PAST-PRESENT

Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso

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Fig. 36. Michelangelo, David. Accademia, Florence (photo: Alinari 1689).
Michelangelo’s *David* has attained a unique status as a symbol of the defiant spirit of human freedom and independence in the face of extreme adversity (Fig. 36). This emblematic preeminence of the *David* is due largely to Michelangelo’s having incorporated in a single revolutionary image two quintessential constituents of the idea of liberty, one creative, and therefore personal, the other political, and therefore communal. We can grasp this dual significance of the *David* because Michelangelo virtually identifies it himself in a famous but still inadequately understood drawing preserved in the Louvre (Fig. 37; Plate II). To my knowledge, the drawing is the first instance in which an artist articulates in words on a preliminary study the sense of the work he is preparing. My purpose is to define and explore the two, complementary aspects of the *David*’s meaning by offering some observations and suggestions concerning the Louvre sheet and its implications.

There is nothing new in suggesting either that the *David* had personal meaning for its creator—Vasari records that Michelangelo returned from Rome to Florence expressly to compete for the commission—or that the work had a political motivation in contemporary Florence: according to Vasari, the overseers (operai) of the cathedral and Piero Soderini, the city’s anti-Medicean governor (gonfaloniere della giustizia) elected by the parliament (signoria), awarded the commission to Michelangelo, who executed it as an “insegna del Palazzo [della Signoria].” The use of a term like *insegna*, meaning “sign” or “advertisement,” to describe a work of art as a *genius loci* in this topo-political sense is unprecedented as far as I know. The vast literature on Michelangelo is filled with ideas on the *David*’s private and public personas. I think it possible to establish some of these ideas more firmly and define them more precisely than heretofore and, above all, to perceive in a new way the relationship between the two realms of meaning. I shall discuss the personal and political implications separately, partly because Michelangelo himself made the same distinction. In the final analysis, however, the fundamental unity of the *David* as a work of art lies in the relationship between them.

The sheet in the Louvre, which dates from around 1501—2, includes two figural elements, a sketch for the lost bronze *David* that was sent to France and the right arm of the marble *David*—shown upside down with respect to the figure.
Fig. 37. Michelangelo, studies for the bronze and marble Davids. Louvre, Paris (photo: Documentation photographique de la Réunion des musées nationaux 714 R).
Two inscriptions appear at the right of David’s arm, toward the margin (the page has not been cut at the right):

**Davicta cholla Fromba e io chollarcho**
**Michelagniolo**

and below:

**Roccte alta cholonna elverd**

(David with the sling and I with the bow. Michelangelo. Broken the tall column and the green.) The basic sense of the upper inscription seems clear enough. Michelangelo identifies himself with David, equating the instruments with which he and the biblical giant killer dispatch their common adversary. The second inscription has a parallel binary construction. The phrase is a quotation, omitting the last word, from the opening line of a sonnet of Petrarch, “Rotta è l’alta colonna e ‘l verde lauro,” in which the poet laments the almost simultaneous deaths in the spring of 1348 of his friend Giovanni Colonna and his beloved Laura. Although apparently unrelated, the inscriptions in fact have several layers of meaning that connect them to the figural drawings on the sheet.

Many explanations of Michelangelo’s arco had been given through the centuries until an ingenious interpretation, first suggested by Marcel Brion in 1940 and then elaborated by Charles Seymour, seemed to resolve the problem. The arco must be the bowed drill, called a trapano, used by sculptors since antiquity to facilitate the carving of marble (Fig. 38). In that case, the alta colonna of the second inscription could refer to the great pillar (or column) of marble, originally intended for a gigante to be mounted on a buttress of Florence cathedral, that had defeated sculptors for at least a century before Michelangelo succeeded in carving it into his marble David. In turn, the traditional association of the column, either whole or broken, with the virtue of fortitude would reinforce the power of the imagery. The whole column appears as a commemorative trophy in a major Byzantine tradition of David as psalmist, and the broken column appears in the closely related subjects of Hercules and Samson.
Fig. 39. David the Psalmist. MS Gr. 139, fol. 1, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
The elements of the Louvre sheet thus interrelate on a strictly mechanical level: David the giant killer is a metaphor for Michelangelo's feat in executing the colossal sculpture.

This "professional" implication of the sheet can be taken several steps further if one modifies slightly and expands the meaning of the term *arco* in the first inscription. There is, to begin with, another kind of *arco* that is essential to the work of the sculptor, whether in modeling, as for bronze, or in carving marble. I refer to the bowed caliper, or compass—*the seste ad arco* (Fig. 41)—used in enlarging from a small-scale model or transferring dimensions from the full-scale model to the final work in stone. In fact, the bowed compass, for use on three-dimensional, rather than flat, surfaces, is the sculptor's primary instrument of measure and proportion. And, enshrined in his metaphorical dictum concerning the importance of artistic good judgment—"*avere le seste negli occhi*, "to have one's compasses in one's eyes"—the device played a critical role in Michelangelo's conception of the creative process itself.

We know that to execute such a grandiose work as the marble *David* from a small model—labor in which the artist's accurate use of the compass corresponded to David's use of the sling—was considered a feat of both intellectual and physical prowess. The original commission had been assigned in 1464 to Agostino di Duccio, who was to construct the work from four separately carved pieces of marble. Two years later, the contract was renewed, Agostino in the meantime having undertaken to execute the sculpture from a single monolith, and at a substantially higher fee. The agreement specifically linked the increased compensation not only to the greater cost and expense (*spendio et expensa*) and value (*valute et pretii*), but also to the greater mastery (*magisterii*) the new project entailed. The gigantic block thereafter remained as Agostino left it, badly begun—*male abozatum*, in the phrase used nearly forty years later in the contract signed by Michelangelo, who finally succeeded where Agostino had failed. The analogy with David is thus twofold: both heroes overcame great differences in size and strength by sheer force of intellectual and physical virtuosity.

When *arco* is thus understood as a tool of both manual and mental labor, two further, metaphorical, uses of the word with which Michelangelo was cer-
tainly familiar come into play. Both metaphors focus on the tension suggested by the term, and express the complementary intellectual and physical constituents of extreme effort—much as one might speak in English of a mind- or a back-bending task. Boccaccio, for example, speaks of the arco dell'intelletto, the mental effort required for a work deserving of eternal fame.11 But the term was also applied to various parts of the body; the phrase con l'arco della schiena is a common adage meaning "to strain with all one's might."12 Both these senses of arco seem to coalesce in Albrecht Dürer's only mythological painting, in which the artist portrays himself as Hercules killing the Stymphalian birds (Fig. 42).13 Here the prowess of the painter in manipulating the brush is compared to that of Hercules, the classical archer-hero par excellence, in using his bow. The theme of Dürer's allegory is the artist's victory over his envious critics, conveyed in the painting through the common equivalence of the Stymphalian birds to the Harpies; these creatures were invulnerable, so that to ward them off required great ingenuity as well as strength.14 Michelangelo's nude giant has often been related to the tradition of Hercules as a symbol of virtue and fortitude, but the allusion to Hercules the archer singles out the hero's skill and ingenuity—in a word, his virtuosity. Based on this Herculean tradition, the bow actually became the primary attribute of Cesare Ripa's Ingegno (Fig. 43).15

Striking, if unexpected, evidence of Michelangelo's meaning is to be found later in the century in the Lombard painter Lelio Orsi's adaptation of the theme of Hercules the archer as a metaphor for the artist. Orsi (ca. 1511–1587), who studied Michelangelo's art carefully, planned a decoration for the facade of his own house, identifiable by the bears (orsi) that appear in the coat of arms shown in the upper story (Fig. 44).16 The composition centers on a man shooting an "arrow" (the tip is actually blunt and rounded, like a painter's mahlstick) directly out and down toward the spectator on the street below; flanking the bowsman are groups of figures holding a broken column on one side, a whole column on the other. The two columns of fortitude, which together here allude to the pillars (often treated as columns) of Hercules, clearly identify the archer as the ancient hero in modern guise. The key to the conceit lies in a story told by the ancient historians about Lelio's namesake, the emperor Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus (Lelio = Aelius), notorious for

Fig. 41. Bowed calipers (from The New Encyclopaedia, 1984, II, 459).
Fig. 42. Albrecht Dürer, *Hercules Killing the Symphalian Birds.*
Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg.

Fig. 43. Personification of Inganno (from Ripa, 1603, 221).

David's Sling and Michelangelo's Bow
identifying himself with Hercules, whom he imitated in every possible way. As an example, Herodian recounts that Aelius set up in front of the senate house a statue of himself “as an archer poised to shoot, for he wished even his statues to inspire fear.” The arco del ingegno of the painter Lelio consists in challenging the physical reality of his archenemy, sculpture, by creating an illusion (presumably in grisaille, to feign sculpture) that penetrates the picture plane and threatens to pierce the spectator’s eye and heart—like Michelangelo’s David. We shall consider presently Michelangelo’s own position in the development of this bitterly fought battle of the arts.

