

The Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence holds the sixteenth-century manuscript known as the “Codice dell’Anonimo Magliabechiano”, containing 128 pages of text and comprising two parts.¹ The first part is devoted to artists from classical antiquity and the second contains the lives and works of a number of Florentine artists, from Cimabue to Michelangelo, as well as a brief survey of Sieneese artists. Also bound into the manuscript are: a brief description, in the same hand, of buildings and works of art in Rome and the Certosa di Val d’Ema, and another manuscript in a different hand with notes on art in Rome, Perugia and Assisi, as well as a copy of Landino’s introduction to his commentary on Dante.² The manuscript contains margin notes by the author showing that he consulted Pliny’s “Historia Naturalis” and Eusebius’ “Chronicus Canon” for his survey of the artists of antiquity.³ For information on the lives of Trecento and Quattrocento artists, he made use of Lorenzo Ghiberti’s “I Commentarii”, Cristoforo Landino’s “Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri” and the so-called “Libro di Antonio Billi”.⁴ In his life of Giotto, he quoted from Boccaccio’s “Decamerone”. He used dialect forms and turns of phrase that were common in spoken language. According to Frey (1892), he wrote as he spoke, without “ornati e gli altri ornamenti del parlare e scrivere dottamente”.⁵ He organized his information in a historical chronological framework, paraphrasing his sources and adding his own observations.⁶ In the part on modern artists, he tried to adhere to a set format, beginning with a general characterization of the artist and his biographical details, going on to describe the place, the circumstances and any anecdotes relating to the works in Florence and Tuscany, then discussing works in other Italian cities, and finally listing the artist’s apprentices, if they were known. In the part on the artists of antiquity, he mentioned the location, if known, of their works. He also tried to relate the works of contemporary artists to examples from antiquity. The blank spaces between the names of artists, the repetitions, strike outs, lists and margin notes tell us that he was still undecided about the sequence and choice of artists. In short, his survey was not yet finished.

In 1688 Filippo Baldinucci attributed the manuscript to Giorgio Vasari, as a forerunner to his “Vite”.⁷ In 1872 Gaetano Milanesi attributed it to Giovan Battista Adriani.⁸ Julius von Schlosser suggested in 1924 that the very comprehensive information about Leonardo da Vinci could indicate that his apprentice, Giovan Francesco Rustici (1474-1554), authored the anonymous manuscript.⁹ At the end of the nineteenth century, annotated transcriptions were made by Cornelius von Fabriczy (1891) and Carl Frey (1892), and a transcription with brief annotations by Annamaria Ficarra appeared in 1968.¹⁰ All three concluded that, judging by the language, content and style, the author was a well-educated Florentine on friendly terms with leading artists, although not himself an artist. According to Frey, the author must have been a well-known personality in Florence, a humanist in the fashion of Vincenzo Borghini and Don Miniato Pitti.¹¹ Ficarra believed that the author was not personally interested in the material, but had been commissioned by a member of the Gaddi family who wanted all the available material about Florentine artists brought together into a single, convenient whole. She based her assumption on the detailed information that the Anonimo presents about artists from the Gaddi family.¹² The manuscript, she believed, was written between 1536 and 1546 (partly after 1541), nearly the first decade of the rule of Cosimo I de’ Medici. In 1995 Richard Stapleford attributed the manuscript to Vincenzo Borghini himself, citing as circumstantial support the fact that the librarian at the Biblioteca Magliabechiana described it in an inventory from 1755 as “Fonti di Monsignore Vincenzo Borghini. Selva di notizie delle vite de’ pittori”.¹³ Stapleford claimed that the nature of the notes in the “Codice dell’Anonimo Magliabechiano” showed that they had been collected in response to Vasari’s request to Borghini to help him with his research into Tuscan artists. Clearly, Stapleford was unable to substantiate his claim, as the promised publication containing his argumentation has never appeared.

It is my conviction that the “Codice dell’Anonimo Magliabechiano” should be attributed to Bernardo Vecchietti (1514-1590), the Florentine humanist and art connoisseur.¹⁴ First of all there is a striking similarity between the handwriting in the manuscript and that of Bernardo in his numerous letters to duke Cosimo I in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. There is no doubt that the *Codice* is written by one hand and that Bernardo wrote the letters to the duke by himself, his signature and the handwriting are corresponding.¹⁵ Although the Anonimo’s manuscript and Bernardo’s letters were meant for different purposes, the calligraphic details in the two handwritings can be compared very well and, on the score of the similarity of all the details, we can be almost certain that they belong to one and the same person.¹⁶ The Anonimo and Bernardo both used the so-called *littera humanistica cursiva*. Bernardo wrote his letters to the duke in a fine regular hand, in a “litera da brevi”, as the writing-master Ludovico degli Arrighi called this fluent style in 1522.¹⁷ Although the Anonimo’s writing is fast and undisciplined — his annotations were not meant for diplomatic purposes —, it is possible to compare the basic elements, such as the grid and the direction of ascenders and descenders, the slant, the proportions of lower-case letters and capitals, the abbreviations, the joins and ligatures, the spacing and the line space. In the context of this paper it is impossible to describe all the details, but I will give some very significant examples. The comparison of a page from the manuscript with one of Bernardo’s letters (1548) clearly shows that the grid, the slant, the spacing and the line space are corresponding (figs. 1 and 2).¹⁸ It is striking that both used the individual letters unsystematically, for example: the letter *r* is either symmetrical or has a flourish at the left arm

99.

