florentine leaders. The symbolic significance of the war for the Florentine political situation is poignantly expressed in some of the missives from the battlefields. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the prominent representative of the anti-Medici, conservative, older families in the Florentine oligarchy mentioned in the context of the *Equestrian Monument* in the previous chapter, led the Florentine administration of the war in the field. He pleaded repeatedly from the battlefield for the mostly pro-Medici Dieci di Balìa to respect his honour in their dealings with him, their management of the war, and their response to attacks on his competence in Florence: 'Now consider, my Lords, the position I have enjoyed in the past, and how I have been accustomed to conduct myself, and may it please you therefore above all to have some regard for my honour, that since you keep me here for form's sake, so that I may not be disgraced, that in the meantime I should be in charge, taking account of my rank and age.'

The war did not often go well for the Florentines, and so sensitive was Rinaldo to criticism in Florence that he even complained when the Dieci di Balìa defended him there: 'I do not believe that I have done anything for which I need to be defended, and in any case I trust I am able to defend myself.'[34] While Rinaldo is not represented in the *Battle* paintings, his attitude helps to explain the extreme pomp and pageantry of Uccello's representation of the battle of San Romano: it expresses political narcissism, jealousy, and rivalry, reflecting the anxiety of those who waged the war to be seen as triumphant, naturally for the sake of the outcome of the war and its effects on Florentine security and power, but perhaps more importantly for what people would say about their performance in Florence.

The historian Anthony Molho recounted a similarly revealing episode from 1432 concerning the two principal subjects of Uccello's paintings:

> It seems that the Florentine city fathers, pleased with the performance of one of their great captains, Michele degli Attendoli, presented to him, as a token of their appreciation, a golden helmet costing the respectable sum of 2,000 florins. No sooner had news of this event spread in the domain than Niccolò da Tolentino, another of Florence's mercenaries, claimed an equal measure of recognition, so that the Commune was forced to present him a helmet similar to that given Michele degli Attendoli. Four thousand florins in a budget of some three quarters of a million was no doubt a small sum. But only a decade and a half before, in 1419, it had represented 4 percent of the annual expenditures for military affairs, and even in the 1420's many thoughtful Florentines would have felt that such a sum paid to please fickle and insatiable mercenaries was an extravagant waste of money.[35]

Dale Kent has demonstrated how the war acted as a catalyst for the latent divisions and resentments in Florentine society, by casting a spotlight on the abilities of its leaders to defend the commune, in particular, Cosimo de' Medici's ability to fund the extremely expensive endeavour and Rinaldo's inability to achieve a decisive victory on the field of battle. These tensions may only have been contributing factors to the political upheaval in Florence following the war, which saw the punishment of first the Medici and then the Albizzi factions, nevertheless, they were clearly important.[36]

As one of the Dieci di Balìa that had conducted the war, Lionardo had good cause to promote any victory in the campaign.[37] The *condottieri* Niccolò da Tolentino and Michele degli Attendoli and their retinues had cost the Dieci astronomical amounts in wages during the war with Lucca,[38] and Lionardo might well have wanted to show that they had been worth the investment by depicting them prominently in the *Battle* paintings. As a private commission, it would have been easier for the patron to ignore any lingering resentment to the Medici party's role in the war, and so Lionardo would have been freer to honour Niccolò da Tolentino in painting, many years before Tolentino's monument was painted in the Duomo. Lionardo's colleague on the Dieci and fellow Medici partisan, Neri di Gino Capponi, had helped supervise the commission for Uccello's *Equestrian Monument*, in which the artist had demonstrated his ability to depict a *condottiere* with the requisite dignity. Thus, Uccello would have been a natural choice for the commission for the *Battles*. While the Bartolini arms are not discernible in the paintings, it is not known that any Bartolini were present at the battle or battles depicted. The yellow diamond shapes on a red background on the shield carried by a foot soldier at the far left of the Paris painting may, however, be a discrete allusion to the family's arms, which show three yellow diamonds on a red field in two of its quarters, as can be seen on the floor of their family chapel in the church of Santa Trinita.

While the *Battle* paintings were most probably not Medici commissions, this is not to say that they do not communicate pro-Medici messages. Attendolo's headdress in the Paris panel shows a decorative cluster of seven circles at the front highly reminiscent of the Medici *palle* (the balls of the Medici coat of arms),[39] while the oranges, roses, and tripartite feather headress in the London panel have been described as allusions to Medici *imprese*.[40] The commission was probably partly intended to flatter the Medici role in the war. While the nature of Uccello's own relationship with the Medici is now unclear, it remains likely that the Medici were Uccello's patrons for the *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* formerly on the façade of the church of San Tomasso Apostolo in the Mercato Vecchio, now destroyed. The painting was attributed to Uccello by the authors of *Il libro di Antonio Billi* and *Il codice magliabechiano*.[41] However, by 1755 it had disappeared, judging by Richa's comments on the

renovated façade of the church: 'Long ago, above the entrance, Paolo Uccello, celebrated master of perspective, painted a Saint Thomas…' ('*In antico fulla Porta al di fuori Paolo Uccello celebre Maeftro di profpettiva vi avea dipinto un S. Tommafo…*').[42]

The Medici first settled in Florence in the northeast corner of the Mercato Vecchio, opposite the church of San Tomasso, before expanding north into the parish of San Lorenzo, in the mid-fourteenth century.[43] Butterfield noted that the Medici were the principal patrons for the church, and proposed that Cosimo was probably responsible for the commission for the *Incredulity*. In 1435, Cosimo, as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, made the Feast of Saint Thomas a communal holiday, and in 1460 he provided a new high altar for the church. Butterfield argued that the iconography of the doubting of Saint Thomas could be construed as an allegory of good government, since it shows clemency (on Christ's part) and the desire for truth (on Saint Thomas' part), a powerful means for the Medici to proclaim the legitimacy of their political hegemony.[44]

Vasari described the *Incredulity* as a late work, although there is no corroborating evidence for its date.[45] There is, though, a small but growing body of evidence (albeit suggestive rather than conclusive) to date Uccello's closest relations with the Medici and their *consorteria* to the second half of the 1430s, beginning with the probable approval of Bishop Donato de' Medici of Pistoia of Uccello's commission for the Marcovaldi Chapel in *c.* 1435–1436,[46] their likely influence over the *Equestrian Monument* commission in 1436, and, less directly, the *Battle* paintings, datable to the late 1430s to early 1440s. When the *Battle between Dragons and Lions* and the *Story of Paris (?)* paintings in the Medici Collection until 1598 were commissioned, and whether the Medici commissioned them or, as with the *Battle* paintings, they acquired them, remains unknown.[47] In any event, Uccello's five paintings in the Medici Palazzo and his works in three churches of great significance to the Medici (the Duomo, San Lorenzo, and San Tomasso) show that the family and its *consorteria* were among his most important admirers.

Notes for Chapter 6

[1] For example: Wornum, 1864, pp. 258–259; and Milanesi (ed. in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, p. 214 n. 1), who identified the Florence *Battle* as one of the four works by Uccello on wood from the Bartolini palazzo in Gualfonda; two others were said to have been recently acquired by the Lombardi-Baldi Collection, and one was said to have gone to England.

[2] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 65: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[3] Horne, 1901, pp. 119–121.

[4] As discussed in: Joannides, 1989, pp. 214–216. Davies (1961, pp. 526–529) noted that Baldini's reconstruction of the works' installation left considerable space around the paintings. Gebhardt (1991, pp. 179–180) pointed out that until Joannides' article, published discussions of the relationship of the paintings to the architectural context of Lorenzo de' Medici's room were compromised by the confusion of the '*chamera delle dua letta*' with the '*chamera grande terrena*' where the paintings were actually installed.

[5] Gebhardt, 1991, pp. 184–185.

[6] Merisalo, 1999, pp. xvi, 56; Caglioti, 2000, vol. I, pp. 266–267; Caglioti, 2001, pp. 45–46.

[7] Caglioti, 2001, pp, 49–50.

[8] Petriboni's and Rinaldi's *Priorista* (2001, pp. 262, 319) recorded that Lionardo worked with Cosimo di Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, and Piero di Cosimo de' Medici (pp. 451–452), and served as Gonfaloniere di Giustizia (p. 471); For Lionardo's other offices, see: Holmes, 1999, pp. 117, 155; Butterfield, 1997, p. 60–61; Zervas, 1987, pp. 117, 128 n. 92.

[9] Eisenberg, 1989, pp. 134–136, 216.

[10] Caglioti, 2001, pp. 49–51.

[11] Horne, 1901, p. 137: '*Nella chamer^a grande terrena, detta Lachamera di Lorenzo…*

Sej quadri chorniciatj atorno & messj dor^o sop^a ladetta spalliera et sopra allettuccio dj braccia 42 lunghj et altj braccia iij1/2 dipintj Cioe tre della rotta di san Romano & uno dj battaglie & [di?] draghj et lionj et vno della storia diparis dimano di pagholo vcello & vno dimano difranc^o dipesello entrovj vna caccia. Fiorinj 300.'

[12] Kent, 2000, pp. 252–255.

[13] Gilbert, 1988, p. 160, citing Müntz, 1888, pp. 58–67.

[14] Merisalo, 1999, pp. XVI, 56; Caglioti, 2000, vol. I, pp. 266–267; Caglioti, 2001, pp. 45–46.

[15] Horne, 1901, p. 138: '*3 quadri grandi di giostre antichi tutti in un^o pezzo, con lor corniciette dorate, apicchati almuro alti sopra alla porta del primo salone, nellandito della capella.*'

[16] The full provenance of the London *Battle*: 1480, in the Camera Grande of the recently deceased Lionardo Bartolini Salimbeni, Florence; 1483, jointly owned by Damiano and Andrea Bartolini; *c.* 1484, appropriated by Lorenzo de' Medici (Caglioti, 2001, pp. 49–50); 1492, in Lorenzo de' Medici's '*chamera delle dua letta*' on the ground floor of the Palazzo Medici, Florence; 1598, Palazzo Medici; 1666, in the *guardaroba* of Cardinal Carlo de' Medici; 1784 one of the panels, probably the Florence panel, was exhibited in the Galleria and two were with the restorer Carlo Magni until 1787 when they were returned to the *guardaroba*; after 1787 the London panel left the Medici Collection (Meloni

Trkulja, 1975, pp. 108–110); possibly in 1844, acquired for the Giraldi Collection; by 1848, acquired for the Lombardi Baldi Collection, Florence; 1857, acquired for the National Gallery, London (Gordon, 2003, p. 394). The Florence *Battle*: provenance as for the London panel until 1769, by which time it was in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (Carli. 1954, p. 61). The Paris *Battle*: provenance as for the London panel until sometime after 1787, the Paris panel left the Medici Collection (Meloni Trkulja, 1975, pp. 109–110); from *c.* 1844–1848, Lombardi Baldi Collection, Florence; Campana Collection; from 1861, Museé Napoleon III (Carli, 1954, p. 61).

[17] Boccia, 1970, pp. 64, 68.

[18] Baldini, 1954a, pp. 227–231. Baldini's hypotheses explaining when these changes were made and why have been partly superseded by recent research. Baldini believed that the works had been designed to fit between the vaults of Lorenzo de' Medici's room in the Palazzo Medici where they were inventoried in 1492, with the London and Florence panels on one wall and the Paris panel on an adjacent wall to the right. This arrangement would account for the smaller corner gaps on the right of the Florence panel and the left of the Paris one, since corner corbels are usually narrower than ones in the middle of a wall. Baldini believed that they were subsequently adapted to be installed in another room where they were inventoried in 1598 as all in one piece. He dated the corner additions to the sixteenth century. Gebhardt (1991, pp. 184–185) pointed out that Baldini had misidentified the room in which the paintings were installed, and that, in any case, no room on the ground floor of the Palazzo Medici would have required the size and shape of the gaps left in the panels. The panels, therefore, might well have been designed for another building. Gebhardt still assumed that the patron was Cosimo de' Medici and supposed that the original commission had been for the old Palazzo Medici, and so dated the works to before 1444 when construction of the new palazzo commenced, specifically to about 1435, shortly after the battle of San Romano. He hypothesised that a carpenter prepared the panels to fit a space in the old Palazzo Medici, that Uccello painted the Paris panel immediately, but postponed the painting of the other two panels until they had been reshaped to fit their installation in the new palazzo. He believed that Uccello was responsible for the wooden infills and their painting. Much of this hypothesis is undermined by more recent investigations, as is discussed in the body of this text.

[19] Gordon (2003, pp. 383–387) noted that while the technique of the corner additions in the London panel is consistent with fifteenth-century materials and technique, it differs from that of the main parts of the panels in the following ways: first, the gesso of the main part of the panel is composed of a layer of *gesso grosso* (gypsum and anhydrite) followed by a layer of *gesso sottile* (gypsum), while that on the additions is only gypsum; second, the medium of the main part of the panel is egg tempera with some walnut oil, while that of the additions is egg tempera with some linseed oil; third, the green pigment of the vegetation in the main part of the panel is a composed of a layer of black followed by a layer of verdigris mixed with lead-tin yellow, followed by a copper green glaze, while that of the additions is composed of a layer of black followed by a layer of artificial malachite. Gordon suggested that the additions probably date to the fifteenth century because the use of artificial malachite is restricted to that period and the oranges in the additions are painted with a red lead pigment microscopically similar to that in the main part of the panel. Gordon also noted (2003, p. 392) that the

technique of applying a single layer of gypsum for the gesso was used by carpenters and so the corner additions may be attributable to Francione, the carpenter Lorenzo sent to seize the works in *c*. 1484.

One feature of the top right corner addition in the Paris panel, however, merits further technical investigation. E. Ravaud's diagram of the panel construction and the disposition of the cloth interlayers published in 2003, shows that it has a more complex make-up than those in the London painting (Gordon, 2003, p. 186, published courtesy of E. Ravaud). Strangely, it is composed of four unevenly shaped pieces of wood. X-radiography housed in the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France shows that the left-most of the four additions has a pronounced craquelure similar to that of the main part of the painting, and the edges of the lances are incised, as they are in the main part of the panel, suggesting that it may be original (CRRMF, conservation file, 5612 [*Battle*]). In the three additions on the right there is a very different, much finer, craquelure and the edges of the lances are not incised, confirming other evidence showing that they are later additions. Gordon (2003, p. 387) noted that the red lances in the main part of the Paris panel are painted with a layer of black followed by a layer of vermilion, while those in the top right corner addition have only a layer of vermilion. If the piece of canvas continues from the main panel onto the left-most addition as the diagram suggests (although there are questions marks drawn in this area of the diagram expressing uncertainty), then it must have been added by Uccello, perhaps because of a change to the desired shape of the panel while it was being made, and so perhaps a change to its intended location. Microscopic examination of the left-most addition, or an enlargement of the X-radiography might help determine whether the interlayer continues from the main part of the panel onto the leftmost addition.

[20] Caglioti, 2001, pp. 37–38, 45, 49.

[21] Identified in Horne, 1901, pp. 128–129, 131–132.

[22] Roccasecca, 1997, pp. 22–27.

[23] Mallett, 1974, p. 183.

[24] Roccasecca, 1997, p. 68; Pertici, 1999, p. 541.

[25] Roccasecca (1997, p. 22) proposed the identification tentatively; Pertici (1999, pp. 544–545, 548) agreed with the identification.

[26] Lessanutti, 1996, pp. 66–67. Pertici (1999, pp. 549–550) also thought the Paris panel might represent the Battle of Anghiari, or a non-narrative depiction of Micheletto simply as a victorious commander.

[27] Spencer, 1991, p. 20.

[28] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 69: 1550 and 1568 eds. It cannot be determined whether Vasari's identifications were correct, since the pictures have not survived.

[29] Landino, 1974, p. 124.

[30] Accounts of the battle of San Romano were written by Giovanni Cavalcanti, Neri di Gino Capponi, Matteo Palmieri, and Luca di Maso degli Albizzi. For discussions of the accounts of the battle of San Romano, see: Griffiths, 1978, pp. 313–316; Pertici, 1999, pp. 537–562; and Gordon, 2003, pp. 388–389. For a broad narrative of the war between Florence and Lucca, told particularly from the point of view of Florence's political factions, see: Bayley, 1961, pp. 97–110.

[31] Starn and Partridge, 1984, pp. 36–37.

[32] Pertici, 1999, p. 538. See also: Mallett, 1974, pp. 181–186.

[33] Pertici, 1999, pp. 537, 541.

[34] Kent, 1978, pp. 253–288; 263–264, and pp. 268–269 for the quotes.

[35] Molho, 1971, p. 19.

[36] Mohlo, 1971, pp. 184–192.

[37] Caglioti, 2001, p. 47.

[38] Molho, 1971, pp. 17–18.

[39] The Medici coats of arms usually depict six *palle*, however, an illuminated manuscript that belonged to Lorenzo de' Medici has coats of arms with seven *palle*, and the portico vault at Poggio a Caiano, decorated in Lorenzo's time, has the same arrangement of *palle* as in Uccello's painting, see: Cox-Rearick, 1984, Plates 41 and 47.

[40] Cox-Rearick, 1984, p. 48.

[41] Billi, 1991, p. 86; Anon. (magliabechiano), 1892, p. 100.

[42] Richa, 1972, vol. VII, p. 231.

[43] Kent, 1978, p. 64.

[44] Butterfield, 1997, pp. 61, 63. For further discussion of Medici patronage at San Tomasso see: Paoletti, 2000, pp. 54–72.

[45] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 70–71: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[46] Padoa Rizzo (1997, p. 38) noted that the *pieve* of Santo Stefano in Prato was dependent on the bishopric in Pistoia and so the bishop would most likely have had to give his approval to a major commission such as the painting of the Marcovaldi Chapel.

[47] Horne, 1901, pp. 121–125.

7

The Master and his Workshop

After the rapid succession of commissions for mural paintings and large panels that Uccello received in the 1430s and early 1440s, the impression gained from the surviving works is that the focus of his attention turned to making smaller paintings in his shop during the late 1440s and 1450s, with one or two assistants working for him. Sporadic commissions for mural paintings continued, nevertheless, which in this period may have included the lost *Giants* in the courtyard of the house of Vitali i Vitaliani in Padua (undated, but often thought to be from the late 1440s),[1] the lost figure of the Blessed Andrea Corsini for the Library of the Duomo in Florence (1453, of unknown medium), and certainly included a *Crucifixion* and the decoration of the washbasin in the refectory of the Monastery of San Miniato al Monte (1454), where he was assisted by a certain Antonio di Pappi. With a substantial body of work behind him, the period from the mid-1440s to the end of the 1450s was a successful one for Uccello, as is demonstrated by the growth of his family, his investments in property, and the relocation of his workshop to the main square of Florence.

Certain smaller categories of painting provided Reniassance artists' shops with a steady stream of work, in particular, portraits, devotional subjects such as the Virgin and Child and the Crucifixion, and decorative panels for domestic furnishings. The repetitive nature of this work could lead to the development of production strategies involving the division of labour between a master and his assistants, with the former responsible for the design and the latter for the execution of paintings. With his assistants busily turning out works to his desgns, the master was free to find new clients, to create new designs, or to dedicate himself to the painting of high quality works for a select clientele who could appreciate and afford the best a master could produce. This arrangement required a master to have access to significant capital to get started, but offered the prospect of greater returns than could be made alone.

Independent portraits came into their own as a genre in the first half of the fifteenth century, and while numerous examples have been attributed to Uccello, it is the comparatively little-known *Portrait of a Young Man* in the Museum of Art in Indianapolis that has emerged as the

most plausible work by Uccello in this genre. Studies of fifteenth-century Florentine portrait paintings have been vexed by the scarcity of documented commissions, and short provenances. The identities of the subjects are rarely known, and even when they are, the circumstances in which the paintings were made usually remain obscure. Attributions can be especially difficult to make because these works often follow a conventional pictorial format, especially for male portraits, of a strict profile against a plain, dark background, providing artists with little opportunity to express their personalities in distinctive ways.

The only documented portrait by Uccello is the *Equestrian Monument*, all other identifications of portraits in Uccello's mural paintings are speculative. Vasari described the dignified figure of Ham in the *Sacrifice and Drunkenness of Noah* as a portrait of the artist Dello Delli, whom he also claimed painted part of the Chiostro Verde cycle.[2] Given that Delli was about forty-three when he returned to Florence in 1446, and that he returned in some style (the Signoria recognised the knighthood conferred on him by King Juan II of Castilla),[3] the mature figure of Ham is not incompatible with Vasari's identification, but it cannot be confirmed, as there is no certain image of Delli to compare it with. It was probably on the basis of the figure of Ham that Berenson attributed to Uccello the similar-looking drawing *Profile Portrait of a Man* in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi.[4] The figure standing alone in the *Flood* has given rise to a great deal of speculation as to his identity: for Ames-Lewis and Eisler he may be Alberti; for Wakayama and Marino, Pope Eugenius IV; and for Gebhardt, Cosimo de' Medici,[5] while the figure of Noah leaning out of the ark has been interpreted doubtfully as a self-portrait.[6]

The *Portraits of Five Men (Giotto, Uccello, Donatello, Manetti, and Brunelleschi?)* in the Musée du Louvre was attributed to Uccello by Vasari in the second edition of the *Vite*, and for this reason was long held to be the most reliable indication of Uccello's portraiture on panel. According to its inscription and Vasari's testimony it depicts the men in the work's title.[7] However, the attribution is improbable on stylistic grounds and the inscription's veracity is open to question. The compositional inconsistencies within the work and in relation to the typical portrait formats of Uccello's time, as well as its execution, have led many recent authors to reject his paternity of it. One figure is depicted in profile, three figures are depicted in three-quarter profile, and one is in a near full-frontal pose. Notwithstanding the work's abraded and repainted condition, the brushwork is thinner and less controlled than is usual for Uccello. Having said that, the depiction of Manetti is reminiscent of Uccello's figure types from the mid-1440s, such as the Dublin *Virgin and Child*. So it cannot be excluded that the work is derived from a lost Uccelloesque source or sources.