The intellectual and physical senses of arco recur a decade after the David in another work by Michelangelo, which also includes an almost exact equivalent of Dürrer’s image, ironically inverted. The archer metaphor is the turning point of a poem Michelangelo composed about the labor of mind and body he expended on another of his great achievements, the Sistine ceiling (1508–12) (Fig. 45). He inscribed the sonnet on a sheet, again accompanied by an illuminating sketch that shows the artist’s body bent back awkwardly as he transfers his idea to the vault above. The poem complains of the strain on mind and body:

And I am bending like a Syrian bow.

And judgment, borne in mind,
Hence must grow peculiar and untrue;
You cannot shoot straight when the gun’s askew.

Here arco conveys the intense labor, physical and intellectual, required by the heroic task the artist has set for himself.

We can trace several additional threads of meaning in what seems an improbable source of ideas for Michelangelo: the traditional Hebrew midrashim, or commentaries on the Old Testament, and the mystical Zohar. These works offered a rich body of legendary and interpretative material on the story of David and Goliath, and may also provide important clues to visual features of the David. In one text, for example, Moses is said to have prayed for his seed, and especially for David, as follows: “Hear, Lord, his voice, and Thou shalt be an help against his adversaries, bring him then back to his people in peace; and when alone he shall set out into battle against Goliath, let his hands be sufficient for him,
David’s Sling and Michelangelo’s Bow
and Thou shalt be an help against his adversaries.' Moses at the same time prayed God to stand by the tribe of Judah, whose favorite weapon in war was the bow, that their 'hands might be sufficient,' that they might vigorously and with good aim speed the arrow."²¹ It has frequently been noted in connection with the conspicuously displayed and enlarged hands of Michelangelo's figure that at least from the time of St. Jerome, David was referred to as manu fortis.²² The midrash is particularly suggestive, however, because of the invocation to the Lord to render David's hands "sufficient" and the linking of his sufficient hands to the Hebrews' divinely inspired use of their favorite weapon, the bow. Similarly, the Zohar speaks of the "evil" eye David cast upon his opponent that rooted him to the ground, an apt description of the effect of the glance of Michelangelo's hero. Michelangelo might well have been aware of these ancient texts, which were avidly studied by such learned men of his generation as Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and especially Egidio da Viterbo, who has been credited with an important influence on the conceptual design of the Sistine ceiling.²³

The personal and artistic associations of the David, in turn, help to clarify the role of David's victory over Goliath in the further development of Michelangelo's ideas on art and the creative process. The victory itself is portrayed on the spandrel in the southeast corner of the Sistine chapel, where David is shown astride his fallen adversary, winding up to decapitate him with the giant's own gigantic sword (Fig. 46). This composition is unprecedented, with the two figures interlocked like Greco-Roman wrestlers.²⁴ Michelangelo must have been alluding to the type of David slaying the lion as it appears in Byzantine tradition (Fig. 47).²⁵ The composition is also based in part, however, as has recently been observed, on what must have been the prototype of the Byzantine formulation, the story of Mithras killing the bull, shown in a relief now in the Louvre that was one of the most familiar antiques in Rome (Fig. 48).²⁶ In Michelangelo's time the work was identified as Hercules killing the bull, so that here, as in the marble figure, David is identified with the ancient hero.²⁷ Michelangelo's Sistine group differs from these precedents, as well as from earlier depictions of David killing Goliath, in three ways: the figures are shown in depth, rather than parallel to the picture plane; they are conjoined so as to create
Fig. 47 (left). **David Killing the Lion**, silver plate. Metropolitan Museum, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.

Fig. 48 (above). **Mithras Killing the Bull**, drawing. Codex Coburgensis. Kunstsammlungen der Veste, Coburg.
a coherent pyramidal group; and they are arranged so that the composition is dominated by David's action, his raised right arm and sword culminating the movement of his powerful arco della schiena. David hacks at Goliath with superhuman fury, and his triumph is supernaturally overwhelming.

Almost immediately after the completion of the Sistine ceiling Raphael paraphrased Michelangelo's composition in his Old Testament cycle in the Vatican Logge (Fig. 49), and soon thereafter the image of David killing the giant was converted to Christianity, as it were, by Raphael's pupil, Giulio Romano, in the Sala di Costantino. The decoration of this great hall, commissioned by the Medici pope Clement VII (1523–34) as a historical sequel to the Old Testament narratives, illustrates the establishment of Christianity as the state religion. The end of idolatry is an important part of the subject, and in one of the scenes Giulio adopted Michelangelo's composition to portray the sculptor converted to Christianity destroying the giants he had created in his pagan past (Fig. 50).

These considerations help somewhat to alleviate our astonishment that the same group was adapted to portray the sculptor himself at work on the figure of Dawn from the tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici (Fig. 51). The illustration occurs in a book of astrological games published in Venice in 1527 by Sigismondo Fanti, an otherwise little-known itinerant humanist, who may actually have seen Michelangelo at work on the figure. Fanti was perspicacious enough to include the image under
Fig. 50. Giulio Romano, the Christian sculptor destroying the idols. Sala di Costantino, Vatican Palace, Rome (photo: Musei Vaticani XXXII-143-28).
Fig. 51 (above). The sign of Jupiter with Michelangelo the sculptor (from Fanti, 1527, carte XXXVIII).

Fig. 52 (opposite, left). Maarten van Heemskerck, St. Luke Painting the Virgin. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes.

Fig. 53 (opposite, right). Detail of Fig. 52.
the sphere of Jupiter, which in fact corresponded to Michelangelo's constellation. The vehement action of Fanti's sculptor gives form to the French traveler Blaise de Vigenère's vivid description of the frenzy with which Michelangelo attacked the marble to free his idea from the block.

I have seen Michelangelo, although more than sixty years old and no longer among the most robust, knock off more chips of a very hard marble in a quarter of an hour than three young stone carvers could have done in three or four, an almost incredible thing to one who has not seen it; and I thought the whole work would fall to pieces because he moved with such impetuosity and fury, knocking to the floor large chunks three or four fingers thick with a single blow so precisely aimed that if he had gone even minimally further than necessary, he risked losing it all, because it could not then be repaired or re-formed, as with images of clay or stucco.  

Although in a different mode and with implications different from those of the marble David, Fanti must have grasped Michelangelo's interpretation of David's victory over Goliath as the prototype for the artist's overcoming the difficulties of his art. Indeed, Fanti's whole conception shows such intimate knowledge of Michelangelo and his working method that I suspect the artist himself supplied the information, perhaps suggesting the appropriateness of the formula or even providing the design.

Both the David and Goliath motif and Fanti's paraphrase of it had repercussions roughly twenty-five years later in specifically art-theoretical contexts. The works to be discussed hereafter all date, on independent grounds, to around 1550 and seem to reflect more or less directly the preeminent art-theoretical issue of the period, the Paragone, or comparison of the arts. The subject was given wide currency by the opinion poll conducted among the leading artists of the day by Benedetto Varchi in 1548.  

Fanti's image reappears in the background of Maarten van Heemskerck's great panel of St. Luke painting the Virgin, now in the museum at Rennes (Figs. 52, 53). Although the meaning of this complex allegory has been much discussed, its underly-
ing theme, an *interpretatio christiana* of the Paragone, has remained obscure. Luke is not presented as the simple recorder of appearances but as the knowing re-creator of the visible form of divine nature. He is a painter but is shown giving color to the underlying prototype, or *disegno*. This seminal concept of mid-sixteenth-century aesthetics derived its potency from its dual, punning, significance as both physical drawing and immaterial scheme. With subtle deliberation Vasari described *disegno* as Father (alluding to God the Father) of the arts. Heemskerck realized that only in the context of Saint Luke depicting the Virgin and Child could he illustrate the pivotal function of *disegno* as the interface (literal as well as figurative, since Luke is painting a portrait) between the artist’s creativity and that of God. Luke is surrounded by the paraphernalia of wisdom and learning the humanist artist needed to fulfill his divine mission. *Exempla* of the arts of architecture and sculpture are portrayed in the background, where Heemskerck transposed the drawings of the courtyard of the Palazzo Sassi (Fig. 54) he had made.

**Fig. 54.** Maarten van Heemskerck, courtyard of the Palazzo Sassi in Rome, drawing. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.
during his visit to Rome a decade earlier. The courtyard must have seemed to him a paradise, reincarnating the classical world with its renowned collection of antiquities. The two works most prominently displayed in the painting are especially important. The seated figure shown on the pedestal was restored in the eighteenth century as Apollo Citharoe- dus, now preserved in the Naples museum (Fig. 55). In Heemskerck’s time it was understood as representing Roma Trionfante; no doubt because of its effeminate form and the imperial stone, porphyry, of which it was made. Jacopo Sansovino had already transformed the figure into a Madonna and Child (Fig. 56), which must have inspired Heemskerck to do the same in his painting. Heemskerck introduces a decisive change, however, by crossing the Virgin’s ankles. This motif, probably inspired by Michelangelo’s figure of the prophet Isaiah in the Sistine ceiling, alludes to the Crucifixion, of which the Mother of God has foreknowledge. The progression from the fragmentary classical to the perfect modern deity thus illustrates the creative process.
whereby Christianity incorporated the good while rejecting the bad in pagan antiquity. Rome triumphant is succeeded by the Church triumphant.