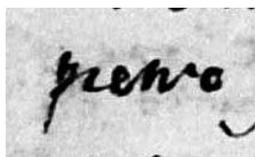
Sta Piero di roma la macchinia detta la chiesa
 nuova cominciata ne tempi di papa Giulio II
 fatta detta macchinia operata da Bramante da
 Urbino che in arte di tutto fu molto eccellente
 come si detto san Pietro si vede ancora benche a
 noi molto fuori del primo ordine di Bramante
 stato rimesso parte e Comagoria parte ordi-
 nata piu si vede, Et cosi si nea fatta da
 Bramante tutta la famiglia del vedere che
 e una cosa molto grande e maravigliosa
 che infra l'altre cose vi e una scuola a luma
 che molto maestrevole et molto bella
 Et di detto Bramante si vede la fabrica di
 san Biagio in strada Julia cominciata ne tempi
 di Giulio, et cosi di detto una parte di san Oreste
 in banchi, e un tempietto nel chiostro di sa-
 Pietro amatorio fatto di micerentino, tutto dell'op-
 era di lui, molto ornato, et molto bene condotto, che
 certo di quello che si vede di suo, si puo dire che da
 gli antichi in qua non ci sia stato meglio, ne suo-
 mo che meglio sabbia inteso le cose antiche, et
 che piu si sabbia contra fatte
 Di poi alla morte di Bramante fu fu sopra alla
 fabrica in suo scambio il certo fra roconio
 Vittriano, e Raffaello d'Ambrosio insieme a
 Antonio da san Gallo di per Camote il detto fra
 roconio, et Raffaello d'Ambrosio seguito detto
 fabrica, Antonio da san Gallo in compagnia di
 come da san Gallo d'Assante da Siena veramente un valentissimo

Bramante
 in d'una chiesa
 nate
 in di del vedere
 alla adiacente
 mante
 Biagio
 nelle
 in nel chiostro
 di Bramante

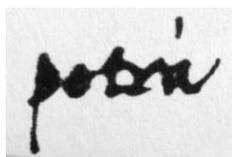
secondo in
 detto
 Raffaello d'Ambrosio
 Antonio da san Gallo

259

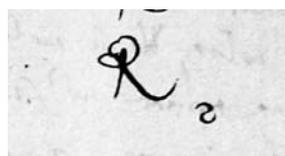
Havendo Moni di Forli (secondo scriuo) presi per v. e. l. 78/
 franzen, per piaci 28 l'uno, quando accadessi che giurandosi
 per 30/ aringar del mandamento, vi saria perdita da v. zoso
 Ma secondo me v. e. no ha da temere di questa perdita, prima
 perche posto che per mandamento imperiale l'v. franzen sono
 valutate un'piaccio meno, che quelli di s. z. l.; contutto cio
 le franzen hanno sempre havuto corso, et par' che l'abbino aora,
 per 28 piacci, come gl'imperiali; Et no fo dubbio che moni di forli
 non gl'abbino aspende al pregio che gli prese: Poi qu' par'endo
 potessi far questo, et che vi vedessi perdita, s. s. scrive del s. tuor
 è obligato riprendersi l'detti v. franzen, con darli altranti ou del
 paese; laqual promessa onozuata, mi par' che assuri v. e.
 di questa perdita preletto, et che per adesso vi resti solo la confida-
 tione del tempo, & disagio d'havere a rimandar' idan' a torna
 Parmi bene che s'ada advertire che quando bene amon' di Forli
 succeda di spendere li detti v. franzen, al prezzo che gl'ha presi,
 altro che bisognara che v. e. prometta di rendere poi altrettanta
 v. franzen della medesima specie, di specificare nel obligo, che
 la prometta rendere detti v. l. intanti v. della medesima sorte, & la
 valuta a 28 piacci: Et per che come dice s. s. si parla che potressa
 alterar' quelle monete, per meglio ancora assicurarsi per a questo
 poter' s. s. prender' figlio da qualche mercate di sul luogo, che la
 meglio et con piu cortezza che noi di qui, potressa per quello che sentono
 c'etterar' s' altro ni fusse degno di consideratione, per a quel tempo
 questo è quello che m'ocorre, et che io conosco in q' negotio, et senza piu dire
 prego il v. d. Dio che felice concorra v. e. alla quale s'araleis: mi
 B. da forli alli xxxi di Marzo M. D. XL. v. m.
 Di v. J. M. et: Ser. S.



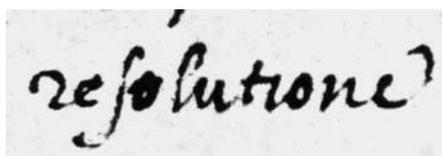
3a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 99r.



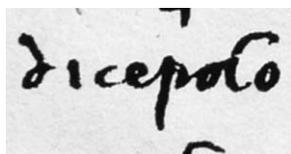
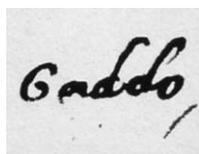
3b Vecchietti, ASF, MP 392, c. 259. March 30, 1549.



4a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 110r.



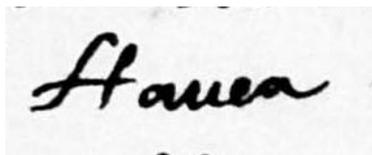
4b Vecchietti, ASF, MP 412, c. 260. November 26, 1552.



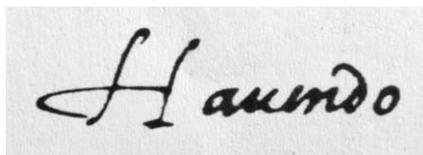
5a, b Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 43r.



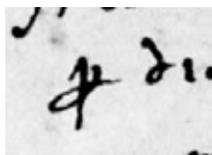
5c, d Vecchietti, ASF, MP 466, c. 275. January 20, 1558.



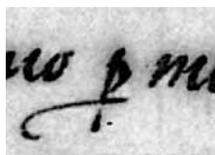
6a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 53v.