The Indianapolis *Portrait of a Young Man* is a much more Uccelloesque work than the *Portraits of Five Men*, even if there remains a lot to be learnt about its original condition,

early history, and subject. The painting can only be traced as far back as the Émile Gravet Collection in Paris in 1897.[8] An old black and white photograph (undated) of the portrait in the Villa I Tatti fototeca shows extensive abrasion to the background surrounding the head and smaller areas of abrasion on the head that have since been repainted. The rest of the paint surface appears to be in reasonably good condition.[9] It has been suggested that the panel was transformed from the usual rectangular format of Renaissance portraits painted on panel into its current polygonal format in a nineteenth-century restoration.[10] The panel is certainly not in its original condition. The right and left edges have been cut and strips of wood have been added to the circumference. However, it is difficult to establish the precise relationship of the original panel to the later additions. Since the back of the panel has been painted it is difficult to know whether the original panel has been set into a new panel (marouflaged), or whether the additions are confined to the edges.[11]

A circular ridge is visible around the edge of the surface, inside the polygonal edges, suggesting that the original format might have been a tondo. The devotional tondo first appeared in Florence in the late 1430s, an early example being Veneziano's *Adoration of the Magi*. Portrait tondi are extremely common in mural paintings (for example, the portraits of Dominican friars in the vaults of the Chiostro Verde at Santa Maria Novella), in sculpture (for example, Ghiberti's self-portrait in the Doors of Paradise and Brunelleschi's memorial in the Duomo), in glazed ceramics, glassware and, of course, in portrait medals. The earliest extant portrait tondo on panel is Jean Fouquet's celebrated *Self-Portrait* from around the middle of the fifteenth century (Musée du Louvre, Paris), while the earliest recognised Italian example is Francesco Botticini's *Portrait of a Young Man* of *c*. 1485–1490 (Nationalmuseum, Stockholm). Archival evidence suggests that they might have existed in Italy earlier. An inventory of the household goods of Tommaso Spinelli made in 1445 recorded a panel painting of a woman on a 'plate' ('*1 tavola di donna suvi la piata dipinta*').[12] The Indianapolis *Portrait of a Young Man* is datable to the early-to-mid-1440s on stylistic grounds.[13] It should come as no surprise if the pioneer of the portrait tondo in Florence turned out to be Uccello, given his taste for pure geometric forms, expressed no more clearly than in his works in the Duomo of the early 1440s, notably the male heads in circular frames in the *Clockface*.

Artworks with polygonal and tondo formats have strong associations with the commemoration of children. Renaissance birth trays, traditionally presented to a new mother, are polygonal or round. The birth of a male child was a significant event in a family, as a vital step in the continuation of the dynasty and, potentially, the family business. It was celebrated in depictions of a male infant on birth trays, such as the *Desco da Parto: A Birth Scene* (recto); *A Putto* (verso) (The New York Historical Society, on loan to Metropolitan Museum,

New York). In this playful work, the child is shown urinating, drawing attention to his gender, and the profession of the father as a goldsmith is alluded to by the fact that the urine is silver and gold. It is known in this case that the patron's son did indeed follow his father's profession.[14] A rare wedding tray (*desco da nozze*) is housed in the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti in Ca d'Oro, Venice. The seventeen-sided panel painted by Gerolamo di Giovanni di Benvenuto shows a naked Hercules standing between Virtues on the recto, and the arms of the Tancredi and Vieri families on the verso, between whom a wedding occurred in 1500. Thus, the polygonal or tondo format is found in works for a domestic context, celebrating family relationships.

If Renaissance portraiture was concerned with presenting the subject as an exemplar of virtue, as has been reasonably argued,[15] what virtue might a youth be expected to possess? The *Profile Portrait of Matteo Olivieri* and the *Profile Portrait of Michele Olivieri* once attributed to Uccello are now generally attributed to an anonymous Florentine artist, or sometimes Domenico Veneziano.[16] On panels of the same size, the subjects are depicted facing in opposite directions and were probably intended to be displayed as pendants facing each other. The panels carry the inscriptions, '*MATHEVS OLIVIERI DNI IOANNI FILI*' and '*MICHAEL OLIVIERI MATHEI FILIVS*', respectively, demonstrating that father and son were depicted within a family context. Michael Olivieri seems to be about the same age as the subject of the Indianapolis portrait. Michael's virtue may be framed within a familial context, as a son who dutifully reciprocates his father's gaze, but his depiction gives little away about his particular personal attributes, as is the case with the majority of independent early Renaissance male portraits.

Later portraits offer more clues. The *Portrait of a Young Man* in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, attributed to an anonymous, north Italian artist working around 1520, depicts a male in his teens before a myrtle tree, with myrtle flowers tucked into his clothes, and before him a cartellino bearing the inscription: '*CLARIOR HOC PVLCRO REGNANS IN CORPORE VIRTUS*' ('Brighter [than beauty] is the virtue residing in this beautiful body').[17] Myrtle is an attribute of Venus, the goddess of love.[18] The inscription of the Melbourne portrait draws attention to the youth's beauty, but emphasises his virtue, while his virtue and beauty are associated, through the symbolism of the myrtle, with his status as an object or reciprocator of love. The youth in the Indianapolis portrait does not return the viewer's gaze, but the delicacy with which Uccello has defined his features emphasises his beauty, and the luminous tones emphasise his virtuous purity ('brighter than beauty'), qualities attractive to a loving gaze. He is surely too young to be of marriageable age, which for a fifteenth-century Florentine man was on average between thirty and thirty-two,[19] although a marriage may have been arranged much earlier in life. The Indianapolis portrait may have been commissioned to

preserve the memory of the youth's beauty and purity by a family member, or to communicate the same qualities to the family of a potential marriage partner. If the original format of the panel was a tondo, the context for the portrait might be imagined more particularly as a feminine one, such as a portrait commissioned by or for a mother to remember her son, or for a future wife.

Another constant source of employment for Renaissance painters was making small depictions of the Virgin and Child, of which innumerable examples have survived providing work for art historians to identify their authors. When Pudelko first attributed the Dublin *Virgin and Child* to Uccello in 1936, he asked: 'Is it possible to consider any other painter except Uccello as the author of such an incredibly bold work?'[20] The Virgin appears as a formidable, solemn woman without a veil, which led Sindona to describe her as 'a rare and magnificent 'profane' Virgin of the early Tuscan Renaissance' ('*una rara e magnifica Madonna 'profana' del primo Rinascimento toscano*'). At some stage in the work's history this was thought so immodest that her head was overpainted with a dark veil. This veil was removed in 1968, during conservation by the Istituto Centrale del Restauro di Roma.[21]

The cleaning also revealed evidence of the work's spatial adventurousness. There are differences between the incised lines for the scallop shell niche and the painted version. The red cornice and some of the lines of the niche were originally incised so as to be seen less *di sotto in su*, more in keeping with the angle at which the Virgin's head is seen, which is almost at the same level as the viewer. By painting the niche as seen from below, behind the Virgin seen from in front, Uccello created the impression that the niche is actually some distance behind the Virgin and considerably larger than her. With the Christ Child's toes and knee overlapping the ledge on which he kneels, it appears as though he is about to lunge forward towards the viewer. Thus, a telescopic depiction of space is achieved, between Christ in the foreground moving, as it were, towards the viewer and the background, receding into depth behind the Virgin.

Sindona recognised the strong influence of Donatello's sculptures in the Dublin *Virgin and Child*, such as the lively putti around the pulpit of the Duomo in Prato. That the format of the Dublin *Virgin and Child* has a Donatelloesque origin is without doubt, given the numerous sculpted versions of the composition attributed to artists in his circle, including the *Virgin and Child* in the Bargello in Florence, and another in the Szépmüvészeti Múzeum, Budapest from the circle of Donatello, and the *Virgin and Child* known as the *Torrigiani Madonna*, in the Bargello, by a follower of Michelozzo.[22] The *Tomb of Baldassare Cossa*, which Uccello had already borrowed from in the design of his *Equestrian Monument*, includes a depiction of the Virgin and Child in half-length format before a scallop shell niche.

Keith Christiansen has observed that Uccello's painting may derive from a lost relief by Donatello, reflected in a gilt bronze relief by a follower of Donatello in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in which the architecture is similarly shown *di sotto in su*, behind the Virgin and Child who are seen from more directly in front.[23] This may well be the case, although the *pentimenti* between the incised version of the niche and the painted version in the Dublin *Virgin and Child* may also indicate that the telescopic effect was Uccello's own invention.

The lively, almost risqué, character of the Dublin *Virgin and Child* may help explain the absence of an altarpiece in Uccello's oeuvre. The only indication that Uccello might have painted one is the *Female Saint* in the Galleria degli Uffizi, conceivably a fragment of a *sacra conversazione*. Judging by the cropped composition, the panel has been cut down around the top, left, and bottom edges. What remains is an unidentified female saint[24] standing in the corner of a plain architectural setting, the most distinctive feature of which is the molding of the entablature, similar to the one designed by Brunelleschi for the Guelf Party's *sala grande*, itself based on the one on the exterior of the Baptistery.[25] The saint's hands are joined in adoration, like the two children appearing from behind her robes. The object of their veneration is beyond the left edge of the panel, perhaps an enthroned Virgin and Child, past another standing figure, the only remains of whom are the edge of black robes at the bottom left of the picture and the mysterious object on the left edge, level with the female saint's chest. It has been suggested that the object might be the end of a knife, the attribute of Saint Peter Martyr when sticking out from his head or chest, although it is not really clear what the object is.[26]

The absence of a surviving altarpiece by Uccello is probably indicative of the nature of his career, rather than the chance disappearance of all such works. While the ecclesiastical contacts of Fra Lorenzo Monaco, Fra Angelico, and Fra Filippo Lippi would have given them an advantage in securing commissions for altarpieces during Uccello's lifetime, this can only be part of the reason that Uccello seems not to have painted many altarpieces, given that Masaccio and Masolino did. The serene, ordered, and decorative character of Fra Angelico's altarpieces, easy on the eye so to speak, is remote from the uncompromising character of Uccello's religious works, whether showing irrepressible energy and movement or severe and forceful aspects of style. Uccello's reputation for his wit or audacity may have inhibited his receiving commissions to provide the solemn visual setting for the mass. It seems Uccello contributed to the upper section of the lost Carnesecchi chapel altarpiece, and three of his predellas survive (the *Miracle of the Host*, the Quarate predella, and the Avane predella), but there is no altarpiece. Was Uccello considered unsuitable for such work or did he never have a chance to develop as a painter of altarpieces because of other commissions? He was,

nevertheless, thought suitable for the representation of religious subjects in other settings including New and Old Testament scenes, and the lives of holy fathers.

The more poetically abstract, but equally distinctive, quality of Uccello's style emerges clearly in the 1450s, perhaps as a result of the smaller scale of the works he was making, if the surviving examples are really representative of his output from the period. The small *Man of Sorrows between the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist* is called the Avane predella because it was formerly in the oratory of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Annunciation (Compagnia della Santissima Annunziata) in Avane. Since 1983 it has been in the Museo di San Marco, Florence. Its inscription relates that 'Antonio di Piero di Giovanni Del Golia had this panel made for the salvation of his soul and [those] of his [family] on 23 September 1452.'[27] Nothing else is known about the commission and the name Del Golia does not appear in the index of names in the Florentine Catasto of 1427.[28] There was, however, a prominent Sienese family by that name in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[29] Inventories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries record a painted *Annunciation* on the altar, attributed by Carocci in 1892 to Neri di Bicci. Five years later it was stolen and there has been no notice of it since, so it is impossible to confirm the attribution or speculate about the implications of the juxtaposition of works by these two artists.[30]

The format of the predella, showing the Virgin, Christ as the Man of Sorrows, and Saint John the Baptist, in three medallions disposed across the predella was traditional in Florentine art by the mid-fifteenth century, as exemplified by the Master of the Docent Christ's *Virgin and Child with Saints* of around 1390 in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris. Apart from the inscription, only the small figures are painted, the rest of the surface is gold leaf, and the figures have been quite badly damaged. Although this minor work gives little insight into the style of Uccello's painting at the time, its figures are sufficiently similar to those in the *Christ Crucified with the Virgin and Saints John the Evangelist, John the Baptist, and Francis* (Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid) to indicate a similar date for that work.

In the Madrid *Crucifixion* Christ is shown on the cross with the Virgin and Saint John the Baptist to the left and Saints John the Evangelist and Francis to the right. The figures are arranged in a line before a barren, hilly landscape with only a few patches of grass and clover, under a night sky. The simplicity of the imagery is paralleled by the economy of the execution. The haloes are painted in a gold coloured (ochre?) paint rather than gold leaf. The dark rectangles of turf in perspective, disposed arbitrarily on the ground serve to create a sense of space behind the figures, but perhaps more importantly, they contribute to the abstract, pattern-making established by the figures' frozen gestures, their ordered alignment across the picture plane, and the almost lunar landscape in the background.

Uccello's abstract, poetic style is even more pronounced in the London *Saint George*. Its spiral storm cloud, a brooding sign of imminent supernatural intervention, is a veritable signature of Uccello's extraordinary imagination, like the moon that appears repeatedly in his works. In nature, the tornado, the whirlpool, and the whirlwind are dangerous phenomena, obeying unseen, yet potent, natural laws. In art, vortexes, storms, and floods appear most famously in the works of visionary artists, such as Lorenzo Monaco's *Miracle of Saint Nicola of Bari* predella panel (Museo di San Marco, Florence) and quite a few of Leonardo's drawings. These are works in which highly-charged atmosphere plays as important a role as narrative and symbolism. Vortices also appear in Uccello's Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, fainter echoes of the motif appear in the scene of the Quarate predella showing Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos, and in the Los Angeles *Virgin and Child*, while the moon appears in the Bologna *Adoration*, the *Hunt*, the London *Saint George* and Paris *Saint George*. The vortex and the moon exercise their influence through invisible and irresistible means, the former sweeps up everything around it, the latter moves the sea. These are perhaps emblematic of Uccello's desire to captivate the viewer.

The dragon in the London *Saint George* is certainly captivating. In the earlier Melbourne *Saint George*, Uccello departed quite radically from what would have been the most familiar depiction of the subject in Florence at that time: Donatello's relief on the base of his marble statue of the saint on the outside of Orsanmichele. Rather than make the saint the heroic focus of the composition with the dragon timidly turning away at the hooves of the saint's horse, as Donatello did, Uccello made the dragon overwhelm his adversary, giving the painter the opportunity to elaborate the details of the fantastic creature's body. While in the London *Saint George* Uccello afforded his hero more dignity, he still made the dragon the real focus of the painting. In so doing he created the most memorable depiction of a dragon in Western art, recognised by a most assiduous modern exponent of the spectacular, Andy Warhol, in a colourful series of prints appropriating Uccello's dragon. Uccello's dragon seems to have fired the imagination of one leading artist already in Renaissance Florence, inspiring the marble waterspout in the shape of a dragon from the Villa Busdraghi attributed to the sixteenth-century sculptor Bartolomeo Ammannati, now housed in the Museo di Santo Spirito.[31]

In lavishing attention on the dragon Uccello was only expressing Florence's deep fascination with the beast. Dragons figured in communal heraldry (some districts of Florence bore dragons on their flags), they decorated the splendid helmets worn by knights (a rare surviving example is housed in the Museo Statale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna in Arezzo), they enlivened the borders of numerous illuminated manuscripts, they spouted water in fountains (another example is the marble *Lavabo* in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo carved

by Verrocchio and the young Leonardo), and they were depicted in fearsome battles in paintings (Uccello's *Battle between Dragons and Lions* graced the walls of the Medici Palazzo by the end of the fifteenth century). With Saint George, dragons appeared in religious art, such as Donatello's sculpture, and paintings commissioned by private patrons throughout Florence, such as Francesco del Pugliese (*c.* 1458–1519), a wealthy wool merchant, who had Fra Bartolommeo paint a mural of the subject in a niche at the top of a staircase in his house, no doubt because it was the emblem of the Wool Merchants' Guild.[32] Uccello's contacts with members of the Guild, as Operai of the Duomo, might help account for the multiple commissions he received for paintings of this subject. The children's confraternity dedicated to Saint George, referred to in Chapter 3, might well have commissioned images of the saint from painters also.

Less conspicuous, but equally revealing of Uccello's approach to the composition of the London *Saint George*, is the foreshortening of the horse's body as a series of undulating curves, starting at the head, travelling along the pronounced curve of the neck, the hollow of the saddle, over the rump and ending in the flourish of the S curve tail, paralleling the simplified geometry of the dragon's body. In contrast to the curved geometry of the figures, the turf forms a grid of rectangles, as it does in the Madrid *Crucifixion*. In these checkerboard grids Uccello reiterates the conceit of the unnatural grids on the ground of the *Battle* paintings, formed in part by turf and in part by fallen lances. In the later, smaller works with their greater stylisation, the effect of making the artifice of painting apparent is even greater. But what kind of patron might such abstract, self-reflexive paintings have appealed to?

Although the original owners of the Madrid *Crucifixion* and London *Saint George* are unknown, it is tempting to imagine them as members of Florence's increasingly visually literate market, connoisseurs such as Giovanni Rucellai who were proud of their discerning taste and who might have savoured Uccello's painterly achievements as much as, if not more than, the religious or moral messages expressed in the subjects of his paintings. These small-scale paintings seem intended for buyers seeking distinctive specimens of Uccello's work. Another work that, judging by its rich palette, precise and detailed execution, and aesthetic finesse, may be nearly contemporary with the London *Saint George* is the *Hunt in a Forest*, perhaps the most magical depiction of a hunt in Western art. In the originality and quality of its conception and the skill of its execution it fulfils all the criteria of a masterpiece in the literal sense: the work of a master demonstrating an exceptional understanding and control of their materials and technique, qualities that Uccello's assistants could only aspire to emulate in their works discussed below.

In a moonlit forest of oak trees, sixteen mounted huntsmen and twelve on foot follow a pack of hounds chasing six roebuck into the distance of a landscape stretching to the

horizon. Roe are a small species of deer admired for their grace more than their sport as game. The canopy of the trees above and the luxuriant carpet of grasses, bull-rushes, clover, and flowers below enclose the brightly clothed hunters in a rich green setting. In his *Ricordi* Giovanni Morelli described just such hunting grounds in the countryside around the Mugello area, to the north of Florence: 'Nearer to the habitations there is a great quantity of groves of beautiful oak trees, many have improved them for pleasure, clear underneath, that is the ground is like a field, so you may go barefoot without fear of anything to injure the foot.' (*'Più di presso all'abitazioni v'è gran quantità di boschetti di be' querciuoli, e molti ve n'ha acconci per diletto, netti di sotto, cioè il terreno a modo di prato, da 'ndarvi iscalzo sanza temere di niente che offendesse il piè.'*)[33]

Hunts were a common form of entertainment among the Florentine patriciate in the Renaissance, staged, in particular, for honoured guests. In specially tended gardens with ponds and fountains, some provided with viewing platforms and seating for audiences, game of all kinds were kept for hunting. While efforts were made to keep the animals away from humans so they did not become tame, contemporary accounts indicate that the animals were not always afraid of their hunters. On occasion, the hunt could be more of a performance than a blood sport. A late instance is the 'hunt' held in the palazzo at Gualfonda in 1600 as part of the celebrations for the wedding of Maria de' Medici. A triumphal cart was constructed with a figure of Diana hunting animals, which were released and chased through the gardens by dogs.[34] The poetic tone of Uccello's *Hunt* has led to various allegorical interpretations. Edgar Wind suggested the work might have been one of a series depicting mythological representations of the months, interpreting the painting as an allusion to Diana's hunt because of the appearance of her attribute the moon.[35] Jacques Darriulat interpreted the work as an allegory of optical theories in pictorial art of the Renaissance, citing a text by Leonardo da Vinci describing the inability of the human eye to register objects on the periphery of the visual field even though the light rays from these objects entered the eye. This phenomenon Da Vinci compared to dogs at a hunt that open their mouths without catching anything.[36]

Although the dogs are not shown catching their prey, two deer have been killed. One carcass is shown carried on the horse of the mounted hunter in the left middle distance and the other is carried on his shoulder. These deer do not have antlers and so might be does or kids, and judging by their relatively large size, they seem to be does. In Lucas Cranach's two paintings comprising the *Hunt in Honour of Charles V* (Prado, Madrid) bucks and does are pursued by hounds and hunters, while only bucks are killed. That only does have been killed in Uccello's painting is unusual, although Renaissance accounts confirm that does were hunted, but in fewer numbers than bucks.[37] The reason for the gender imbalance in Uccello's painting is not clear. Uccello may simply not have thought to paint antlers on the slain deer,

which are rather small in the picture, although, all the live deer, even the smallest ones do seem to have antlers.

Petrarch and Boccaccio described the hunt for a doe as a metaphor for the male experience of love, and some fourteenth and fifteenth-century marriage caskets and cassoni show hunting scenes.[38] Roe were noted for their maternal devotion and for their habit of forming monogamous pairs each season. When a couple was separated in a hunt they sought to reunite.[39] An interesting aspect of the spatial construction of the *Hunt* is the fact that most of the riders' heads are aligned with the horizon, while the heads of those on foot are all lower. This implies that the viewer is on the same level as the riders, and given the flat terrain, might be on a horse, and so virtually a part of the hunt. Any interpretation of the work divorced from its original context must be speculative, and nothing is known of the work's provenance prior to its donation to the Ashmolean Museum, by W.T.H. Fox-Strangways in 1850.[40] However, it may not be an accident that all of the figures depicted are young men of marriageable age. Perhaps Uccello's painting was intended as an allegorical encouragement for, or a commemoration of, a young patrician man's search for a faithful wife and devoted mother for his children.