The other image that concerns us, the sculptor at work on his statue (Fig. 53), was conspicuously added by Heemskerck to the actual furnishings of the Sassi courtyard. The reference to Fanti’s portrayal of Michelangelo at work—the paradigm of creative fervor—is striking; one scholar has even seen a physiognomical resemblance to Michelangelo. 38 Heemskerck again makes a significant change, however, replacing Aurora with another antique then in the garden of the Villa Madama in Rome and now to be seen, radically transformed into a herm, in the Louvre (Fig. 57). 39 Heemskerck drew the figure in a reclining position (Fig. 58), just as it appears in the painting. In fact, he had already adapted Fanti’s Michelangelo as a symbol of sculpture generally, and of the attainments of ancient sculpture in particular, by replacing the Aurora with the same ancient figure in his engraved composition of the children of Mercury, that is, the arts as products of human ingenuity (Fig. 59). The motive for the substitution in the Rennes picture becomes evident when one realizes that the sculpture was recognized as Jupiter Capitolinus (Jupiter was Michelangelo’s own planet, we recall), the father of the pagan gods and the chief deity of Rome; contemporaries singled it out as one of the largest and most beautiful statues ever to have been found in Rome. 40 The sculptor is thus shown creating a gigantic idol of the most exalted imperial divinity, whose power would be broken and replaced by that of the divinity portrayed by St. Luke. Taken together, the two pairs of figures, Rome and Jupiter in the background, Mary and Christ in the foreground, mark the succession from antiquity to the present—in time, in belief, and in the self-conception of the artist.

In all likelihood Heemskerck’s painting was made for a confraternity of St. Luke and was thus intended to carry north of the Alps the transformation of the craftsmen’s guild into the artist’s academy then taking place in Italy. 41 The exalted purpose of this transformation, and the ultimate point of Heemskerck’s allegory, is embodied in the parrot, a standard symbol of rhetoric, that the Christchild holds up to the viewer. In effect it defines the painting as the visual equivalent of the ideal sermon envisioned by Erasmus and the humanist advocates of a

Fig. 57 (above). Jupiter herm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (photo: Documentation photographique de la Réunion des musées nationaux 71 EN 2671).

Fig. 58 (opposite, top). Maarten van Heemskerck, garden of the Villa Madama in Rome, drawing. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Fig. 59 (opposite). Maarten van Heemskerck, Mercury and His Children, engraving (photo: Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam 21856).
“Christian rhetoric” that would combine the learning of antiquity with the divinely inspired expressive simplicity of the Bible.⁴²

Heemskerck’s elaborate compilation of learned but clearly recognizable sources might be described as a modern structured version of the traditional medieval exemplum in didactic literature and sermons.⁴³ In this respect, the painting sheds light on the historical method implicit in Michelangelo’s marble David. The inscriptions on the Louvre drawing are, after all, a tissue of references—to the biblical hero as the prototype of the artist and, as we shall see, to the verse of Petrarch as a metaphor for a political statement. In this methodological sense, too, the inscriptions are paralleled visually in the statue itself, which refers to the earlier Florentine depictions of the Old Testament David; to Hercules, the pagan paragon of fortitude and virtue; and, as we shall also see, to the Early Christian warrior saints.

The second legacy of the David-beheading-Goliath tradition is a work by Daniele da Volterra, now at Fontainebleau (Figs. 60, 61), showing on either side (one cannot properly say front and back) of the same panel opposite views of the climax of the action, in a composition clearly derived from the scene on the Sistine ceiling. Vasari records that the picture was made for the poet Giovanni della Casa, who wanted professional help in clarifying certain points for a treatise he was preparing on the art of painting.⁴⁴ The panel is one of a number of works by artists of the period that refer to the debate concerning the relationship of the arts, specifically the respective merits of painting and sculpture.⁴⁵ The painter answered the sculptor’s claim to three-dimensionality by inventing devices that...
responded in kind, as it were: by introducing a mirror or other reflective materials in the scene, for example, or, as here, by exploiting both sides of the surface. Some critics, beginning with Michelangelo himself, came to regard these disputes about the arts as exercises in futility. Yet the debate entailed a serious challenge to the artist—and on this score Michelangelo did participate—to demonstrate conceptual ingenuity and technical virtuosity and thereby establish a claim to the ambivalent title Deus artifex. Vasari’s account of the commission (see n. 44) includes a detail, usually neglected, that is of the utmost importance in our context:

... having begun to write a treatise on painting, and wishing clarification of certain details and particulars from men of the profession, [Giovanni della Casa] had

Daniele make, with all possible diligence, a finished clay model of a David; and he then had him paint, or rather portray in a picture the same David, which is most beautiful, on both sides, that is the front and the back, which was a capricious thing.

Daniele therefore made a terra-cotta model first, and then the two-sided painting. It has long been known that the Fontainebleau panel is one of a number of works Daniele based on designs supplied by Michelangelo. A series of sketches by Michelangelo in the Morgan Library representing basically the same composition must have served for the terra-cotta that Daniele then translated into paint (Fig. 62).46
Surely the real purpose of the lesson in sculpture and painting was to illustrate for Giovanni della Casa the view of the Paragone that Daniele had learned from Michelangelo—who, in a statement
we shall quote presently, invoked three main principles: the primacy of sculpture, the reflectivity of painting, and the derivation of both ultimately from the same "intelligence."

This understanding helps to elucidate the awesome confluence of form and meaning in Michelangelo's interpretation of David killing Goliath. The key to the unprecedented conception, in the Sistine ceiling and in the composition recorded by Daniele, lies in Michelangelo's invention of an interlocking double contrapposto: both figures show opposite sides, front and back, at the same time, but in opposite directions; both sides of both figures, which together form a single, indissoluble knot, are always visible. David's victory over Goliath is indeed the prototype for the ingenuity and power of the artist to overcome the difficulty and labor of his art—the arco dell'intelletto and the arco della schiena. There could be no better illustration of the one explicit statement by Michelangelo that has come down to us verbatim expressing his conception of his art, and therefore of himself. At the same time that he painted the figural group, and in response to Varchi's inquiry concerning the Paragone, Michelangelo composed an ironic, lapidary verbal conundrum no less interlocking and contrapuntal than the David and Goliath composition itself. The statement both describes and draws upon the same arco—dell'intelletto and della schiena—with which, for the early David, the alta colonna was broken to the artist's will.

I say that if greater judgment and difficulty, impediment and labor do not make for greater nobility, then painting and sculpture is [sic] the same thing. And if this be held so, no painter should make less of sculpture than of painting, and no sculptor less of painting than of sculpture. By sculpture I mean that which one does by taking away; that which one does by adding is similar to painting. Enough, for the one and the other deriving from the same intelligence, that is, sculpture and painting, one can make a good peace between them and abandon so many disputes, because they take more time than making figures.
The parallel Michelangelo draws between David and himself in the first text of the Louvre sheet inevitably does more than simply equate two improbable victories over physically superior adversaries. David had long since become an emblem of Florentine republicanism, and it is clear that Michelangelo imputed to his own colossus an apotropaic efficacy against Florence’s contemporary enemies, equivalent to and infused with the same divine power the biblical hero had against the Philistine enemies of Israel. The first inscription itself therefore suggests that Michelangelo’s personal power served a larger, communal, purpose through the image of David.

The nature of this public mission, in turn, is manifested in the text written below the artist’s signature, for the Petrarchan verse suggests that the defeat of the giant conveys more than the superiority of purely intellectual and technical prowess. To begin with, David and the column had a particularly close, quasi-idolatrous, relationship in Florence. Donatello’s bronze David, the first freestanding nude statue since antiquity, had been displayed on a column in the classical manner, first in the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici and again, after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, in the courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio. Similarly, in the fictive monument painted by Ghirlandaio beside the entrance to the Sassetti chapel in Santa Trinita (Francesco Sassetti was a close ally of the Medici), David stands on a pedestal supported by a tall pilaster. The inscription on the pedestal proclaims the civic, no less than the religious, import of the monument: Salvati Patriae et Christianae Gloriarum (Fig. 63). In view of this prior association with the Medici the renewed interest in the colossus under Soderini can only be understood as an attempt by the republican government to reclaim David as its own hero.

A contemporary Florentine would immediately have recognized Michelangelo’s allusion to the Petrarchan broken laurel as a patent reference to the Medici, in particular to Lorenzo the Magnificent. Punning on the Latin form of his name, Lorenzo had adopted the laurel as a personal emblem and that evergreen thereupon became one of the most prominent motifs of Medicean heraldic imagery. It has been suggested that Michelangelo was here applying Petrarch’s lament to the premature death of Lorenzo in 1492, which deprived the artist of a great friend and early patron. The poet Poliziano had already associated the laurel with Lorenzo’s death, reversing with sad irony the plant’s legendary immunity to lightning:

Lightning has struck our laurel tree, our laurel so dear to all the muses, to the dances of the nymphs.