6b Vecchietti, ASF, MP 392, c. 259. March 30, 1549.

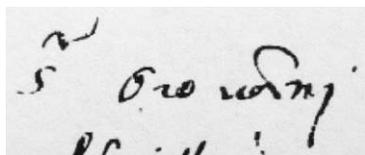


7a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 43r.

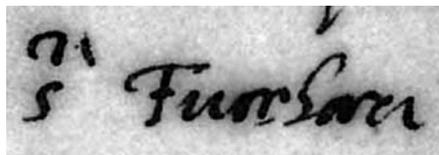


7b Vecchietti, ASF, MP 466, c. 275. January 20, 1558.

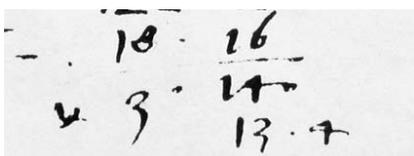
(figs. 3a, b; 4a, b); the letter *d* sweeps back at the top or curves slightly to the right at the top (figs. 5a-d). Both used formal Roman capitals but varied with cursive alternatives (figs. 6a, b). The abbreviations for the words *per* and *Signor* are corresponding (figs. 7a, b; 8a, b). The similarity of the figures 3 and 8 in one of Bernardo's letters and on page 119 of the Anonimo's manuscript is striking (figs. 9a, b). The joining of two letters is corresponding (figs. 10a, b), just like the ligatures (figs. 3a, b; 11a, b). On some pages the Anonimo experimented



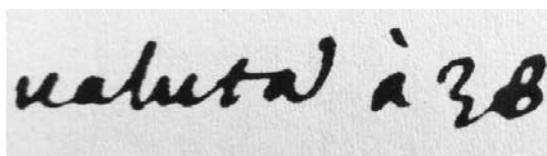
8a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 85r.



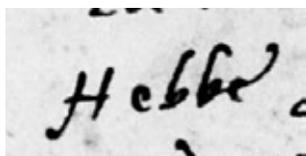
8b Vecchiotti, ASF, MP 466, c. 275. January 20, 1558.



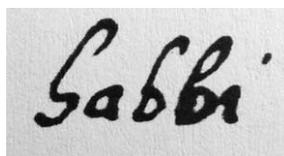
9a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 119r.



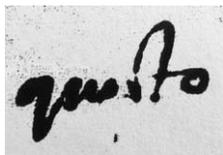
9b Vecchiotti, ASF, MP 392, c. 259. March 30, 1549.



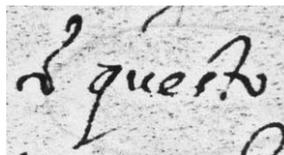
10a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 43r.



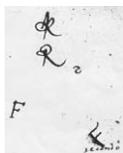
10b Vecchiotti, ASF, MP 392, c. 259. March 30, 1549.



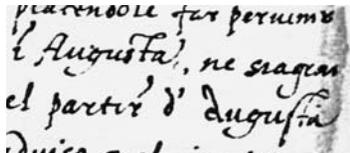
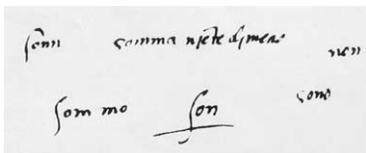
11a Anonimo, BNCF, Magl. XVII. 17, c. 121r.



11b Vecchiotti, ASF, MP 412, c. 383. December 10, 1552.



12a, b Anonimo, BNCF, Mag. XVII. 17, c. 110r and 119r.



12c Vecchiotti, ASF, MP 412, c. 260. November 26, 1552.

with his style of writing, as can be seen in his exercises with the capitals *R* and *F* and the lower case letters *r*, and *s* (figs. 12a, b). In his letters Bernardo was also experimenting with his style (fig. 12c). Did they use one of the popular writing-books that were published in the third and fourth decade of the sixteenth century?¹⁹

The similarity of the handwriting is by no means the only argument. There are powerful clues in the text suggesting that the Anonimo had access to Medici family circles and in particular to the group of artists and

scholars surrounding Ottaviano de' Medici (1484-1546), who married a sister of Cosimo I de' Medici's mother and therefore became his uncle. After the murder of Duke Alessandro in 1537, Ottaviano supported Cosimo's candidacy and became one of his principal cultural advisors. He was on friendly terms with leading artists and played a guiding role in their careers. Giorgio Vasari, Jacopo Pontormo (1494-1557), and Baccio Bandinelli (1488-1565) were part of his clientele. While it is true that Vasari fled to Rome in 1537 for fear of civil war, he came back regularly, always staying at Ottaviano's house.²⁰