The resemblance of the *Hunt* to cassone paintings has often been noted. It is larger than many cassone fronts, but falls within the range of dimensions for *spalliere* paintings, works that could be integrated into the rear panel of the top of a cassone or displayed independently on a wall above wainscoting at shoulder height.[41] Furniture painting provided a regular income for numerous Florentine painters' workshops. Vasari recorded that Uccello painted scenes in perspective for the sides of couches, beds, and other pieces of furniture that could be found in many houses in Florence, but did not provide much information about precisely where or what these were.[42] It is known, though, that in 1474, Uccello sued the carpenter Domenico di Francesco del Tasso for two paintings he had done but not been paid for. The document recording the event states that the sum owed was three florins *largi* ('*fiorini tre larghi per quandri dui dipinti*').[43] According to Laurence Kanter these were 'unmistakeably references to a pair of cassoni', taking this as a starting point for reassessing Uccello's activity as a furniture painter. He attributed to Uccello and his workshop a group of cassone panels in collections around the world, mostly dating to the period around 1465–1470.[44]

The style of Uccello's late works such as the *Miracle of the Host*, with its clusters of small figures on foot and others on horseback in tightly woven narrative scenes, is certainly comparable to the cassone panels of artists such as Apollonio di Giovanni. The workshop Uccello rented in 1442 in Via delle Terme was in an area in which numerous furniture painters worked, including Apollonio di Giovanni,[45] but by 1469 he no longer declared

separate workshop premises in his *portata*. If Uccello worked predominantly from home at an advanced age,[46] apart from his trip to Urbino, then a reduced output of works on a smaller scale might be expected. Without studying at first hand all of the many panels Kanter discussed it is difficult to assess their authorship. However, the panels in the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, attributed to Uccello's workshop by Kanter, are undoubtedly the work of Scheggia, as is evident in the horses' comic bulging eyes, the men's caricaturish faces, and the particularly emphatic manner in which the brickwork is shown in relief, all distinctive features of Scheggia's style. Intriguing though the possibility of Scheggia working with Uccello is, there is as yet no substantial evidence for it.

In any case, it is not clear that the works Uccello painted for Domenico del Tasso were for cassoni. The *Saint George* by Uccello that Lorenzo Morelli owned in 1465 was a small-scale painting (the equivalent of 65.67 by 87.56 cm) costing eight florins *largi*. Morelli noted that Uccello's contribution accounted for seven florins *largi*, while the panel and frame made by 'Jacopo the carpenter' accounted for one florin.[47] Using this price as a guide, Uccello's paintings for Domenico del Tasso, worth only three florins *largi*, would probably have been quite small items, probably too small to be cassone panels. The fact that the works mentioned in the suit were made for a carpenter does not imply that they were furniture paintings either, as Uccello's work on a panel made by 'Jacopo the carpenter' demonstrates. The objects of the suit may simply have been small, independent panels in carved frames. And so it remains that no work by Uccello can be described with certainty as a furniture painting, even if it is very likely that he did make such works.

Efforts to distinguish Uccello's paintings from those of his assistants in the past led to the invention of the Karlsruhe Master, the Prato Master, and the Quarate Master, named after the locations where Uccelloesque works (but insufficiently so) were found.[48] These 'masters' should perhaps have been called 'students' since it was usually suggested that they were workshop assistants or direct followers of Uccello, rather than independent masters. In any case, there was no consensus as to which works belonged to which pseudonymous artist, an indication that there were insufficient grounds to justify their distinct identities. With the absorption of their works into Uccello's oeuvre over the course of the twentieth century, the nature of Uccello's workshop became more obscure.

The documents from Uccello's lifetime provide scant information about his assistants. Antonio di Pappi collaborated with him in the refectory at San Miniato al Monte. However, as their works are lost and no independent work by Antonio is known, it is impossible to say whether he might have collaborated with Uccello elsewhere. Uccello's son Donato (1453–1497) certainly travelled with him to Urbino. Although Donato probably

assisted his elderly father with their travel and living arrangements, there is nothing to suggest he contributed to the execution of the *Miracle of the Host*. In the absence of specific documentation and any signed work, nothing can be convincingly attributed to Donato, despite attempts to do so.[49] Uccello's daughter Antonia (1456–1490) is recorded as a painter. Parronchi hypothesised that she might have worked in a manner close to that of her father's late style and might be responsible for works of an intimate character that he considered difficult to integrate into Uccello's oeuvre, such as the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, the Los Angeles *Virgin and Child*, and the Karlsruhe *Adoration*.[50] However, the last of these works more probably predates her birth, on stylistic and technical grounds, as argued here in Chapters 3 and 8. The fact that Antonia was not referred to in Uccello's 1469 *portata* may indicate that she had left the family home by the age of thirteen,[51] posing a problem for the hypothesis of her involvement in the creation of works in Uccello's workshop during his lifetime. With no documentation of Antonia's commissions and no work clearly signed work by her, it is impossible to attribute anything to her securely. A number of artists with established oeuvres have also been proposed as pupils of Uccello on stylistic grounds, including Benozzo Gozzoli, Alesso Baldovinetti, Andrea del Castagno, and Giovanni di Francesco, but again, no compelling evidence has been found to support these hypotheses.[52]

However, there are indications that Uccello delegated painting to assistants, in works such as the small triptych *Crucifixion with a Bridgettine Nun Donor, Sister Felicita* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), even if the artist's name remains elusive. The central panel reprises the principal elements of the composition of the Madrid *Crucifixion*, with the Virgin on the left and Saint John the Baptist on the right of the cross. The triptych differs in the addition of Saint Mary Magdalene, two Angels, the donor, and the gold ground. In the left wing, Saint Bridget seems to be dripping wax on her arm in an act of self-mortification while holding a red cross with a white circle in its centre, in the right wing the Virgin stands holding the Child, and in the upper sections of the wings the Annunciation is shown. The triptych, a bequest of Lore Heinemann to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, emerged in the literature at the end of the twentieth century with an attribution to Uccello, although it has not been written about at length.[53]

In Keith Christiansen's notice of the work following its acquisition by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, he accepted the attribution to Uccello, and proposed a date for it in the 1430s. He also noted the inscription identifying the Bridgettine nun donor in the central panel as 'S[OUR]. FELICITA', and suggested that the work might have been painted for the Bridgettine convent of Santa Maria del Paradiso, near Florence.[54] A frontispiece illuminated by Lippo d'Andrea di Lippo, *The Annunciation; Saint Bridget and a Choir of Bridgettine Nuns* (Bernard H. Breslauer Collection, New York) of a gradual from the convent

confirms Christiansen's suggestion about the original destination of the triptych. Datable to the 1420s or 1430s, it shows nine nuns wearing the same grey habit as the donor of the New York triptych, including the distinctive headpiece with red dots symbolising Christ's wounds. In the illumination, Saint Bridget carries a processional cross, similar to one held by the saint in the left wing of the triptych. This style of cross has been identified as the symbol of the Santa Maria del Paradiso convent,[55] founded in the fourteenth century by the Alberti family with a dedication to Saint Bridget of Sweden, in an area southeast of Florence known as 'del Paradiso' because of its idyllic landscape.[56]

Even if the triptych's gold ground is in some respects comparable to Uccello's works from the 1430s, the style of the figures is closer to those in his later works, with the central figures being very close to those in the Madrid *Crucifixion*, datable to the 1450s. The Virgin in the central panel is very similar to that in the Madrid panel, with her proper left hand raised and her proper right hand lowered, and the drapery drawn over her head and swept up between her arms. The Saint John the Evangelist is close to that in the Madrid panel, notably, in the red robe that reveals its yellow lining in a series of folds.

The triptych's paint surface seems generally well preserved, although the uneven surface of the Virgin's robes in the central panel may indicate that they are a little rubbed and repainted. The figure of Saint Mary Magdalene is similar to that in the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, notably, in the technique of rendering her hair in yellow glazes and series of wavy, incised lines over a layer of gold leaf, although the hair is less finely executed than in the Karlsruhe *Adoration*. Other aspects of the execution are not as precise as is generally the case in Uccello's small-scale works from the 1430s. The hair belonging to Christ, the Angels, and Saint John is executed in a roughly-applied brown scumble, rather than with the fine, clearly defined brushstrokes for individual curls and tresses found in such works as the Melbourne *Saint George*. Economically executed hair is found in the Madrid *Crucifixion*, the *Hunt*, and the *Miracle of the Host* and a reduced attention to such details is a characteristic of Uccello's late style. Nevertheless, the triptych cannot be by the same artist as the Madrid *Crucifixion*. Most of the faces show prominent modelling of the highlights in a white paint that is not characteristic of Uccello's technique at any stage of his career. Indeed, the majority of the faces are too clumsy to be by Uccello. The combination of a clearly Uccelloesque design, familiarity with Uccello's technique, and some uncharacteristic execution suggests that the work was made from Uccello's designs by a workshop assistant in the late 1440s or 1450s. Interestingly, archival research by Rolf Bagemihl has revealed that a Felicità di Francesco Casavecchia made profession at the convent in January 1455, a plausible dating for the triptych.[57]

Of the panel paintings of the Virgin and Child associated with Uccello in the literature, in this author's opinion only the Dublin *Virgin and Child* is manifestly consistent with Uccello's style. Nevertheless, a number show elements of Uccelloesque design, offering likely evidence of his workshop's production. As Lorenza Melli has shown, the support of Uccello's drawing *Angel with a Sword; A Cup* contains part of a pricked design of a Virgin and Child (without their heads that were cropped when the sheet was cut) close in form and size to the *Virgin and Child* painting in a private collection in Prato. This painting was first attributed to Uccello by Berti, but has been subsequently attributed to the school of Uccello by others.[58] The correspondence in form between the pricked drawing and the painting shows that the design of the Prato *Virgin and Child* at least is most probably by Uccello. Melli also observed that the Los Angeles *Virgin and Child* (J. Paul Getty Museum) is based on the same design as the pricked drawing, with variations in the position of the Child's arms and the Virgin's costume, and that the *Virgin and Child with Angels* (Hamilton Collection, Paris?) shows one element of the pricked design not followed in the other paintings: the Child holding a round object in front of the Virgin's chest, which is seen to be a piece of fruit in the painting.[59]

Three other small Virgin and Child paintings can be considered in this context. Some features of the Raleigh *Virgin and Child* (Museum of Art) are close to the design of the pricked drawing, notably the similar way Christ is held in the Virgin's arms. The Berlin *Virgin and Child* (Bode Museum) has almost the same composition as the Raleigh *Virgin and Child*, but in reverse, with only minor differences in the position of the Child's arms and legs, and the features of the Virgin's face. The Raleigh and Berlin panels are also of similar dimensions: 58 by 41 cm and 60 by 42 cm, respectively, supporting the idea that they were made speculatively for the open market. Either a carpenter made panels of standard sizes knowing that painters could use them for certain kinds of works, or the painter ordered them to size in numbers. The Allentown *Virgin and Child, with Saint Francis and Two Angels* (Art Museum) derives a smaller number of features from the pricked drawing, notably the Virgin's robe clasped by a broach of similar design, and the similar contours of the Child's body, with his arms raised to hold an object (a book in the painting). The Angels' costumes are similar to that in Uccello's drawing of an Angel, the circle of clover in the bottom right corner is a recurring feature of Uccello's works, as is the unidentified plant on the left side of the painting with circles of dots around its leaves.

Melli emphasised the quality of execution of the Prato *Virgin and Child* despite its mediocre state of preservation and accepted the attribution of the work to Uccello himself. However, there is a woodenness about the figures that is difficult to reconcile with Uccello's own execution. The Los Angeles *Virgin and Child* exhibits Uccello's characteristic idealised

design in the rounded contours of the figures, but some passages of painting within the figures lack the same sharp definition, notably the indistinct modelling of the Child's chest and stomach. The Hamilton *Virgin and Child with Angels* is Uccelloesque in its overall design, while certain features such as the Angels, and in particular their bizarre hands, are not close to Uccello's usual style. Despite variations of style and quality, the Prato, Los Angeles, Hamilton Collection, Raleigh, Berlin, and Allentown paintings are sufficiently similar to each other to have come from the same workshop, and it seems that the design of the Virgin and Child in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe sheet was a model for a number of them. Furthermore, some of them show independent associations in details of their compositions with Uccello's works, supporting the argument that the workshop where they were created was Uccello's.

In the Hamilton Collection *Virgin and Child*, the Virgin delicately holds a transparent veil across the Child's genitals, between a thumb and finger. This motif was known in Italy since at least the middle of the fourteenth century, and was taken up in numerous paintings of the Virgin and Child by the Roman artist Antoniazzo Romano in the 1470s and 1480s, as well as by other artists. It has been associated with the passage in the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, based on Saint Augustine, in which the Virgin is said to have wrapped Christ in her headscarf at birth, and to have used the same scarf to wrap his loins at his Crucifixion.[60] The motif is, then, a subtle reference to his ultimate fate. Interestingly, in the Los Angeles *Virgin and Child*, it is the infant who holds the scarf between a thumb and finger, a sign that he is taking his destiny into his own hands. The difference in the iconography of the Los Angeles and Hamilton Collection versions shows that the production of variants was not an entirely unthoughtful one.

It seems, then, that Uccello had one or two assistants who were responsible for a kind of semi-mechanical reproduction of small devotional images, somewhat conservative in style, either made on demand for specific patrons or made speculatively for the open market. These works are stylistically datable to the late 1440s or 1450s, a period when Uccello enjoyed a certain level of prosperity. By the late 1450s, he no doubt tried to capitalise on the prominent location of his workshop in the Piazza di San Giovanni by targeting passing trade. If there is no real evidence for the identity of his assistants, Giovanni di Francesco is at least a possibility, for the reason of the stylistic closeness of his *Virgin and Child with Two Saints* (published in 1934 by Giovannozzi in the Weisbech Collection in Berlin),[61] to the Los Angeles *Virgin and Child*. Bellosi described the equally luminous Christ Child in Giovanni di Francesco's *Nativity* (Berea College Collection, Berea, Kentucky) as Uccelloesque, dating Giovanni's period of association with Uccello to the 1440s.[62] The fact that the attribution of the Stuard Collection *Christ Carrying the Cross* has oscillated between Uccello and Giovanni

di Francesco is indicative of the closeness of their styles.[63] Having said that, the most distinctive trait of Giovanni's style—the unruly curls of his figures' hair—is missing from the Uccelloesque Virgin and Child paintings, and their physiognomies are more refined and attenuated than in his works. The motif of two Angels on either side of the Virgin and Child in the Hamilton Collection *Virgin and Child* occurs in Scheggia's oeuvre.[64] The poor quality of the Angels is comparable with Scheggia's occasional lapses in anatomical correctness, although none of his particular traits are present in the works under discussion. The identity of Uccello's assistant or assistants remains unknown, probably because they estsblished no great reputation.

The records kept by the customs officers of the gates of Rome give an indication of the movement of a large number of artworks around the period in which some of these Uccelloesque paintings of the Virgin and Child were produced. Florence was mentioned specifically as the origin of certain works. In particular, numerous paintings of the Virgin were recorded: thirty small paintings in November 1453, forty-one images in March 1456, and thirty small panels in March 1458.[65] The speculative production of large numbers of paintings inevitably leads to some diminution of quality, in the originality of conception if not quality of the execution, and the hiring of workshop assistants is certainly linked to this phenomenon.

Notes for Chapter 7

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[1] In the first half of the sixteenth century Marcantonio Michiel wrote: 'In the *Eremitani* in the house of the Vitelliani. The Giants in chiaroscuro were by the hand of the Florentine, Paolo Uccello, which were made one per day for the price of one ducat each.' ('*Alli Heremitani in casa delli Vitelliani. La Giganti de chiaro et scuro furono de mano de Paulo Ucello Fiorentino, che li fece un al giorno per precio de ducato uno l'uno.*' Michiel, 2000, p. 32). In the second edition of the *Vite*, Vasari referred to a letter in Latin he had seen by the humanist writer Girolamo Campagnola (*c.* 1433/5–1522) addressed to the Venetian-born scholar and collector Niccolò Leonico Tomeo (d. 1531), who was appointed a lecturer on Greek in Padua in 1497. The letter, since lost, provided Vasari with much of his information on Paduan artists for the second edition of the *Vite*. Vasari added to what is known about the lost works that Donatello had taken Uccello to Padua (Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 69: 1568 ed.). Donatello left Florence for Padua in 1443; Mode (1972, p. 377) argued that Uccello could not have gone to Padua in 1443–1444 due to his documented payments by the Opera del Duomo in Florence in those years. Art historians do not agree whether Uccello's *Flood* was a model for, or a derivation of, Donatello's *Miracle of the Repentant Son* relief panel for the altar of the Santo in Padua made in 1447, with its similarly monumental use of perspective. Thus, no firm date for Uccello's trip to Padua can be established from the available evidence.

[2] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 67: 1568 ed.

[3] Bambach, 2005, pp. 76–79; for a summary of documents for Delli and his brothers Niccolò and Sansone, who were also painters, see also: pp. 82–83.

[4] Berenson, 1954, tav. 1.

[5] Ames-Lewis, 1974, pp. 103–104; Eisler, 1974, pp. 529–530; Wakayama, 1982, p. 98; Marino, 1991, pp. 295–304; Gebhardt, 1990, pp. 28–35.

[6] Joost-Gaugier, 1974a, pp. 233–238.

[7] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 134: 1550 ed./p. 70: 1568 ed.

[8] Boskovits, 2002b, p. 194.

[9] VT Fototeca, *Paolo Uccello, except Florence*.

[10] Boskovits, 2002b, p. 194.

[11] I am grateful to Ronda Kasl, Curator of Painting and Sculpture before 1800 at the Museum of Art, Indianapolis, for providing the following extract of the conservation report for the work by David Miller, Senior Conservator of Paintings (personal communication, 28 Apr. 2005): 'The panel itself may have begun life as a tondo but is now a polygonal shape due to subtraction and addition. The right and left sides were cut vertically and strips of wood were added all around (or the entire panel has been inset into an auxiliary support this shape—the x-rays are unclear) to give the painting its current dimensions.'

[12] Jacks and Caferro, 2001, pp. 59, 293.

[13] Dating the *Portrait of a Young Man* is difficult. The profile is similar in style to a number of heads in Uccello's Marcovaldi Chapel paintings, of around 1435–1436 (Boskovits, 2002b, p. 196). The refinement and harmonious geometry of the depiction of the subject is comparable with the design of

the *Equestrian Monument*, also suggesting a dating to the mid-1430s. However, the assured drawing of the youth's features, in particular the foreshortening of his eye, is close to the profile of Ham, datable to 1439 or shortly after. Furthermore, the schematic execution of the hair, painted with fine strands of light yellow over a layer of dark brown is close to Uccello's economical execution of hair in the small figures in his mid-to-late works, all-in-all suggesting a date for the Indianapolis portrait around the middle of these periods, in the early-to-mid-1440s.

[14] Kanter, 1994a, pp. 311–314.

[15] As argued in Wright, 2000, p. 88.

[16] Recently, Holmes (1999, pp. 128–129) sustained the attribution of the portraits to Veneziano.

[17] Hoff and Devapriam, 1995, p. 170.

[18] De Tervarent, 1997, pp. 332–333. According to Ovid, while washing her hair in a river one day, Venus hid in myrtle from the unwanted attentions of satyrs. Other reasons for the association of myrtle with Venus are its sweet perfume, the fact that it grows near the sea from which Venus emerged, the fact that its leaves grow in pairs, like lovers, and because it is evergreen, like love.

[19] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, 1978, p. 87.

[20] Pudelko, 1936, pp. 127–134. The quotes are from pp. 128, 133

[21] Sindona, 1970, pp. 67, 103 n. 1.

[22] Jolly (A.), 1998, Figs 134, 135, 124.

[23] Christiansen, 2005d, p. 168.

[24] The identity of the saint cannot be established conclusively, for lack of a distinctive attribute, although Saint Scolastica (Longhi, 1928, p. 44), the Blessed Villana delle Botti (Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 301), Saint Felicitas (Strehlke, 1996, pp. 133–134), and Saint Monica (Angelini, 2002a, pp. 198–200) have been suggested.

[25] Zervas, 1987, p. 220.

[26] Borsi and Borsi, 1994, p. 301.

[27] The inscription reads: '♦ *QESTA* ♦ *TAVOLA* ♦ *AFAT[…]A* ♦ *FARE* ♦ *ANTONIO DIPIE/ O* ♦ *DIGIOVANNI* ♦ *DELG[O]…LEA* ♦ *PER RIMEDIO* ♦ *DE/LANIMA* ♦ *SVA* ♦ *ET DESV…OI ADI XXIIII* ♦ *DI SETE/ NBRE* ♦ *1452* ♦'.

[28] As surmised by Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 106.

[29] Albizzi, 1867–1873, vol. III, p. 574, doc. 1397. A document of *c*. 1432 lists an Antonio di Iacopo del Golia among the Sienese Priori. For a reference to the Sienese Del Golia family in the sixteenth century, see: Hughes, 1997, p. 29.

[30] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, pp. 106–107.

[31] Becherucci, 1983, p. 284.

[32] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. IV, pp. 100–101: 1568 ed.; Horne, 1915c, p. 102; Lightbown, 1978, vol. I, p. 122.

[33] Morelli, 1969, p. 92.

[34] Wright, 1976, vol. I, pp. 66–76.