Michelangelo’s omission of the word laurel from the Petrarchan text might thus have been motivated by...
a fear of reprisal from the anti-Medicean republican party then in power.

Apart from the fact that this interpretation makes Michelangelo, the ardent republican, into something of a hypocrite with respect to his current patrons, several factors suggest an alternative meaning of the inscription. The commission for the David came during a crucial period in the history of the Florentine republic that had been installed after the Medici were ousted.\(^5\) The longed-for benefits of this democratic form of government failed to materialize, and internal conditions worsened while external dangers became more acute. There were even hints of a change in attitude toward the Medici, including a revival of sympathetic interest in Lorenzo, especially among the intellectuals he had patronized. Eventually, having been denounced after his death as a pernicious tyrant, he came to be idealized as a benevolent and popular leader. There may indeed be an echo of this nascent political nostalgia as well as an expression of personal loss in Michelangelo’s quotation from Petrarch.

The successors to Lorenzo, however, enjoyed no such sympathy. They and their supporters were a constant threat to the republic, and it was certainly in the face of this threat that the marble David was revived. Moreover, the re-evaluation of Lorenzo the Magnificent was itself part of a movement that ultimately led to the restoration of the Medici and the demise of the republic. Considering this reactionary tendency, Michelangelo must have felt as much apprehension about a future Medicean tyranny as nostalgia for the lost virtues of Lorenzo. Hence the passage from Petrarch may also be understood as alluding to the defeated but still formidable adversary of the republican spirit championed by David. This anti-Medicean point becomes clear when one realizes that Michelangelo was actually referring to a specific motif of Lorenzo’s political propaganda intended to identify his family with the city of Florence; associate himself with Augustus, the founder of the Roman empire; and proclaim his own rule as an Augustan Golden Age. The key factor here is the reference, through Petrarch, to the broken laurel. To be sure, the laurel was an ancient and multivalent symbol of virtue, but Lorenzo transformed it into a distinct political message. In a medal of about 1480 (Fig. 64), a figure labeled Florentia is seated under a laurel tree holding three fleurs-de-lys to symbolize the City of Flowers that flourishes under Lorenzo’s tutelage (Tutela Patrie). Lorenzo adopted a form and meaning for the device that extended its reach across time, so that it both referred to the past and was rife with implications for the future.\(^5\) In antiquity each of the Giulio-Claudian emperors (the dynasty inaugurated by Augustus) customarily planted in a grove the branch of laurel he had carried in triumph; the trees that grew from the branches came to symbolize the continuity of the imperial line. The custom began with Augustus who planted the first branch from which all the others were taken, and who adopted the laurel branch conspicuously on his coinage.\(^5\) Because of these associations and the evergreen’s capacity to renew itself from a slip, Lorenzo took as his emblem a branch, or stump—broncone in Italian—of laurel and combined it with a chivalric version of a conceit involving temporal renewal that derived from a celebrated passage in Virgil’s fourth Eclogue.\(^5\) The broncone of laurel with the motto Le Temps Revient (Fig. 65) became a striking evocation of the return, under the benign auspices of Lorenzo de’ Medici, of the Golden Age under Augustus celebrated by Virgil. The ever-flourishing laurel served as the image of the Medici’s
tutelage of the city. Imperialist associations had already been evoked by the Medici tombs in San Lorenzo (see pp. 17, 25 above), and the potential threat to republican tradition implicit in such imagery must have aroused suspicions as to Lorenzo's ultimate ambitions. Michelangelo's invocation of the Petrarchan broken tall column and laurel thus uniquely and conspicuously refers to the death of Lorenzo. But also, co-opting the bronze, the reference celebrates the rupture of the Medici dominion in Florence and the triumph of republican government—whose future stability Michelangelo would help to assure by the ever-vigilant defiance of his gigantic giant killer. Michelangelo might very well have omitted "lauro" for fear of reprisal, not by the republicans but by supporters of the Medici whose subsequent efforts to take revenge on the statue will be adduced below.

This reading of Michelangelo's written message on the Louvre sheet elicits in the first instance the coherent meaning of the drawing itself. The republican sentiment applies to both figures in the study. The French, for whom Piero Soderini commissioned the bronze David expressly in emulation of Donatello's figure, were the chief allies of the Florentine republic against the political aspirations of the Medici. The anti-Medicean implication of the inscription also clarifies a number of puzzles in the marble sculpture's history and imagery. Apart from its physical character—its extraordinary size and physique and its complete nudity—Michelangelo's David is above all distinguished by its unprecedented isolation of the moment before the epic battle with the Philistine. Normally, and quite rightly, this abrogation of the traditional rule of showing David triumphant over the decapitated giant is taken as heightening the dramatic intensity of the event. The inscription on the drawing, however, records an underlying change of meaning, as well: emphasis has shifted from victory to vigilance against the potential future menace that was implicit in the retrospective Medicean emblem of verdant laurel and Le Temps Revient. Michelangelo's narrative innovation thus imbues the figure with a vital contemporary meaning analogous to that of the physical power and psychological immediacy of the sculpture itself. The prototypical victor over brute physical strength devoid of moral support has become the modern image of the spiritual force with which moral right is endowed. In this sense, especially, the David shows its debt to the great tradition of warrior saints, propugnators of the faith, that includes Donatello's St. George and Michelangelo's own earlier portrayal of St. Proculus.

This radical new interpretation of the subject may even have been one of the reasons Michelangelo was given the commission in the first place. At least, good sense can thus be made of Vasari's account of how the earlier work on the marble had been botched: Agostino di Duccio had cut a large hole between the legs, rendering the block useless for the intended figure. Agostino's error is usually assumed to have created a purely technical problem, which Michelangelo succeeded in overcoming. I suspect, however, that the situation entailed another, more substantive, difficulty that profoundly affected the idea the work was to convey. Agostino's gaping hole would have precluded the one indispensable element of the subject as traditionally conceived: the decapitated head of the defeated Goliath. It may have been this very problem that later prompted Andrea Sansovino to propose adding certain pieces of marble to create a figure. We have seen that Michelangelo's achievement lay, in part, in the purely artistic feat of extracting the giant from the immense disfigured block. It also lay in the political feat of
Fig. 66 (above). Personification of Furor poetico (from Ripa, 1603, 178).

Fig. 67 (right). Medal of Cosimo I de’ Medici. Bargello, Florence (photo: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence 277070).
devising a conception of David that would obviate the need for the giant's head while retaining—indeed augmenting, as it turned out—the affective power inherent in the very notion of the basic theme of David as the youthful protector of his people.

Instead of Goliath's head between or beneath David's feet, Michelangelo placed behind his leg the stump of a tree, a conventional support commonly used by ancient sculptors. In the case of Michelangelo's David, however, the device may also serve as David's attribute, the equivalent of Goliath's head, though different in form as well as meaning. The stump was in fact called broncone, the same word used for Lorenzo's impresa, in an often overlooked document describing certain embellishments, now lost, that were added to Michelangelo's statue shortly after it was installed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. The broncone was gilded, as was the strap of David's sling; a gilt bronze laurel wreath was added (recalling, as does the nudity of the figure, Donatello's bronze David); and a leafy vine of copper (presumably ivy) was placed about the groin (cf. Fig. 69). A letter written later by Pietro Aretino complaining about the statue's nudity suggests that the vine may have been added in an act of public prudery. Perhaps not without reference to the David thus adorned, Cesare Ripa later applied the laurel crown and the ivy cinch to his Poetic Fury, as symbols of eternal fame (Fig. 66). In any case, Michelangelo's statue did acquire the laurel as an attribute—the Medicean broncone was pruned, as it were, to serve as David's trophy.

To my mind, however, there are still more compelling, and historically more significant, witnesses to the anti-Medicean reference in Michelangelo's inscription and, by implication, in the statue itself. The witnesses testify, as well, that the message was heard and understood by his contemporaries. The evidence is to be found in what happened to the Medici impresa after the republic was defeated and the Medici returned to even greater power than before. Under Duke Cosimo I, the pun on Lorenzo's name was replaced by a new, explicitly retrospective pun relating the duke's name to that of the founder of the family's power, Cosimo il Vecchio (itself the subject of a cosmic pun; see p. 20 above). At the same time, the theme of recurrence that had given political overtones to Lorenzo's laurel now resounded in a new Medicean proclamation of dynastic hegemony. In this version of the impresa, as on the reverse of an early medal portraying the young duke (Fig. 67), the broncone remained but the motto was changed from the chivalric Le Temps Revient to Uno Avulso non Deficit Alter ("when one [laurel-Cosimo] is torn away, another fails not"), quoting all but the first word of a phrase Virgil had used in reference to the Golden Bough. The substitution of uno for Virgil's primo transformed a limited sequence into a generic notion of perennial regeneration from the broken laurel of Petrarca. Significantly, the prime image of this principle of "augural historicism," including the laurel branch and revised motto, is Pontormo's portrait of Cosimo Pater Patriae, which pointedly revives the profile format characteristic of the earlier period (Fig. 68). As far as I can discover, however—and this is the essential point—Michelangelo on his drawing for the David was the first to apply the Petrarca phrase to the Medici in specific reference to the eclipse of the family's power following the death of Lorenzo. It is well known that Michelangelo's statue, which he executed secretly behind a specially constructed enclosure, immediately became a matter of civic pride: after a public consultation with no less than thirty citizens of Florence, including the leading artists of the day, the statue was brought to the Piazza della Signoria—following Michelangelo's own advice, according to a contemporary report—and given the most conspicuous civic location, at the entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio. I have no doubt that Michelangelo's subtle and ironic subversion of the Medici laurel device also entered, subversively, into the public domain. The later version of the impresa was promulgated as a triumphant rejoinder and can only have been intended to parry Michelangelo's ingenious thrust at the heart of tyranny.