The Anonimo's margin notes clearly show that the author knew Vasari, Pontormo and Bandinelli personally. In the margin of the life of Andrea del Sarto, he twice noted that he should ask Giorgio [Vasari] or Jacopo da Pontormo for information — the first time in relation to a panel by Andrea del Sarto in the home of the Florentine patrician Bartolomeo Panciatichi and the second in relation to the subject of Andrea's paintings in the hall of the Medici villa in Poggio a Caiano.²¹ In his contribution on works of art in Rome, bound in with the manuscript, he described the marble funerary monuments of Popes Leo X and Clement VII in Santa Maria sopra Minerva as incomplete works by Baccio Bandinelli. In the margin he noted: "Il Cavaliere", i.e. Baccio Bandinelli. He obviously knew that Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) had commissioned Bandinelli to make the models for the tombs.²² The Anonimo not only knew the artists from the circle surrounding Ottaviano, he also knew what was in his home, as attested by his life of Leonardo da Vinci, in which he wrote: "E ancora dipinse Adamo e Eva d'acquerello, oggi in casa messer Ottaviano de' Medici."²³ In brief, this suggests that we are justified in concluding that the Anonimo had access to Ottaviano de' Medici's close circle of acquaintances in the years in which he worked on the "Codice". There are also indications in the text suggesting that he visited the homes of other members of the Medici family. He described works of art in various Medici residences, some of the descriptions revealing that he himself had seen the works. In his life of Benozzo Gozzoli, he mentioned the artist's fresco cycle in the chapel of the Palazzo Medici on the Via Larga, adding very explicitly: "dove è la tavola di fra Giovanni di Fiesole"²⁴, i.e. Fra Angelico. In the life of Fra Filippo Lippi, he wrote that the altarpiece that had originally stood in that chapel was taken after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494 to the Palazzo de' Signori, where it could still be found.²⁵ Lorenzo de' Medici's inventory of 1494 shows that several works by Fra Angelico were in the possession of the Medici.²⁶ We can almost certainly assume that the family after their return replaced Lippi's confiscated altarpiece with another religious work, according to the Anonimo with one by Fra Angelico. In the life of Sandro Botticelli, he wrote: "A Castello, in casa il signor Giovanni de' Medici [a son of Pierfrancesco di Lorenzo de' Medici], più quadri dipinse, che sono delle più belle opere che facesse." Of course he was referring here to Botticelli's *Nascita di Venere* and *Primavera*. He also knew the location of Botticelli's illustrations for Dante's "Divina Commedia": "Dipinse [Botticelli] e storiò un Dante in carta pecora a Lorenzo di Piero Francesco de' Medici [Giovanni's brother], il che fu cosa maravigliosa tenuto."²⁷ In the life of Leonardo da Vinci, he wrote: "dipinse a [blank] una testa di megera con mirabili e rari aggruppamenti di serpi, oggi in guardaroba dello illustrissimo e eccellentissimo signore duca Cosimo de' Medici."²⁸ The only one of Botticelli's smaller works that he named, describing it as an "opera singulare", was a painting of Saint Jerome.²⁹ Vasari incorrectly attributed it to Fra Filippo Lippi, but said that it hung in the Duke's *guardaroba*.³⁰ As only intimates and high-ranking courtiers had access to Cosimo's *guardaroba*, the Anonimo must have been a person of significance in Florence.

Bernardo Vecchiotti also had a close relationship with the Medici; in fact, he was even related to them. His maternal grandmother, Honesta de' Medici (1478-1555), was a first cousin of Ottaviano de' Medici. Their fathers, the brothers Lorenzo and Averardo, lived together with their families in the family palazzo on the Via Larga.³¹ Honesta de' Medici married Francesco di Vanni Strozzi, who died in 1528. It was customary at that time for a widow to return to the bosom of her family after the death of her husband, and in Honesta's case, this meant the home of her cousin Ottaviano and his kinsfolk on the Via Larga.³² Is it too much to assume that Bernardo was a regular visitor there? From 1524 onward, Ottaviano also took in the two Medici orphans, Alessandro (1511-1537) and Ippolito (1511-1535), and the thirteen-years-old Giorgio Vasari. It is conceivable that Bernardo, who was then about the same age as Alessandro and Ippolito, took lessons there until 1527 from Ottaviano's private tutor Pierio Valeriano, a humanist and antiquarian. Vasari was also required to attend the lessons for two hours a day.³³ As a close relative, Bernardo will of course have occupied a different position in this little group to Vasari, who was after all subservient to the Medici. Letters from Cosimo I and Cardinal Alessandro de' Medici, the son of Ottaviano, show that Bernardo was indeed regarded as a much-loved member of the family.³⁴ The personal connection with Bernardo comes across very clearly in a note from Cosimo, written in his own hand before 1554, the year of the conquest of Siena: "Bernardo, se voi siete in villa, veniteci a parlare e fateci l'ambasciata; se voi siete in Firenze, venite né più né meno come vi diciamo, perché vogliamo saper da voi una cosa e state sano di più."³⁵ There is no doubt that as a blood relative of the Medici, Bernardo had every opportunity to view the works in the family residences, and he must have been well-acquainted with the artists in Ottaviano's entourage.

The Anonimo's manuscript ends with the names of nineteen artists, mostly from outside Florence, whom he still wished to include in his survey. One of the artists on the list was Benvenuto Cellini who, after training as

a goldsmith in Florence, moved in 1519 to Rome, where he was mainly engaged in making coins and medals until 1540. From 1540 to 1545 he worked for the King of France. In August 1545 he returned to Florence and was commissioned shortly thereafter by Cosimo to make a bronze statue of Perseus. He began working on his bronze portrait bust of Cosimo at the same time.³⁶ The fact that the Anonimo included him in his list shows that he was quickly appraised of Cellini's rising star. Bernardo also came into contact with Cellini at that time. He wrote three poems about the bust of Cosimo, which stood in the Duke's *guardaroba* even before 1548 and which could only be viewed by intimate friends and people of high rank.³⁷ Bernardo sent his sonnets to Benedetto Varchi, who at Cosimo's request had returned to Florence from exile in 1542. On 9 October 1562, together with Francesco de' Medici and Andrea Benivieni, Bernardo was appointed executor of the will that Cellini wrote that day.³⁸ On 30 October 1562 he became the godfather of Elisabetta, Cellini's illegitimate daughter.³⁹

To what extent does the dating of the "Codice" support the suggestion that the Anonimo and Bernardo were one and the same man? Bernardo was only 23 years old in 1537. Is it likely that a young man of that age would embark on the gargantuan task of writing a work like the "Codice"? He certainly had the time and opportunity to do so. Men under thirty were not permitted to take an active part in politics in Florence and they generally did not go in search of a spouse before that age. What is more, Bernardo was to remain unmarried and childless throughout his life. The prosperous Vecchietti family business, which exported textiles and clothing to the Ottoman Empire and the Levant, was run by Bernardo's father until his death in 1559.⁴⁰