[35] Lloyd, 1977, pp. 174–175. In a letter dated 1 June 1969 to the Ashmolean Museum, Edgar Wind suggested that the subject matter might be associated with the Augustan poet Manilius, whose work was rediscovered in the early Renaissance, inspiring the program for the mural cycle in the late fifteenth-century Schifanoia at Ferrara. Wind suggested that the *Hunt* might have represented November, the month for hunting, in a series of mythological representations of the months.

[36] Darriulat, 1997, p. 69. Darriulat wrote: 'The metaphore is remarkable, and provides us with the key to the Oxford panel. Is it Leonardo's invention, or did he borrow it?' ('*La metaphore est remarkable, et nous fournit comme la clé du panneau d'Oxford. Est-elle de l'invention de Léonard, ou bien l'a-t'il emprunté?*')

[37] Cummins, 1988, pp. 260–265. For example, the English Framlingham Park Game Roll for the years 1515 to 1519 show that does were hunted, but in much fewer numbers than bucks.

[38] Seidel, 2003, pp. 430–437.

[39] Cummins, 1988, pp. 87–91.

[40] Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen, 1991, pp. 166–167. The hypothesis that the work might be identified with one recorded in a seventeenth-century inventory associated with Federico da Montefeltro's court at Urbino has been disproved.

[41] Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen, 1991, pp. 164–165.

[42] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 69: 1568 ed.

[43] Beck, 1979, p. 4. In 1433 the Florentine Commune introduced the *fiorino largo*, 10% purer than the previous *fiorino di suggello* and so more valuable than it.

[44] Kanter, 2000, pp. 11–17.

[45] ASF, Catasto, 625, San Giovanni Drago, fol. 224; Haines, 1999, pp. 41–44.

[46] As suggested by Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 13.

[47] Beck, 1979, p. 3.

[48] For the Karlsruhe Master, see: Pudelko, 1932, pp. 174–176 and Pudelko, 1935c, pp. 123–130; for the Prato Master, see: Pope-Hennessy, 1950, p. 161; and for the Quarate Master, see Salmi, 1934, pp. 1–27, especially 20–21 and Salmi, 1950, p. 26.

[49] Parronchi (1974, pp. 63–64) suggested, for example, that Uccello's son may have painted the Hamilton collection *Virgin and Child with Two Angels*.

[50] Parronchi, 1974, pp. 64–68.

[51] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber (1978, p. 330) observed an under-reporting of female children in the 1427 Catasto and suggested this might reflect the lack of significance attributed to them in Tuscan society at the time. It cannot be excluded that Uccello had some other reason for leaving his daughter out of his *portata* than her departure from the home.

[52] For Gozzoli, see: Cole Ahl, 1996, p. 6; for Baldovinetti, see: Colnaghi, 1986, p. 264; Spencer (1991, p. 3) rejected the hypothesis that Andea del Castagno trained in Uccello's workshop on the basis that Vasari would probably have noted such a famous master. For Giovanni di Francesco, see: Boeck, 1933a, p. 2.

[53] Boskovits, 1990, pp. 178–179.

[54] Christiansen, 1997, p. 26.

[55] Kanter, 1994b, pp. 319–321.

[56] Mignani Galli, 1976, p. 32.

[57] R. Bagemihl, pers. comm. to K. Christiansen, 4 Jan. 1980. I am indebted to Keith Christiansen for sharing this information with me via Prof. Jaynie Anderson, and to Rolf Bagemihl for answering my enquiry regarding his discovery, pers. comm., 27 Jul. 2004.

[58] Berti, 1961, pp. 298–309. Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 348) attributed the work to an anonymous artist from the school of Uccello.

[59] Melli, 1998, pp. 27–29, 31–35.

[60] Wilson, 1996, p. 244–254.

[61] Giovannozzi, 1934, p. 343.

[62] Bellosi, 1990, p. 24.

[63] Giovannozzi (1934, p. 346) preferred to see a link between Giovanni and Baldovinetti, rather than Uccello, although he did not discuss the stylistic relationship between their depictions of the Virgin and Child.

[64] Bellosi, 1999b, pp. 74, 75, 77, 85, 87, 91, 94.

[65] Gilbert, 1988, p. 55, citing *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. XVII, 1978, pp. 211 ss.

8

The Art of Painting: *Scienzia* and *Poesia*

At the beginning of Cennino Cennini's celebrated late-fourteenth-century treatise on artists' techniques, *Il libro dell'arte*, the author justified the high status of painting, a manual art, by its association with *scienzia* (theory) and *poesia* (poetry). As evidence of the theoretical nature of painting he cited its ability to find what is not seen, cloaked by natural appearances (*'trovare cose non vedute, cacciandosi sotto ombra di naturali'*). This was qualified by the artist's poetic licence to compose their pictures ultimately as they please (*''l poeta, con la scienza prima che ha, il fa degno e libero di potere comporre e legare insieme sì e no come gli piace, seconda sua voluntà.'*)[1] The artist's theory lies in their study of the world, their poetry lies in the freedom with which they depict it. This conception of painting is readily applicable to Uccello, whose style is highly analytical in its underlying approach and yet frequently poetic in its ultimate expression. It is equally relevant to his technique, which demonstrates a mastery of the materials of painting without being constrained by this knowledge.

The polarity of Uccello's artistic personality was first addressed at length by Charles Loeser, in his important article of 1898 in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, in which he recognised that the artist's contradictory impulses to observe nature on the one hand and to arbitrarily negate it on the other were manifest in such works as the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, the London *Saint George*, and the Paris *Saint George*.[2] Loeser was the first to associate these paintings with Uccello, and after decades of controversy his opinion is now commonly accepted. Perhaps the reason for this critical demurral can be explained by the way that art historians since Vasari have given greater attention to the rational aspect of Uccello's work and neglected or misunderstood the poetic side of his art. Misfortune may also have played a part, since Uccello's *Stories of Saint Benedict* in Santa Maria degli Angeli, highly praised by Vasari more for their expressive and graceful figures than their perspective, have been lost.[3]

A close look at Uccello's technique shows that his approach to making paintings is consistent with their style, inasmuch as it was informed but not constrained by theory. Modern scientific technologies that reveal Uccello's technique by showing the hidden layers

and structures of his works, such as infrared reflectography (IRR) and X-radiography, would undoubtedly have fascinated the artist, whose works display an abiding interest in the underlying structures of objects and in the principle of an underlying cosmological order. Close analysis of Uccello's preparatory drawings and incisions, executed on paper, on the ground layer of paintings, and on the *arriccio* layers of mural paintings, reveals a greater concern for the representation of space than is visible on the surfaces of his works. Such concerns may seem to confirm the legend of the artist as dedicated to the science of art. However, examining the full range of techniques Uccello used in the development of his paintings, from the making of preparatory drawings to the final application of glazes, it is clear that he was more than technically competent, he was an intelligent artist, and not rigid in his application of technique. He occasionally drew architectural features by hand rather than with a ruler, he estimated distances and angles—and adjusted them where necessary, he predetermined the painting in of his compositions up to a point, but not so fastidiously that the position of every detail was accounted for, and he improvised his compositions, moving objects around, sometimes adding and subtracting details spontaneously.

Uccello probably bought his small panels from carpenters with their frames already attached.[4] In 1465 the Florentine merchant and sometime furniture dealer Lorenzo di Matteo Morelli owned a '…Saint George with part of the story painted on a panel of wood with a frame carved by Jacopo, carpenter, and painted by Paolo Uccello, painter, for seven florins *largi*; and the panel cost one florin *largi*; and the panel is one and a half *braccii* long and one and one eighth wide.'[5] The Madrid *Crucifixion*, the Dublin *Virgin and Child*, and the New York *Crucifixion* triptych retain their original frames.[6] From these examples, it seems that Uccello or his patrons preferred relatively simple moulding on the frames of small panels. The Madrid *Crucifixion* frame is semi-integral with the panel; the horizontal members of the frame are carved from the same piece of wood as the support, while the vertical members have been attached, presumably with glue (there may also be dowels). It has been suggested that the panel's size and the horizontal direction of the wood grain imply that it was part of a predella for an unidentified altarpiece.[7] However, the grain of most wood supports runs in the direction of the longest dimension, reducing the likelihood of warping across the major axis. Indeed, the Madrid *Crucifixion* has warped, causing a crack in the right vertical member of the frame. However, if the wood grain had been vertical the degree of warping might have been even greater. The *Hunt in a Forest* (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) is evidently not a predella panel and its grain also runs horizontally, along its longest dimension.

Uccello's small and medium-size panel paintings have a support made of a single piece of wood. The broadest single plank is the 48.5 cm support of the Karlsruhe *Adoration*.

Broader works are composed of several planks joined lengthways, numbering from two (the total width of the *Hunt* is 73.3 cm) to about eight (the total width of the London *Battle* is 182cm).[8] The wood is known to be poplar in the panels that have been tested.[9] Poplar has an uneven grain and a relatively high proportion of knots, making it less than ideal as a support for painting, but it is common in Italy and grows rapidly, making it economical. A disadvantage of poplar for art historians is that, unlike the oak wood commonly used in early Netherlandish panels and the wood from other temperate climate trees that has distinct seasonal growth rings, poplar grows more continuously throughout the year, producing insufficiently distinct rings to be dated dendrochronologically.[10]

Cennini recommended applying cloth strips over a panel to cover any faults in the wood, before the application of the ground layers.[11] Cloth interlayers on panel paintings have been reported in many fifteenth-century Florentine paintings, such as Fra Angelico's San Domenico predella in the National Gallery, London, to name just one.[12] Uccello used cloth strips to cover knots and joins between panels of the *Hunt* and the London *Battle*, and covered almost the entire panels of the Paris *Battle* and the Paris *Saint George* with separate pieces of cloth.[13] The X-radiography of the Oxford *Annunciation* shows a single piece of fine-weave cloth was laid over virtually the entire panel. Similarly, the X-radiography of the Melbourne *Saint George* shows a single piece of fine-weave cloth covering virtually the entire panel, up to a point just below the top of God the Father's papal tiara. The extensive use of fine-weave cloth in these two works suggests a particularly high value for their commission(s), greater in this respect than the Karlsruhe *Adoration* in which X-radiography shows roughly torn pieces of coarse-weave cloth disposed over the panel.[14] For the ground, up to three layers of gesso (calcium sulphate) could be applied over the panel and cloth interlayer, with the initial layers composed of a coarser kind of gesso known as *gesso grosso*, and the last layer composed of a finer grade of gesso known as *gesso sottile*.[15]

The study of X-radiography can reveal non-original carpentry, as it does for the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, which has been sawn into two pieces along a line level with the edge of the plateau supporting the holy family, separating the saints at the bottom of the picture.[16] The X-radiography shows that the wood grain, pieces of cloth interlayer, and the craquelure continue across the cut, demonstrating that the division of the panel must have been made some time after the work was painted, perhaps by an unscrupulous dealer who wanted to make two works from one and so increase the work's value for sale.[17]

Two medium size works on canvas survive from Uccello's workshop: the London *Saint George* and the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*.[18] Canvas has been employed as a support for paintings since ancient times; being lighter than wood, it was commonly used for large, portable works such as procession banners. Due to their inherent delicacy, occasional

exposure to the elements, and wear and tear from handling, relatively few works of this kind have survived from the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, some paintings on canvas from the fourteenth century onwards have survived.[19] Vasari recorded that Uccello's paintings in the Palazzo Medici were on canvas, which was confirmed for the *Battle between Lions and Dragons* and the *Story of Paris (?)* in a 1598 inventory where they were described as torn.[20] Although Uccello's London *Saint George* is by no means an early example of a painting on canvas, it is a relatively early surviving instance of an oil painting on a canvas support, which became increasingly common for easel paintings during the Renaissance.

Before painting on a support, whether panel, canvas, or wall, Renaissance artists often prepared their designs on paper. Although Vasari wrote that Uccello's descendants owned chests full of his drawings, the number of certain drawings by him that survives is small, and they suggest he used paper parsimoniously.[21] Lorenza Melli has conducted the most thorough examination of the three drawings undoubtedly by Uccello, all in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, using a range of scientific analyses. She found that in each case Uccello had re-used his paper support. The *Study for the Equestrian Monument* is drawn on paper previously used for writing financial accounts. Infrared photography has made numbers legible under the priming layer, where the horse and rider were subsequently drawn. On the sheet with the *Mounted Knight*, the drawing of the horse and rider on a green priming is superimposed over an unrelated design for a *Holy Father and a Kneeling Companion*, as well as an unrelated design for part of a nude infant. Uccello made two apparently unrelated drawings on the sheet of paper for the *Angel with a Sword; A Cup*, as the title suggests, and had previously used the same sheet for a definitely unrelated design of a *Virgin and Child*, as discussed in the previous chapter.[22] Other drawings in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe have traditionally been attributed to Uccello, most famously the *Chalice*, *Mazzocchio (with Hexagonal Section and Points)*, *Mazzocchio (with Octagonal Section)*, and *Profile Portrait of a Man*, although these attribution are unconfirmed.

The *Angel with a Sword; A Cup* came to the Uffizi from the Medici Collection.[23] Vasari claimed there were drawings by Uccello among the designs, cartoons, and models by Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Filippo Lippi, and Fra Angelico in the Medici Collection at the Giardino of San Marco.[24] He also described drawings by Uccello showing *mazzocchi* (the polyhedral headdresses made of a cloth-covered wicker frame that feature in the *Battle* and *Flood* paintings) and polyhedra with seventy-two faces, points, and sticks with ribbons interlaced around them. The seventeenth and eighteenth-century art historian and collector, Filippo Baldinucci, owned the *Polyhedron with Seventy-Two Faces and Points* and the *Mazzocchio* both now in the Musée du Louvre, which he attributed to Uccello, no doubt on

the basis of Vasari's descriptions, and this opinion is still frequently accepted.[25] For Uccello to have painted the difficult foreshortenings of the *mazzocchi* and other polyhedra in his paintings he must have made preparatory drawings like those Vasari described. Whether the existing examples traditionally attributed to him are in fact his is open to question because it is extremely difficult to attribute technical drawings lacking 'Morellian' idiosyncrasies of execution.

None of the drawings known to have come from Vasari's own collection, attributed to Uccello by Vasari or subsequent owners, is certainly by him, and few are even close to the style of his paintings. Vasari claimed to have drawings by Uccello in his *Il libro de' disegni* (*Book of Drawings*) of perspective studies, birds, animals, a *mazzocchio*, and drawings for the lost *Battle between Dragons and Lions* formerly in the Palazzo Medici.[26] Vasari mounted his collection of drawings in decorative architectural frames, some labelled with artists' names. Three pages of drawings with such mountings bearing Uccello's name are now housed in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. The attributions to Uccello of all of these drawings have been doubted by critics,[27] and in this author's opinion only the charming drawing of a child on a camel bears any real resemblance to Uccello's work.

Six small portrait drawings of men's heads from Vasari's collection have also been implausibly attributed to Uccello. Four of these are now in the Albertina in Vienna. The two others, each with Uccello's name inscribed in a different hand than the artist's, are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the Musée du Louvre.[28] Two larger portrait drawings from Vasari's collection sometimes associated with Uccello are also in the Albertina, one of an unidentified youth and one of the Florentine Chancellor Leonardo Bruni. Further, two sheets of studies of men and animals, originally comprising a single sheet belonging to Vasari have been attributed to Uccello and are housed in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Dijon, and the Albertina.[29] None of these drawings is really very close to Uccello's usual style.

Uccello must have kept drawings in his workshop of textile patterns. John O'Grady has pointed out that the brocades of Tolentino's headdress in the London *Battle*, the princess' robe in the Paris *Saint George*, and the cope of one of the priests in the *Miracle of the Host* appear as flat patterns that do not vary according to the contours of the fabrics depicted and are not foreshortened. He suggested Uccello may have used stencils to trace the patterns.[30] It has not previously been noted that the pattern on Saint Eustace's robe in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* is identical to the pattern on the princess' robe in the Paris *Saint George*. In the Karlsruhe *Adoration* the vine and flower motifs with circles at the intersections of the vines are gold on a red background, while in the Paris *Saint George* the colours are reversed. Given that these works can be dated several decades apart on stylistic grounds, it seems that Uccello preserved his workshop drawings carefully.

The re-use and adaptation of figure studies is also a recurring feature of Uccello's technique. The figure of Joseph in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* is so similar to the one in the Quarate predella, where it is reversed, that they must be based on the same drawing. The *Mounted Knight* drawing in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe may have been used as the basis of one of the mounted knights in the London *Battle*, but also perhaps for a Saint George and the dragon.[31]

Modelbook drawings were valuable workshop assets for early Renaissance artists, especially for the depiction of fantastic creatures such as the unicorn and the dragon. A design of a dragon fighting a lion was circulated widely in Florentine workshops, as is demonstrated by its appearance in the fifteenth-century Florentine engraving by an anonymous artist *Pattern Plate of Beasts and Birds Hunting and Fighting* (an example is in the British Museum, London), a similar looking dragon painted by Benozzo Gozzoli in the *Infancy of Moses* in the Campo Santo, Pisa,[32] and the drawing *Dragon Fighting a Lion* in a private collection when it was published by Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt in 1963 (the present whereabouts of the drawing are unknown). The design of the dragon in the Melbourne *Saint George* is closely related to the drawing. The painted and drawn dragons have in common a long, S shaped neck, horizontal bands of scales on the front of the neck, two rows of circular scales on the back of the neck, a large head surrounded by shaggy hair and a long snout. In the drawing there seems to be a lock of light-coloured hair falling over the dragon's forehead, at the base of a longer, darker, spike-shaped feature that may be a lock of hair shown in silhouette. Alternatively, these features may be intended to represent a horn. In the Melbourne dragon there is what is clearly a horn emerging from the dragon's forehead. Dragons do not usually have a single horn in Italian Renaissance depictions, so these features in the drawing and the painting suggest a close relationship. Degenhart and Schmitt attributed the drawing to an anonymous fifteenth-century Florentine artist copying the lost painting by Uccello of the *Battle between Dragons and Lions* in the Palazzo Medici.[33] However, Uccello may have used the drawing, or at least one very much like it, as the basis of his depiction of the dragon in the Melbourne painting. If Uccello substituted the saint for the lion, this would explain why the saint is not depicted on horseback as is usually the case.

Uccello used a number of techniques to transfer designs from drawings to the supports of his paintings. He used pouncing, and probably incising, to transfer designs at the same scale as his drawings, and squaring to enlarge his designs.[34] The *Mounted Knight* and the *Angel with a Sword; A Cup* each contains a design prepared for transfer by pouncing, a procedure in which charcoal powder is brushed through holes pricked along the main contours of a drawing on paper. As Melli has shown, the pricked design of a Virgin and Child on the sheet of the latter drawing probably served as the basis for the panel painting of that

subject now in a private collection in Prato.[35] The cup in the same drawing has been incised, probably to transfer the design, although no corresponding work has survived. Pouncing is evident in a number of Uccello's mural paintings, although no large-scale cartoon has survived. The decorative borders of the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings, comprised of sinuous poppy stems in geometric panels, are outlined with black dots called *spolveri*, the results of using the pouncing method. *Spolveri* are also visible in the spiral fluting of the columns in the temple of the *Presentation of the Virgin* at Prato,[36] and the Gothic tracery border of the *Nativity* from the Spedale di San Martino alla Scala.

The X-radiography of the Karlsruhe *Adoration* shows an incised plumb line running through its centre, along the full height of the panel. Uccello may have used this as the basis for the vertical orientation of the composition as he drew it on the gesso, or as a guide for the transfer of a design from a drawing on paper onto the panel. Raphael's pricked cartoon for the *Saint George and the Dragon* has a pricked plumb line through its centre (the cartoon is in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence; the corresponding painting is in the National Gallery of Art, Washington).[37] Raphael probably aligned the pricked drawing with the panel by looking for the corresponding plumb line on the ground through the pricked holes. An IRR examination of the *Adoration* undertaken in 2003 did not reveal clear signs of underdrawing. That underdrawing is present, however, is shown in an area of loss on the hem of Saint Eustace's robe, where a few lines of brownish-black underdrawing for the contours of the drapery are exposed. That IRR did not reveal underdrawing under the paint layers may be because the drawing is in a medium not visible in IRR, such as iron-gall ink, or because there are few *pentimenti* between the underdrawing and the paint layers. Underdrawing can be difficult to distinguish when the painted composition follows the underdrawing closely. No major *pentimenti* in the paint layers of the *Adoration* are visible in the X-radiography. Uccello probably fully worked up the composition in a preparatory drawing on paper. He may have transferred the design with the pouncing method, or by lightly incising the design through the paper onto the ground.

The *Study for the Equestrian Monument* is squared for the transfer of the design to the wall in the Duomo where the image was painted, although the *sinopia* for this work has been lost, and with it the evidence to show whether or not Uccello actually did transfer his design using a system of proportional enlargement. Nevertheless, the fairly close correspondence between the drawing and the painting, notwithstanding some minor adjustments to the contours of the horse's body, suggests that he probably did. In Ghiberti's *I commentarii* he claimed to have helped artists enlarge their designs in correct proportion for larger than life-size works. This boast comes immediately prior to his discussion of his own works in the Duomo, and so could conceivably be a reference to Uccello's *Equestrian*

Monument.[38] Although, it seems Uccello was already aware of the technique at this time. In the *Presentation of the Virgin* and the *Stoning of Saint Stephen* scenes in the Marcovaldi Chapel the walls were marked out with grids of squares, made by snapping string rubbed with chalk against the damp *arricci* (the preparatory layers of mural paintings). The lack of changes made to their compositions during the painting stage suggests that these scenes were thoroughly prepared in drawings on paper and scaled up using grids on the drawings and the proportionally enlarged grids on the *arricci*.[39]

For Uccello, the creative evolution of a composition often did continue on the panel, canvas, or wall. Infrared imaging and X-radiography reveal changes in the drawing stage, between the drawing and the painting stages, and in the paint layers of his works. By comparing Infrared and X-radiography images with the surfaces of paintings it is often possible to distinguish the underdrawing from incisions and painted lines on the surface, and by plotting the variations, to reconstruct the development of Uccello's compositions. After drawing a composition on the gesso, a Reniassance artist often incised certain important lines of the design so they would remain visible after the first layer of paint had been applied. In addition, the edges of any areas to be covered in metal leaf were usually incised. The IRR and X-radiography of the Oxford *Annunciation* reveal surprisingly elaborate and sophisticated underdrawing and incisions, with numerous changes that are very revealing of Uccello's approach to design, and this is of particular interest as amongst the earliest surviving examples of Uccello's perspective drawing.