The "battle of the impres" was not the only reply to the David. When the huge monument was transported to its destination in the middle of the night, it was attacked and stoned by vandals, who must have been supporters of the Medici faction. The statue appears in depictions of two important political events that took place in the Piazza della Signoria following the Medici restoration: an oration by Giovan Battista Ridolfi, the Medici-supported gonfaloniere della giustizia who replaced Piero Soderini, shown in the border of one of the tapestries for the Sistine Chapel designed by Raphael for the Medici Pope Leo X (Fig. 69); and the reception of the insignia of command in defense of the Church given to Florence by the same pope, in a fresco by Vasari.
Fig. 68. Pontormo, *Cosimo Pater Patriae*. Uffizi, Florence (photo: Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici, Florence 10407).
in the Palazzo Vecchio itself (Fig. 70). It has been suggested—and it can scarcely be coincidental—that in both cases the David is deliberately shown "decapitated," as if in ironic response to the threatened beheading of the Medici-Goliath. An amusing, if somewhat vulgar, detail in the fresco confirms the politically charged atmosphere that surrounded Michelangelo's figure. The crowd of spectators in the piazza divides directly beneath the David, and in the opening thus conveniently provided a dog is shown conspicuously relieving itself. The vignette underscores the humiliating irony of the scene, in which the defeated republic is conceded the honor of defending its enemy's leader. The reference would have been even more specific if it had been placed where originally planned: an inscribed preparatory sketch for the same defecating animal may be discerned directly in front of the pedestal of the statue itself (Fig. 71).

The episodes of antirepublican symbolic vandalism anticipate the actual decapitation of the portrait reliefs on that great symbol of ancient imperialism, the Arch of Constantine in Rome, perpetrated in 1536 by one of the leading partisans of Florentine republicanism, Lorenzino de' Medici. Lorenzino's purpose was manifestly to propagate the republican cause against his hated and potentially tyrannical cousin Alessandro de' Medici. The specific act of physical violence, however, unmistakably recalled the dramatic end of the Augustan dynasty with Nero, when the temple of the Caesars was struck by lightning and the heads of all the statues were knocked off. The same mania for decapitating images was also evident in Giulio Romano's depiction of the inspired Christian sculptor surrounded by headless idols (see Fig. 50).

The David was not the only work by Michelangelo whose political associations, whether intended or acquired, the Medici rulers of Florence considered intolerable and in need of "neutralization"—or rather reconversion, since the Medici considered themselves the embodiment of Florentine traditions and tactfully maintained the fiction of republican government. The mutilations of the Arch of Constantine were a prelude to the assassination of Alessandro, which Lorenzino perpetrated a year later, in 1537. Michelangelo's over-life-size, apparently unfinished marble sculpture of Brutus (Fig. 72)—the first independent heroic commemorative bust allantica carved in the Renaissance—must have been made to celebrate this act of politically justified homicide. Confirmation of our argument comes from the wonderfully fatuous inscription, added when the Brutus was acquired later in the century by Grand Duke Francesco; it explains that while working on the marble, Michelangelo had a change of heart.

Under the grand dukes of Tuscany works of art
became weapons of statecraft as never before, and the Medici court transmitted this form of political art-propaganda, for better or worse, into the bloodstream of European culture. I hope it is clear from the spectacle of art-political vicissitudes we have witnessed that this new awareness of the rhetorical value of affective imagery was deeply indebted to the power of Michelangelo’s interpretation, both verbal and visual, of David. If this view of its meaning and effect is correct, then the sculpture played a role in Florentine, indeed in European, political history no less significant than its role in the history of art—the first colossal freestanding nude figure carved in marble since antiquity was also the first colossal freestanding public monument conceived in the name of liberty.

Michelangelo’s Louvre drawing should also be appreciated as an innovation in itself, since the relationships we have discerned between the figural elements and the inscriptions lend the work a programmatic character that marks a new departure in the development of the graphic medium. This coherence of visual and verbal content is matched by the structure and balance with which the page itself is organized, the central arm of the marble David being flanked on one side by the sketch for the bronze figure and on the other by the “explanatory” inscriptions. Even the comparative scale of the figures is considered, the life-size bronze David having been a third the size of the marble giant. In this structural and substantive unity the Louvre drawing foreshadows the beautifully designed conflation of text and image Michelangelo achieved a decade later on the Casa Buonarroti sheet, where he apostrophizes and mocks his own work on the Sistine ceiling (see Fig. 45). The sketch and its verbal equivalent together approach the coherence and deliberateness of an autonomous work of art. In this informal, didactic domain the development parallels that of the elaborate and self-sufficient drawings Michelangelo presented to his friends and patrons, in which the traditionally preliminary medium was raised to a noble art form (see Fig. 274).
Appendix

VASARI ON THE David OF MICHELANGELO

“Gli fu scritto di Firenza d’alcuni amici suoi che venisse, perché non era fuor di proposito che di quel marmo che era nell’Opera guasto egli, come già n’ebbe volonta, ne cavasse una figura; il quale Pier Soderini, fatto gonfaloniere a vita allora di quella città, aveva avuto ragionamento molte volte di farlo condurre a Lionardo da Vinci et er alora in pratica di darlo a Maestro Andrea Contucci dal Monte San Savino, eccellente scultore, che cercava di averlo; e Michelagnolo, quantunque fussi difficile a cavarne una figura intera senza pezzi — al che fare non bastava a quelli altri l’animo di non finirlo senza pezzi, salvo che a lui, e ne aveva avuto desiderio molti anni innanzi —, venuto in Fiorenza tentò di averlo. Era questo marmo di braccia nove, nel quale per mala sorte un Maestro Simone da Fiesole aveva cominciato un gigante, e si mal concia era quella opera, che lo aveva bucato fra le gambe e tutto mal condotto e storiato; di modo che gli Operai di Santa Maria del Fiore, che sopra tal cosa erano, senza curar di finirlo l’avevano posto in abbandono, e già molti anni era così stato et era tuttavia per istare. Squadrollo Michelagnolo di nuovo, esaminando potersi una ragionevole figura di quel sasso cavare, et accomodandosi con l’attitudine al sasso ch’era rimasto storiato da Maestro Simone, si risolse di chiederlo agli Operai et al Soderini, dai quali per cosa inutile gli fu conceduto, pensando che ogni cosa che se ne facesse fusse migliore che lo essere nel quale allora si ritrovava, perché né spezzato, né in quel modo concio, utile alcuno alla Fabrica non faceva. Laonde Michelagnolo, fatto un modello di cera, finse in quello, per la insegna del Palazzo, un Davit giovane con una trombola in mano, acciò che, sì come egli aveva difeso il suo popolo e governatolo con giustizia, così chi governava quella città dovesse animosamente difenderla e giustamente governarla. E lo cominciò nell’Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, nella quale fece una turata fra muro e tavole et il marmo circondato; e quello di continuo lavorando senza che nessuno il vedesse, a ultima perfezione lo condusse. Era il marmo già da Maestro Simone storiato e guasto, e
non era in alcuni luoghi tanto che alla volontà di Michelagnolo bastasse per quel che avrebbe voluto fare; egli fece che rimasero in esso delle prime scarpelette di Maestro Simone nella estremità del marmo, delle quali ancora se ne vede alcuna. E certo fu miracolo quello di Michelagnolo, far risuscitare uno che era morto.

Era questa statua, quando finita fu, ridotta in tal termine che varie furono le dispute che si fecero per condurla in Piazza de'Signori. Per che Giuliano da San Gallo et Antonio suo fratello fecero un castello di legname fortissimo e quella figura con i canapi sospesi a quello, acciò che scotendosi non si troncasse, anzi venisse croclando sempre; e con le travi per terra piane con argani la tirorono e la missero in opera. Fece un cappio al canapo che teneva sospesa la figura, faciliissimo a scorrere, e stringeva quanto il peso l'aggravava, che è cosa bellissima et ingegnosa, che l'ho nel nostro libro disegnato di man sua, che è mirabile, sicuro e forte per legar pesi.