For his comprehensive survey of classical artists, the Anonimo made use of Landino's translation of Pliny's "Historia Naturalis". He also consulted Eusebius' "Chronicus Canon". All the information about painters and sculptors, distributed throughout Pliny's various books, was painstakingly brought together by him. He then tried to place the artists in a historic chronological sequence. For the classical artists he did not use Ghiberti's excerpts from Pliny in part I of the "Commentarii", although he did use information from part II for his survey of artists from the Trecento and Quattrocento.⁴¹ Bernardo demonstrated his knowledge of the classics in the exchange of sonnets about Cellini's bronze portrait bust of Cosimo with Benedetto Varchi around 1548.⁴² There he compared Cellini with Lysippus and Pyrgoteles, a reference to Pliny as well as a variation on Petrarch's reference to Lysippus, Pyrgoteles and Apelles in his "Canzoniere".⁴³

For his survey of modern artists, the Anonimo also had access to the "Libro di Antonio Billi". In a manuscript in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, containing Jacomo Rilli's notes for his book on the Accademia degli Umidi that appeared in 1700⁴⁴, Rilli gives the impression that Bernardo had in some way been involved in the Accademia degli Umidi, which was set up by young *litterati* in 1540 and was the forerunner to the Accademia Fiorentina. Giovanni Battista Gelli, also one of the first Umidi, used the "Libro di Antonio Billi" for his own codex of artist's lives, which he compiled after 1550.⁴⁵ It goes without saying that in this milieu Bernardo also had access to the "Libro di Antonio Billi".

The Anonimo also described the works by Florentine artists in other Italian cities. Some of this information came from Ghiberti and Antonio Billi, and some from his own observations, as demonstrated by his survey of the art in Rome. Those works he had certainly seen himself.⁴⁶ Many letters and documents in the Medici archive in Florence show that Bernardo travelled regularly, staying in Rome, Venice, Bologna, Naples, Pisa, and elsewhere. This would have given him an opportunity to look at the artworks in those cities.⁴⁷

For his survey of the Siennese artists, the Anonimo borrowed for the most part from Ghiberti's "Commentarii", but he himself added two artists who were still painting after Ghiberti's death. Interestingly, one of them was Lorenzo di Piero Vecchietti (d. 1482), a painter and sculptor with the same family name as Bernardo.⁴⁸ He mentioned two paintings and two sculptures of Bernardo's namesake.

Bound in with the manuscript are several pages, in the Anonimo's hand, about works in the Certosa di Val d'Ema. This was the area close to San Giusto a Ema where Bernardo's father, Giovanni Vecchietti, purchased in 1515 the two *poderi*, Il Riposo and La Lama.⁴⁹ Bernardo had the villa Il Riposo renovated and decorated, and he held regular literary and artistic gatherings there.

On the final pages of the manuscript the Anonimo scribbled letter exercises, drawings and sums. His experiments with the capitals *R* and *F* (see fig. 12a) stand out. Is it coincidental that in 1552 Bernardo suggested, in one of his many letters to Cosimo, that they should use the letter *R* as a code for the name Fugger in their private correspondence?⁵⁰ In 1547 Bernardo was already representing the Duke in important financial transactions. Under Cosimo's authority, he maintained very close links with the Fugger banking family in Augsburg.⁵¹ Clearly, the Duke would have wanted to send to the Fuggers someone who was both absolutely trustworthy and sufficiently well educated to be able to communicate effectively with the bankers on their level. Cosimo gave Bernardo a free hand in the transactions with the Fugger bank, involving millions of *scudi*.

The subject matter of the "Codice" ties in very well with Bernardo's activities in the field of art. He is best known as the patron of the Flemish sculptor Giambologna, but he also played a key role in the Medici's major art projects. For example, on 18 January 1572 Giorgio Vasari wrote a letter to his trusted friend Vincenzo Borghini, in which he complained bitterly about Bernardo, who as one of the court censors had made negative comments about Vasari's paintings in the Sala Grande of the Palazzo Vecchio. But according to Vasari, Vecchietti

and his colleagues were incapable for passing judgment on others, just like the blind were unable to judge colours.⁵² After Vasari's death in 1574, in his role as *luogotenente* for Cosimo's successor Francesco I, Bernardo commissioned the Roman artist Federico Zuccari in 1575 to complete the paintings in the dome of the Cathedral.⁵³ The painter incorporated portraits of his family and friends into his *Giudizio Universale*, giving Bernardo a prominent place next to his father (fig. 13). When Ferdinando I commissioned Giambologna to make a bronze equestrian statue of his father Cosimo I, immediately after becoming Grand Duke on the death of his brother Francesco in 1587, he delegated the supervision of this prestigious project to Bernardo. Bernardo also acquitted himself well in the field of poetry. To exchange lyric poetry in the vernacular language was one of the most popular pursuits of the time⁵⁴ and Bernardo regularly participated in public debates about art. Even before 1548 he sent odes on Cellini's bronze portrait bust of Cosimo to Benedetto Varchi, who replied in verse.⁵⁵ A favourite subject of the poems that Bernardo exchanged with Varchi and Raffaello Borghini was *Il Riposo*, the Vecchiotti family's villa in the Val d'Ema, where Bernardo organized his literary gatherings.⁵⁶ In 1583 a small book appeared containing 23 odes to Giambologna's *Ratto della Sabina*, his sculpture group on the Piazza della Signoria. Bernardo was very much involved in this collection of poems — he wrote five of the poems and the volume was dedicated to him.⁵⁷ Raffaello Borghini's "Il Riposo" appeared in 1584, a collection of fictitious dialogues between four real Florentine citizens on the subject of painting and sculpture in Florence. The dialogues took place in the villa *Il Riposo* and Borghini presented Bernardo as *the* expert in the fields of art history and literary history by having him tell the lives of the classical and modern artists up until Sebastiano del Piombo.⁵⁸