In the *Annunciation* there is ample evidence that the composition was underdrawn. As noted, underdrawing is most easily identified in IRR image when it differs from incisions or painting on the surface. Here, the Holy Spirit was drawn next to the top of the capital of the freestanding pillar, but was painted a fraction lower.[40] The lowest depiction of Gabriel was drawn with his left hand holding a lily stem, appearing above his right sleeve, but this detail was painted out, and a drawn S shaped curve for a contour of the drapery of the Virgin's robe appearing in the IRR just below her book was neither incised nor painted. It seems that Uccello first drew much of the architecture with a ruler and then drew the figures and their drapery freehand: the outlines of the portico were drawn like a wire frame structure with a ruler, and the Virgin and the lowest Gabriel were then drawn by hand over the architecture, explaining why the principal lines of construction for the portico pass through the figures.[41] The medium or media of this underdrawing is difficult to determine, but may be a mixture of metalpoint for the straight lines of the architecture and brush drawing for the figures and drapery. There is, though, little or no hatching for shadows and no obvious monochrome wash shading.

The procedure of drawing figures over construction lines for architecture and furniture, demonstrating a concern for the positioning of bodies in space, is also found in Uccello's *sinopia* drawings for the *Holy Fathers* at San Miniato al Monte, notably for a figure of a seated monk-saint on the east wall.[42] Here, the principal lines of construction, in this case for a bench, extend right across the figure. Similarly, in the IRR of the *Hunt* the ruled lines for the single-point perspective pass through figures, such as the standing man blowing a horn in the foreground.[43]

The IRR of the *Annunciation* shows numerous adjustments to the drawing for the architecture. The opening of the portico facing the viewer was drawn and then incised as a round arch and the doorway leading inside was also drawn and incised as an arch. The round arch facing the viewer was then made into a pointed arch and the doorway was made rectangular. These and numerous other changes to the building suggest that there was not a detailed auxiliary drawing for it; the composition was probably largely worked out on the panel. Neither does the design appear to have been measured. For example, the decorative frieze along the top of the building facing the viewer was divided into approximately, not exactly, equal sized rectangles in the underdrawing as a guide for the repeated arabesque motif.

Uccello did not slavishly follow his incisions either, the freely executed corkscrew curls of God the Father's hair in the Melbourne *Saint George*, were evidently only intended as a guide to the painting of the hair. Where precision was required, tools were used. Compasses were used to draw the haloes for the cherubim in the *Annunciation*, as indicated by the points visible in the centres of the unpainted ones.

The *Annunciation* provides a fascinating insight into Uccello's approach to the planning of perspective, in particular his awareness of the relationship between two and three-dimensional geometry. Uccello was evidently aware that the intersection of the diagonals of a square locates the centre in a foreshortened square, just as it does in square parallel to the picture plane. It seems he drew an approximate square in perspective for the ceiling of the portico, drew diagonals between the corners of the ceiling to find its centre, and then, after many changes of mind, divided the square into a grid to provide the basis of the pointed coffering. The final grid is based on eight rows of foreshortened squares by eight rows, while only those visible through the arch were actually drawn and incised. There were many changes made during the planning stage and the purpose of some of the construction lines is not entirely clear, suggesting Uccello's perspective drawing was largely improvised.

In the underdrawing for the cornice around the freestanding pillar, separated from the capital by a block, he first determined the position of the four corners of the pillar, including the corner that is not visible. He then drew two diagonals between the corners to establish the

correct angle for the corners of the cornice as they extend beyond the pillar. Having established the final version of the cornice he then extended the principal lines to the left so that the cornice of the far pillar would be correctly aligned. He also extended construction lines to align their capitals. Of this fairly extensively underdrawn perspective construction, many lines do not appear in the X-radiography or as incisions on the paint surface. Evidently, Uccello generally incised, or incised more strongly, those lines he intended to be visible in the final composition.[44]

A similar geometric approach to the planning of perspective is visible in the Bologna *Adoration*. The lines of construction incised into the *arriccio* (the preparatory layer for the final *intonaco* layer) for a pyramid-shaped point on the inside edge of the right side of the architectonic frame show Uccello drew two diagonals between the corners of a foreshortened square to find the centre of the base of the pyramid, and then extended a perpendicular line from this point to arrive at the correct position for the point of the pyramid in relation to the base. Piero della Francesca followed a similar procedure when he drew the pyramid-shaped roof of a house in perspective in his treatise *On Painted Perspective*, sometime between 1470 and 1480 (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, *De prospectiva pingendi*, Book 2, Proposition 9, fol. 25v.).

The IRR of the *Hunt* revealed minimal perspective planning in the underdrawing and incisions, consisting of a horizon line, four orthogonal lines leading towards the vanishing point and a single horizontal line to establish the rate of diminution. It may be inferred, however, that Uccello used more lines to construct a *pavimento*, which are not actually visible in the IRR due to the black underpainting of the vegetation throughout the forest, which may obscure any underdrawing.[45] The perspective construction of the city in the background of the *Saint George* is even less developed, showing that Uccello's approach to perspective was not dogmatic. Apart from a long, ruled incision for the battlements along the front of the city wall, the rest of the design seems to have been worked out freehand. Infrared imaging reveals freehand underdrawing in the towers and battlements of the city wall and the buildings inside the wall. A number of buildings were incised freehand. Infrared imaging and X-radiography show that numerous changes were made to the design of the city in each stage of the execution. The representation of architecture in the *Saint George* serves only as a background to the narrative, rather than to provide the mise en scène as it does in the *Annunciation*, accounting for Uccello's relaxed approach to its design.

The style of underdrawing revealed by infrared imaging can provide further evidence, sometimes decisive, for an assessment of a painting's attribution, when the evidence on the surface is ambiguous. The *Portrait of a Young Man* housed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chambéry, was first attributed to Uccello by Roberto Longhi in 1927. This attribution

initially received support from other art historians. However, the trend in more recent scholarship has been towards an attribution to Domenico Veneziano.[46] The infrared photograph of the work housed in the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France shows bold, thick underdrawing, unlike anything revealed so far by the infrared examination of Uccello's works, supporting the case that he was not the painter.

One technique guaranteed to give paintings an impressive appearance is the application of precious metals. Areas to be covered in gold or silver leaf were prepared with a layer of bole, a reddish-brown clay pigment, used to give the thinly-beaten metal a warmer tone. In the London *Battle* the colour of the bole is slightly warmer (a lighter orange-red) under the gold leaf and slightly cooler (browner and including an admixture of black) under the silver leaf, which may have been intended to give the different metals a more distinct tonality, or to serve as a guide for the subsequent application of the two kinds of metal leaf over the large and complex composition.[47] Metal leaf could be incised and punched to create a variety of effects. The gold ground around God the Father in the Melbourne *Saint George* is incised with ruled, radiating lines, and hexa-prong punchwork is used to create the alternating areas of stippled texture.[48] Uccello used a similar, perhaps identical, punch in the pomegranate designs on Tolentino's headdress in the London *Battle*.[49] In the Oxford *Annunciation*, similar punchwork appears in the cherubim, although not with sufficient clarity to determine the type of punch used. Small, circular punches were used to embellish the musical Angels' haloes, while the Virgin's and the lowest Gabriel's haloes were incised by hand with meandering motifs, in a manner distinct from the *Saint George*.

A technique used by Uccello predominantly in the 1430s is the painting of coloured glazes over gold and silver leaf. A similar technique has been recorded since the twelfth century, was used widely across Europe, and was particularly popular in Florence in the first half of the fifteenth century.[50] Examination of Masolino's *Saint Julian* has revealed that the saint's red tunic was executed with red glaze over silver leaf that had been incised with a blunt instrument to give the impression of the texture of the fabric. This technique of incising the silver leaf before applying glazes was apparently unusual in Florence, and may have been introduced into the city by the Marchigian painters Gentile da Fabriano and Arcangelo di Cola, but became a feature of the technique of Masaccio's and Masolino's workshop and painters in their entourage, such as Andrea di Giusto and Scheggia.[51] Uccello apparently worked on another part of the commission for which Masolino painted the *Saint Julian*, in the Carnesecchi Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore, Florence around 1423, and he may have learnt or consolidated his knowledge of the technique through his contact with Masolino, although precisely the same technique of first incising the metal leaf before painting over it has not yet

been identified in a work by Uccello. Punched gold leaf covered in glazes was, however, identified in the London *Battle*.[52] Furthermore, apart from the depiction of armour, Uccello generally preferred to use gold leaf rather than silver as a base for painting on, as he did in the Oxford *Annunciation*, Melbourne *Saint George*, and Karlsruhe *Adoration*.

In the Melbourne *Saint George* a large part of the dragon's wings and body are painted with semi-transparent green glazes over gold leaf, reinforced with painted black hatching in the shadows. The same technique of employing green glazes over gold leaf was used in the surcoat of Tolentino's page in the London *Battle*. In this work, though, the repertoire of techniques is much larger. The adjacent brocade is executed with red glazes over gold leaf and the sallet in his right hand was executed with red glazes over silver leaf. The page's armour, like Saint George's, was executed with opaque blackish glazes over silver leaf.[53] The gold bands of God the Father's papal tiara in the *Annunciation*, and the corresponding feature in the *Saint George*, as well as the princess' gold girdle also show traces of red glazing.

In the Karlsruhe *Adoration* the repertoire of techniques is similar to that in the *Battle* paintings. The Angels are executed entirely with gold leaf covered with blackish and red glazes except for their faces and hands. Their robes are gold leaf with modelling of the shadows of the folds in thin, blackish glazes worked with the artist's fingertips. The highlights of the folds have fine incisions hatched into the gold leaf that catch the light, creating an appearance like an engraving in negative. The hair of all of the figures in the painting is executed with gold leaf, incised to represent locks, painted with glazes and more opaque paint to further define the locks, and the paint layers are sometimes scraped in a *sgraffito* technique, revealing the gold leaf to create highlights. The borders of the Virgin's, Joseph's, and Mary Magdalene's robes are gold leaf covered with blackish glazes for the shadows with incisions into the gold leaf for the highlights and to suggest the texture of the fabric. The brocade cloth on which the Christ Child lies and the brocade fabric of Saint Eustace's robe are also gold leaf covered with glazes for the patterns and shadows. These works would have made a sumptuous impression when first painted, with large areas of shimmering exposed silver and gold leaf and areas of precious metals covered in jewel-like coloured glazes.

Like Van Eyck and Leonardo, Uccello was a tactile painter. He used his fingers to work his paintings while they were still fresh. Fingerprints appear in the Melbourne *Saint George*—in the blue paint of the building behind the city gate and the horse's saddle. In the London *Battle*, Uccello used his thumb and fingers to thin or modulate the blackish glazes over a layer of silver leaf.[54] The Karlsruhe *Adoration* also shows extensive use of the artist's fingertips to work blackish glazes over gold leaf in most of the robes. However, the

fingerprints in these three works are too smudged and partial to provide a match with each other.

Changes in Uccello's use of precious metals in his paintings occurred over time. While gold grounds appear in his works from the early 1430s to the Avane predella of 1452, there is a decrease in its use from the 1440s, combined with less elaborate surface treatments, probably reflecting a change in taste among Uccello's clientele. In 1435 Alberti expressed his dislike of the excessive use of gold in paintings because of the way glare interfered with the perception of light and dark on the surface of a painting.[55] There is a limited use of glazed metal leaf and punchwork in the Oxford *Annunciation* (*c*. early 1430s), more appears in the Melbourne *Saint George* (*c*. early 1430s), they are used extensively in the *Battle* paintings (*c*. late 1430s), there is glazed gold leaf but little punchwork in the Karlsruhe *Adoration* (*c*. late 1430s), and from the 1440s both techniques more or less disappear except for the tooling of haloes. Exceptions to this trend are the small, stylistically conservative, devotional panels probably made in Uccello's workshop in the late 1440s to 1450s, discussed in the last chapter. It may be that those clients who preferred to buy replicas of existing compositions over commissioning new compositions also preferred old fashioned gold grounds to painted landscapes or architectural settings.

Uccello's complex paint layer structures first became apparent during the technical examination of the London *Saint George*, following its acquisition in 1959 by the National Gallery, London. At the time of its purchase the work was kept in a bank in Zurich, having been recovered at the end of the Second World War from the Nazis, who had stolen it in 1939 from the Lanckoronski Collection in Vienna.[56] Questions about the work's authenticity had been raised in 1959, and needed to be answered, since it had been acquired for an enormous sum, reported in the American press as £125,000 of which the British Government had contributed a special grant of £60,000.[57] Indeed, the work's fantastic imagery was considered so singular that it was difficult for the Director of the Gallery, Philip Hendy, to hang the work suitably with the other fifteenth-century paintings.[58] Questions are still occasionally raised about the work. Thomas Hoving, the former Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, recently proposed that the work is either a fake or is so overpainted that an attribution to Uccello is questionable.[59]

Following the work's acquisition, Martin Davies, Assistant Keeper, and Norman Brommelle, Restorer, at the National Gallery, London, each published articles in 1959 supporting the work's authenticity, attribution, and importance, citing a range of iconographic, stylistic, and technical evidence. Davies described the *pentimenti* revealed in the infrared photography of the work as characteristic of Uccello in the improvised and

unresolved nature of the compositional solutions reached, referring to similar changes in the *Miracle of the Host*. He did admit, however, that some features revealed in the infrared images, such as the sweeping mark passing through the princess' body, defied explanation.[60] Brommelle noted that doubts had been expressed about whether a painting datable to about 1460 would be expected to be on canvas as the *Saint George* is, and that it had been suggested the work might be an imitation of a later date. Brommelle rallied substantial physical and documentary evidence showing there was nothing unusual in finding a mid-fifteenth century painting on a canvas support.

Complicating Brommelle's argument was the fact that the work had an unusual paint layer structure. Of the paint samples taken, many showed an initial red-brown layer, followed by one of black, and another of lead white, before the straightforward paint layer structures corresponding to the composition on the surface. While Brommelle hypothesised that the black layer could conceivably correspond to an early idea Uccello had for a depiction of a night scene, he had no explanation for the underlying red-brown layer that seemed like the coloured primings of paintings from much later periods, such as those of Veronese and Canaletto.[61] Brommelle illustrated his article with a macrophotograph of an area of loss from the paint surface revealed during cleaning, which showed the work's paint layer strata. And Davies illustrated his article with an infrared photograph detail showing *pentimenti* in the princess' crown, hands, and girdle, and features of the landscape. These were the first scientific images of a work by Uccello to be published.

In 1998, Jill Dunkerton and Ashok Roy of the National Gallery, London, Conservation Department clarified the nature of the paint layer structure by observing that the red earth layer was present in all the samples, while in some it was covered by a black layer and in others a green layer, with a layer of lead white covering all of these layers. They suggested that this did not correspond to figurative techniques of the period 'where colour areas tend to be carefully planned and reserved', proposing that the canvas might have served initially as the support for a non-figurative, decorative, heraldic, or emblematic design, which Uccello painted out with a layer of lead white before painting the composition as it is seen on the surface. The lead white was brushed on freely, perhaps accounting for the sweeping mark Davies had observed in the infrared photograph of the princess. With this explanation, they emphasised that the paint layer structure might be less unusual than had been thought.[62]

Their hypothesis still leaves unexplained why Uccello painted black and green over a layer of red. This is particularly relevant for the hypothesis that the initial composition might have been heraldic in nature, since the colours and forms of heraldic designs are by definition pre-determined. However, a modified version of their hypothesis could account for the work's complex paint layer structures. An initial composition might have been abandoned and

painted out with the all-over lead white layer, as they suggested, but the first composition could have been a figurative or landscape composition, since such compositions can show complex paint layer structures, in which colours are not always left in reserve. The landscape of the technically similar Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers* is composed of rather abstract, nearly geometric forms, corresponding somewhat to the underlying composition of the *Saint George*, at least as far as it can be seen in the IRR of the area around the princess. In the *Holy Fathers* there are also indications of superimposed paint layers, such as the red paint for the church at the top, visible through losses in the black shadow of the doorway.

In Uccello's Madrid *Crucifixion* a layer (or layers) of orange-buff paint extends across much of the landscape, over which a thin mauve wash was applied in places to model highlights of the terrain. At least some of the blackish-green grass and clover along the edges of the areas of turf was painted over the orange-buff layer and was not left in reserve. This is not surprising, since it is unlikely that any artist would leave in reserve such tiny features as blades of grass. More surprisingly, the abrasion to the ridges of the craquelure seems to show that an orange-buff coloured layer is present beneath the black for the night sky, rather than a whitish gesso ground. Thus, it seems that a large part of the gesso would have been covered by an initial layer of orange-buff colour, perhaps comparable to the initial red layer of the London *Saint George*. Similarly, it appears that the landscape in the Paris *Saint George* is painted with one or more layers of buff-brown paint over which lighter and darker strokes model form. Even some large areas of dark green paint for the fields under cultivation seem to lie over the brown layer, notably in the left background, where Uccello has used a *sgraffito* technique in a resinous (?) green layer, revealing the underlying brown layer to depict what seems to be a hunting scene with a lion hunting a deer. Uccello was a sophisticated technician who handled paint in a way that was economical, to the extent that it avoided planning every area to be left in reserve, and clever, to the extent that it allowed the overlying layers to be manipulated for interesting effects, such as *sgraffito*.

Scientific analyses of the pigments and media used by Uccello in his panel paintings have been published in only a few instances. The London *Battle* is executed mainly in egg tempera with some areas in *tempera grassa*, including walnut oil. The pigments have been described as standard for the fifteenth century: lead white, ultramarine, sometimes mixed with white, azurite, vermilion, verdigris, lead-tin yellow (type I), a variety of red and yellow lakes, read lead, charcoal black, and earth pigments.[63] The London *Saint George* is executed predominantly in a medium of walnut oil.[64]

Studying Uccello's mural painting technique is difficult because of the poor condition that many such works are in and because most of them are inaccessible, high up on church walls.

However, parts of the Bologna *Adoration* are in reasonable condition, and since the painting and *sinopia* have been detached and put on display near ground level it is possible to study them at close range. The brick wall (removed with the *sinopia*) is covered with a greyish cement mix about 7 mm thick. Over this base, at least two thin layers of whitish preparation of unknown composition were applied, the uppermost one a pale, pinkish-white colour.[65] The architectonic features of the *sinopia*, such as the fictive frame and the support for the shelter, were outlined with a dry, red medium, probably the pigment sinoper. Two heraldic shields were drawn in a dry, black substance, presumably charcoal or black chalk, although they were not painted in the final composition. The outlines of the figures, such as Christ's head and some simple outlines of his limbs, were also drawn in black. Dark brown lines were painted in the *sinopia*, judging by their fluid contours and the colour that flows into the striations of the preparation. These lines seem to relate to the shapes of the figures and their drapery.

Some parts of the paint surface are slightly glossy, suggesting that not all of the paint was applied in a *buon fresco* technique (painted into the fresh plaster). Confirmation that paint was applied *a secco* (painted in an organic medium on a dry layer) is provided by the damaged condition of the red pyramid-shaped points in the frame. Close examination reveals that a mid-tone red layer extends over the entire area of the frame and that a further layer of dark red was applied over the surfaces of the points in shade and a layer of light red was applied over the surfaces of the points in light. Some parts of these *a secco* passages have flaked off, revealing the underlying mid-tone red layer. Thus, Uccello was just as economical in his mural painting technique as he was in his panel painting technique, in as much as he did not always leave areas of colour in reserve.[66]

Determining the media of mural paintings scientifically is exceptionally difficult, partly because of the changes that can occur to organic compounds after prolonged exposure to the elements. The medium of Uccello's *Creation Scenes* has been described as *a secco tempera forte* and the *Stories of Noah* as tempera,[67] while both have elsewhere been described as a mixture of *buon fresco* and *a secco*.[68] Documentary sources indicate that Uccello's lost mural painting in the refectory of San Miniato al Monte may have been in mixed fresco and *a secco* technique, with the latter applied in an oil medium.[69] Because of the variety of media used and the difficulty in determining the media used in individual cases, the general description 'mural painting' is preferable to the indiscriminate (though time-honoured) use of 'fresco' for all Italian Renaissance wall paintings.

Notes for Chapter 8

[1] Cennini, 1971, p. 4. For a discussion of these passages in Cennini's book, see: Kemp, 1997, p. 86. Bellucci and Frosinini (2002a, p. 30) described Cennini's book as a conservative codification of artists' practices in Florence probably made for the painters' guild at a time when the guild was seeking to enforce its control of the art in Florence in the face of rapid changes taking place in professional practices.

[2] Loeser, 1898, pp. 83–94.

[3] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 68–69: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[4] Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002a, p. 30. Some painters, such as Scheggia and Mariotto di Cristofano, belonged to the carpenters' guild, and so might conceivably have made their own panels.

[5] The document is transcribed in Beck, 1979, p. 3.

[6] For the Madrid *Crucifixion* see: De Watteville, 1989, p. 369. My thanks to Dr Sergio Benedetti, Head Curator and Keeper of the Collection, National Gallery of Ireland, for confirming that the Dublin *Virgin and Child* has its original frame, personal communication, 20 Jan. 2005. For the New York triptych see: Christiansen, 1997, p. 26.