Nacque in questo mentre che, vistolo su Pier Soderini, il quale, piaciutogli assai et in quel mentre che lo ritoccava in certi luoghi, disse a Michelagnolo che gli pareva che il naso di quella figura fussi grosso. Michelagnolo, accortosi che era sotto al gigante il Gonfalonieri e che la vista non lo lasciava scorgere il vero, per satisfarlo sali in sul ponte che era accanto alle spalle, e preso Michelagnolo con prestezza uno scarpello nella man manca con un poco di polvere di sabbia, e preso Michelagnolo, e lo avere contento quel signore che se ne risse da sé Michelagnolo, avendo compassione a coloro che, per parere d'intendersi, non sanno quel che si dicono; et egli, quando ella fu murata e finita, la discoperse. E veramente che questa opera ha tolto il grido a tutte le statue moderne et antiche, o greche o latine che elle si fussero; e si può dire che né 'l Marforio di Roma, né il Tevere o il Nilo di Belvedere o i giganti di Monte Cavallo le sian simili in conto alcuno, con tanta misura e bellezze e con tanta bontà la finì Michelagnolo. Perché in essa sono contorni di gambe bellissime et appicature e sveltezza di fianchi divine, né ma' più s'è veduto un posamento si dolce, né grazia che tal cosa pareggi, né piedi né mani né testa che a ogni suo membro di bontà, d'artificio e di parità né di disegno s'accordi tanto. E certo chi vede questa non deve curarsi di vedere altra opera di scultura fatta nei nostri tempi o negli altri da qual si voglia artefice.


“Some of Michelagnolo's friends wrote from Florence urging him to return, as they did not want that block of marble on the opera to be spoiled which Piero Soderini, then gonfaloniere for life in the city, had frequently proposed to give to Lionardo da Vinci, and then to Andrea Contucci, an excellent sculptor, who wanted it. Michelagnolo on returning tried to obtain it, although it was difficult to get an entire figure without pieces, and no other man except himself would have had the courage to make the attempt, but he had wanted it for many years, and on reaching Florence he made efforts to get it. It was nine braccia high, and unluckily one Simone da Fiesole had begun a giant, cutting between the legs and mauling it so badly that the wardens of S. Maria del Fiore had abandoned it without wishing to have it finished, and it had rested so for many years. Michelagnolo examined it afresh, and decided that it could be hewn into something new while following the attitude sketched by Simone, and he decided to ask the wardens and Soderini for it. They gave it to him as worthless, thinking that anything he might do would be better than its present useless condition. Accordingly Michelagnolo made a wax model of a youthful David holding the sling to show that the city should be boldly defended and Righteously governed, following David’s example. He began it in the opera, making a screen between the wall and the tables, and finished it without anyone having seen him at work. The marble had been hacked and spoiled by Simone so that he could not do all that he wished with it, though he left some of Simone's work at the end of the marble, which may still be
seen. This revival of a dead thing was a veritable miracle. When it was finished various disputes arose as to who should take it to the piazza of the signori, so Giuliano da Sangallo and his brother Antonio made a strong wooden frame and hoisted the figure on to it with ropes; they then moved it forward by beams and windlasses and placed it in position. The knot of the rope which held the statue was made to slip so that it tightened as the weight increased, an ingenious device, the design for which is in our book, showing a very strong and safe method of suspending heavy weights. Piero Soderini came to see it, and expressed great pleasure to Michelagnolo who was retouching it, though he said he thought the nose large. Michelagnolo seeing the gonfaloniere below and knowing that he could not see properly, mounted the scaffolding and taking his chisel dexterously let a little marble dust fall on to the gonfaloniere, without, however, actually altering his work. Looking down he said, “Look now.” “I like it better,” said the gonfaloniere, “you have given it life.” Michelagnolo therefore came down with feelings of pity for those who wish to seem to understand matters of which they know nothing. When the statue was finished and set up Michelagnolo uncovered it. It certainly bears the palm among all modern and ancient works, whether Greek or Roman, and the Marforio of Rome, the Tiber and Nile of Belvedere, and the colossal statues of Montecavallo do not compare with it in proportion and beauty. The legs are finely turned, the slender flanks divine, and the graceful pose unequalled, while such feet, hands and head have never been excelled. After seeing this no one need wish to look at any other sculpture or the work of any other artist. Michelagnolo received four hundred crowns from Piero Soderini, and it was set upon in 1504. Owing to his reputation thus acquired, Michelagnolo did a beautiful bronze David for the gonfaloniere, which he sent to France...” (Hinds and Gaunt, 1963, IV, 115–17).
the education of the young, Plato himself associates geometry and eros through the notion of binding necessity: the students, living in close proximity, will mate "not by the necessities ['aνάγγελον, also bonds, constraints] of geometry but by those of love, which are perhaps keener and more potent than the other to persuade and constrain the multitude" (Shorey, 1956, I, 456ff.).

Finally, the interlace pattern enveloping the name Julius II in the altar in Raphael's Disputa should be recalled in this connection (Pfeiffer, 1975, 94–96).

59. Pedretti (1980 and 1981, 298) has revived an eighteenth-century idea that the designs may have been intended for floor decorations in central-plan churches, referring also to Michelangelo's Capitoline pavement, which in turn has been compared to medieval astronomical schemata illustrating Isidore of Seville's De natura rerum (Ackerman, 1961, I, 72, pl. 38c).

60. On the Sala delle Asse, see M. Kemp, 1981, 181ff.

61. "Itaque postquam Platonis librum de uno rerum principio, ac de summō bono legimus ... paulo post decessit ... Vale, & sicut Deus Cosmum ad ideam mundi formauit, ita te ipse ... ad ideam Cosmi figura" (Ficino, 1576, I, 649). Ficino repeats the account in the preface to his translation of another, pseudo-Platonic, dialogue on death. See Klibansky, 1943, 314ff.; A. M. Brown, 1961, 203ff.


63. One of the pulpits, at least, served this purpose in 1515. Kauffmann, 1936, 179, even supposed they were intended as singers' tribunes; but see Janson, 1957, 213ff. The existence of a singers' tribune (also often attributed to Donatello) in the left aisle over the portal to the cloister, however, did not preclude the use of the bronze pulpits for singing as well.


65. I follow here a suggestion by Battisti, 1981, 369 n. 17. As McKillop points out (forthcoming), the Ambrosian rite also normally calls for the altar to be oriented versus populum. On the Ambrosian chant, and Confessions 9.6–7, see Cattaneo, 1959, esp. 12ff.


67. See Morselli, 1981.

68. Frommel (1977, 47) also notes that the idea may have originated in the placement of the tomb of Cosimo's mother and father under the dome of the Old Sacristy.

69. Burns, 1979, 150.

70. Parronchi, "Un tabernacolo," 1980, documents a marble Sacrament tabernacle by Brunelleschi, 1426–27, placed in relation to the high altar of San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini in Florence, but the wording is not clear.

71. Barocchi, 1962, 120ff.; Wallace, 1987, 45ff. The high altar is shown close to the steps leading to the choir, and therefore oriented versus populum, in an anonymous plan of about 1550 and in a sketch plan by Sallustio Peruzzi (Burns, 1979, 149 fig. 4, 153 n. 11).

72. Barocchì's projects have been studied most recently in a paper by a former student of mine, Alexandra Herz, 1988. Herz compares these projects to the medieval presbytery of St. Peter's.

2. David's Sling and Michelangelo's Bow

An earlier version of the first part of this essay was presented at a colloquium entitled "Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk," organized by Matthias Winner at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome in February 1989. In the discussion that followed Hoest Bredekamp, Phillip Fehl, Kristina Herrmann Fiore, Christoph Frommel, Justus Müller-Hofstede, and Matthias Winner made especially helpful comments. I have incorporated several of their suggestions here. The present version was published in abbreviated form in the Acts of the Twenty-Seventh International Congress for the History of Art at Strasbourg in September 1989 (Lavin, "David's Sling," 1990).

1. Because the fascinating story of the David as
told by Vasari will be referred to repeatedly, it is quoted in full in the Appendix to this chapter (see pp. 59–61).

2. A handy survey of “Davidiana” will be found in the notes of Barocchi, 1962–72, II, 190ff. More than any other scholar Charles Seymour (1974) perceived Michelangelo’s identification of his personal artistic accomplishment in the David with the monument’s public mission in the republican cause. My own observations partly differ from and partly develop, but do not replace, those of Seymour. One important difference is that Seymour is at pains to discredit Vasari’s account of the David as reflecting mid-sixteenth-century anti-libertarian bias. For example, Seymour dismisses Vasari’s report that Piero Soderini was involved in the commission because Soderini is described as gonfaloniere for life, a position he acquired only a year later, in 1502. In fact, Soderini had already been elected gonfaloniere for a two-month term, March–April 1501 (Bertelli, 1971, 344), just before the project was officially revived in early July. Interestingly enough, in the first edition of the Vite, 1550, Vasari’s statement was perfectly accurate since he did not refer to Soderini’s lifetime appointment and noted properly that Soderini had been gonfaloniere: “già gonfaloniere in quella città” (Barocchi, 1962–72, I, 19). The anachronism introduced in the second, 1568, edition—“fatto gonfaloniere a vita allora in quella città” (ibid.)—was clearly inadvertent. We shall see that Vasari did indeed join in the later Medicean effort to disarm the anti-Medicean thrust of the statue, but precisely because he was well aware of its original intent.