In the later sixteenth century, the "Codice" manuscript was owned by the Florentine Gaddi family. We do not know how it ended up in the Gaddi collection, but a note in the margin of the life of Polycletus reveals that the Anonimo must have been on intimate terms with Monsignore Giovanni Gaddi (d. 1544), *chierico di Camera del Granduca*.⁵⁹ Gaddi was a highly erudite art lover and an intimate friend of Giorgio Vasari and Benvenuto Cellini.⁶⁰ He was the uncle of Niccolò Gaddi (1537-1591), the last male descendant of the family, who in 1591 bequeathed his entire collection of manuscripts, printed books and works of art to the Pitti branch of the family. It is a known fact that in his later life Bernardo, together with Niccolò, regularly acted on behalf of the Medici in important matters involving art.⁶¹ Given the close relationship between the two men, it is not inconceivable



13 Federico Zuccari, *The Last Judgement*, 1575 (detail). Florence, Dome of the Cathedral.



14 Bernardo Vecchiotti, BNCF, Magliabechiano XVII. 17, c. 121r.

that it was through Niccolò that the manuscript ended up in the Gaddi library after the death of the childless Bernardo. Since 1775 the manuscript has been held in the library in Florence that later became the Biblioteca Nazionale.⁶²

My conviction that Bernardo Vecchiotti was the author of the “Codice dell’Anonimo Magliabechiano” immediately raises new questions, however. Was it on his own initiative that Bernardo brought all Florentine artists together in a single survey or was he commissioned to do so by, say, someone from the Medici circle? Given Ottaviano’s leading role in cultural matters, it appears quite conceivable that the idea originated with him. Did he perhaps encourage both Bernardo and Vasari to begin the major undertaking? Unfortunately for Bernardo, the appearance of Vasari’s “Vite” in 1550 rendered his “Codice” both superfluous and obsolete. The drawing on the final page of the manuscript is especially intriguing in this regard (fig. 14). Bernardo drew the portrait of a malevolent man sporting a beard of the type worn by Vasari and Ottaviano and beleaguered from the left by a scorpion, a lizard and two insects. He appears to have two horns on his head and his face is shown both in full and in three-quarter profile. It is certainly not a kind drawing — a devilish man with two faces, in the company of assorted vermin. There are angry scratches through the sketch. We can deduce from the text that Bernardo worked on his manuscript until 1547 at the latest. In the life of Polycletus he noted that *Il letto di Polycleto Sicionio*, an antique bronze relief from Lorenzo Ghiberti’s collection, was at that time in the possession

of Cardinal Pietro Bembo, who died in January 1547.⁶³ Between November 1546 and the summer of 1547, Vasari worked in Florence on his draft for the “Vite”, asking learned Florentine friends like Giovanbattista Strozzi and Giovanbattista Adriani for advice and support.⁶⁴ Vasari’s activities would not have gone unnoticed by Bernardo. He stopped work on his manuscript before January 1547. Did he intend, with this cartoon, to express his bitter feelings about the course of events?

NOTES

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- ¹ *Anonime Notizie di Pittori, Scultori e Architetti, autografe*, BNCF, Magliabechiano XVII. 17. For a detailed description of the manuscript see *Eliana Carrara*, in: Vincenzo Borghini, *filologia e invenzione nella Firenze di Cosimo I*, exhibition cat., eds. *Gino Belloni/Riccardo Drusi*, Florence 2002, pp. 148-151.
- ² *Cristoforo Landino, Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante Alighieri*, Florence 1481. In the preface to his commentary on Dante, Landino gives a brief overview of famous Florentine painters and sculptors. He starts with artists from Antiquity, based on Pliny, “*Historia Naturalis*”, and continues with the works of Cimabue, Giotto and other Trecento painters, based largely on Filippo Villani, “*Liber de origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus*” (1375-1404).
- ³ Landino (1424-1498) translated Pliny’s “*Historia Naturalis*” into Italian in 1473.
- ⁴ *Lorenzo Ghiberti, I Commentarii*, ed. *Lorenzo Bartoli*, Florence 1998. Volume I contains an extract from Pliny and an overview of the artists up to Ghiberti’s own time. Volume II contains the modern artists and his own biography; *Il Libro di Antonio Billi*, ed. *Fabio Benedettucci*, Anzio 1991. The original manuscript is lost, but the BNCF holds two incomplete, differing copies: the “*Codice Stroziano*” and the “*Codice Petrei*”. The first contains 23 biographies and a list of 47 artists, from Cimabue up to Michelangelo, the latter contains 48 lives of artists. The Florentine merchant Antonio Billi is considered to be the composer and/or owner.
- ⁵ *Carl Frey*, *Il Codice Magliabechiano*, Berlin 1892 (repr. Farnborough 1969), p. LXXXV.
- ⁶ Hereafter I will refer to the anonymous author as the Anonimo.
- ⁷ *Baldinucci-Ranalli*, I, pp. 428-429.
- ⁸ *Gaetano Milanesi*, *Documenti inediti riguardanti Leonardo da Vinci*, in: *Arch. Stor. It.*, serie III, XV, 1872, p. 219 ff.; cf. *L’Anonimo Magliabechiano*, ed. *Annamaria Ficarra*, Florence 1968, p. XX, n. 6.
- ⁹ *Schlosser-Kurz*³, pp. 190-191.
- ¹⁰ *Cornelius von Fabriczy*, *Il libro di Antonio Billi e il codice dell’Anonimo Gaddiano*, Florence 1891 (repr. Farnborough 1969); *Frey* (n. 5); *Ficarra* (n. 8).
- ¹¹ *Frey* (n. 5), p. LXXXIV.
- ¹² *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. XLII.
- ¹³ *Richard Stapleford*, *Vasari and Botticelli*, in: *Flor. Mitt.*, XXXIX, 1995, pp. 399-408.
- ¹⁴ Hereafter I will refer to Bernardo Vecchiotti as to Bernardo.
- ¹⁵ I thank Sandra Mascini of the ASF for her advice.
- ¹⁶ I am also very grateful to Maurizio Arfaioli for his assistance.
- ¹⁷ *Ludovico degli Arrighi, La operina da imparare di scrivere littera cancellarescha*, Rome [1522?]. Reprint in: *Three classics of Italian calligraphy*, ed. *Oscar Ogg*, New York 1953, p. 50.
- ¹⁸ ASF, Fondo Mediceo del Principato, 412, fol. 260: November 26, 1552.
- ¹⁹ The most famous were *Arrighi* (n. 17); *Giovanniantonio Tagliente, Lo presente libro insegna la vera arte delo eccellente scrivere [...]*, Venice 1530; *Giovambattista Palatino, Libro nuovo d’imparare a scrivere*, Rome 1540 (1561). Reprints in: *Three classics* (n. 17).