[7] Boskovits, 1990, p. 172 including n. 2.

[8] For the measurements of the *Hunt*, see: Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen, 1991, p. 175; for the measurements of the *Battle*, see: Roy and Gordon, 2001, p. 6.

[9] For example, for the Florence *Battle*, see: Alfio Del Serra, *La struttura lignea della Battaglia di S. Romano, di Paolo Uccello, degli Uffizi, Osservazioni, deduzioni, e note nell'attuale restauro*, p. 1, NGL, Curatorial Files, NG 583, I, unpublished material; and for the London *Battle*, see: Gordon, 2003, p. 378.

[10] For an introduction to dendrochronology, see: Baillie, 1995.

[11] Cennini, 1971, pp. 119–120.

[12] Gordon, Wyld, and Roy, 2002, p. 13.

[13] Kemp, Massing Christie, and Groen, 1991, p. 176 n. 2; Gordon, 2003, p. 380, 386; CNRRMF, conservation file 5616 [*Saint George*].

[14] The X-radiography was kindly provided by Dr Dietmar Lüdke, Senior Curator for Old Masters, and the Conservation Department, at the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe.

[15] Roy and Gordon, 2001, pp. 6–7.

[16] As noted in Dresel, Lüdke, and Vey, 1992, p. 119.

[17] Renaissance panel paintings have sometimes cut up and dispersed, presumably for profit. For a discussion of the example of Zanobi Strozzi's *Annunciation* in the National Gallery, London, see: Gordon, 2003, pp. 406–407.

[18] Brommelle, 1959, p. 92. The threads of the London canvas have been identified as flax.

[19] Hoch (2004, pp. 15–24) has dated a series of four painted canvases in a private collection that are attributed to the Master of the Franciscan Temperas to *c*. 1342. Villers (1995, pp. 338–358) provided a valuable survey of the practice of painting on canvas in late Medieval and early Renaissance Italy.

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[20] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 65: 1550 and 1568 eds. For the 1598 inventory, see: Horne, 1901, pp. 123–124.

[21] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 70: 1568 ed. The most comprehensive survey of Uccello's drawings to date is Degenhart and Schmitt, 1968, vols I–IV, although they were more generous in their attributions than most authors.

[22] Melli, 1998, pp. 1–39; Melli, 1999, pp. 261–272.

[23] Melli, 2002a, p. 206. Petrioli Tofani, 1983, pp. 220–223. The earlier provenances of many of the drawings in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi are for the most part undocumented. The collection of Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici (1617–1675), including the earliest collections of the Medici, was augmented by other members of the family, such as Giovan Carlo, Apollonio Bassetti, Ferdinando and Cosimo III.

[24] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. IV, p. 125: 1568 ed.

[25] Melli, 2002b, pp. 210–212.

[26] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 62–63, 65, 70: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[27] Stockholm, 2001, unpaginated, nos 1049–1054, 1063, 1067–1071.

[28] For the drawings in Vienna, see: Birke and Kertész, 1992, vol. I, pp. 16–18, 26; for the drawing in Oxford, see: Degenhart and Schmitt, 1968, vol. II, p. 379; for the drawing in Paris, see: Degenhart and Schmitt, 1968, vol. II, p. 381.

[29] For the drawing in Dijon, see: Degenhart and Schmitt, 1968, vol. II, p. 395; for the drawing in Vienna, see: Birke and Kertész, 1992, vol. I, p. 16.

[30] O'Grady, 1985.

[31] Melli, 1998, pp. 18–20.

[32] Ames-Lewis, 1987, pp. 2–3, 7–9.

[33] Degenhart and Schmitt, 1963, p. 114 and Fig. 17.

[34] It is also possible that the designs of the pricked drawings were transferred to paper, as part of the development of a composition from workshop drawings. For a survey of preparatory drawing techniques in the Renaissance, see: Bambach, 1999, especially pp. 192–193, 197–204, 216–219, for Uccello.

[35] Melli, 1998, pp. 27–29, 31–35.

[36] Borsook, 1980, p. 82.

[37] For an illustration of Raphael's cartoon, see: Bambach, 1999, Fig. 56.

[38] Ghiberti, 1998, p. 97.

[39] Borsook, 1980, pp. 81–83.

[40] I am grateful to Rachel Billinge for bringing this to my attention, personal communication, 25 Jul. 2003.

[41] A horizontal line in the drawing for the corner where the floor meets the rear wall extends across the area filled by the lower part of the Virgin's body, meeting a vertical line passing through her proper right sleeve, the book and the lower part of her robe, for the corner where the back wall meets the right wall. This line is joined at the bottom to a diagonal line for the corner of the floor and right wall which

meets another vertical line passing through her left sleeve approximately below where the incision for the inside edge of the arched door ends (ultimately painted as a rectangular opening in a slightly different position) for the inside edge of the doorway. There are other ruled lines in the area occupied by the Virgin's body, the significance of which is unclear. The vertical edges of the far pillar extend through the lowest Gabriel's sleeve and an incision passes through his halo.

[42] An illustration of the *Holy Fathers*' *sinopia* was published in: Berti, 1988, p. 258, Fig. 7.

[43] An illustration of the IRR of the *Hunt* was published in: Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen, 1991, Fig. 13.

[44] Only by studying the paint surface under a microscope would it be possible to distinguish in every instance whether the incisions were made into the ground, an initial paint layer, or a final paint layer.

[45] Kemp, Massing, Christie, and Groen, 1991, pp. 174–175.

[46] Longhi, 1927, pp. 46–48; Boskovits, 2003b, p. 240.

[47] Roy and Gordon, 2001, p. 9.

[48] Frinta, 1998, pp. 132–140. Hexa-prong punches were used in many Florentine workshops in the fifteenth century.

[49] For a macrophotograph showing the punchwork, see: Roccasecca, 1997, p. 47.

[50] Max Doerner (1969, p. 321) noted that the eighth century *Lucca Manuscript* described the '*pictura translucida*' technique of applying resin and oil based colours over tin foil. Translucent green and red glazing over silver foil is present in the tiles in the three central panels in the upper tier of the Van Eycks' Ghent altarpiece completed in 1432 (Cathedral of Saint Bavo, Ghent, discussed in: Van Asperen de Boer, 1979, pp. 173–175). In Florentine painting of the early fifteenth century there are numerous variations of the technique, including painting in translucent and opaque paint over metal leaf and incising the leaf before and after painting.

[51] Bellucci and Frosinini, 2002a, pp. 39–40.

[52] Gordon, 2003, p. 382.

[53] Roy and Gordon, 2001, p. 10.

[54] Roy and Gordon, 2001, p. 10.

[55] Alberti, 1972, pp. 92–93.

[56] For a discussion of the history of the Lanckoronski Collection, including the London *Saint George*, see: Jerzy Miziolek, 1995, pp. 27–47.

[57] *New York Times*, 1959, p. 10.

[58] Brommelle, 1959, p. 87.

[59] Hoving, 1996a, p. 1: 'To me the small St George is either a cooked up fake or a picture that has been repainted to such an extent that an attribution to the real Paolo Uccello is highly questionable.' Hoving's views about the *Saint George* were expressed in more ambiguous terms in his book published in the same year (1996b, p. 330).

[60] Davies, 1959, pp. 309–314.

[61] Brommelle, 1959, pp. 87–90.

[62] Dunkerton and Roy, 1998, pp. 26–30.

[63] Gordon, 2003, pp. 378–382.

[64] White, Pilc, and Kirby, 1998, p. 87.

[65] Campani (1910, p. 204) claimed to have discovered a layer of whitewash and another whitish layer below the paint layer of Uccello's *Sacrifice and Drunkenness of Noah*. He claimed that such a preparation would have made the use of a *buon fresco* technique impossible, concluding that the medium of the paint layers was tempera.

[66] D'Amico (1981, pp. 58–59) described the ass, its tether, the ox's horns, the area where the Child lies, his ball, Joseph's face, the Magi, the black sky, the red fields, and the Virgin's flesh tones and mantle as painted in *buon fresco*, except for the finishing touches that are in tempera, in this case animal glue. D'Amico identified as *a secco* passages the blue of the sky, the brown earth colours in the robes in the foreground, the dark browns in the ox, the shadows of the points, the green, yellow and brown colours of the shelter, the fur lining of the donor's sleeves, Joseph's halo, and other small details.

[67] Bambach, 1999, pp. 198, 218.

[68] Frosinini, 2003, pp. 32–33.

[69] Saalman, 1964, p. 560.

9

Hermetic Meditation: Final Works

The Uccello of the 1460s and after is an artist no longer concerned with the arduous work of achieving dazzling optical effects or displays of aesthetic brilliance, rather he works in an economic, even sardonic, visual idiom, distinct from the increasingly elaborate decoration and painstaking naturalism of Florentine art of the time. Unlike his contemporary, Filippo Lippi, Uccello never adopted the refined drapery forms that became a signature style of Florentine painting in the second half of the fifteenth century, common to the works of Verrocchio, Leonardo, and Botticelli. Lippi's *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints* in the Galleria degli Uffizi exemplifies this style of drapery in the Virgin's robe, which falls to the ground in soft curves, splaying out in a complex arrangement of flat, angular folds, reminiscent of the Netherlandish style pioneered by Van Eyck.

Neither did Uccello adopt the realistic depiction of sedimentary rock strata that became ubiquitous in Florentine and Venetian art in the second half of the fifteenth century under the influence of Van Eyck's *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* (one version is in the Galleria Sabauda, Turin, another is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art). Baldovinetti's *Adoration of the Child* of 1460 in the cloister of Santissima Annunziata in Florence shows the Holy Family resting on a grassy knoll, over sub-strata of rock with realistic, sedimentary layers of a kind imitated by Verrocchio, Leonardo, Botticelli, and Giovanni Bellini, but never by Uccello.

During the last decade-and-a-half of his life Uccello witnessed the emergence of a new generation of Florentine artists: Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio and his student Leonardo, Filippo Lippi's son Filippino and student Botticelli, and others who combined refined, decorative details with the study of nature. While increasingly working in an outwardly naive idiom in this period, Uccello nevertheless invested his iconography with subtle meanings appropriate for his hermetic subjects, to be revealed through the viewer's patient meditation.

The Olivetan monastery at San Miniato al Monte overlooks the south of Florence from a high escarpment with thick cypress groves. Its massive walls enclose the cloister where Uccello, almost certainly working with an unknown assistant, painted the enigmatic, and poorly preserved, mural cycle *Holy Fathers* on the east and south walls of the upper story. A seventeenth-century chronicle records that in 1461 the Abbot of San Miniato, Fra Giuliano, wrote to Uccello concerning the painting of two walls of the upper storey of the cloister.[1] What kind of paintings the Abbot asked for is unknown, but the cycle shows the extremity of Uccello's dry and abstract style, appropriate, nevertheless, for a monastery. Most of the figures are isolated in their landscape settings, either in prayer or meditation. The imagery is no doubt a response to the subject matter, the pursuit of holiness through the monastic renunciation of earthly pleasures, as advocated by Saint Benedict—the '*PERFETTA ABSTINENTIA*' referred to in one of the fragmentary inscriptions on the east wall. That the paintings were not found pleasing by later commentators (the author of *Il codice magliabechiano* noted that 'they are not much valued' '*sono cose non molto tenute in pregio*')[2] may be because Uccello was faithful to the principles of the Olivetans, even more austere than the Benedictine rule that formed the basis of their lives. Unlike the flower-strewn lawns and beguiling details of Fra Angelico's mural paintings in the Dominican convent of San Marco, Florence, completed with the assistance of his workshop around the middle of the century, the harshness of Uccello's imagery is unrelenting.

Vasari was puzzled by the colouring of the 'blue fields, the red city, and the buildings mixed according to his whim' ('*campi a[z]zurri, le città di color rosso, e gli edifici mescolò secondo che gli parve*').[3] The paintings are in *terra verde*, inasmuch as certain figures, such as the Angel on the east wall are green. However, Uccello used a variety of colours throughout the cycle, sometimes in an apparently capricious way, as alluded to by Vasari. The rocks behind the kneeling figure at the far right of the south wall suddenly change from brown to blue without any obvious explanation. The door in the rock face to the left of the figure perhaps indicates that the kneeling figure is in a cave, to which the viewer has privileged visual access, with the blue representing the dark interior. Sadly, the poor condition of the paintings precludes any close reading of Uccello's intention in this and many other respects.

The riddle-like *Scenes from the Lives of Holy Fathers* in the Accademia in Florence, a work probably designed and begun by Uccello but finished by an assistant, also has austere, monastic imagery. Fortunately, its good condition allows a clearer interpretation of its iconography than is possible for the paintings at San Miniato. Its labyrinthine composition shows the Virgin appearing to Saint Bernard (bottom left), a monk-saint preaching to monks (bottom right), monks flagellating themselves around a crucifix (upper left), a Franciscan

monk in front of a church conversing with two laymen (top, centre-left), Saint Jerome giving penance before a crucifix in a cave (centre), and Saint Francis receiving the stigmata (top).[4] The work was often imprecisely described in the past as a thebaïd: a depiction of scenes from the lives of early Christian monks and nuns living in the desert around Thebes.[5] Strictly speaking, this is not correct,[6] since Saints Bernard and Francis did not belong to this tradition of devotion. Longhi, avoiding the issue of the work's precise subject matter, sarcastically described it as a 'Luna Park for monks'.[7] More seriously, Parronchi proposed that the subject might be an illustration of Pierre Lacepierre de Limoges' Latin treatise *De oculo morali*,[8] a popular late thirteenth-century text by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris, repeatedly published in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The text interpreted the optical theories of the Arab scholar Alhazen in moral terms for the training of preachers.[9]

As Parronchi admitted, the *De oculo morali* is by no means a technical discussion of optics and it might also be wondered whether it really relates to the asceticism of Uccello's imagery. General uncertainty about the source of Uccello's iconography has led to the painting being referred to simply as 'the way to perfection' or, more generically, 'scenes from the lives of holy fathers'. The work's provenance does not clarify the context of the iconography; it has been traced as far back as the suppression of the Vallombrosan monastery of Spirito Santo alla Costa in Florence in 1810. There is no clear correspondence between the saints depicted and the orders active there in the fifteenth century, which included Silvestrans and Dominicans,[10] although the Confraternity of Saint Jerome, called '*della Notte*' (of the night) met there and so might account, in part, for the appearance of Jerome.[11]

The painting contains ominous signs. The storm clouds gathering in the sky at the right, the sinuous forms creeping up the wall on which the monks are sitting seem to be snakes, and the dog on the left of the stream stalking birds, all probably allude to the transience of life. Furthermore, the two openings in the rock at the left are reminiscent of the eye sockets of a skull, Saint Bernard's cave seems like an exposed skull cavity, and the edge of the path near the river is like an upper jaw. Thus, a large part of the rocky area at the left bears some resemblance to a skull.[12] It is probably significant then that the middle monk in the left opening in the rock has a skull in his lap. In imagery of penitent monks and nuns, corpses, and the skull in particular, frequently appear as objects of religious contemplation in the Renaissance.[13] Bernhard Ridderbos discussed the iconography of death in the context of penitent saints in Sienese and Florentine art, noting a number of mural paintings in which death is alluded to as a *memento mori*, a warning to laity of the transience of life and an object of meditation for monks and nuns, reminding them that serenity and eternal life come from renouncing earthly life.[14] An image central to Ridderbos' discussion is the late fourteenth-century *Saint Jerome in Penitence* mural painting in the Vallombrosan nunnery of Santa

Marta, Siena, in which a stern looking Saint Jerome points to a grisly pile of decaying corpses.

If Parronchi's tentative proposal to associate the painting's subject with *De oculo morali* is difficult to confirm, at least one passage from that text referring to Saint Bernard's commentary on the second verse of the Canticles is quite revealing of the painting's iconography. The imagery of the rock with its many caves calls to mind the passage from Canticles 2:14, albeit in a particular way: 'My dove in the clefts of the rock/ in the hollow of thee wall/ show me your face/ let your voice sound in my ears/ for your voice is sweet/ and your face is beautiful'.[15] The Canticles (Song of Songs) was the subject of numerous allegorical interpretations since Origen (third century AD), in which the Bridegroom was commonly identified with Christ and the Bride with the Church. Gregory the Great (sixth and early seventh century AD) proposed an influential interpretation that used the ideal described in the Canticles as a standard by which to criticise the worldly corruption of the Church, identifying a specifically monastic ideal within the text. For later exegetes, such as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (twelfth century), the emphasis shifted away from seeing the Bride as the Church to the individual soul in its quest for a mystical union with God through self-denial.[16] Saint Bernard's commentary on the Canticles was sufficiently important to warrant a mention in his biography in the *Legenda aurea*[17] and parts of it were incorporated into the popular *Meditationes vitae Christi*.

Appropriately, since he appears most prominently in the work, it is Saint Bernard's exegesis of Canticles 2:14 that is particularly relevant to the interpretation of Uccello's imagery, and it may be from this source, rather than the *De oculo morali* that briefly refers to it, from which Uccello's iconography is drawn. Having invited the reader or listener to think of the Bridegroom as Christ and the Bride as the Church, Saint Bernard goes on to say:

> Another writer [Gregory the Great] glosses this passage differently, seeing in the clefts of the rock the wounds of Christ. And quite correctly, for Christ is the rock [....] The wise man builds his house upon a rock, because there he will fear the violence neither of storms nor of floods. Is on the rock not good? Set high on the rock, secure on the rock, I stand on the rock firmly. I am secure from the enemy, buttressed against a fall, all because I am raised up from the earth. For everything earthly is uncertain and perishable. Our homeland is in heaven, and we are not afraid of falling or being thrown down. The rock, with its durability and security, is in heaven. 'The rock is a refuge for the hedgehog.' And really where is there safe sure rest for the weak except in the Saviour's wounds? There the security of my dwelling depends on the greatness of his saving power. The world rages, the body oppresses, the devil lays his snares: I do not fall because I am founded on a rock.[18]

Saint Bernard goes on to explain how the martyr draws courage to face suffering from this image:

> While gazing at the Lord's wounds he will indeed not feel his own. The martyr remains jubilant and triumphant though his whole body is mangled; even while the steel is gashing his sides he looks around with courage and elation at the holy blood pouring from his flesh. Where then is the soul of the martyr? In a safe place, of course; in the rock, of course, in the heart of Jesus, of course; in wounds open for it to enter…From the rock therefore comes the courage of the martyr, from it obviously his power to drink the Lord's cup. And this intoxicating cup—how wonderful it is![19]

Uccello's painting shows a number of correspondences with the imagery of the Canticles viewed through Saint Bernard's ascetic and mystical interpretations. The composition unfolds from the bottom left, with the Virgin appearing to Saint Bernard. In the corner a horned devil sneaks out of a hole with a grin on his face, next to a length of chain, perhaps laying a snare as Saint Bernard described (or is the devil bound by the chain?). The saint and his fellow monks take refuge in the 'clefts in the rock' and the church and buildings are constructed on the same rock ('The wise man builds his house upon a rock'), providing shelter from the coming storm in the sky at the right.

Imaginatively, Uccello interpreted the imagery in a semi-literal way. Where the Bride in the Canticles implores the Bridegroom, in the form of a dove, to appear in the clefts of the rock, Uccello shows the clefts in the rock *as the face*, albeit the face of a skull. Perhaps the three deer (does or fawns?) are references to the Bridegroom in the same chapter of the Canticles (2:17). Saint Bernard interpreted the reference to the Bridegroom as a gazelle or fawn in this passage as an allusion to the swiftness of God's Word and the keenness of His sight.[20] The saints' and monks' barren rock is remote from the city in the distant landscape, which is surrounded by cultivated fields and olive groves, illustrating the holy fathers' withdrawal from worldly life to a place where, by study, contemplation, self-denial and mortification, they may ascend to the heights of a mystical union with God, represented by Saint Francis' stigmatisation on a ledge at the summit of their enclave. The presumably monastic viewer of the painting was invited to meditate on Christ's wounds symbolised by the clefts in the rock. From this they might have drawn courage for the tribulations they suffered or penance they served, and through this suffering might have hoped to be brought into a mystical union with God. Imagery based on monastic allegories of the Canticles appeared across Europe in the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, notably, in works by Hieronymous Bosch and Filippino Lippi.[21]

In the *Saint George* now in the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris Uccello found something new to do with the subject already very familiar to him, in a way that is characteristic of his late style. Focusing on the monstrous and uncanny nature of the narrative, he accentuates the composition's naive spatial construction, creating an Alice-in-Wonderland-like world for his subjects. The three figures outside the city gate would be giants if they entered the gate, the sizeable bushes along the side of the road where they are standing mysteriously turn into insignificant clover when the hedge turns around the corner behind the princess. As in the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, a fringe of vegetation inexplicably grows up along the edge of the cave. The three protagonists are arranged across the picture plane, like actors in a tableau vivant: the princess seems remarkably cool considering she is standing directly behind the dragon. The dark sky adds to the air of mystery, as do the curious incidental details throughout the background of the picture: the golden rays emanating from the top left corner, the crescent moon in the top right corner, the faintly visible cherub in the upper right area of the sky, and the lion (?) hunting a deer in the fields behind the princess. The mystery is not without some explanation, however. As mentioned in the discussion of the Melbourne *Saint George* in Chapter 3, the saint's symbolism is related to the cycles of nature and the rebirth of crops. The rays of sunshine and the moon in the sky of the Paris *Saint George*, above a landscape under cultivation, make the symbolism more explicit here than in Uccello's previous versions.