My view of the anti-Medicean political import of the David is essentially in line with that of Levine, 1974, although I would not follow a number of his arguments; the main difference, however, is that my point of departure is the Louvre drawing, which Levine does not consider.

3. For a full discussion of the drawing and further bibliography, see Seymour, 1974, 3ff.; Summers, 1978.

4. The opening stanza is as follows:

Rotta è l’alta colonna e l’ verde lauro,
Che facean ombra al mio stanco pensiero;
Perduto è quel che ritrovar non spero
Dal borea a l’austro, o dal mar indo al mauro.

Chiòrboli, 1923, no. CCLXIX, 62ff., with commentary. Rendered as follows by Armi, 1946, 387:

Broken the column and the green bay tree
That lent a shade to my exhausted thought;
And I have lost what can nowhere be sought
In any distant wind or distant sea.

5. Brion, 1940, 102; Seymour, 1974, 7ff. Surveys of the various interpretations will be found in Clements, 1961, 416ff., and Seymour, 1974, 84ff.; see also Summers, 1978, 116. Brion’s suggestion has been largely overlooked, and Seymour does not cite it, although the title of his chapter on the subject is curiously similar to Brion’s.

6. For an interpretation of Michelangelo’s technical feat in relation to his novel use of preliminary models, see Lavin, 1967, 98ff.

7. On the symbolism of the column, see Tervarent, 1958, I, 106ff., and, with reference to Michelangelo’s drawing, Summers, 1978, 119f. n. 17. As far as I can discover, no attempt has been made to explain the significance of the column in Byzantine scenes of David as psalmist (for which see Cutler, 1984, index, sv “David” and “Melodia”; Suckale-Redlefsen, 1972, 38).

8. Various uses of the compass are illustrated in Carradori, 1979, and in La Sculpture, 1978, 582f., 592; for the circinus arcuatus in antiquity see Zimmer, 1982, 168f.


10. For what follows here, see Lavin, 1967. The relationship between Michelangelo’s David and that of Agostino di Duccio has recently been discussed by Parronchi, 1989–90.

11. “Così adunque operando si pigliano gli animi


13. We owe this important understanding of Dürer’s painting as an allegory of the artist’s victory over his detractors to Fiore, 1989.

14. The same conflation underlies Dürer’s use of this classical subject in the prayer book of Maximilian I to illustrate the opening verses of the Nineteenth Psalm, where heaven is cleansed of falsehood by Maximilian-Hercule’s handiwork (opera manuum eius adnuntiat firmamentum) and the word of God is ubiquitous (Sieveking, ed., 1987, p. XXIII, fol. 39v; Strauss, ed., 1974, 78; and especially Vetter and Brockhaus, 1971–72, 81f.). Dürer must have known a text and illustration such as that in the manuscript of Pietro Andrea di Bassi’s Le fatiche d’Ercole (Bassi, 1971, 77, 81f.).


Et g’Egittij, & Greci, per Hieroglifico dell’Ingegno, & della forza dell’intelligenza dipingevano Hercole con l’arco in vna mano, & nell’altra vna frezza con tre punte, per dimostrare, che l’huomo con la forza, & acutezza dell’ingegno, va investigando le cose celesti, terrene, & inferne, ouero, le naturali, diuine, & matematiche, come riferisce Pierio Valeriano nell’aggiunta dell’Hieroglifici” (Ripa, 1603, 220; the reference is to Valeriano, 1602, 624).

16. The five preserved drawings for this heretofore unexplained project are reproduced and discussed in Monducci and Pirondini, eds., 1987, 208ff.


18. There is still another dimension to this perspicuous invention. In maintaining the superiority of painting over sculpture, Orsi, who was strongly imbued with Northern traditions, is surely also referring to an important and well-known passage concerning the nature of the icon, with which Nicholas of Cusa introduced his treatise on the sight of God (De visione Dei). To illustrate the all-seeing eye of God, Cusa describes a painting on the city hall of Nuremberg depicting a bowsman aiming his arrow, which seemed to follow the spectator wherever he moved. The image is reflected in a number of early drawings and prints. Cf. Mende, 1979, no. 573, 429f., with further bibliography.

19. I have commented on the relationship between the text and the drawing on this sheet in Lavin et al., 1981, 34.

20. c’a forza l’ventre appicca sotto l’mento.

e ’l pennel sopra l’viso tuttavia
mel fa, gocciando, un ricco pavimento.

e tendomi come arco soriano.

Però fallace e strano
surge il iudizio che la mente porta,
ché mal si tra’ per cerbottana torta.

La mia pittura morta
difendi orma’, Giovanni, e ’l mio onore,
non sendo in loco bon, nè io pittore.


22. For example, Tolnay, 1943–60, I, 133f.


24. Tolnay, 1943–60, 2394, observed the novelty of the composition, though my analysis differs from his.

25. The relationship of Michelangelo’s composition
to the motifs of David killing the lion and Mithras killing the bull was pointed out by Haitovsky, 1988, who overlooked the identification in Michelangelo's time of the subject of the Mithras relief as Hercules.

26. Visible throughout the Middle Ages and widely influential, the relief is reproduced here from a drawing in the mid-sixteenth-century Codex Coburgensis.

27. See Bober and Rubinstein, 1986, 85.

28. The derivation of the Logge composition from that in the Sistine ceiling has often been noted (cf. Dacos, 1977, 195f). The most recent discussion of the Sala di Costantino decorations is that of Queudnau, 1979; see 489f, for the scene discussed here.

29. See the fine study by Buddensieg, 1965, esp. 62ff. Queudnau, 1979, 490, refers the figure in the fresco to one on the Column of Trajan of a soldier at work on the construction of a fortress.

30. Fanti, 1527; a facsimile of Fanti's book has been published by Biondi, 1983. The relationship between the Sala di Costantino image and that of Fanti was discussed by Buddensieg, 1965, 63 n. 57, with earlier bibliography. The design of Fanti's frontispiece, for which a drawing is preserved, has been attributed to Baldassare Peruzzi and those of other pages to Dosso Dossi (Frommel, 1967–68, 137f; Gibbons, 1968, 266, 268; 1980, 42f). The figure standing behind the sculptor refers to another work by Michelangelo, as noted by Tolnay (1966, 329 and 332 n. 7; cf. Summers, 1979, 161, 389), who also points out the correspondence to Michelangelo's constellation. The same woodcut is repeated on later pages of the book, with other artists' names substituted.

31. "... je puis dire avoir veu Michell'Ange bien que agé de plus de 60 ans, et encore non des plus robustes, abattre plus d'escaillles d'un tres dur marbre en un quart d'heure, que trois jeunes tailleurs de pierre reussent peu faire en trois ou quatre, chose presqu'incroyable qui ne le verroit; et y alloit d'une telle impetuositè et furie, que je pensois que tout l'ouvrage deust aller en pieces, abattant par terre d'un seul coup de gros morceaux de trois ou quatre doigts d'espoisseur; si ric à ric de sa marque que, s'il eust passe outre tant soit peu plus qu'il ne falloit, il y avoit danger de perdre tout, parce que cela ne se peut plus reparer par après, ny replaster comme les images d'argille ou de stucq" (Vigenère, 1578, here quoted from Barocchi, ed., 1962–72, II, 232).

32. The literature on the Paragone and Varchi's inquiry is vast, but see the monograph by Mendelsohn, 1982.


34. See in particular, W. Kemp, 1974; Poiret, 1976; Lavin, 1980, 7f.


36. See Garrard (1975), who observed the relevance of the ancient figure to Sansovino's Madonna and Heemskerck's reference to both; Garrard also noted, but failed to grasp the significance of, the identification as Roma trionfante.

37. As noted by Foucart, in Le XVIe siècle, 1966.

38. Bergot (in Le Dossier, 1974, 73), evidently without knowledge of the Fanti print.

39. Heemskerck's use of the Villa Madama Jupiter has been the subject of a special study by C. M. Brown, 1979.

40. See ibid., 57f.

41. There is a good chance that the Rennes picture is identical with a documented work painted by Heemskerck about 1550 for the Guild of St. Luke in Delft; cf. Grosshans, 1980, 196ff; King,

On the change in the social and intellectual status of the artist, see generally Pevsner, 1973.

The development in Italy from guild and workshop to academy has been studied by Rossi (1980); for the corresponding change in the North, as reflected in portrayals of St. Luke as painter, cf. Schaefer, 1986–90.

42. See Tervarent, 1958–59, 303 ff., on the parrot as a symbol of rhetoric. The parrot was also a symbol of the virginity of Mary, and the nut the Christchild offers the bird refers to the Passion (Grosshans, 1980, 200). These allusions help to explain another important liberty Heemskerck took with the antiquities visible in the courtyard of the Palazzo Sassi: he transferred the grotesque, open-mouthed mask in the pavement from the Palazzo della Valle, where he had seen and drawn such a sculpture, presumably an ancient sewer cover. The transposition was surely based on the superstitious oracular power popularly associated with a similar piece preserved at the church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, the Bocca della verità, or “mouth of truth” (cf. Spargo, 1934, 207 ff.). Heemskerck thus contrasts the infernal, false voice of the pagan demon exuding foul odors from the earth with the gospel truth repeated by the gorgeous bird of Christian eloquence.