- ²⁰ For Vasari's relationship with Ottaviano de' Medici, see the bibliography in *Anna Maria Bracciante*, *Ottaviano de' Medici*, Florence 1984; see also *Patricia Lee Rubin*, *Giorgio Vasari: art and history*, New Haven 1995, pp. 98, 100, 354, 361, 375, 394.
- ²¹ *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. 117: "dimandarne Jacopo da Pontormo"; p. 118: "dimandarne Giorgio [Vasari] o Jacopo da Pontormo".
- ²² *Ibidem*, p. 132: "v'è dua sepulture di marmo, che sono la sepultura di Lione e di Clemente, sono a un medesimo modo ambedue, che sono di mano del cavaliere e non sono finite". Before Clement's death in late 1534, Bandinelli made models in wood and wax (untraced) for the tombs of Clement and Leo X, but by 1536 the architectural design was allocated instead to Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, with only the statues and reliefs being reserved for Baccio. After many prevarications, in about 1541-1542 he actually delivered four statues of apostles and six narrative reliefs, while the seated portraits of the Medici popes were carved by others.
- ²³ *Ibidem*, p. 121.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 111; cf. p. 102.
- ²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 105: "Dipinse ancora una tavola nel palazzo de' Medici, la quale, "quando essi di Firenze furono scacciati", fu cavata e messa nel palazzo de' Signori, dove al presente si trova."
- ²⁶ Il libro d'inventario dei beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico, eds. *Marco Spallanzani/Giovanna Gaeta Bertelà*, Florence 1992, pp. 12, 33, 78, 80, 93. I would like to thank Victor Schmidt for his information about Fra Angelico's paintings.
- ²⁷ *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. 114.
- ²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 121.
- ²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 114-115.
- ³⁰ *Vasari-Barocchi*, III, pp. 338.
- ³¹ *Bracciante* (n. 20), p. 1, n. 3. See also *Francesca Carrara*, Il magnifico Bernardo Vecchietti, cortigiano e committente in un inedito epistolario privato, in: Giambologna, gli dei, gli eroi, exhibition cat., eds. *Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi/Dimitrios Zikos*, Florence 2006, p. 309, n. 6. I would like to thank Francesca Carrara for sending me her paper (2000) on Vecchietti's *Fonte della Fata Morgana*.
- ³² On the position of widows, see *Christiane Klapisch-Zuber*, *Women, family and ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Chicago/London 1985, pp. 117-131.
- ³³ *Rubin* (n. 20), pp. 72-73.
- ³⁴ *Carrara* (n. 31), pp. 303 and 311, n. 65.
- ³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 303.
- ³⁶ *Benvenuto Cellini, La Vita*, ed. *Guido Davico Bonino*, Turin 1973, p. 402.
- ³⁷ Raphael, Cellini and a Renaissance banker. The patronage of Bindo Altoviti, exhibition cat., ed. *Alan Chong* et al., Boston/Florence 2003, pp. 439-442 (*Dimitrios Zikos*).
- ³⁸ *Michael Bury*, Bernardo Vecchietti, patron of Giambologna, in: *I Tatti Studies*, I, 1985, p. 51, n. 37.
- ³⁹ *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini orefice e scultore fiorentino scritta da lui medesimo*, ed. *Francesco Tassi*, III: Ricordi prose e poesie, Florence 1829, pp. 114-115.
- ⁴⁰ For Giovanni Vecchietti's business activities see ASF, Carte Stroziane, IIIA, 136: this undated letter refers to letters received in July, August, September 1555 and March 1556, and shows that Giovanni Vecchietti and Piero di Carlo Strozzi were active in the export of textiles through Ancona to the Ottoman Empire and the Levant; ASF, Fondo Mediceo del Principato, 472, fol. 397: in this undated letter to Cosimo I, filed with other letters of July 20, 1558, permission is requested to repair Giovanni Vecchietti's galley, the *Santa Chiara*, at Pisa. Cf. *Rachel King*, Material culture and the construction of ancestry, legacy and the self in the life of Bernardo Vecchietti (1514-1590), unpublished M.A. Thesis, Victoria & Albert / Royal College of Arts Course in the History of Design, London 2006, p. 25.
- ⁴¹ *Frey* (n. 5), p. XCI.
- ⁴² *Tassi* (n. 39), III, pp. 478-481.
- ⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 479: "Il mio Lisippo, il mio Pirgotele solo / sia 'l buon Cellino." Lysippus and Pyrgoteles were a bronze sculptor and medallist respectively, and according to *Pliny* (Book VII) they had a privilege on portraying Alexander the Great, together with Apelles, the painter; *Francesco Petrarca, Il Canzoniere*, ed. *Piero Cudini*, Milan 1974, p. 304, CCXXXII.
- ⁴⁴ BNCF, Magliabechiano VII. 767, *Schede appartenenti alla Vita e Opere di vari Letterati particolarmente Fiorentini*. The manuscript (only available on microfilm) contains a short biography of each member of the Accademia degli Umidì (including Bernardo), listing his greatest moments, his poems and references to his name in the works of Benedetto Varchi. The manuscript catalogue states that it is the material for *Jacomo Rilli, Notizie letterarie ed istoriche intorno gli uomini illustri dell'Accademia fiorentina*, Florence 1700. I would like to thank Rachel King for bringing this manuscript to my notice.
- ⁴⁵ *Wolfgang Kallab, Vasaristudien*, Vienna 1908, pp. 182-187. Gelli mentions the pontificate of Pope Julius III, 1550-1555.