The *Miracle of the Host* may be Uccello's last surviving work. It was originally on the high altar of the church built by the Confraternity of Corpus Domini in the Piazza di Pian di Mercato (now the Piazza della Repubblica) in the centre of Urbino. Building of the church commenced around the beginning of the fifteenth century with the help of Duke Federico da Montefeltro. It was eventually destroyed in 1705 to make way for the Palazzo del Convitto de' Nobili.[22] The richness and quality of its art made it one of the most important Renaissance churches in the Marche. In June 1456 Fra Carnevale (Bartolomeo di Giovanni Corradini) withdrew from a contract to paint an altarpiece for the confraternity, for unknown reasons.[23] The names of Uccello and his son Donato then appear in an account book of the confraternity between February 1467 and October 1469, although they were not in Urbino for the entire period, since Uccello was in Florence by August of 1469.[24] Although the documents do not describe the nature of Uccello's work explicitly, it undoubtedly included painting the *Miracle of the Host* predella. Subsequently, in April 1469, a payment was recorded in relation to the visit of Piero della Francesca, apparently for him to consider the commission for the altarpiece, although the *Communion of the Apostles* altarpiece was subsequently painted by the Netherlandish artist 'Giusto da Guanto' (Joos van Wassenhove), documented in Urbino

from 12 February 1473.[25] The altarpiece and the predella are now housed in the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino.

An enduring myth is that Uccello received the commission for the altarpiece but was dismissed, probably based on the assumption that the contract for the predella and altarpiece would have been awarded to a single artist at the outset.[26] Since there is no mention of the altarpiece, or indeed the predella, in relation to Uccello in the confraternity's documents, the reason for assigning parts of the work to different artists is a matter for speculation. Uccello may never have been offered the commission for the altarpiece, he may have asked too much for it, or at the age of about seventy, he may have been unable to complete the enormous project (the altarpiece is 238 by 320 cm). The facts that Fra Carnevale withdrew from the commission and that Piero della Francesca did not take it up suggest that the terms of the commission were disadvantageous for the artist.

The cult of the Eucharist, to which the confraternity was dedicated, developed significantly from the middle of the thirteenth century. A feast of the Eucharist was established in Liège in 1246, Pope Urban IV issued the bull *Transiturus* to establish a universal feast of Corpus Christi in 1264, and this initiative was reinforced by the inclusion of the bull in a new collection of canon law issued in 1317 by John XXII.[27] The liturgy of Corpus Christi proclaims the doctrine of transubstantiation, that bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ during the Mass. Celebrations of the body of Christ took many forms, including sermons, processions, and theatrical performances, and a number of confraternities dedicated to Corpus Christi were founded in the second half of the fourteenth century. Accounts proliferated of miracles demonstrating Christ's real presence in the host, in terms readily comprehensible to a mass audience. These stories included visions of a baby or a bleeding child on the altar at the consecration. Stories of mistreatment of the host described the miraculous recognition of its divine status or the punishment of the perpetrator. One story related that a host was stolen from a church and buried in a field where oxen refused to plough over the spot, instead kneeling down before it. Jews, in particular, were cast as the malefactors in such stories. In one, a Jew stole a host and offered it to his dog. The dog refused the host and attacked the Jew.

The story depicted in Uccello's predella originated in events in the Rue des Billettes in Paris in 1290, in which a Jew was said to have obtained a host from a Christian woman. The Jew attacked the host with knives, axes and fire, whereupon it bled. He was caught and executed, and the miraculous host was celebrated with the construction of a chapel, processions, and the singing of hymns.[28] Marilyn Aronberg Lavin has shown that the version of the story in the predella most closely reflects a Florentine mystery play version of the story, but includes details that are probably Uccello's own inventions.[29]

The miraculously bleeding host in the predella demonstrates the divine presence in unmistakable terms. The congregation in the church would have seen this message in miniature below Wassenhove's enormous representation of the communion of the Apostles, as the host was raised before the altar during the mass. The iconographic program of the church was not subtle, and further images of miracles involving the host were painted on the ceiling of the church in the late sixteenth century, reinforcing the predella's message.[30]

Aronberg Lavin provided a historical explanation for the choice of the predella's subject matter. In the fifteenth century there was a backlash to the growing influence of Jewish moneylenders in Italy, particularly among the Franciscans who spoke out in the interests of the Christian poor. They advocated retaliation, sometimes of a brutal nature. A more measured response was the establishment of not-for-profit moneylending facilities for exclusively Christian use, known as the *monti di pietà*, one of which appeared in Urbino in 1468. Aronberg Lavin drew attention to early sixteenth-century documents showing that the Urbino *monte* and the Confraternity of the Corpus Domini were linked by reciprocal financial obligations—evidence that the subject of the predella was probably related to this anti-usury and more specifically anti-Jewish movement.[31]

Nevertheless, Dana Katz has observed that Jews are not represented as entirely beyond the pale in the altarpiece and predella.[32] They are certainly not gratuitously demonised in the predella. The burning of the Jewish family as punishment for the desecration of the host is horrific, but the Jew is not depicted as a caricature. His physical appearance is indistinguishable from the lay Christians at the end of the Corpus Domini procession in the third scene of the predella. The Jew and his family do not even wear the round badges identifying Jews that are seen in other fifteenth-century representations of comparable subjects.[33] Nor is he shown actively engaged in the desecration of the host as in other representations (his sinfulness is not as prominent as it might have been), and his family are shown as frightened witnesses of the events that lead to their demise (eliciting sympathy).

On the other hand, the anachronistic inclusion of the Roman acronym 'S.P.Q.R.' on the soldiers' banners and shields, places the story in the context of a long history of anti-Jewish sentiment. In the scene of the burning of the Jewish family this represents an inversion of the events surrounding the Crucifixion. Where Roman soldiers, encouraged by Jews, put Christ to death at the Crucifixion, in the predella Christians in the guise of Roman soldiers put the Jews to death, perhaps as a double revenge motif: revenge for the desecration of the host and for the Crucifixion. Thus, the overall message of the predella seems to be one of ambivalence towards contemporary Jews in Urbino. There is an implied resentment of their historical role in the Crucifixion, and of their current practice of usury, and a warning on what might happen to Jews who transgress Christian mores, but these are expressed without

demonisation—suggesting there might still be a degree of tolerance of, or even sympathy for, the Jews.

Despite its sinister subject matter, the predella has a beguiling quality due to Uccello's characteristic play with the representation of space and time. Unlike many predellas, this one has a single, very long painted scene, rather than separate scenes set within a dividing framework. The work has something of the charm of a cartoon, with miniature figures acting out events in dollhouse settings, except that Uccello introduces an uncanny effect by unifying the six spaces between the balusters into a single architectural and landscape setting. This is not to say that Uccello attempted to lend the story the power of realism, but rather that he depicted the story in a particularly engaging way to underscore the narrative and its message. The story unfolds in successive scenes from left to right, beginning with a woman recklessly pawning the host, and ending with the same woman on a bier being given the Last Communion by two angels. She is saved, just in time, from two demons clawing at her legs (who have in turn been scratched by ardent worshippers). The cyclical nature of the story may have a moral intention: to invoke the cycle of sin and redemption.

Notes for Chapter 9

[1] Venturini, 2005, p. 8.

[2] Anonymous (magliabechiano), 1892, p. 100.

[3] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, p. 64: 1550 ed. (and 1568 ed).

[4] Russo (1987, p. 218) identified the scene at the lower right as Saint Romuald preaching to Camaldolites. Falletti (2001, p. 73) identified it as Saint Benedict teaching the *Regola* (Rule) to monks. Since the monks' robes are not significantly different from Saint Bernard's, they may be Cistercians, as he was. Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 248) suggested that the Franciscan monk in front of the church might be Saint Bernardino.

[5] On the iconographic fortune of the thebaïd in late Medieval and early Renaissance Florentine art, see: Malquori, 2001, pp. 119–137.

[6] As pointed out by Pope-Hennessy (1950, p. 166).

[7] Longhi, 1928, p. 46.

[8] Parronchi, 1957b, pp. 21–25:

[9] Clark, 1977, pp. 329–343.

[10] Malquori, 1990, p. 128.

[11] Bernacchioni (2003, p. 418) argued that despite the apparent lack of immediate associations between the work's iconography and the monastery, the work probably did originate there and not the adjacent Monastery of Saint Jerome and Saint Francis, as Malquori had previously suggested (1990, p. 128). Bernacchioni noted that the Confraternity of Saint Jerome '*della Notte*' had links with the Confraternity of the '*Buca*' of Saint Jerome to which Uccello belonged.

[12] Berra (1999, pp. 359, 379) discussed other examples of disguised skulls in fifteenth century paintings. An illuminated manuscript of *c*. 1440 that belonged to Catherine of Clèves includes an illumination with butterflies on whose wings skulls appear in their spotted patterns. The rocks behind the Angels in Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi* (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, *c*. 1462–1464) also include the image of a skull.

[13] Russo, 1987, p. 236. Russo discussed the iconography of the skull as an accessory of images of Saint Jerome in the desert, with reference to paintings by Fra Angelico, Marco Zoppo, Carpaccio and Botticelli. Russo described this type of representation as the penitent in his classic role, analogous to a *memento mori*.

[14] Ridderbos, 1984, pp. 63–73.

[15] The translation of the Vulgate text is by Matter (1990, p. xxi).

[16] Matter, 1990, pp. 20–41 (on Origen), 92–97 (on Gregory the Great), 123–133 (on Saint Bernard).

[17] Iacopo da Varazze, 1995, p. 662.

[18] Bernard of Clairvaux, 1979, vol. III, pp. 142–143: Sermon Sixty-One. The translation is by K. Walsh and I.M. Edmonds.

[19] Bernard of Clairvaux, 1979, vol. III, pp. 147–148: Sermon Sixty-One. The translation is by K. Walsh and I.M. Edmonds.

[20] Bernard of Clairvaux, 1979, vol. III, pp. 82–86: Sermon Fifty-Five.

[21] Ruppel (1988, pp. 9–11) discussed the imagery in Bosch's *Saint Jerome in the Wilderness* (Museé des Beaux-Arts, Ghent), and Clark (1981–1982, pp. 181–183) that in Lippi's *The Virgin Inspiring Saint Bernard* (Badia, Florence).

[22] Scatassa, 1902, p. 438; Katz, 2003, p. 655 n. 38.

[23] Daffra, 2005a, pp. 33–34; Mazzalupi, 2005, p. 300.

[24] Moranti, 1990, pp. 206–214. For Uccello's 1469 *portata* (ASF, Catasto, 926, vol. II, San Giovanni Drago, fols 259–259v., in Mather, 1948, pp. 63–64).

[25] Scatassa, 1902, p. 440.

[26] Hendy (1964, p. 39) stated that the Corpus Domini rejected Uccello's design for the altarpiece for unknown reasons. Belozerskaya (2002, p. 215) made a similar claim, citing Aronberg Lavin, 1967. Aronberg Lavin (1967, p. 2), however, was equivocal about this hypothesis, noting on the one hand that Uccello claimed shortly afterwards to have been without work or means of support, but noting, on the other hand, that his predella was evidently considered successful since it was accepted by the patron.

[27] Rubin, 1991, pp. 164–185.

[28] Rubin, 1991, pp. 108–129.

[29] Aronberg Lavin, 1967, pp. 1–10.

[30] Scatassa, 1902, p. 439. An undated description of the church of the confraternity of the Corpus Domini mentioned two figures, two miracles of the host, four Evangelists, and four prophets painted by Filippo Bellini in the upper part of the church, paid for in 1582–1583.

[31] Aronberg Lavin, 1967, pp. 8–10.

[32] Katz (2003, pp. 646–661) argued that the predella and the altarpiece together provided a message about the limited tolernace of Jewry in Urbino. The hypothetical identification of the exotically dressed figure engaged in amicable discussion with the duke in the altarpiece as a Jewish Persian ambassador was said to represent a positive engagement with Jewry at his court, in which the Jew accepted the duke's Christian views (the ambassador had converted to Christianity during his stay in Italy in 1472–1473), while the punishment for the desecration of the host in the predella represented the limits of tolerance for Jewry in Christian dominated Urbino. Thus, this tolerance is predicated on the willingness of Jews to respect or embrace Christianity.

[33] Katz, 2003, p. 650 and Figs 9–11.

10
Epilogue

Uccello was a late addition to the catalogue of artists to be the subject of a monograph. In 1931 Bernard Berenson observed: 'It is strange that up to date we have no monograph that attempts to treat exhaustively the artistic personality and career of Paolo Uccello. Perhaps the problem is too complicated and too perplexing, and neither rash youngsters nor still rasher oldsters dare to tackle it.'[1] The difficulty of studying Uccello is due to the scarce documentary evidence, the poor condition of many of his works and the loss of many others, but it is above all due to the complex nature of his artistic personality, defying easy categorisation.

At least Uccello was not forgotten by subsequent generations, unlike some of his contemporaries, such as Giovanni di Francesco, who disappeared from the historical record until the twentieth century. This was no doubt due to the prominence of Uccello's works, some signed, in Florence's most important cultural sites. It is interesting to imagine the young Leonardo, having arrived in Florence in 1469, studying the city's celebrated artistic monuments in the last years of Uccello's life. Leonardo would certainly have seen Uccello's works in the Duomo, possibly those in the Chiostro Verde, and in churches, convents, *spedali* and private houses around the city.[2] Leonardo's master, Verrocchio, seems to have been inspired by Uccello's work,[3] and there are analogies between Uccello's and Leonardo's visionary styles and distinctive subject matter. Uccello's swirling storm clouds, whiplash dragon tails, mysterious, gloomy landscapes, and perspective scenes haunted by enigmatic figures and wild animals provide precedents for some of Leonardo's more imaginative early drawings and paintings.

The subjects in which Uccello excelled, battles and storms, are those on which Leonardo lavished greatest attention in his writing on the art of painting.[4] In particular, parts of Leonardo's instructions on how to represent a tempest read like a description of Uccello's *Flood*, with, 'clouds riven and torn and flying with the wind… boughs and leaves swept up by the strength and fury of the gale' and, 'men…fallen and wrapped in their garments and almost indistinguishable'.[5] In another passage Leonardo described, 'different kinds of animals huddled together, terrified and subdued into tameness in company with men and women who

had fled there with their children. And the waters which cover the fields with their waves are in great part strewn with tables, bedsteads, boats and various other contrivances improvised through necessity and fear of death…' and further on, he wrote, 'You might see groups of men with weapons in their hands defending the small spots that remained to them from the lions, wolves and beasts of prey which sought safety there. Ah! what dreadful screams were heard in the dark air rent by the fury of the thunder and the lightning it flashed forth…And the birds had already begun to settle on men…the dead bodies now inflated began to rise from the bottom of the deep waters to the surface.'[6]

Uccello's fame grew steadily in a string of manuscripts and publications in the late-fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Antonio di Tuccio de' Manetti's *Vita di Filippo di ser Brunelleschi* (*Life of Filippo di Ser Brunelleschi*, *c*. 1480s) observed that Uccello was among the artists who followed Brunelleschi's innovations in perspective,[7] and his *Uomini singolari in Firenze dal MCCCC* (*Singular Men in Florence from 1400*, *c*. 1494–1497) devoted a paragraph to the artist mentioning the *Flood* and the scene below (*Sacrifice of Noah*) and the first two scenes in the Chiostro Verde (the *Creation Stories*), as well as unspecified work in Santa Trinita and other places.[8] Giovanni Santi's *La vita e le gesta di Federico di Montefeltro Duca d'Urbino* (*The Life and Deeds of Federico di Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino*, *c*. 1480) included Uccello in his verses describing famous, mostly Florentine, artists of the fifteenth century.[9] Cristoforo Landino's *Comento di Cristoforo Landino fiorentino sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri poeta fiorentino* (*Commentary by Cristoforo Landino, Florentine, on the Comedia by Dante Alighieri, Florentine Poet*, 1481) remembered Uccello as a specialist in the depiction of animals, landscape and perspective.[10] The memory of Uccello was also perpetuated in inventories of Florentine collections. The inventory taken in 1492 of Lorenzo de' Medici's belongings listed Uccello's three *Battle* paintings, as well as the now lost *Battle between Dragons and Lions* and *Story of Paris (?)*.[11]

Francesco Albertini's *Memoriale* (1510) recorded Uccello's authorship of the *Creation Stories* and the *Stories of Noah*, work in Santa Maria Maggiore, unidentified painting in Santa Trinita and the *Holy Fathers* in San Miniato al Monte.[12] Marcantonio Michiel's notebook, *Pittori e pitture in diverse luoghi* (1525–1543), recorded Uccello's *Giants* in the courtyard of the Casa Vitaliani in Padua, now lost.[13] The author of *Il libro di Antonio Billi* (*c*. early sixteenth century), added to what had previously been written about Uccello only a brief reference to unspecified canvases,[14] and similarly, the anonymous author of *Il codice magliabechiano* (*c*. 1537–1542) referred to numerous unidentified canvases and panels.[15] Thus, the fundamentals of Uccello's reputation were established: one of the first painters to follow Brunelleschi in the development of perspective, memorable for his

depiction of animals and landscapes, renowned principally as a mural painter, who also executed numerous works for private patrons.

The two editions of Vasari's *Vite* (1550 and 1568) comprise the most extensive information about Uccello prior to the nineteenth century, but they also contain some of the most gossipy and—it must be said—inane anecdotes in all of art history. Thus, the earliest account of Uccello's artistic personality is also the most problematic. According to Vasari, an abbot at San Miniato al Monte where Uccello was working fed him so much cheese that he dared not pass a carpenter's shop (cheese was used by carpenters to make glue), and he feared that if his diet did not improve he would end up being more cheese than man. Undoubtedly, the most famous of Vasari's anecdotes is the one that has Uccello's wife calling him to bed at night, to which he responds, 'Oh what a sweet thing this perspective is!' ('*Oh che dolce cosa è questa prospettiva!*')[16] It is usually understood from this story that Uccello preferred to work on his beloved perspective than sleep with his wife, although the words Vasari puts in Uccello's mouth are ambiguous, probably intentionally so, and it may also be inferred that the prospect of going to bed with his wife was a sweet thing (*prospettiva* meaning perspective *and* prospect).

Rather than the comedic account of Uccello's life, it is Vasari's romantic characterisation of Uccello as a strange, lonely artist who died more poor than famous that has proved most memorable. Vasari claimed Uccello was so poor that he filled his house with drawings of animals because he could not afford live ones. This colourful caricature is still invoked, even by Renaissance art historians. However, it is at odds with the documentary evidence showing that Uccello was a successful and sociable artist, active in the artistic, business and religious communities in Florence throughout his life. What has been lost sight of is Vasari's literary strategy of contrasting types in his *Vite*. In Uccello's case the strongest contrast is made between Uccello's solitude and specialisation and the amiability and adaptability of his colleague Donatello. Vasari was wrong about important biographical details of Uccello's life (see the beginning of Chapter 1), suggesting he did not have reliable information about the artist's life, so what might have inspired Vasari to construct Uccello's personality in the way that he did? Perhaps Uccello's tiny output, as it can be judged from the *Vite* and from other sources, is a factor. This, and and his works' visual complexity might well create the impression that Uccello was specialised, precious and not particularly prolific, especially when compared with Donatello's vast production, not to mention Vasari's own enormous oeuvre. It is fair to say that Vasari probably equated an artist's devotion to their art with a lack of productivity and, ultimately, poverty, as Pliny did before him in his description of the classical painter Protogenes.[17]

The *Vite* formed the basis of historical accounts of Renaissance art for centuries. This included accounts of Uccello's career too, as Enrico Somaré observed in 1946:

> The annotators and historians of art who followed, until the nineteenth century, added little or nothing of relevance to Vasari's sixteenth century pages: not Borghini with "Il Riposo" (1584), not Baldinucci in his "Notizie dei professori del disegno" (1728), not Lanzi in "Storia della pittura" (1795), not Burckhardt in his "Der Cicerone" (1840), not Müntz in "Histoire de l'art pendant la Renaissance" (1889).[18]

While the attribution of works to Uccello in the art-historical literature did not change significantly during the period Somaré referred to, the process of tracing works described by Vasari and of proposing attributions for undocumented works had begun by the time of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's *A New History of Painting in Italy*, published in 1864.[19] Furthermore, the process of sorting fact from invention in Vasari's biography of Uccello, and filling in the gaps through comparison with independent documentation had progressed from the end of the seventeenth century. Filippo Baldinucci's 1686 publication on Italian artists transcribed documents for the commission of Uccello's *Equestrian Monument*.[20] In 1774 Thomas Patch published the account of payments for Ghiberti's workshop assistants, which mentioned Uccello.[21] Giovanni Gaye's *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV.XV. XVI.* of 1839, included one of Uccello's Catasto documents, the notice of a deliberation by the Merchants' Guild involving Uccello, and his 1425 will.

In the nineteenth century, the acquisitions of private collectors and large public galleries generated interest in Uccello's works, even if they were not often recognised as his at the time. In Florence the Bardini Collection included the Dublin *Virgin and Child* (sold in 1899 with an attribution to Lorentino d'Arezzo) and the Paris *Saint George*,[22] and the Contini-Bonacossi Collection included the *Female Saint*, the *Virgin and Child with Saint Francis and Two Angels*, and the Raleigh *Virgin and Child*.[23] The English diplomat, the Honourable W.T.H. Fox-Strangways, acquired the *Hunt* and the *Annunciation*, probably in Florence during the first third of the nineteenth century. Both were donated to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1850, the former attributed to Benozzo Gozzoli and the latter to 'Pesello Peselli', according to notes on the backs of the paintings. In 1854 Gustav Friedrich Waagen, the Director of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, attributed the *Annunciation* at Oxford to Benozzo Gozzoli.[24] Waagen's survey of the most important English collections was probably made with an eye for potential acquisitions. By *c*. 1846 the London art dealer Samuel Woodburn had offered a large group of early Italian paintings to the National Gallery, London, probably including the Melbourne *Saint George* then attributed to Orcagna. In 1856 Otto Mündler, the

National Gallery, London's travelling agent, recorded the *Battle* painting now in Paris in the Campana Collection, Rome, noting that it was very much restored.[25] The following year the National Gallery acquired the *Battle* from the Lombardi Baldi Collection in Florence, which would turn out to be in as bad if not worse condition. These *Battle* paintings were, nevertheless, the only works on the market in the nineteenth century that could be securely attributed to Uccello, on the basis of the signature on the Florence panel.