I should emphasize that Heemskerck also incorporates in the image of Luke as artist references to the other two aspects of the disciple’s traditional persona: Luke the Evangelist, whose open Gospel the knowing ox points to with its hoof, and Luke the physician, surrounded by his medical texts and specimen flasks. Luke as physician was evoked, expressis verbis, by an inscription on the frame based on the passage in Paul’s letter to the Colossians 4:14: Salutat vos Lucas medius charissimus (Luke, the beloved physician, hails you). The inscription itself is a device of visual rhetoric, exhorting the spectator to receive the central message that the picture illustrates by merging all three aspects of Luke: the painter “shows” that Christ’s sacrifice is the salvific medicine conveyed to mankind through the “word” of God.

On the rhetoric of Erasmus, see the splendid pages of Fumaroli, 1980, 92 ff.

43. For which see Welter, 1927.

44. “Avendo monsignor messer Giovanni Della Casa, fiorentino ed uomo dottissimo (come le sue leggiadrisse e dotte opere, così latine come volgari, ne dimostrano) cominciato a scrivere un trattato delle dose di pittura, e volendo chiarirsi d’alcune minuzie e particolari dagli uomini della professione, fece fare a Daniello, con tutta quella diligenza che fu possibile, il modello d’un Davit di terra finito; e dopo gli fece dipignere, o vero ritarrire in un quadro, il medesimo Davit, che è bellissimo, da tutte due le bande, cioè il dinanzi ed il di dietro, che fu cosa capricciosa” (Vasari, 1906, VII, 61).


45. On the illustrated Paragone, see Holderbaum, 1956; Larsson, 1974, 54–58; Summers, 1981, 270, 530 n. 5; Mendelsohn, 1982, 124, 151.


47. “... e dico che, se maggiore giudicio et dificultà, impedimento et fatica non fa maggiore nobilità; che la pittura e scultura e una medesima cosa: e perché la fussi tenuta così, non doverrebbe ogni pictore far manco di scultura che di pictura; e simile lo scultore di pictura che di scultura. Io intendo scultura quella che si fa per forza di levare; quella che si fa per via di porre è simile alla pictura. Basta, che, venendo l’una e l’altra da una medesima intelligenza, cioè scultura e pictura, si può far fare loro una buona pace insieme, et lasciar tante dispute; perché vi va più tempo, che a far le figure” (Barocchi and Ristori, 1965–83, IV, 266).


49. See the observations on this point in Janson, 1978, 34, 37 ff.; Borsook and Offerhaus, 1981, 48.
M. A. Lavin, 1972, 75ff. Botticelli placed a statue of David with the head of Goliath on a tall column in his *Death of Lucrezia* (in the Gardner Museum, Boston); cf. Walton, 1965, 178ff., 185ff., where the motif is aptly related to Michelangelo’s *David*, the theme of tyrannicide, and Florentine republicanism.


51. For what follows here, see Seymour, 1974, 5ff.

52. For the political history of Florence during the period that concerns us here, see, besides the classic study by F. Gilbert, 1965, Stephens, 1983; Butters, 1985.

53. My interpretation at this point varies slightly from that of Cox-Rearick.

54. The story of Augustus’s laurel grove is told by Pliny, *Natural History* XV, 136–38 (Rackham, 1945, IV, 381–83), and Suetonius, *Galba*, I, 1 (Rolfe, 1950, II, 190ff.). The laurel imagery of Augustus will be discussed in a forthcoming paper on the emperor’s villa *Ad Gallinas* by Barbara Kellum, who kindly allowed me to read a preliminary version.

55. Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas; magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo. iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna; iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.

(Note is the last age of the song of Cumae; the great line of the centuries begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new generation descends from heaven on high [Eclogues IV, 4–7; Fairclough, 1950, I, 28ff].)

56. In particular, Bredekamp’s important interpretation of Botticelli’s *Primavera* as a political allegory (1988) can be carried further in the syncretistic vein of Christian humanism: the perennial spring illustrates the classical heritage of the Medicean in the City of Flowers, while the apsidal bower of laurel and the basilica-like grove of flowering fruit suggest a Christian sacral architecture and the patronage of the Virgin, Santa Maria del Fiore.

57. The theme of return and the potential threat of Medicean rule is evident in other devices adopted by Lorenzo, such as “Glovis” (*si vel[g]e*, “it turns,” spelled backward) with a disk; and “Suave” (“gentle”) with a yoke (Cox-Rearick, 1984, 29ff.).

58. For an analysis of Michelangelo’s political views, see Tolnay, 1964, 3ff. An important earlier formulation was that of Portheim (1889, 150ff.). Verspohl (1981) has interpreted the *David* in relation to the political thought of Machiavelli.

59. For a discussion of some of the technical aspects of the giant’s history, see Lavin, 1967, 97ff.

60. “Poiche di tal pezzo di marmo non potevano cavar cosa che buona fosse, parve a un Andrea dal Monte a San Sovino, di potersi ottener da loro, e gli ricerco che gliene facessero un presente, promettendo che, aggiungendovi certi pezzi, ne caverebbe una figura” (Condivi, 1938, 58). “Since they were unable to get anything out of that block of marble which was likely to be good, one Andrea dal Monte a San Sovino had the idea that he might obtain it from them, and he asked them to make him a present of it, promising that, by adding certain pieces to it, he would carve a figure out of it” (Condivi, 1976, 27).

61. For this type of support in antiquity, see Muthmann, 1951. Verspohl (1981, 213) interprets the tree trunk analogously, but less aptly, I think, as an allusion to the renovation of the Florentine republic.

62. October 31, 1504: “... per dorare la cigna, el bronchone e la ghirlanda al Gighante ... et per fogli 12 di stagno per mectere d’oro el broncone di d(e)cto Gighante ... ; ... per havere messo d’oro el broncone del Gigante et la cigna et la ghirlanda ... ; ... per un filo d’octone con vencotto foglie di rame et per saldatura di d(e)cto
fogle in su’ d(e)cto filo saldato con l’ariento per il Gighante . . .” The document has recently been republished and discussed by Ristori, 1986, 85f; cf. also the comments by Isermeyer, 1965, 325.

63. “... la fama de gl’huomini, che poi si mantiene verde, e bella per molti secoli, come la fronde del lauro, & dell’edera si mantengono” (Ripa, 1603, 178). In a letter of 1545, published in 1550, Aretino mentions the statue’s leafy cinch as an expression of “la modestia fiorentina” (cf. Ristori, 1986, 84). On the honorific symbolism of the plants, cf. Trapp, 1958.

64. On the interviews and the issues involved, see especially Levine, 1974; Parks, 1975. The chronicler Pietro Parenti records under the year 1504 that the David was brought to the Piazza “per consiglio del maestro,” a passage that seems to have been overlooked or neglected by nearly everyone who has considered the matter. Raffaele Borghini later (1584) claimed that the installation did not please Michelangelo, who would have preferred to see the sculpture placed in a niche (Barocchi, ed., 1962–72, II, 207).


67. I am indebted at this point to Bredekamp’s study (1989) of Lorenzino’s “Brutian” attack on the arch, and its anti-Medicean political implications.

68. Suetonius, Galba I, 1 (Rolfe, 1950, II, 190f).

69. M. DUM . BRUTI . EFFIGIEM A. SCULPTOR . DE . MARMORE . DUCIT IN . MENTEM . SCELERIS . VENIT B. ET . ABSTINVIT F.

(As he carves the image of Brutus from the marble, the sculptor is reminded of the crime, and desists. Michael Angelus Buonarrotus Fecit.)

The material concerning the bust is assembled in Barocchi, ed., 1962–72, IV, 1792ff., but see Gordon, 1957; Lavin, 1975, 357ff. Portheim (1889, 153) once suggested that the bust commemorates not the murder of Alessandro by Lorenzino, as is commonly assumed, but Lorenzino’s own assassination in 1547 at the behest of Duke Cosimo; this view has been revived by Hirst (1977). If this later dating is correct, Michelangelo may have conceived the sculpture in response to the busts of Cosimo I made by Bandinelli and Cellini explicitly in the imperial tradition (see Lavin, 1975, 385ff.).

70. Further to the subject of this paragraph below, p. 213ff.

3. Giambologna’s Neptune at the Crossroads

First presented in the Aula Magna of the Archiginnasio at Bologna in October 1990. The lecture served to inaugurate the newly restored Fountain of Neptune and a colloquium on the subject of Bologna as a cultural crossroads, “Il luogo e il ruolo della città di Bologna tra Europa continentale e mediterranea,” held under the aegis of the International Committee for the History of Art.


2. See Malaguzzi Valeri, 1901, 31f; Corpus, 1927, 10ff; Miller, 1977, 25; Bellocchi, 1987, 20f.


5. The primary sources on the fountain are Vasari, 1906, VI, 191ff., and Borghini, 1584, 586. For the modern literature see Avery, 1987, 206–9, 256, no. 31, with bibliography. Most important for the present essay are the contributions of Miller,


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