- ⁴⁶ *Ficarra* (n. 8), pp. 127-134.
- ⁴⁷ Several unpublished letters in the ASF refer to his travels. See also *Carrara* (n. 31), pp. 303, 304, 306.
- ⁴⁸ *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. 94. He also mentioned Vecchietti's apprentice Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439-c. 1501).
- ⁴⁹ For the *poderi* see ASF, Depositario Generale, 160, fol. 21, and ASF, Notarile Antecosimiano, 11030, fol. 204; for the latter cf. *Carrara* (n. 31), p. 302. The villa Il Riposo was also the place where *Raffaello Borghini* situated the dialogues in his book *Il Riposo*, Florence 1584.
- ⁵⁰ ASF, Fondo Mediceo del Principato, 412, fol. 260: November 26, 1552.
- ⁵¹ See *Götz Freiherr von Pölnitz*, Anton Fugger, Munich 1986, II, 2: 1544-1548, p. 783, n. 78; see also *Carrara* (n. 31).
- ⁵² *Frey*, Nachlaß, II, p. 635: "Ho inteso per que 4 uersi la nuoua della sala in generale che la .S. V. mj da, ma io non son satisfatto, perche sebene la sento molto bene et satisfatione, alle vostre orecchie non uerra dagli artefici se non bene, sapendo quanto ella mj ama, et dallo onjuersale. Vorrej che da Maestro Baccio o dal Concnjo o lala sapessi o da altrj dj corte quel che dicie il Princjpe, perche que Bernardj et Timantj et Puccinj et Vechietj che son censorj, il parer loro, che giouera per l'altre cose dj Maestro Giouan Strada et dj certj altrj, questi parte per inuidia, parte per isdegno, parte perche son djuenuto troppo grande, faran lufitio loro; che, quando si guardera l'opere loro, si fara conto che, non passando il segno, non giudichjno dj colore i ciechj." I would like to express my gratitude to Lionella Delcampo and Laura Rietveld for helping me to translate and interpret this complicated passage.
- ⁵³ See *Detlef Heikamp*, Federico Zuccari a Firenze 1575-1579, in: *Paragone*, XVIII, 205, 1967, pp. 44-68; see also *Cristina Acidini Luchinat*, Taddeo e Federico Zuccari, fratelli pittori del Cinquecento, II, Milan/Rome 1999, p. 76.
- ⁵⁴ *Deborah Parker*, Bronzino, Renaissance painter and poet, Cambridge 2000, p. 18.
- ⁵⁵ *Tassi* (n. 39), III, pp. 478-481.
- ⁵⁶ For these poems see *Bury* (n. 38), pp. 38-42.
- ⁵⁷ *Alcune composizioni di diversi autori in lode del ritratto della Sabina [...]*, ed. *Michelagnolo Sermartelli*, Florence 1583.
- ⁵⁸ *Borghini-Rosci*.
- ⁵⁹ *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. 11: "salvo il vero a messer Giovanni Gaddi".
- ⁶⁰ Vasari repeatedly mentioned him in his *Vite*. For Cellini's relationship with Giovanni Gaddi, see *Cellini-Bonino* (n. 36), pp. 107-108.
- ⁶¹ See *Paola Barocchi*, Collezionismo mediceo, Cosimo I, Francesco I e il Cardinale Ferdinando, Modena 1993, pp. 149-150. Federico Zuccari honoured Vecchietti and Gaddi in his "Lettera a precipi, et signori amatori del disegno [...]" (Mantua 1605) as "ambidue virtuosissimi gentilhuomini, & singolari amatori di queste nobilissime professioni"; *Scritti d'arte di Federico Zuccaro*, ed. *Detlef Heikamp*, Florence 1961, p. 115.
- ⁶² In 1755 the whole collection was sold to the Grand Duke of Tuscany and catalogued by the historian Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti (1712-1783), librarian of the Biblioteca Magliabechiana. See *Frey* (n. 5), p. LXXXI.
- ⁶³ *Ficarra* (n. 8), p. 11: "E ancora a' nostri tempi s'è visto di sua mano, di bronzo, il letto con figure maravigliose che oggi è appresso monsignor Bembo, che l'ebbe da Vettorio Ghiberti fiorentino, ch'era tra le cose di Lorenzo di Bartoluccio Ghiberti."
- ⁶⁴ See *Rubin* (n. 20), pp. 177-186.

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