From 1896, Bernhard Berenson's assessment of Uccello's oeuvre was among the first to add significantly to it through connoisseurship, even if some of his attributions did not find general acceptance. Berenson's first list of Uccello's works included the traditional attributions of the *Battle* paintings in London, Florence and Paris, the *Clockface* and the *Equestrian Monument*, both in the Duomo in Florence, as well the following attributions based on connoisseurship: the *Portrait of a Lady* in the National Gallery, London (now attributed to Baldovinetti), a *Portrait of a Lady* in the Marquand Collection at the Metropolitan Museum, New York (tentatively attributed to Uccello by Berenson, now attributed to Filippo Lippi), the *Hunt*, the *Portraits of Five Men (Giotto, Uccello, Donatello, Manetti, and Brunelleschi?)* in the Musée du Louvre, and the *Miracle of the Host* in Urbino (following Crowe's and Cavalcaselle's identifications for the last two). In the second edition of 1900 he added to this list the designs for the *Resurrection*, *Nativity*, *Ascension*, and *Annunciation* windows in the Duomo in Florence, the *Stories of Noah* in the Chiostro Verde, the Paris *Saint George* and London *Saint George*, and he removed the Marquand Collection portrait. In the third edition of 1909 he reinstated the Marquand Collection work, renamed by him the '*Profiles of Woman and Man of Portinari Family*' and added the *Creation Stories* in the Chiostro Verde.[26]

Charles Loeser also extended the size of Uccello's oeuvre through connoisseurship, and was the first to discuss the polarity of Uccello's style. Loeser had been Berenson's classmate at Harvard and was, like Berenson, a Jewish-American art historian and collector who lived in Florence (after 1888).[27] Of the four undocumented works that Loeser attributed to Uccello or his school, the *Hunt*, the London *Saint George*, the Paris *Saint George* and the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, the first had been attributed to Uccello by Berenson, although this has always been overlooked.[28] Thus, Loeser's contribution as a connoisseur was to suggest the other three could be by Uccello. Given their predominantly Gothic rather than Renaissance style, they would prove to be controversial attributions, but ones that stood the test of time.[29]

The absence of original documents for most of the works in Berenson's lists and Loeser's article and other works close to Uccello's style led to differences of opinion about what constituted the master's oeuvre and those of artists in his workshop, his circle, and followers. Sub-groups of Uccelloesque paintings were proposed as the oeuvres of artists

working in Uccello's workshop, including Uccello's son Donato and daughter Antonia, and hypothetical artists such as the Karlsruhe Master (as named by Pudelko), the Prato Master (as named by Pope-Hennessy) and the Quarate Master (as named by Salmi). Numerous *doppelgängern* have been invented by sceptical art historians to account for disputed works stylistically close to those by eminent Renaissance painters: for Jan van Eyck there is 'Hand G', for Leonardo there is 'Pupil A', although few artists have had as many as three *doppelgängern*.[30]

Roberto Longhi's 1928 article on Giovanni di Francesco in the journal *Pinacotheca* drew attention to the research that had been done on the problematic identification of late-Gothic artists active in the first half of the fifteenth century and their works. In particular, he noted Uccello's influence on these artists, identifying the Melbourne *Saint George* as an example of a work by an anonymous, immediate follower of Uccello. Longhi noted a group of works, including the paintings in the Marcovaldi Chapel, the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, and the *Female Saint*, which showed close affinities with Uccello's style. Rather than attribute these works—some of which he considered slightly eccentric—to Uccello himself, he gave them to Giovanni di Francesco, whose name had recently been rediscovered, on the basis that some of the works already attributed to him showed Uccello's influence. Longhi argued that Uccello was one of the *grande* of the fifteenth-century *stile nuovo* while Giovanni di Francesco was a conservative artist of the second order, to whom these slightly eccentric works, although close to Uccello's style, could more properly be attributed.[31]

The difficulties in reconstructing Uccello's oeuvre were reflected in the continued absence of a scholarly monograph for the artist until the end of the 1930s and the continued debate regarding whether to include in his oeuvre the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings and a number of small-scale, Gothic flavoured works. This question formed the principal topic of discussion about Uccello during the 1930s, a period in which more articles were written about him than any other. Longhi's proposed attribution of the group of works listed above to Giovanni di Francesco did not find acceptance among his peers. Mario Salmi, in particular, rejected Longhi's attribution of the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings to Giovanni di Francesco, giving them and the Quarate predella to a student of Uccello, although he agreed the Karlsruhe *Adoration* was close to Giovanni di Francesco.[32] In 1932 Matteo Marangoni noted the timidity of art historians who found it difficult to recognise Uccello's authorship of works unless they agreed with Vasari's description of the artist as a devoted disciple of perspective, ignoring the possibility that Uccello's style encompassed the international Gothic as well. To demonstrate that he was not one of those art historians, Marangoni accepted the Quarate predella as a youthful work of Uccello.[33] In 1933 Wilhelm Boeck published an article

outlining a basis for constructing Uccello's oeuvre, which included, in addition to works in Berenson's list, the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, the Madrid *Crucifixion*, the *Portrait of Matteo Olivieri* then with the dealer Duveen in New York, and the *Portrait of Michele Oivieri*, then in the John D. Rockerfeller Collection in the same city.[34]

In the following year Georg Pudelko complained:

> Instead of keeping solely to the authenticated works and those guaranteed by the older literature and to Vasari's excellent biographical sketch, the estimate of Uccello has been falsified by the unauthorised attribution to him of certain pictures of a romantic and lyric character, and thus the figure of this grand and lonely spirit has been diminished.

In a footnote, Pudelko explained that the unauthorised attributions were the Paris and London versions of the *Saint George*, the Madrid *Crucifixion*, the Hamilton Collection *Virgin and Child with Angels*, the Quarate predella, the Florence Accademia *Holy Fathers*, as well as the female profile portraits in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Gardner Collection. Pudelko attributed all of these works to the Karlsruhe Master.[35]

A significant development in Uccello's critical reception, much discussed in the Uccello literature since, is Longhi's changing view of the artist over the course of his career.[36] In 1927 Longhi cited Uccello's use of perspective as an important influence on Piero della Francesca, and by extrapolation on the course of the whole Italian Renaissance, given Longhi's belief in Piero's central role in it. For Piero, who is documented in Florence in 1439, to have been so impressed it follows that Uccello must have achieved his powerful use of perspective by that date.[37] In the 1940s, however, Longhi's view of Uccello had changed in two ways. First, he accepted the consensus among art historians that the commission for the *Battle* paintings, in which Uccello's powerful use of perspective is famously demonstrated, was associated with the decoration of the Palazzo Medici, and so was datable to the 1450s. Second, he accepted that his attribution of the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings and a number of small-scale, Gothic flavoured, Uccelloesque works to minor followers of Uccello, such as Giovanni di Francesco, was not correct. He re-situated them in Uccello's late career, thereby dispensing with Uccello's *doppelgängern*, even though it seemed to Longhi to diminish the artist's standing in relation to his peers.[38] Longhi then referred to Uccello as a follower who reached his peak long after his contemporaries' major achievements, whose late works were increasingly bizarre, and whose influence on Piero was inconsequential.[39]

The somewhat forced nature of Longhi's revised opinion of Uccello's development is evident in his unfounded belief that Uccello must have repainted the *Equestrian Monument* in about 1455.[40] The work's unquestionable maturity and accomplishment and its documented date of 1436 contradicted Longhi's idea of Uccello's late development,[41] and so had to be

explained away by the invention of a much later repainting by the artist for which there is no evidence. As Laurence B. Kanter suggested, Longhi's negative reappraisal of Uccello seems to have been bound up with a personal animosity towards Mario Salmi, whose appointment to the prestigious Chair of Art History in Rome would have been cause for Longhi's displeasure.[42] Salmi placed Uccello first among the generation of artists that followed Masaccio, in time and importance. Salmi and Longhi crossed swords in articles that appeared in the early 1950s, over the issue of Uccello's standing among the Florentine artists following Masaccio's death.[43] More playful was Longhi's description of Pope-Hennessy's unchanging view of Uccello's oeuvre in the first edition of his monograph as 'antediluvian'.[44] Pope-Hennessy continued to exclude the Marcovaldi Chapel paintings and many other controversial attributions.

The exhibition that included the greatest number of Uccello's works to date, *Mostra di quattro maestri del Primo Rinascimento*, was held in 1954 at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. As well as works then considered to be securely attributed to Uccello, it included a number of tentatively attributed works, such as the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, the Dublin *Virgin and Child*, and the Quarate predella, and others from American collections.[45] Baldini noted of the exhibition that it showed the high quality that Uccello achieved, while leaving unresolved the problems of attribution posed by his varied stylistic formation.[46]

If Longhi's incorporation of non-canonical, Uccelloesque works into the master's oeuvre eventually proved influential, his chronology of Uccello's career and re-assessment of the artist's significance was less so.[47] Enio Sindona's monograph on Uccello of 1957 followed Longhi's expansive approach to attributions, but dated works such as the Karlsruhe *Adoration* to the early phase of Uccello's career rather than the end because of their strongly Gothic character.[48] In 1967 Luciano Berti flatly rejected Longhi's re-assessment of Uccello's status among his peers, drawing attention to the evidence for Uccello's lost *Saint Peter* mosaic and *Annunciation* in Santa Maria Maggiore as indications that he was among the leading exponents of the new style.[49] In 1970 Lionello Boccia, a specialist in armour, pointed out that the type of armour represented in the *Battle* paintings was datable to 1435 or shortly thereafter, rather than the date of 1455 generally assumed for the works.[50] In a contemporary article, published subsequently, Boccia noted there were few of surviving pieces of armour, and his chronology for the changing styles of armour was supplemented from representations in artworks that sometimes mixed styles from different periods and places, and were not always accurate.[51] Thus, the precise dating of armour in an artwork can be difficult. Nevertheless, Boccia's 1970 observations indicated to him that the *Battle* paintings should be dated significantly earlier than they generally had been.

A turning point in the literature on Uccello, particularly concerning the issue of his works from the 1430s, was Carlo Volpe's 1980 article '*Paolo Uccello a Bologna*', written following the discovery of the fragmentary *Adoration* at San Martino Maggiore. As well as attributing the work to Uccello, he dated it to 1437, arguing that the work confirmed that Uccello reached his artistic maturity by the 1430s, considerably earlier than the late development in the 1450s proposed by Longhi. While Volpe largely accepted Longhi's revised approach to the attribution of works to Uccello, he argued contrary to Longhi that these works were of high quality and a number could be dated relatively early, to the 1420s and 1430s, on stylistic grounds.[52] Volpe's article led to the current consensus among art historians concerning the attribution to Uccello of such works as the Del Beccuto *Virgin and Child*, the Oxford *Annunciation*, and the Melbourne *Saint George*, notwithstanding the occasional dissenter.[53]

Another outcome of the discovery of the *Adoration*, not addressed by Volpe, was that it provided further evidence for the incorporation into the master's oeuvre of the Karlsruhe *Adoration* and works stylistically close to it.[54] The composition of the painting in Bologna, showing a nocturnal Adoration with the ox and the ass greatly foreshortened, is closely related to the composition of the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, and so tends to support the case that it and, by extension, those works stylistically close to it that had once been attributed to the Karlsruhe Master are by Uccello himself.

From the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a renewed interest among European avant-garde artists and writers in early Renaissance painters, Uccello in particular, which can only be rapidly outlined here. In 1919 the Italian futurist and metaphysical artist Carlo Carrà (1881–1966) wrote: 'I looked at Paolo's work as others would look in a mirror' ('*io guardai nell opera di Paolo com altri guarderebbe in uno specchio*').[55] Carrà admired the sculptural, abstract and analytical qualities of Uccello's work and was attracted to Vasari's romantic description of Uccello as a poor genius, misunderstood by his contemporaries, with which he identified.[56] The influence of Uccello on Carrà's work is clear in *The Red Rider* (*Il cavaliere rosso*, Civiche Raccolta d'Arte, Tuckor Collection, Milan) of 1912, in which the subject matter of a rider mounted on a horse in motion, and the style, with its emphasis on the rhythmic repetition of geometric forms to create a sense of movement, are comparable with Uccello's *Battle* paintings.[57] In Italy, the interest of contemporary artists in their Renaissance predecessors has been interpreted as a reassertion of nationalist values.[58] However, the affinities between Uccello and modernism crossed national boundaries. In 1929 the French avant-garde writer Antonin Artaud wrote a curious poem *Uccello le poil* (*Uccello the Hair*) in which it has been said that the writer attempted to erase the boundaries between his own

personality and Uccello's, and between his own writing and Uccello's painting. Which, if any, of Uccello's works the text alludes to has not identified with certainty; however, the concern of Artaud's text for the contrast between the definitive and the ephemeral finds parallels in Uccello's *Flood*.[59] The *Flood* occupies a central position in Jean Louis Schefer's post-structuralist text *Le déluge, la peste. Paolo Uccello* as a site for interrogating the relationships between words and images, the visceral experience of the human body and the thought processes of the mind. The complexity, disruption of order, and incongruousness of Uccello's painting have a particular resonance for post-modern criticism. This interest in Uccello's works throughout the twentieth century offers some justification for the punning epigram published by Borghini in the sixteenth century, which likened Uccello to a phoenix.

Notes for Chapter 10

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[1] Berenson, 1969, p. 161.

[2] Brown (1998, p. 123) discussed evidence suggesting that Lorenzo de' Medici was Leonardo's patron. Furthermore, Brown (1998, p. 110) upheld the view that Leonardo's *Portrait of Ginevra de' Benci* (National Gallery of Art, Washington) was influenced by a portrait by Petrus Christus in Lorenzo de' Medici's collection, whether or not that work can be identified with the *Portrait of a Lady* in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Whether the young Leonardo might have seen Uccello's works subsequently recorded in the Medici Palazzo in 1492, including the lost *Battle between Dragons and Lions* and *Story of Paris (?)*, is unclear, because it is not known whether these were commissioned by the Medici, or acquired by them, as the *Battle* paintings now in London, Florence and Paris were.

[3] Borsi and Borsi (1994, p. 291) described the palm in Verrocchio's and Leonardo's *Baptism* in the Uffizi as inspired by the one in Uccello's Karlsruhe *Adoration*. Brown (1998, p. 136) attributed this part of the painting to Verrocchio.

[4] Clark, 1961, pp. 80–81.

[5] Richter, 1966, pp. 186–187: translation of manuscript B.N., formerly Bibliothèque Nationale, Institut de France, N. 2038, p. 21.

[6] Richter, 1966, pp. 190–192: translation of manuscript W., Royal Library, Windsor, 12665.

[7] Manetti, 1970, pp. 44–45.

[8] Manetti, 1957, p. 335.

[9] Santi, 1985, vol. II, p. 674.

[10] Landino, 1974, p. 124.

[11] Horne, 1901, p. 137.

[12] Albertini, 1972, pp. 5, 8, 11.

[13] Michiel, 2000, p. 32. The work has been published with the title *Notizia d'opere del disegno* or *Notizia dei pittori*. On Michiel's original title, see: Anderson, 1997, pp. 53–54.

[14] Billi, 1991, pp. 86–87.

[15] Anonymous (Magliabechiano), 1892, pp. 99–100.

[16] Vasari, 1966–1987, *testo*, vol. III, pp. 64–65, 72: 1550 and 1568 eds.

[17] Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historiae*, XXXV, xxxvi, 101. Rubin (1995, pp. 347–348) described Vasari's characterisation of Uccello's anti-social behaviour, such as his sensitivity in the face of Donatello's criticism of his work, as a foil to Vasari's characterisation of Donatello as a successful and happy artist. Rubin (1995, pp. 333–334) also noted that Donatello's enormous productivity would have had a special significance to Vasari, whose own struggles to find work are expressed implicitly at many points in the *Vite*.

[18] Somaré, 1946, p. 22: 'Gli annatatori e gli storici dell'arte che seguirono, fino alla fine del'Ottocento, non aggiunsero se non poco o niente di rilevante alle pagine cinquecentesche del Vasari: né il Borghini con "Il Riposo" (1584), né il Baldinucci nelle sue "Notizie dei professori del disegno" (1728), né il Lanzi nella "Storia della pittura" (1795), né il Burckhardt nel suo "Der Cicerone" (1840), né il Müntz nella "Histoire de l'art pendant la Renaissance" (1889).'

[19] Crowe and Cavalcaselle, 1980, pp. 283–299 (for Uccello).

[20] Baldinucci, 1974–1975, vol. I, pp. 339–441.

[21] Milanesi (ed.) in Vasari, 1981, vol. II, p. 203 n. 1.

[22] Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 60; Loeser, 1898, p. 89.

[23] Cole Ahl, 2000, p. 303; Padoa Rizzo, 1991, p. 136.

[24] Waagen, 1854, vol. III, p. 53.

[25] Dowd, 1985, p. 121.

[26] Berenson, 1896, pp. 129–130; Berenson, 1900, pp. 139–140; Berenson, 1909, pp. 185–186.

[27] Secrest, 1980, pp. 93, 198–200. Lensi, 1934, pp. 7–9. It is possible that Loeser initially helped Berenson establish himself in Europe, and had visited sites in Italy with Berenson. However, by the early 1890s their relationship had soured and they became rivals. Loeser left his collection of Old Master drawings to Harvard University, eight Cézanne paintings to the White House, and thirty Old Master works of Italian origin in various media to the Florentine Commune.

[28] Berenson (1896, p. 129) listed a *Midnight Hunt* in the 'Taylorian' at Oxford among Uccello's works. Loeser is usually given credit for attributing the *Hunt* in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford to Uccello (e.g. Pope-Hennessy, 1950, p. 154), however, it is hard to believe that there could have been another Uccelloesque Renaissance painting of a hunt by moonlight in Oxford.

[29] Loeser, 1898, pp. 83–94.

[30] For 'Hand G', see: Reynolds, 2000, pp. 6–12; for 'Pupil A', see: Brown, 1998, p. 171.

[31] Longhi, 1928.

[32] Salmi,1934, pp. 1–27.

[33] Marangoni, 1932, p. 329.

[34] Boeck, 1933b, p. 274.

[35] Pudelko, 1934, p. 259.

[36] For example: Kanter, 2000, pp. 11–12.

[37] Longhi, 2002a, pp. 10–11.

[38] Longhi, 2002a, p. 7.

[39] Longhi, 1940, pp. 179–180; Longhi, 2002b, p. 93; and Longhi, 1952, pp. 32 n. 8, 32–33 n. 11. Schlosser, 1938, pp. 79–89. Longhi's reassessment of Uccello may have been influenced by Julius von Schlosser's unfavorable comparison of Uccello with Piero in an essay published in 1933.

[40] Longhi, 2002b, p. 119.

[41] Already in 1864 Crowe and Cavalcaselle recognised the *Equestrian Monument* as evidence for Uccello as an 'early master of his craft' (1980, p. 291).

[42] Kanter, 2000, p. 12.

[43] Longhi (1952, pp. 32 n. 8, 32–33 n. 11) compared the premise of Salmi's *Paolo Uccello, Andrea del Castagno, Domenico Veneziano* (1939) to a picture-book; Salmi's article 'Commenti: Fuochi d'artificio o della pseudo critica' (1954, esp. pp. 66–67 for Uccello) alluded to Longhi's scholarly 'fireworks' as pseudo-criticism.

[44] An example of Longhi's sly wit, the adjective 'antediluvian' describes something that is extremely old fashioned, referring to the pre-flood period in the Bible, and is a pun on the subject of one of Uccello's most famous works—the *Flood*.

[45] Micheletti, 1954, pp. 19–75.

[46] Baldini, 1954b, pp. 17–18.

[47] Zeri, 1985, pp. 48–54. Longhi's late career view of Uccello's status is reflected in Federico Zeri's description of Uccello as a 'pseudo-Renaissance' artist.

[48] Sindona, 1957, p. 22.

[49] Berti, 1967, pp. 77–78.

[50] Boccia, 1970, pp. 70–85.

[51] Boccia, 1987, pp. 42, 45, 46.

[52] Volpe, 1980, pp. 3–28.

[53] Christopher Lloyd (1996, pp. 512–518) rejected Volpe's reconstruction of Uccello's early career.

[54] Angelini, 1990a, p. 73; Dillian Gordon (2003, p. xi) noted the discovery of the Bologna *Adoration* tended to confirm that Uccello was also the author of the Karlsruhe *Adoration*, although she stated that the Bologna *Adoration* had been attributed to the Master of the Karlsruhe Adoration, an attribution which does not appear in the mainstream literature.

[55] Carrà, 1919, p. 189.

[56] Carrà, 1919, pp. 192–198; Fergonzi, 2001, p. 24, Fergonzi noted that Carrà had also praised Uccello as one of the predecessors of the modern painters' re-conquest of volume in his 1916 essay 'Paolo Uccello: Costruttore'.

[57] For a discussion of Carrà's *Inseguimento* (Mattioli Collection, on loan to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice), a depiction of a cavalry horse in wartime showing analogies with Uccello's *Battle* paintings, see: Fergonzi, 2001, pp. 11–14.

[58] Armellini, 1972, pp. 39–44.

[59] Artaud's texts *Uccello le poil* and *Paul les oiseaux* have been discussed by Leslie Boldt-Irons (2003, pp. 119–134).